

Report To: Safe Sustainable Communities Committee **Date: 4th May 2010**
Report By: Corporate Director, Regeneration and Environment **Report No: SSC/PL/10/05/01/FJM/CC**
Contact Officer: Charlie Cairns **Contact No: 01475 712464**
Subject: Wemyss Bay Woodland - Local Nature Reserve designation

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To request authority from the Committee to formally designate the area known as Wemyss Bay Woodland as a Local Nature Reserve.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Local Nature Reserves (LNR), are local authority designated areas that can contribute to biodiversity, environmental education, and awareness and promotion of community involvement in the natural heritage. By making this designation, the local authority is offering status and protection to a site, and encouraging a partnership approach to its future management. There is only one other designated LNR in Inverclyde: Coves Reservoir.
- 2.2 As Wemyss Bay Woodland has been the focus for biodiversity improvements, recreation improvements and community involvement over recent years, it is considered to be a fitting site for LNR declaration.
- 2.3 Committee gave authority in October 2009 to the Head of Planning and Housing to develop a Management Plan for the site and to then report back to Committee seeking formal approval for the LNR designation. The requested Management Plan is appended to this Report.

Min. Ref:
27/10/09,
Para 674

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Committee:
- (a) note and approve the attached Management Plan for the proposed Wemyss Bay Woodland LNR; and
 - (b) remit to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Regeneration and Planning to undertake the necessary steps to formally declare Wemyss Bay Woodland as a Local Nature Reserve.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Wemyss Bay Woodland is an 8 hectare area of remnant estate policy woodland within the built up area of Wemyss Bay, bounded by Cliff Terrace Road to the north and Ardgowan Road to the east. It is largely within the ownership of Inverclyde Council, and those identified small areas not in Council ownership will not be included within the LNR.
- 4.2 The Management Plan outlines a long term approach to the management of this woodland which is based on partnership, enhancing existing potential and neutralising maintenance issues through innovative, partnership based mechanisms. This latter point is already established by the valuable input of the community through the Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Group, alongside beneficial Lower Clyde Greenspace initiatives involving the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. However, at the moment these varied activities are often disparate and not co-ordinated. In establishing the LNR, with an associated Management Group, a clear framework will be established within which these valuable activities can operate and where information and resources will be shared to the long term benefit of the woodland.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Key to the successful operation of any LNR is the establishment of a local Management Group, which provides an interface between agencies, community and other interested partners. It is proposed that the following membership of this group should be sought: Scottish Natural Heritage; Elected Member, Lower Clyde Greenspace; Biodiversity Officer; Inverclyde Council Grounds Services; Police/Community Police rep; Forestry Commission; and two representatives from Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Association, one Youth Representative and one representing the local primary school. It is considered appropriate that, as landowner, Inverclyde Council should act as Chair for this Group.
- 5.2 Although many of the aims and objectives in the Management Plan are physical, it is worth noting that the real benefit of this designation at this site will be human. Local consultations have clearly shown the value the community place on this site as a greenspace, and a range of national studies and research in the last few years has shown the benefits that quality greenspaces can bring to communities in terms of health, social wellbeing and skills.
- 5.3 There are also corporate benefits. As noted in the Committee Report of October 2009, in implementing this designation Inverclyde Council will be meeting several of its corporate and wider partnership targets, notably with regards to the Single Outcome Agreement, Green Charter, Local Plan/Local Development Plan, Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Access Strategy/Core Paths Plan.
- 5.4 The LNR designation and associated Management Group will also open access to specific low scale funding sources which are either currently not available for the Council or which demand partnership with communities, for example Scottish Natural Heritage's LNR fund, Awards for All or various Forestry Commission sources.
- 5.5 Given the information above, this area is considered to offer an exemplar within Inverclyde for LNR status.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Financial:** One off Costs. None; Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings); None
- 6.2 **Legal:** the basis for this designation is Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

6.3 **Personnel:** this initiative will be absorbed into the work programme of Lower Clyde Greenspace. No additional staff resource will be required.

6.4 **Equalities:** when delivering services to our customers, full cognisance is taken of equality and diversity processes and procedures.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 There has been no specific requirement for the Chief Financial Officer or the Head of Organisational Development and Human Resources and Performance to make comment on this report. As the proposal necessitates a legal designation, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been fully involved in the process leading to this Report.

7.2 In addition, the following organisations were consulted on the content of the Management Plan and the proposed LNR designation:

Inverclyde Council - Ward 6 Councillors; Economic and Social Regeneration Service; Education Service; Safer Communities Service; Property Resources; Environmental Services; and Planning and Housing Service.

Partner and external groups - Biodiversity Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission, Inverclyde Local Access Forum, Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Association, and Wemyss Bay Community Council.

7.3 All of the above consultees have reacted positively to the Management Plan and have also expressed their specific support for the Local Nature Reserve designation.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Wemyss Bay Woodland has been the focus for biodiversity improvements, recreation improvements and community involvement over a number of years and it is with a great deal of satisfaction for all those who have been involved to now have this valued local natural heritage asset proposed to be declared a LNR.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 A summary of consultation responses received is available on request from Charlie Cairns, Lower Clyde Greenspace Manager tel. 2464

ATTACHMENTS

Annex 1 : Boundary of Wemyss Bay Woods proposed Local Nature Reserve

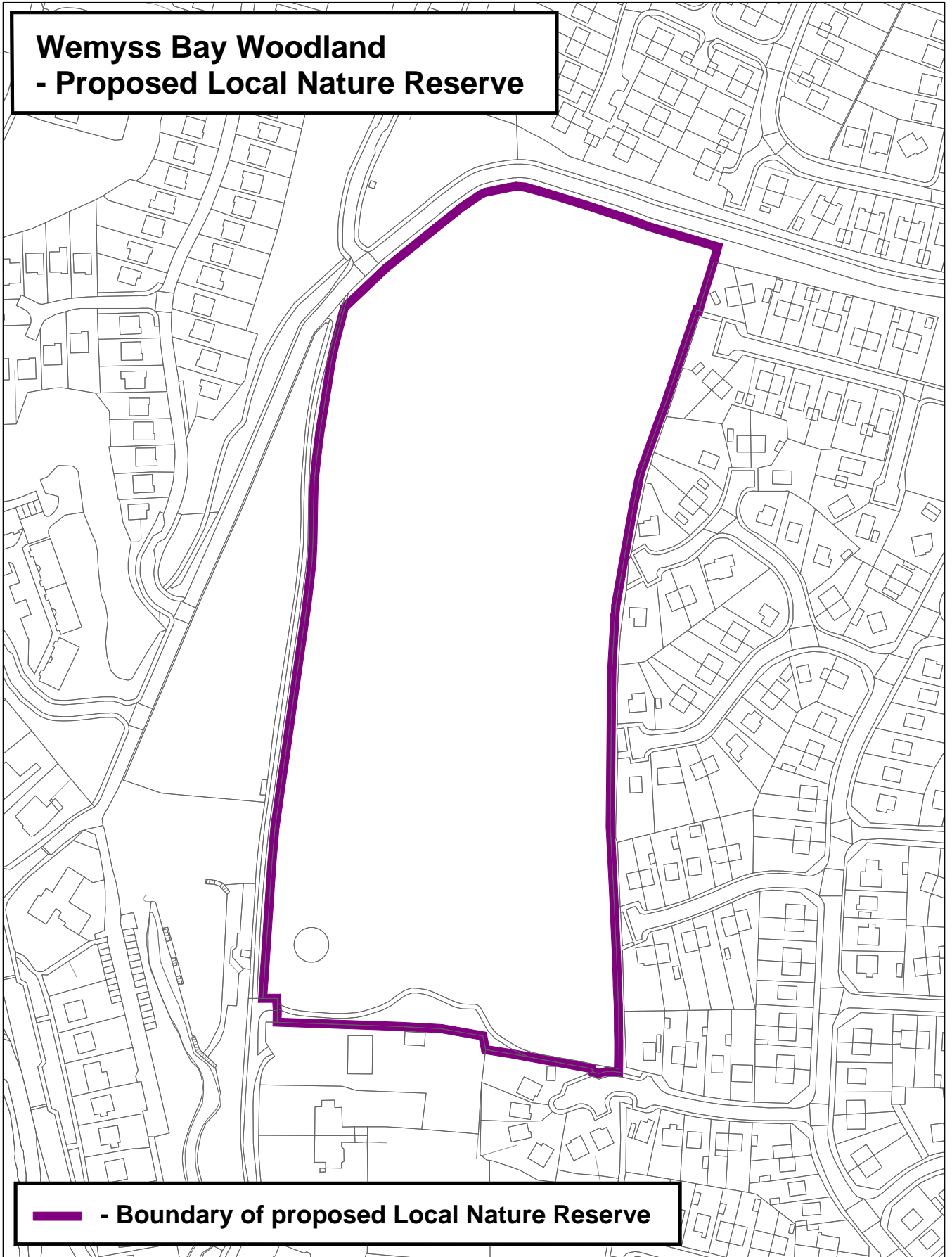
Annex 2 : Wemyss Bay Woodland : proposed Local Nature Reserve – Management Plan 2010 – 2014

Head of Regeneration and Planning

9 April 2010

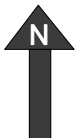
SSC Cmtee Wemyss Bay LNR (rpt2) (May 2010)

**Wemyss Bay Woodland
- Proposed Local Nature Reserve**



**Inverclyde Council
Regeneration & Planning**

**NOT TO SCALE
GMcC / APR 10**



Wemyss Bay Woodland Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2010 - 2014



**LOWER CLYDE
GREENSPACE**

Inverclyde
Renfrewshire
East Renfrewshire
LBAP

Inverclyde
council

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1. Introduction

This document is a 5 year management plan, designed to inform and guide future works in Wemyss Bay Woodland. This plan is intended to support the ongoing maintenance and development of current and future works in the woodland to secure the site, as a valued community resource, in the long-term.

Many local people in the Wemyss Bay area regard the site as an asset for biodiversity and recreation, and a partnership approach has been taken with the local community in the regeneration and care of the woodland. The aspiration is to manage the site as a ‘wildlife friendly community greenspace’¹ and to be sympathetic to this in the management aims.

This document has been written with the intention of supporting ongoing work in the woodland with fluidity, to take into account the progression and development of the management aims. LNR status will grant further protection over the woodland and encourage wider community involvement through establishing a new management committee to oversee future maintenance and projects.

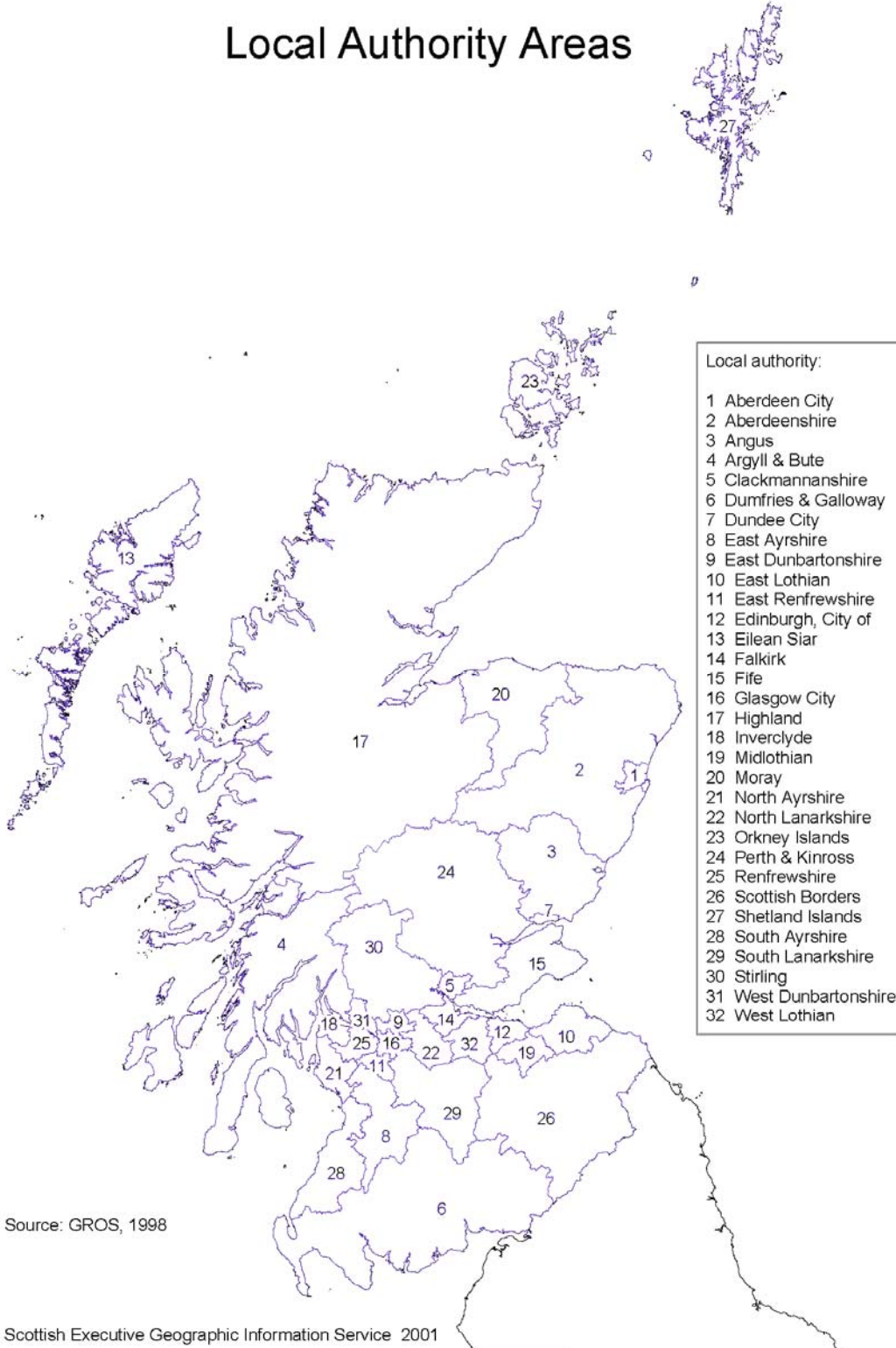


¹ Views gathered in ‘Public Consultation on Future Site Management Objectives for Wemyss Bay Woods’, Section 8.3

1.1 Site Location

Wemyss Bay Woodland is located in Wemyss Bay village in Inverclyde, one of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities located in a westernly position in the south of the Strathclyde Regional Area at the mouth of the River Clyde.

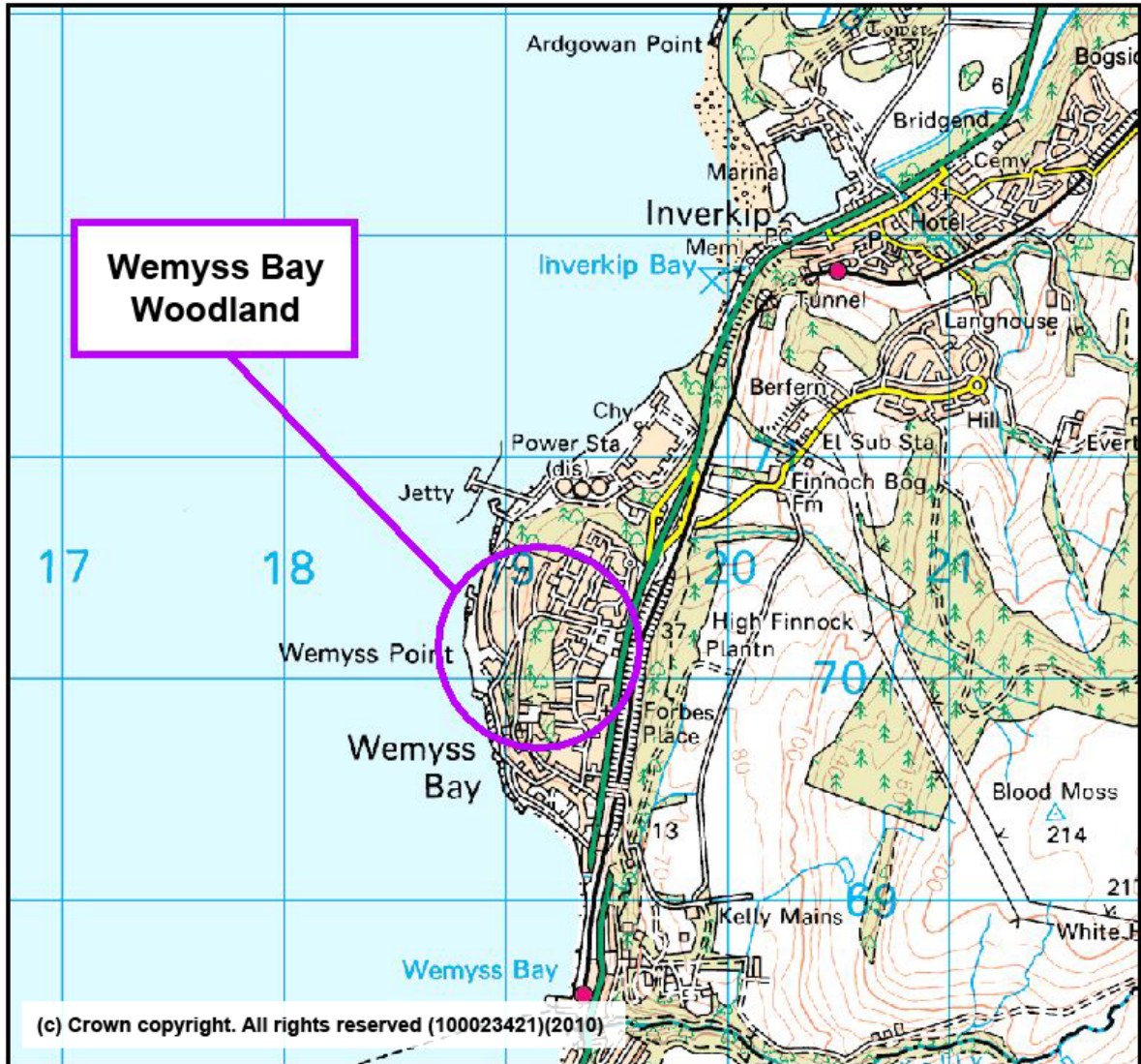
Local Authority Areas



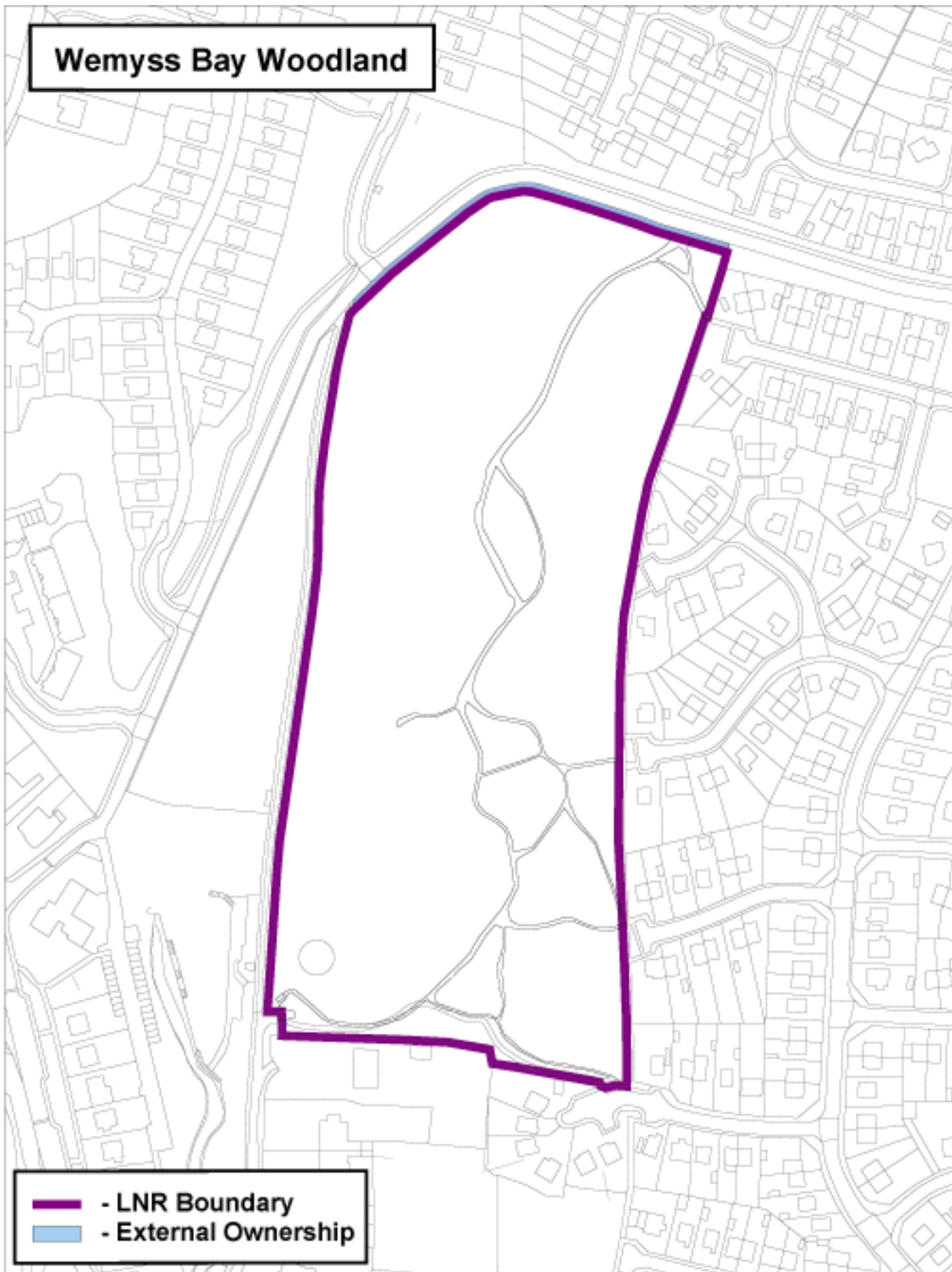
The area of Wemyss Bay Woodland is located in the centre of the village forming a significant landscape feature being the largest single block of mature woodland existing in Wemyss Bay between the A78 and the coast, and is the most significant surviving remnant of the former Castle Wemyss Estate.



These maps show where Wemyss Bay is in relation to the wider community, with co-ordinates of 219,143.18 easting and 670,097.25 northing and grid reference of NS 1970.



Both the boundary of the woodland and the path network within the site are shown on the following map of Wemyss Bay Woods. There is a strip which runs along the entrance area of the woodland that is not under Local Authority ownership, but access has never been an issue and is permitted through the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.



**Inverclyde Council
Regeneration & Planning**

NOT TO SCALE



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1.2 Background to the Woodland

The site is currently within the ownership of Inverclyde Council (IC) and management in areas of the woodland is restricted to safety issues, mainly danger from wind blown trees adjacent to private housing.

Past land use was developed on an estate policy land system, where various exotic tree species were planted within an existing native woodland. The greenspace surrounding the woodland has since become the location for substantial residential development, especially after the castle fell into a state of disrepair in the late 1990's. Previous maps¹ of the Wemyss Bay area show that development has reduced the greenspace area around the woodland. The woodland represents a valuable local greenspace for the Wemyss Bay community and a resource worth protecting for future generations.

The woodland also has high recreational value, and is used locally for activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding, running and dog walking. The LNR status would give this valuable greenspace an advantage through protection of the woodland and encouraging greater involvement with the community. This designation will support the need to maintain and improve the current infrastructure within the woodland, and strengthen future funding requirements.

Enthusiasm of the local community to use of the woodland is considerable, and the location of a primary school adjacent to the woodland raises the potential of the site for environmental education. Stakeholders within the local community are very active and have set themselves up as Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Association² (WBCWA).



¹ Historical maps and aerial photographs can be found in the Annex on page 33.

² www.wemyssbay.net/news/wbcwa/index.html

The work to develop Wemyss Bay Woodland began in 2000, when local people became uneasy about the lack of maintenance and anti-social behaviour on the site and contacted Inverclyde Council with their concerns. Lower Clyde Greenspace (LCG) gave support to the improvement initiative and helped with an initial community consultation. The high level of interest the site generated in the community led to a public meeting in May 2002 and over 100 local people attended to show their support for improving the woodland. From this meeting, a small group of volunteers formed the WBCWA, set up to further the regeneration and improvement works in the woodland. The community group have already conducted a lot of work to clear and control rhododendron, raise funds and organise fun, recreational and educational activities. They have shown a clear commitment to helping with future works of the woodland and are still highly active in the site.

The following table demonstrates the work that has been put into improving the woodland. This also highlights the importance of this community greenspace in Wemyss Bay through the estimated 5576 man hours volunteered by local people to help improve and maintain the woodland, working on a weekly basis over the past decade.

Project/ Activity	Input from LCG/ IC	Input from WBCWA	Volunteer Hours	Value
Main Contract Works	Inverclyde Council - £22,000 Forestry Commission - £15,000	WBCWA In Kind £10,000* Fresh Futures £20,000 SNH £14,000	1600	£81,000 (£10,000 in kind)
Furniture and Habitat Boxes	LCG £500	WBCWA In Kind £320*	40	£820 (£320 in kind)
Ongoing Clearance Work	LCG £6000	WBCWA In Kind £21,850*	3500	£27,850 (£21,850 in kind)
Woodland Walk Programme	LCG/Starling Learning - £900	WBCWA In Kind £1500*	240	£2400 (£1500 in Kind)
Education Activity	LCG/ BTCV £1500	WBCWA In Kind £850*	136	£2350 (£850 in kind)
Consultation Work	TGP – 2002 £1990 Projects Plus – 2006 £2980	WBCWA In Kind £375*	60	£5345 (£375 in kind)
Other Contractor works	BTCV £2500	WBCWA £3000 for SWT		£5500
Current value/ time spent on works	£53,370	£37,000 (capital) £34,895 (in kind)	5576	£90,370 (capital) £34,895 (in kind) £125,265

*Volunteer hours have been costed at the BTCV and SNH recommended rate of £50 per day

1.3 Site Description

The site is an area of mature woodland of approximately 7.5 Ha of mixed ancient semi-natural and estate plantation origin. It is situated within the village of Wemyss Bay and, being completely surrounded by residential development offers a valuable amenity opportunity for the local community. It is located at the top of a very pronounced raised beach.

The wood varies in structure from area to area. The southern end of the wood has a fairly well defined woodland structure with intermittent canopy, developing shrub layer and a well pronounced ground flora. Natural regeneration is evident throughout this part of the woodland. Canopy species are dominated by oak, beech and sycamore.

The shrub layer was previously dominated by *Rhododendron ponticum* in some parts. Isolated stands of Japanese knotweed also exist. Formal paths have now been situated throughout the woodland allowing access for all and linking with the residential areas and form part of Inverclyde's Core Path Network.

Towards the north the woodland is dominated by trees of plantation origin and the once heavy infestation of *Rhododendron ponticum* is now under control, although this requires ongoing maintenance. The canopy is formed of European Larch and Scots Pine, all even aged and therefore exhibiting very poor structural diversity.

The shrub layer is now under control, and the natural holly, bramble, raspberry, wild garlic and dog rose have more space to spread and grow. As a result of clearing invasive species from the main areas within the woodland a wider spread of flora and fauna has been encouraged.

There is generally a decrease in garden rubbish being dumped and a reduced instance of vandalism shows that the woodland has become a valued community asset. Fly tipping is an ongoing issue that WBWCA are keen to see addressed.

There is also a reduction in anti-social behaviour with clearings throughout the woodland being created, minimising opportunities for drinking dens. It should be noted that in common with many other greenspaces, anti-social behaviour will most likely be an issue for future management to tackle.

1.4 Proposed Local Nature Reserve Status

The reasons for designating the site are twofold;

Firstly Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status would recognize the value of the woodland to a range of stakeholders. It is already defined in the Inverclyde Council's Local Plan as a site designated primarily for nature conservation and amenity, thereby providing a presumption against any activity or development that would undermine this.

Secondly the LNR status would improve opportunities for local people and in all likelihood attract funding, and encourage a higher level of community support for the woodland, which in turn will help to sustain its long-term future.



2. Site Assessment

2.1 Methodology

Various methods and sources of information have been used to collate information on the Study Area with regards to its suitability as a LNR.

2.1.1 Phase 1 Survey 1999

The Inverclyde Habitat Survey 1999 was commissioned and funded by Scottish Natural Heritage under contract number BAT/L104/99/00/30 and conducted by Keith Watson between August and September 1999.

The survey was carried in order to fill in the gaps left by the earlier surveys of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and Lower Clyde River Valley Projects, this survey used the former Nature Conservancy Council's (NCC) standard Phase 1 methodology. This system has a standard well defined and used methodology, and has been employed extensively within the former Strathclyde Region, allowing for relatively easy cross-reference and assessment of habitat types and distribution.

Although some long range mapping has been used (e.g. of well managed agricultural land), the vast majority of the fieldwork data was gathered from "walked ground". Aerial photographs were extensively used, both before and after fieldwork (to aid site/zone targeting and facilitate the final mapping). The late summer period of the work aided a thorough and accurate assessment of habitat and species interest.

This survey provides descriptions of the various habitats found and discussions on their quality allowing for eventual assessment of the general nature conservation interest.

Results

The survey found that woodlands account for a large part of the site (c. 20%); more than half of this total represents conifer plantations.

Semi-natural woodlands covering 141 ha (6.9%) of the survey area is a relatively high figure compared to other local surveys (and higher than national averages for such types); however caution should be used as this figure includes several long-established plantation areas. This total comprises a range of woodland types, not just associated with valleys.

Notable areas of woodland across Inverclyde include Duchal Wood, with an oak type structure (but not oak dominated) by the Green Water; others include Tandie Brae, Commoncraig and Swallow-brae Plantation (the latter with wet woodland) and those semi-natural woodlands with more policy influence at Ardgowan and Wemyss Bay Wood.

Excerpt from 1999 Habitat Survey

Site Number: 4

Site Name: Wemyss Bay Wood

Grid Ref.: NS192700

Area: 7.5 hectares

Site Summary:

There is a large area of mature broad-leaved policy-type woodland on level ground above cliff slope.

Canopies of oak, sycamore, beech with some birch, ash and frequent conifers (more to west) but also some rhododendron are present. Ground cover is variable, seemingly most diverse to north and margins (more aliens and disturbance).

*Species include *Luzula sylvatica*, ferns including bracken, *Silene dioica*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Geum urbanum*, *Carex sylvatica* etc. Locally more acidic to south (oak, birch, bracken, *Luzula sylvatica* - very rare *Molinia caerulea* and also to the western slope where pine and larch provide the canopy (with scrubby sycamore, birch etc.) and rhododendron becomes abundant.*

It is worth noting that at the time of the survey, the woodland was overgrown, with no paths or management policy in place.



2.2 Community Involvement

Lower Clyde Greenspace and Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Association have continued to improve, upgrade and conserve this community woodland and established the proposed LNR status in 2002. Consulting with the community and involving them in practical works has been ongoing. To gauge community interest, LCG led a focused community consultation in 2006 to establish community aspirations for Wemyss Bay Castle Woods. Going forward to establish a full LNR designation to the site will be an important step in securing the future of the woodland. As part of this process, an LNR Management Committee will be developed to assist with future maintenance and sustainability of the woodland, high level of community input.

The conclusion from the consultation is shown below:

Various statements have been made throughout the timeframe of the study to confirm Inverclyde Council's ongoing intention:

- To retain and present the area as a woodland greenspace, primarily being used by locals, and not to consider built development on the site;
- To continue the current programme of woodland management operations with a view to opening up the site to enable natural regeneration – and increase visibility and therefore the perception of public safety in using the area.

In views given by the public, there is a consistent expression of support for;

- Completing the ongoing site works of woodland management and drainage;
- Of being selective about the extent of access route development, and the type of user to be encouraged (or indeed, discouraged); and
- Of introducing measures to enhance the wildlife interest of the site, and of increasing a deeper public understanding of the qualities of the site through guided walks and on-site interpretation.

The options for making the site a more active destination did not receive large support. A distinction was made between the potential of the woodland and the gardens to accept active use. There is interest in developing cycle paths and adventure play in the woodland, although this would have to be sympathetic to the woodland and the current users. This would also carry maintenance obligations that cannot currently be met, for such developments are dependent on suitable resources being identified and secured, and have long term management implications.

The proposition of developing and promoting the site as a visitor destination has not found favour, with strong views being expressed that Wemyss Bay Woodland should remain essentially a local facility. Commentary at the public meeting, emphasised the findings on current use being on a daily or weekly basis, by local residents, 90% of who live within 10-15 minutes of the site, and 83% of who walk to the site. On that basis there was a clear rejection in responses of any need to provide toilets, or to introduce parking. The one exception to the latter point is the support for a modest provision of parking for the disabled, linked directly to the maintenance of good quality path access through the sites, which would be accessible for all abilities.

Because this survey was directed at and hand-delivered to a wide group of local householders, the response clearly reflects the views of that user group. This is clearly a strength of this investigation. Given that the survey questionnaire achieved 100% "penetration" through distribution in the local newsletter, we might assume that the non-respondents have either little interest in the subject; are entirely satisfied with the management of this local facility at present; or are content to leave concern about future actions to local activists and to the Council and the Greenspace team.

Given therefore that the majority of respondents are current site users and that they find value in the qualities of the woodland and the gardens, the responses achieved in this consultation provide a clear and consistent picture of support for the current detailed programme of works, and for the modest theme-related extensions of that work into access improvement and wildlife enhancement.

Suggested Agenda for the Woodland Area from Consultation

Responses from the public suggest that the work already completed on the woodland area is very well appreciated, but possibly not finally concluded. The woodland is seen as a local, informal, natural facility available to be enjoyed readily by local residents, for a range of relatively quiet, and passive pursuits. There is no strong appetite for more “manufactured” activity such as adventure play, or cycle tracks, or introductions, such as lighting, sculptures, parking areas, or public toilets.

The ongoing work programme for the woodland area may include;

- Continue the remaining woodland management work, taking measures with regard to the natural regeneration of native woodland that retains the new-found openness of the site
- Consider modest extensions to access opportunities for walkers and disabled users
- Review the extent of usage by cyclists and horse riders, and look to provide alternative attractive routes to avoid conflict with the core group of site users;
- Continue to use the woodland for environmental education
- Manage the site as a wildlife friendly community greenspace



2.3 Strategic Framework

This LNR Management Plan has been written in line with several key documents and strategies that are written in support of areas such as Wemyss Bay Woods

2.3.1 Local Plan

The site is currently listed as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation or SINC in the 2006 Adopted Local Plan. It is referred to on the Environmental Constraints Map as SINC site 49 Wemyss Castle Wood. This designation in the Local Plan¹ provides the site with a level of protection under Inverclyde Council Policy HR1: Designated Environmental Resources and Built Heritage.

“Development that would adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the natural or built heritage resources listed in Schedule 9.1 and where indicated, on the Proposals Map, will not normally be permitted”

Additionally, the local plan recognises greenspaces as the ‘wild’, ‘uncultivated’ or ‘naturally regenerated’ areas of ‘Open Space’ that “contribute to a more attractive townscape by providing a softer, more pleasant environmental setting to surrounding developed land”.

2.3.2 Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan or LBAP highlights habitats and species of conservation concern to Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Council is a key partner on the LBAP. Inverclyde Council uses the LBAP to focus awareness about what key species and habitats occur in Inverclyde and the commitment to the LBAP is mentioned in the Local Plan.

One of the habitats in the LBAP is Broadleaved & Mixed Woodland. The Habitat Action Plan or HAP for this habitat highlights the importance of mixed woodlands like Wemyss Castle Wood for both biodiversity and landscape value.

The full Habitat Action Plan for Broadleaved & Mixed Woodland is available online². The actions for 2008-2011 which are relevant to this plan can be viewed in the following table. More formal establishment of Wemyss Bay Wood as a LNR and the associated management and community involvement would contribute to these actions.

¹ <http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/planning-and-the-environment/planning/development-plan/adopted-inverclyde-local-plan-2005>

² www.renbap.paisley.ac.uk/renbap/BROADLEAVED.htm

Broadleaved & Mixed Woodland

Actions	Partners	Timescale
Ensure no further loss in extent and quality of existing woodland habitat	FC SNH LA's	2008-ongoing
Collate and digitise all available survey information to review status of the main sites	FC LA's CMRP	2008-2011
Encourage natural regeneration, colonisation and native tree planting in appropriate sites	FC LA's CMRP	2008-2011
Promote available funding sources in order to encourage sympathetic, site-specific management regimes	FC SNH LA's	2008-ongoing
Promote an appreciation of the value of woodlands to local communities	LA's FC Greenspace Projects Rangers	2008-ongoing
Organise potential woodland management activities for community groups, volunteers, trainees etc geared towards enhancing biodiversity in targeted sites.	BTCV	2008-2011

2.3.3 Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network is a 25-year strategic initiative to improve significantly the scale, quality and value of greenspace across the whole of the metropolitan area. The initiative will improve the living and working environment of nearly 2 million people and improve the competitiveness of Glasgow city region as a location for investment.

The Green Network will encompass a wide variety of sites, including public parks, woodlands, transport corridors, river corridors, private gardens, wildlife sites, sports grounds, institutional greenspace associated for example with schools, hospitals, allotments and cemeteries, and amenity ground associated with housing and business locations. Opportunities for the temporary greening of development sites will also be identified.

The establishment, protection and enhancement of sites like Wemyss Bay Wood as a Local Nature Reserve is potentially an attractive site to the GCV Natural Green Network Project. Aims of enhancing biodiversity in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley (GCV) area could be met by targeting actions on the site that support the creation of a network of functioning ecosystems that encompass a wide range of native habitats and species.

The project aims to bring **existing** and new biodiversity sites into positive conservation management through a programme of survey, management advice, habitat management, restoration and recreation, where appropriate sites can be afforded a level of protection from development through designation as Local Nature Conservation Sites.

2.3.4 The Value of Greenspace

The high level of interest which Wemyss Bay Woods has to the local community has already been shown in section 1 of this plan. It is the significant value the site holds, in terms of health and recreation, which encourages local people to volunteer their time to help secure the future of the woodland.

Greenspace Scotland¹ recently carried out a survey in the Omnibus Report to further examine the value that areas such as community woodland hold to local people and the results generally illustrate the value which quality greenspace holds to the local community.

1. **More regular use of greenspace** - 63% of people now use their greenspaces at least once a week, compared with only 49% in 2005.
2. **Greenspaces are important to communities, and are meeting local needs** - 86% think that it is very important to have greenspaces in their local area, and 83% say that their local greenspace meets their needs
3. Greenspaces are contributing to **health improvement** - the survey shows that local greenspaces are strongly rated as places for relaxing and unwinding (63%), physical activity (60%) and play (59%).
4. Local greenspaces are functioning as **vital community spaces** – 57% of respondents strongly agreed that their greenspaces were attractive and made the area a great place to live, while 52% rated their local greenspaces as good places to meet other people from the community.
5. People continue to have **high expectations about what greenspace can offer** in terms of physical activity, relaxation, play, socialising and viewing nature, but the reality of their local spaces still falls short of these expectations. As in previous surveys, this difference is particularly pronounced in more deprived areas.
6. When asked what would make them use their local greenspace more often, suggestions included simple issues around better maintenance and a reduction in dog fouling, or additional facilities such as seating.

¹ <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/default.asp?page=433>

2.3.5 Educational Value

Woodlands are key to our sustainable future and wellbeing. Educational activity can highlight a host of important issues to help both the local and wider community connect with greenspaces, while boosting the biodiversity of the woodland through informed actions. Trees provide us with a realm of benefits by providing oxygen, homes for wildlife, raw materials for building and industry, rich soil and substrates, carbon storage, places for recreation, inspiration, play and tranquility. It is important that our local woodlands are protected and learning opportunities are harnessed to get the best out of these greenspaces by involving the wider community.

Lower Clyde Greenspace and WBCWA have hosted a series of educational events in the woodland over the past 10 years, and the hope is to continue with activities such as guided walks, biodiversity recording, family events, mini-beast and scavenger hunts. Improving interpretation and access for all as part of recreation and daily life on the site is important. The value of supporting an education programme will encourage an understanding and supportive community who have aspirations to positively use and look after the local woodland.

The Forestry Commission have done much in the way of woodland education, and have a Woods for Learning Action Plan¹, which lists actions that may be useful to our own educational activity. Specific actions which are of relevance to Wemyss Bay Woods include;

- Mainstream the use of woodland and greenspace in schools for learning outdoors within A Curriculum for Excellence;
- Aid the development of Forest School in Scotland;
- Develop work with Active School Co-ordinators and other partners to use woods for safe and active routes to schools;
- Extend programmes of first time woodland visits for children and young people;
- Support a pilot of woodland clubs for children during school holidays;
- Develop Forest Kindergarten.

Undertaking taking any of these suggested actions will help to meet national indicators and tie in with local SOA Outcome 8 targets.

Samples of these include;

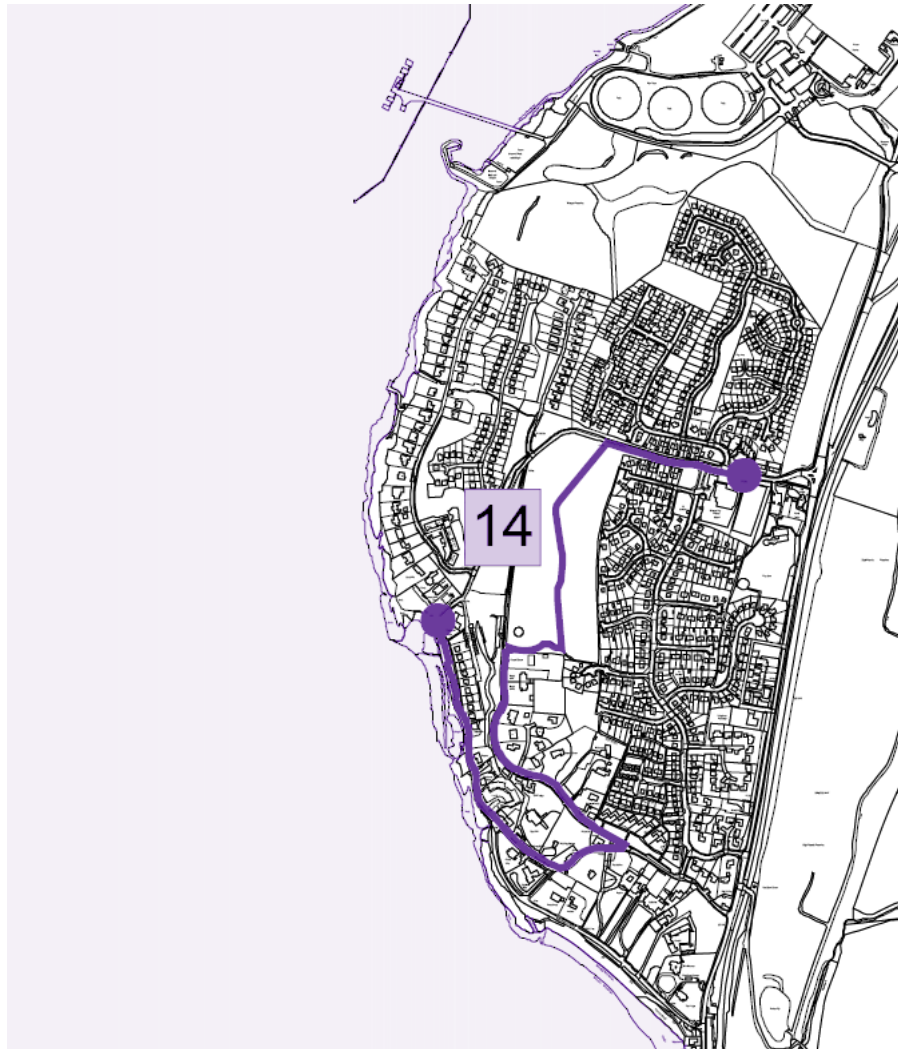
- Reducing the overall Ecological Footprint;
- Increase the proportion of journeys made by public or active transport ²;
- Reduce the rate of increase in the proportion of children with their Body Mass index outwith a healthy range by 2018

¹ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-6cjdgl>

² This is achievable by linking into the wider Inverclyde Access agenda and transport network.

2.3.6 Recreation and Access

The core path network runs through Wemyss Bay Woodland as part of the Core Path Plan. This part of the core path network is the only route that is not directly joined to the path network, and is shown below.



Under the Core Path Plan, the path that runs through the woodland is protected under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, where people have the right to access paths and routes, but also have a duty to behave responsibly¹. LNR status for the woodland will serve to support access based activities and greater involvement by the community will make the area more attractive and encourage people to feel safe in a local woodland that is well managed.

¹ <http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/Category.aspx?catid=1198www.outdooraccess-scotland.com>

2.3.7 Green Charter

Broadly speaking, the Green Charter¹ sets out the Council's commitment to greening the environment in Inverclyde. Specific topics covered include the importance of community engagement, education and awareness-raising initiatives and the use of enforcement action.

LNR status of Wemyss Bay Woods fits with the following Key Actions of the Green Charter:

1. Improving and protecting the natural, built, physical and marine environment in which we live and work.
2. Enforcing, either directly, or in conjunction with the relevant statutory bodies, the protection of the environment and the community from the threat of pollution.
3. Complying with all relevant environmental legislation and codes of practice and surpassing statutory requirements, when possible.
4. Promoting and raising awareness of environmental issues.
5. Researching and seeking to replicate good practice and develop innovative local solutions where good practice does not exist.

Corporate Documents

The promotion of environmentally-friendly issues is a key aim of the Corporate Plan 2007/11 under 'Strategic Outcome 3: Safe, Sustainable Communities' and of the Single Outcome Agreement 2008/11 under 'Local Outcome 8: Inverclyde is a place where people want to live now whilst at the same time safeguarding the environment for future generations'.

School Green Charters

Every Inverclyde Educational Establishment is currently developing a Green Charter to promote environmental sustainability at school (local) level. The essential components for Establishment Green Charters are: action on energy saving, action on recycling, action on litter and aiming for an Eco School Award at the appropriate level.

¹ <http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/planning-and-the-environment/green-charter>

2.4 Evaluation

This woodland forms a significant feature of the local area in both landscape terms and biodiversity terms. It is the largest single block of mature woodland existing in Wemyss Bay between the A78 and coast, and is the only surviving remnant of the former Castle Wemyss Estate policy outwith private ownership and freely accessible to the public. The site has informal recognition at a national level due to its inclusion on the national Ancient Woodland Inventory as a “Long-Established Woodland (of plantation origin)” that has had continuous tree cover since at least 1860.

Appropriate management will allow this woodland to maintain its landscape value but will increase the biodiversity potential, and will be a significant local and regional resource for biodiversity. It will create a vital link in a movement corridor for wildlife between a series of local sites

Ongoing monitoring of the woodland will allow for recording progress, assessing required resources with experience and enabling future management teams to make informed actions by looking at the woodland heritage and planning for the future on pertinent issues, whatever those may be.



3. Site Management

3.1 Objective

The main management objective for the woodland is to balance the demands of this community greenspace in a manner that fosters ownership, increases biodiversity and creates opportunities for local people, including recreation, access, education and training. This plan is designed to involve wide ranging community activities in future plans and accommodate the balance of needs for the sustainability and enjoyment of the woodland.

It is important that any future management committee is aware of potential conflicts that may arise with the variety of needs of the different users of the woodland, and all parties are represented in the new group. Following on from future habitat surveys, it would help to compartmentalise the woodland. This could identify areas designated for specific activities and manage the woodland sympathetically for biodiversity and local use. This may help to direct the future management of the woodland and balance needs to mitigate possible conflict of interest.

3.2 Main Aims

The following aims will guide future work in the woodland to maintain the site for future generations to use and enjoy.

1. Improve the long-term future of the woodland;
2. Manage the woodland to improve the biodiversity of the site;
3. Maintain the infrastructure of the site;
4. Encourage and support community involvement with the woodland;
5. Manage the site to secure its long-term survival as a semi-natural woodland;
6. Encourage strategic links to the site for education, health and recreation initiatives.



3.3 Areas of Concern

3.3.1 Biodiversity

There are currently three plant species within the site of significant concern, Rhododendron, Sycamore and Japanese Knotweed. These plants have a tendency to take over producing large dense stands pushing out native species. Furthermore Rhododendron leaf litter produces a chemical which poisons the soil preventing species from growing, even if the dense stand has been removed.

These species should be closely monitored and controlled to stop them from spreading and pushing out native species.

Implications of the tree species and age structure to biodiversity are discussed in section 3.5.1

The woodland currently has a significant amount of deadwood largely on the ground. This provides an excellent habitat for invertebrates so should be encouraged in spite of fire hazard risks. If dead trees that are considered to be a health and safety risk it should be recommended that the main trunk is retained as standing dead wood also provides another important habitat niche for invertebrates and species like woodpecker.

3.3.2 Resources

Much work has been done to improve the infrastructure of the woodland, which includes the introduction of paths and benches. The woodland has been well maintained and developed to encourage wide community use, therefore it is important that the standard of the woodland remains high.

Maintenance work will not add any further duties to Environmental Services at Inverclyde Council, and funding to carry out future works must be sourced.

For basic woodland maintenance, sycamore thinning and control of rhododendron and japanese knotweed should be sufficient to allow other native species to spread and establish. Felled deadwood should be used as habitat piles for birds and invertebrates, and standing deadwood should be encouraged where it is safe.

3.4 Mechanism

3.4.1 Management Group

'The parties involved in identifying, evaluating, declaring and managing the LNR may form a group to help steer the process, which is often termed the Local Management Group (LMG). An LMG could typically be composed of representatives of the local authority, the local community and potential users of the LNR which may include environmental or other local interest groups. Ideally an LMG should be established early on in the process.

LMGs tend to be established and serviced by the local authority. Experience has shown that LMGs can become involved in a wide range of activities. Key among these should be establishing the purpose and management objectives for the LNR, at least in outline, prior to the declaration; and the preparation and monitoring of the LNR management plan.'¹

Suggested Group Members - SNH, Elected Member, LCG, Biodiversity Officer, Representative from Grounds Services, Police, Forestry Commission, 2 Representatives from WBCWA, Youth and School Representative.

Representatives who cannot regularly attend meetings can become ex-officio members, which will allow the group to continue to make decision without a quorum being affected. This can be covered in more detail when the members are selected and the group is officially constituted. Recognised practice is for the group to have office bearers and meet quarterly.

3.4.2 Funding

The Local Nature Reserve designation itself carries no funding obligation for Inverclyde Council and SNH are no longer permitted to provide direct funding to local authorities. Therefore, targeting innovative external funds will be a key role for the management group. A sample of funders and potential resources are listed below.

1. Possible Sources of Funding

- Awards for All
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Forestry Commission
- Esmee Fairbairn
- Links Foundation
- Local Businesses
- Check updated funding lists on www.greenspacescotland.org.uk

2. Community Based Resources

- Local Newsletter
- Community Website
- Local Noticeboard

¹ Excerpt taken from section 7.3 of Local Nature Reserve in Scotland, a Guide to their Selection and Declaration, SNH 2000

3.5 Long-term Proposals

The following section discusses some of the issues that should be dealt with for the long-term management of the woodland. A further Feasibility Assessment report is advised for the woodland. This should assess the value of individual elements of woodland management, and looks at topical issues such as training, funding, monitoring, recording, ongoing maintenance and sustainability.

3.5.1 Tree species and age structure management

A formal agreement will be required from the Management Group as to how to best approach the management of tree species within the woodland. There is currently significant natural regeneration of sycamore within the woodland.

Sycamore is not considered to be native to the UK and is highly invasive, inhibiting the regeneration of native species. If active management to keep the sycamore under control is not undertaken the woodland will eventually compromise largely of Sycamore in decades to come. However it was apparent that some of the larger sycamores provide bird nesting opportunities and the removal of large specimens can often cause damage to surrounding trees.

It is therefore recommended that any young sycamore is removed and any native broadleaved trees should be encouraged where they have room to grow. The sycamore to be removed should be all those small enough to be cut down by hand tools as this will be a time consuming activity so would be an ideal opportunity for the local community to become involved in with the help of expert advice and demonstrations from organisations like BTCV.

Furthermore the woodland species composition is complicated further by species like beech, larch and Scots pine. Larch is not native to the UK, beech is not native to Scotland, and Scots Pine is not found naturally within this region of Scotland.

These trees would probably have been actively planted during Victorian times and reflects the policy nature of the site contributing to the ambience of the woodland.

Consequently it is recommended that natural regeneration of these species is retained at low levels to maintain the nature of the woodland but that no active planting of these species will be undertaken.

Any recommendations will need to be agreed with SNH and the Management group.

3.5.2 Monitoring

Maintenance Issues

The Management Steering Group will meet four times a year every three months to discuss any issues or make suggestions for activities and events at the LNR. This is usually the best way to report back on any maintenance issues as the local community representation on the Steering Group are usually best placed to visit the site more regularly. It is also recommended that one of the meetings each year takes place on site so the Management Steering Group can see specific areas and become familiar with the LNR.

Biological Recording

There is scope to provide training opportunities to the local community to monitor biodiversity on site. There are a variety of organisations that could potentially provide training and advice on the easier animal and plant groups.

It would be preferable to find keen members of the local community to monitor biodiversity on site as this would be a more sustainable, cost effective and integrated way of providing ongoing data to inform future management decisions.

Survey Work and Monitoring Techniques

There is limited information available on the woodland composition, condition and the effects of current maintenance on the woodland structure. It would be worth securing funding to commission new survey work, which will help the woodland develop well over time. Recommended survey work includes:

- A Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- A National Vegetation Classification (NVC)
- A Flora and Fauna Study
- A Visitor Survey

To record the ongoing status and accurate account of the woodland, survey results, events, projects, letters, comments, minutes and photographic records of the variety of flora, fauna, trees and wildlife in the woodland should be kept. This will help the development of the woodland and allow careful monitoring of any significant changes.

3.6 Five Year Management Plan Programme 2010-2014

Management Aims	2010 Priorities	2011 Priorities	2012 Priorities	2013 Priorities	2014 Priorities
<p>Initial structure, programming and resources to be established</p>	<p>Official LNR Status to be approved by Inverclyde Council</p> <p>Community activity to celebrate biodiversity and LNR status</p> <p>Establish LNR Management Steering group with community representation</p> <p>Inverclyde Council to register land with IACS to facilitate future funding via SRDP</p> <p>Apply for funding for management when opportunities arise</p> <p>Obtain vector maps and a recent aerial photograph of the site to aid management organisation.</p>	<p>Ensure regular meetings of the LNR Management Steering Group</p> <p>Apply for funding for management when opportunities arise</p>	<p>Ensure regular meetings of the LNR Management Steering Group</p> <p>Apply for funding for management when opportunities arise</p>	<p>Ensure regular meetings of the LNR Management Steering Group</p> <p>Apply for funding for management when opportunities arise</p> <p>Investigate longer term implications for woodland management and sustainability</p>	<p>Ensure regular meetings of the LNR Management Steering Group</p> <p>Apply for funding for management when opportunities arise</p> <p>Prioritise programme of plans and activities for longer term woodland management</p>

<p>Manage the woodland to improve biodiversity of the site</p>	<p>LNR Management Plan to be approved by SNH</p> <p>LNR Management Plan to be approved by LNR Management Steering Group</p> <p>Control of non-native invasive plants.</p>	<p>Ongoing control of sycamore, rhododendron ponticum and Japanese knotweed</p> <p>Encourage native ground flora</p>	<p>Ongoing control of sycamore, rhododendron ponticum and Japanese knotweed</p>	<p>Ongoing control of sycamore, rhododendron ponticum and Japanese knotweed</p> <p>Encourage native ground flora</p>	<p>Ongoing control of sycamore, rhododendron ponticum and Japanese knotweed</p>
<p>Maintain infrastructure of the site</p>	<p>Support community involvement in fundraising, maintenance & management activities.</p>	<p>Clear drainage channels</p> <p>Repair existing paths</p>	<p>Clear drainage channels</p> <p>Repair existing paths</p>	<p>Clear drainage channels</p> <p>Repair existing paths</p>	<p>Clear drainage channels</p> <p>Repair existing paths</p>
<p>Encourage and support community involvement with the woodland in education, recreation and health</p>	<p>Set up feedback mechanism for community input</p> <p>Raise the profile of the site via LNR launch and programme of interactive activities</p> <p>Encourage community monitoring activities</p> <p>Encourage Woodland Watch to reduce opportunities for anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>Support community involvement in educational activities</p> <p>Encourage associated recreational opportunities</p>	<p>Support community involvement in educational activities</p> <p>Encourage associated recreational opportunities</p>	<p>Support community involvement in educational activities</p> <p>Encourage associated recreational opportunities</p>	<p>Support community involvement in educational activities</p> <p>Encourage associated recreational opportunities</p>

<p>Manage the site to ensure long-term survival as a semi-natural woodland</p>	<p>Control regeneration of sycamore</p>	<p>Encourage natural regeneration of native tree species and species with heritage value</p> <p>Plant native tree species where deemed appropriate</p>	<p>Control regeneration of sycamore</p>	<p>Encourage natural regeneration of native tree species and species with heritage value</p> <p>Plant native tree species where deemed appropriate</p>	<p>Control regeneration of sycamore</p>
<p>Encourage strategic links to the site for education, health and recreation initiatives</p>	<p>Investigate feasibility of existing initiatives becoming involved in the LNR</p>	<p>Encourage other providers involvement in woodland for events</p>		<p>Investigate feasibility of Forest schools Development</p>	

4. Summary

Wemyss Bay Woodland has been a proposed Local Nature Reserve for seven years, and in that time, much work has been put into improving infrastructure and maintaining the woodland. The woodland is well used and highly regarded within the Wemyss Bay community, and local people have been very supportive of the regeneration works and steps made towards designating the site as a Local Nature Reserve.

This management plan has been written with guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage, with a high level of consultation with the Local Biodiversity Officer and Wemyss Bay Community Woodland Association. Consultation specific to this plan and LNR status has also taken place with the Forestry Commission, Inverclyde's Local Access Forum, Inverkipp and Wemyss Bay Community Council and relevant services across Inverclyde Council. The local community were widely consulted on their views and desires for the woodland in 2006, and a summary of this study can be found in section 2.2. The strategic framework of plans and policies that support and advise on issues pertinent to the woodland can be found in section 2.3.

How the site will be managed in the future is central to the further regeneration and development of the woodland. Currently, local authority resources are minimal, nevertheless the desire is there to improve and sustain enjoyment of community greenspaces such as Wemyss Bay Woods. This will only be achievable through partnership working.

Guidance on next steps for caring for the woodland are laid out in the five year management plan programme in section 3.6. The establishment of an LNR Management Committee is central to these actions being met for continued regeneration of the woodland. The group will represent local people and a variety of aspects of the woodland, such as education, safety, biodiversity, recreation and sustainability.

What has been clear throughout the process of working with local people in Wemyss Bay Woods is that there is a commitment and desire within the community to preserve, develop and enjoy the woodland as a place for children to play, walking the dog, reading a book, horse riding, cycling or simply to connect with nature. Establishing the woodland as a Local Nature Reserve will be a step forward in safeguarding and managing the site alongside the local community.

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- Greenspace Scotland, Omnibus Report, June 2009

Appendices

General Species List

Canopy

Beech *Fagus sylvatica*
Birch *Betula pendula*
Larch *Larix* spp.
Lime *Tilia x vulgaris*
Oak *Quercus robur*
Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*
Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*
Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*

Understory

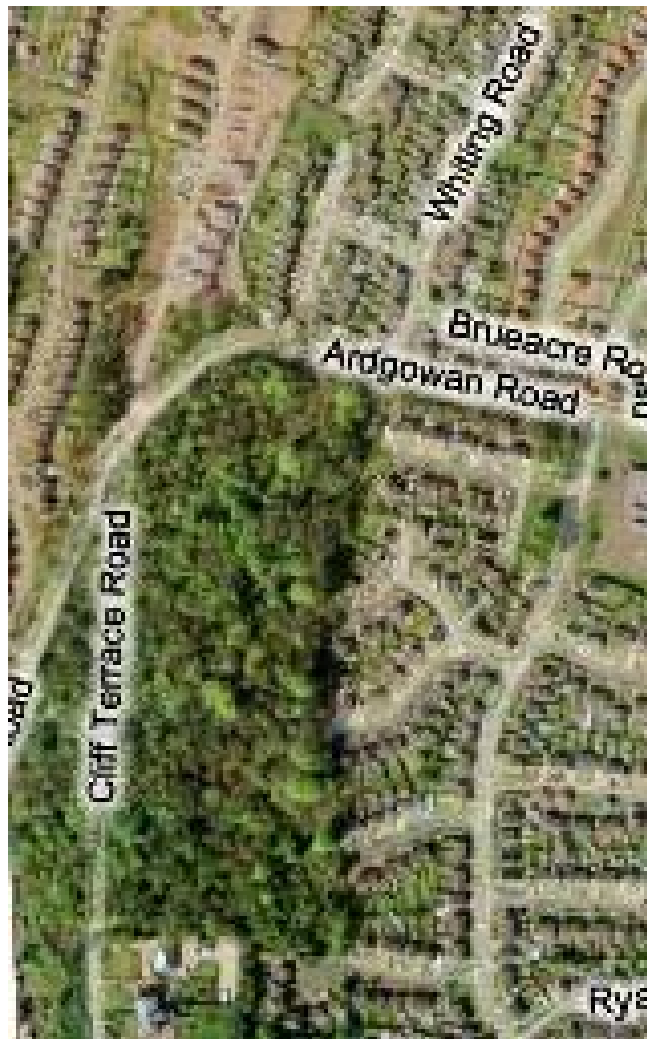
Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*
Holly *Ilex* spp.
Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*

Ground Flora

Blackberry/Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*
Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*
Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*
Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*,
Dogs Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*
Great Woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*,
Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*
Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea*
Red Campion *Silene dioica*,
Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*
Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*
Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*
Wild Garlic *Allium ursinum*
Wood aven *Geum urbanum*,
Wood Sedge *Carex sylvatica*
Wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*,

Annexed Photographs and Maps

1. Arial Photo 2009
2. Arial Photo 1975
3. Arial Photo 1964
4. Arial Photo 1947
5. First Edition OS Map
6. Second Edition OS Map
7. Inverclyde District Council title deed acquisition map from 1978



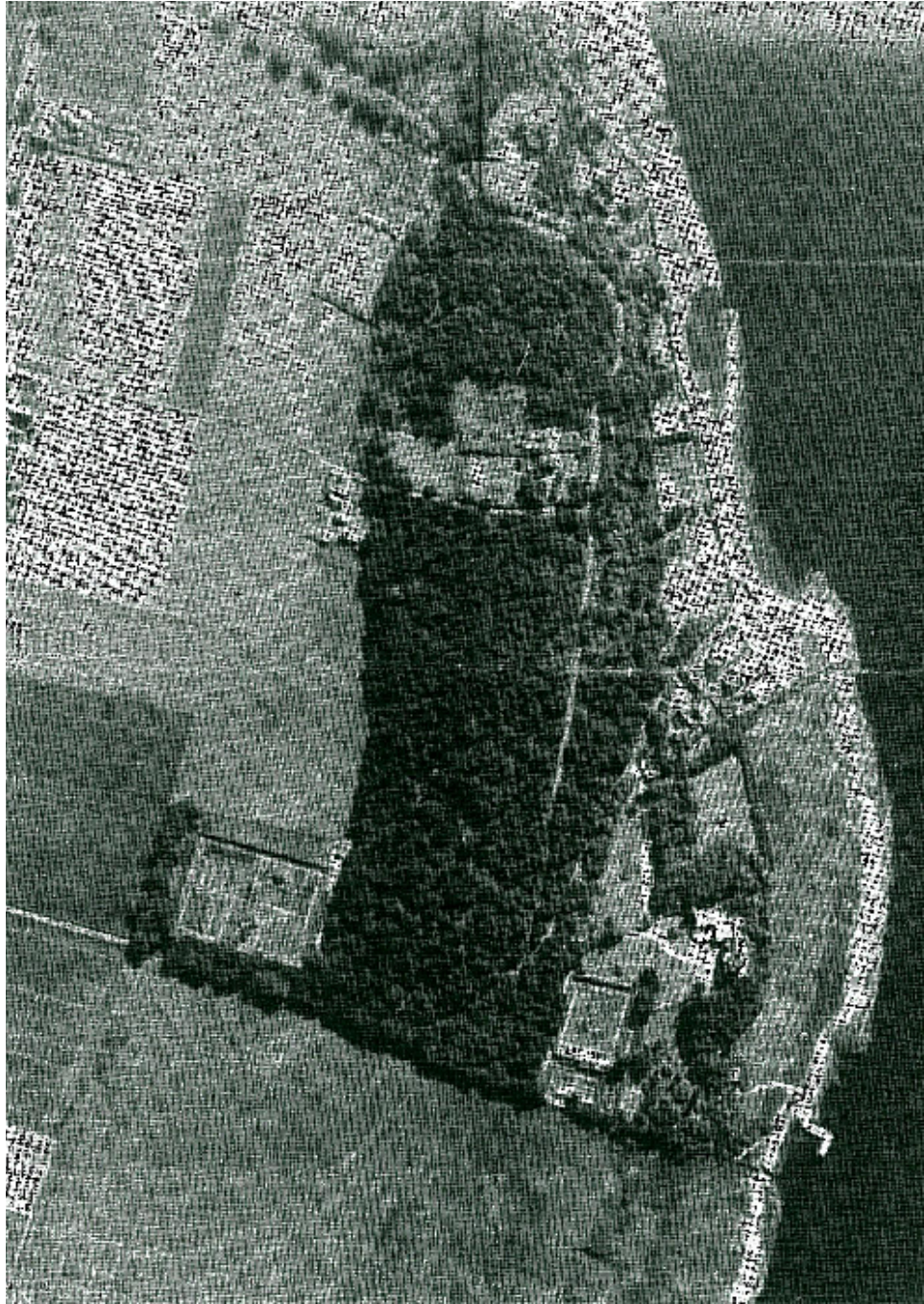
1. Aerial photo of Wemyss Bay Woods, 2009, from www.aboutmyplace.com



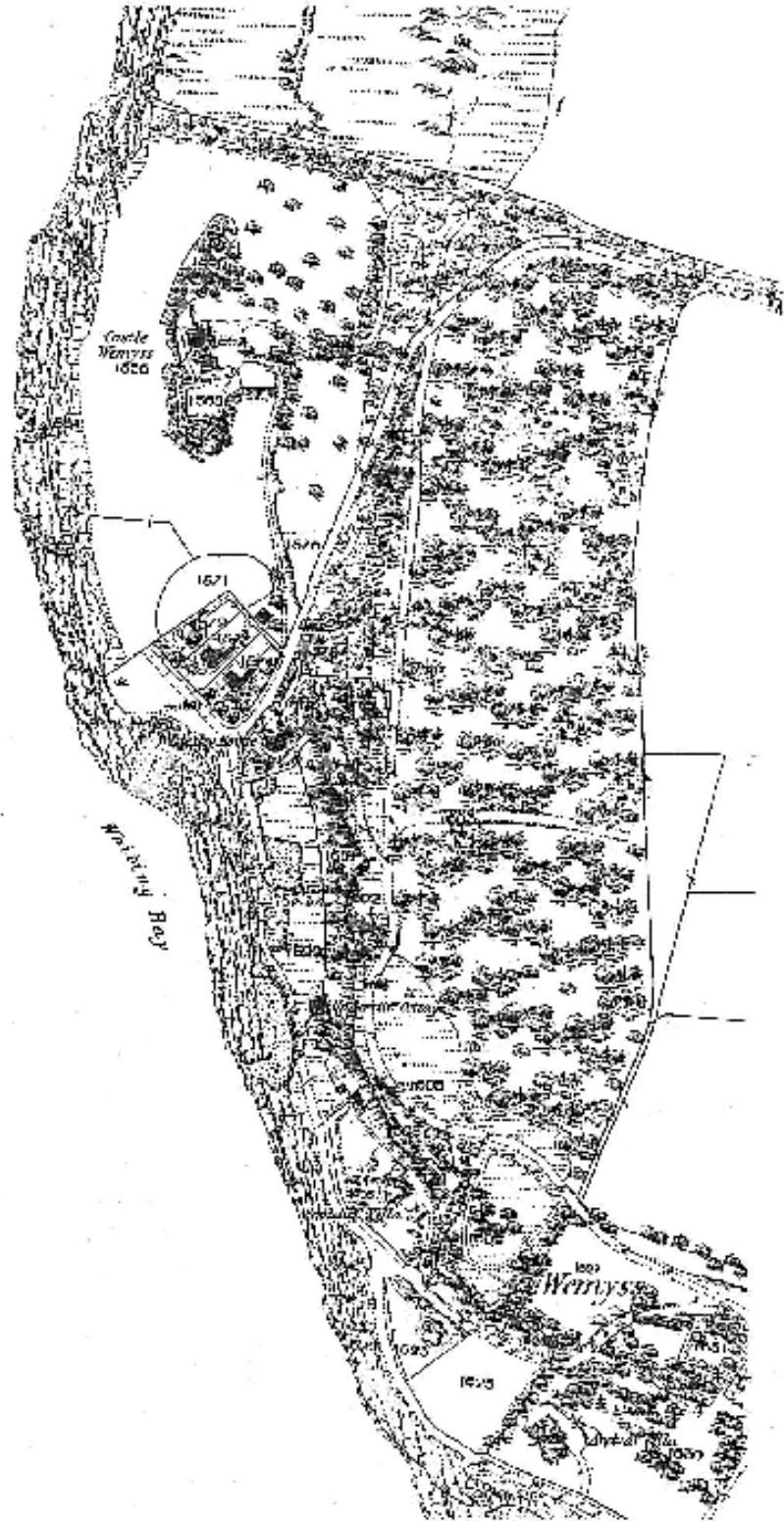
2. Aerial Photo of Wemyss Bay Woods 1975



3. Aerial Photo of Wemyss Bay Woods, 1964

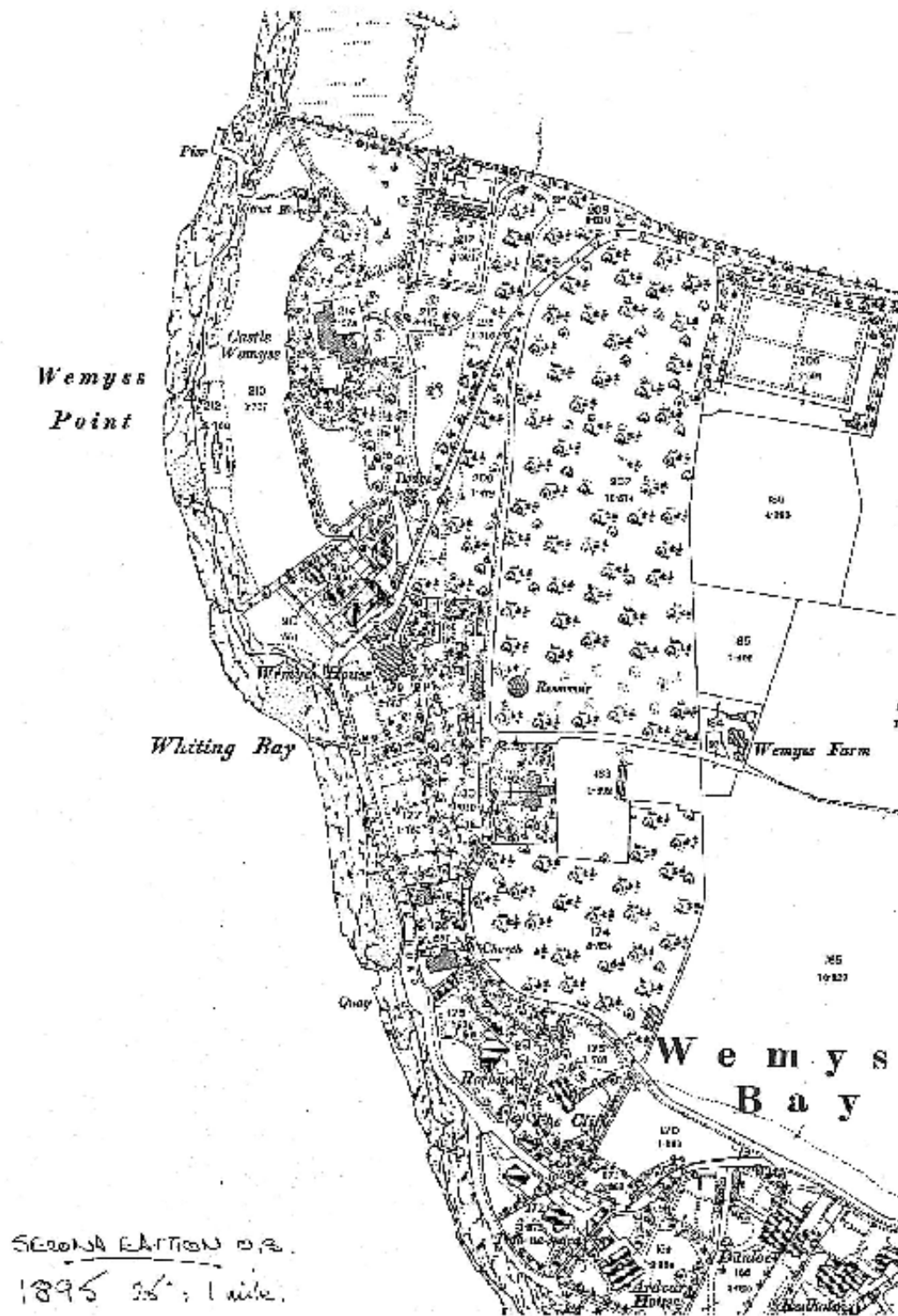


4. Aerial Photo of Wemyss Bay Woods, 1947

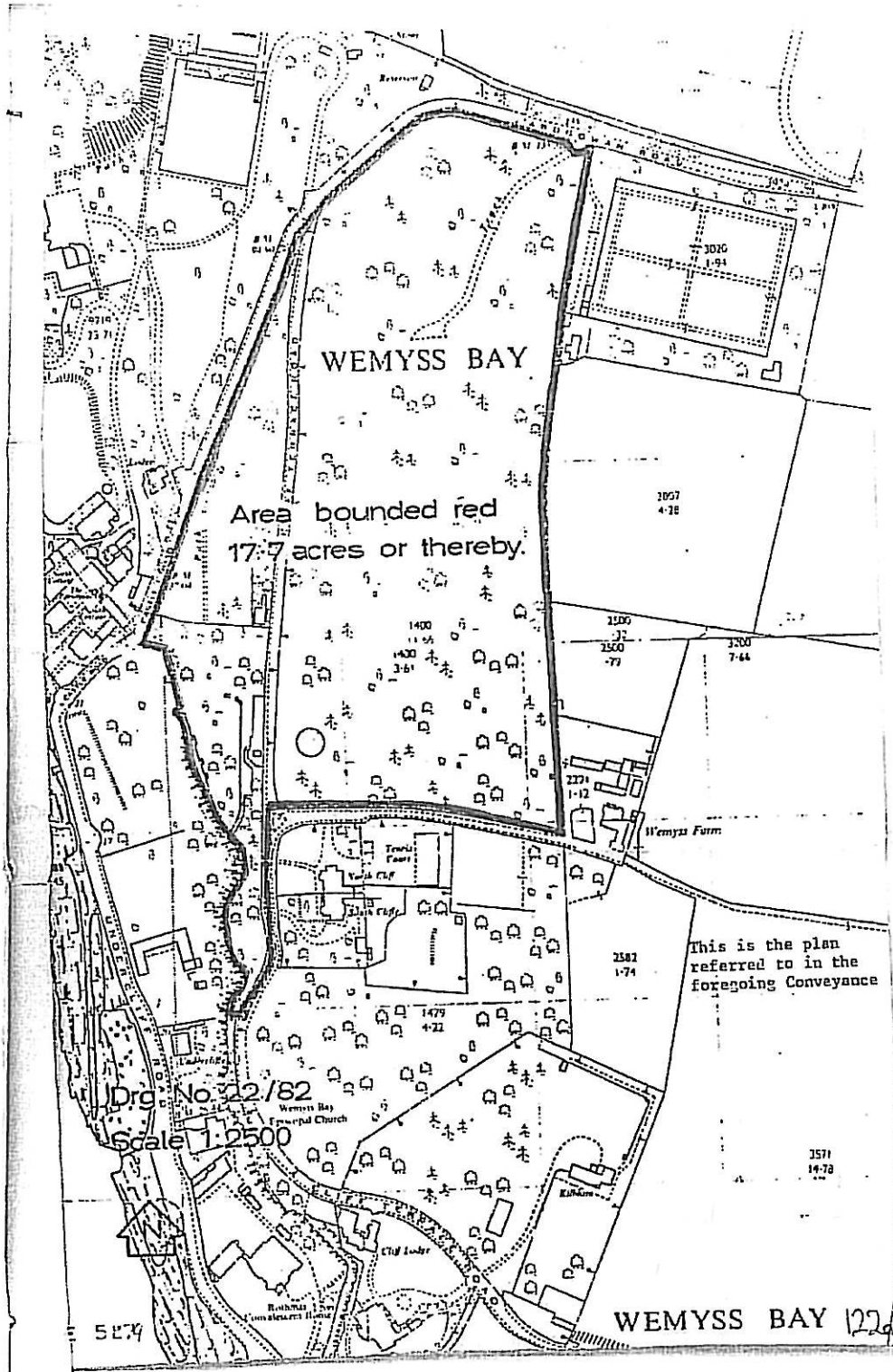


FIRST EDITION O.S.
1856 35" scale

5. First edition OS Map of Wemyss Bay, 1856



6. Second edition OS Map of Wemyss Bay Woods, 1895



7. Inverclyde District Council title deed acquisition map from 1978