Leadburn Wood – Site Management Plan

January 2026

This management plan describes Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland's (FLCW's) recent and current management of Leadburn Wood as of January 2026 and anticipated plans for the foreseeable future. It is intended to be updated regularly as required.

Summary:

This document lists the aims and objectives that Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland have for Leadburn Wood, a brief overview and history of the site's management under FLCW, and short introductions to our plants and wildlife, visitor numbers, and to our extended influence. The main purpose of the document, however, is to provide an extended description of our habitats as of January 2026, how these have been created or managed since purchase in 2007, and our plans for future management going forward.

These plans are summarised in brief bullets below. Rationale and more detail is provided in the main Habitat and Management Plan sections that follow.

- *New planted woodland - Maintenance of tree guards, removal of undesirable species and infill planting. Birch seedlings and saplings will be thinned to keep much of the woodland open. Numbers of aspen and bog myrtle could be increased. It may be possible to increase the extent of wet areas by adding small dams and reprofiling heather ridges.*
- *Peat mosses - Monitoring the recovery of bog vegetation especially sphagnum species and potentially enhancing this by further transplantation. The effectiveness of peat dams and bunds will be improved where necessary. Unwanted species will continue to be removed although conifers could be allowed to grow to Christmas tree size before removal to help speed up nutrient depletion.*
- *Grassland – There may be potential to extend the grassland habitat by restricting scrub and willowherb encroachment.*
- *Burns and ditches - Ditches will require regular clearing.*
- *Hedgerows - Maintenance of tree guards. Additional infill planting or layering of strong growth is desirable.*
- *Path network – Our paths are much used and appreciated by visitors and their maintenance will continue to be a major focus for volunteer effort. This will involve repair of the pathways and cutting back of vegetation every summer to allow safe and comfortable access for visitors.*
- *Buildings - The future of our two buildings is undecided, but their existing condition will be monitored and maintained particularly with a concern for safety. Some replacement roof cover may be installed to provide a shelter in the Laboratory Building.*

Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of FLCW are:

- To provide a safe, accessible and pleasant place for use by people of all ages and abilities where they are able to enjoy views of the Pentland Hills and appreciate the woodland and wildlife.
- To retain and enhance biodiversity through the retention of the range of habitats already on the site and the creation and restoration of others.
- To create an attractive landmark for local people and visitors.
- To provide opportunities for continuing community involvement in design, planning maintenance, management and monitoring.
- To offer an educational resource to local schools and other groups through the best use of the range of habitats on the site.

Since its inception in 2005, FLCW has been a volunteer-run self-funded charity steered by a committee that is guided by these aims and objectives. FLCW's committee has varied between five and ten committee members who meet on a near-monthly basis to discuss matters arising, report on progress and decide future actions. The committee report to an AGM, including annual accounts and elections of committee members. Funding and recruitment of FLCW Supporters (numbering 1266 as of January 2026) is enabled through our annual sale of Christmas trees sourced from regeneration of self-seeded forestry conifers. Supporters receive an engaging monthly email highlighting pictures of recent events, sightings and other interesting snippets from the woodland.

Overview of Site:

Leadburn Wood currently extends to 55ha west of the A703 just south of Leadburn Junction (see our website leadburnwood.com for more details). Approximately 21ha of the wood are former raised bogs undergoing restoration (peat deposits on the bog area can be 2-6m deep over much of the site), whilst the remainder is mainly open mixed woodland and smaller areas of original forestry plantation. There are four permanent large ponds and an extensive path network.

Areas of the site are referred to by the names given on our website map (https://leadburnwood.com/leadburn-map/) apart from the large raised bog on the western side of Leadburn Wood which is now referred to as Leadburn Moss. We also refer to the unmarked pond 100m south of the Laboratory Building as the Seasonal Pond (as it sometimes dries up in summer) and the small pond at the eastern end of the Grass Path as the Frog Pond.

History of management:

The first 44ha of Leadburn Wood was acquired by FLCW in 2007 as a largely clear-felled (in 2001) forestry plantation previously planted in the 1960s on raised bog and grassier ridges. Two disused railway lines cut through the site with two associated ex-railway and second world war buildings alongside. A second area of standing conifer plantation of 11ha was acquired in 2019.

FLCW has planted over 10,000 mixed mostly native trees since 2007, removed large areas of forestry regeneration, but managed other areas of forestry regeneration to include harvesting of self-sown Christmas trees. Four large ponds (0.2-0.5ha) were created in 2009.

Additional paths have been added to the railway lines giving over 4km of easy public access. Since 2020, two large areas of former raised bog have been re-wetted by ground smoothing (stump flipping and cross tracking) to remove timber, tree stumps and forestry drainage ditches.

Several largescale projects have been carried out by contractors since the woodland was acquired, including the creation of the ponds, insertion of plastic dams on Leadburn Moss, creation of an access track from the layby, clearing of pathside drainage ditches, felling of timber on Restoration Bog, resurfacing of tree stumps and the former forestry ridges on Leadburn Moss and Restoration Bog, and asbestos removal from the Laboratory Building.

Otherwise, management has mainly been achieved by our volunteers, originally mostly through the efforts of committee members and monthly work parties but also through weekly work parties since 2019. Tasks have included tree planting and maintenance, path construction and clearance, removal of unwanted tree seedlings, and dam and pond creation.

Habitat information:

Leadburn Wood comprises a wide variety of habitat types extending well beyond our wooded areas. This mixture, together with the open nature of the site and the views to the surrounding hills and farmland, is often favourably commented on by woodland visitors and attracts a broad spectrum of plants and animals.

Existing plantation woodland – There are three main areas of 1960s forestry plantation at Junction Wood, Benders Bog and Sales Stand, mainly lodgepole pine and spruces. Occasional gales have blown over these mature shallow-rooted species, providing small clearings in the woods, upturned root plates, broken stumps and dense areas of regrowth from fallen trees as well as much dead wood. Most areas are still accessible, but Benders Bog is a thicket of dead wood and regenerating wind-blown trunks valued as a seldom-visited ‘wilderness’.
No future work is planned for these areas unless fallen trees cause obstruction or danger to roads or pathways.

New planted woodland – Natural regeneration of lodgepole pine, sitka spruce, birch and some rowan has occurred over almost all of the woodland not originally clear-felled in 2001. This would have become dense stands in places if we had not removed the conifers or managed them as Christmas trees. As it is, these now provide much shelter for our post-2007 tree planting which extends across much of the central area of the woodland apart from the open raised bogs and the original plantation woodland. Small tree seedlings of reasonably local provenance have been sourced from Alba Trees and Cheviot Trees, and have been planted according to the peatiness, wetness or richness of the potential planting subsites across the woodland. Trees are planted in plastic tubes for early protection from roe deer. Birches, rowan, oak and Scots pine have been the main species planted on peatier ground, alder and willow in wetter areas. Drier grassier ridges and especially the railway embankments have a wider range of plantings including hazel, holly, aspen, bird cherry, wild cherry, ash (struggling), hawthorn and blackthorn, with occasional elm and larch. Most plantings have been at low densities to create a largely open woodland. However, although the conifer regeneration is now mostly under control, birch thickets are becoming increasingly obvious as self-seeded mature birches have produced more seedlings themselves. This proliferation may lead to drying out and loss of the valuable peat beneath.

Future work will involve maintenance of tree guards, removal of undesirable species and infill planting. Birch seedlings and saplings will be thinned to keep much of the woodland open. Numbers of aspen and bog myrtle could be increased. It may be possible to increase the extent of wet areas by adding small dams and reprofiling heather ridges.

Peat mosses – Restoration Bog (3ha) and Leadburn Moss (12ha) are now managed as two areas of deeper peat where the original forestry ditches (with deeper drains at roughly 20m intervals) has been re-wetted by ground smoothing, stump flipping and cross tracking by heavy machinery to smooth the peat surface. Leadburn Moss had been clear-felled in 2002 (before FLCW acquired Leadburn Wood), but conifer regeneration was quite dense in places before this was removed by FLCW in 2009 ahead of a first attempt to re-wet the peat with the installation of 330 plastic dams installed along the main drains. This work was carried out by SWT and funded by SNH. It became apparent by 2020 that this method of re-wetting the bog was only marginally successful as the forestry ridges were still very dry and dominated by rank heather which shaded out any bog vegetation in the wetter ditches below. Bog restoration again became relevant at Leadburn Wood when peat re-wetting was included as a condition of our purchase of Restoration Bog in 2019, with concomitant felling and removal of much of the standing timber crop. This was achieved by 2020 when heavy machinery again carried out ground smoothing of the forestry ridges, upturned remaining conifer stumps and buried these into the peat, and blocked the drains with peat and wooden dams to leave a flat surface of bare peat with reduced rainfall run-off. The peat surface quickly started holding shallow pools in winter and was still damp in summer. Recovery of bog vegetation soon followed with 90+% vegetation cover within three years. Bog cotton currently dominates, perhaps indicating an unwanted nutrient legacy from the forestry era, but sphagnum and other bog specialist vegetation types are also frequent. Given our experience of re-surfacing Restoration Bog, FLCW decided in 2022 to repeat this process on Leadburn Moss which was still too dry and dominated by heather. Machinery again ground-smoothed this larger site in autumn 2024, burying stumps but leaving up to 5m diameter untouched areas around the plastic dams to encourage pool formation. Peat bunds around the perimeter prevent excess pooling and run-off. Sphagnum salvaged prior to re-wetting was used to seed the bare peat and was starting to show promise by one year in.

Future work will involve monitoring the recovery of bog vegetation, especially sphagnum species, and potentially enhancing this by further transplantation. The effectiveness of peat dams and bunds will be improved where necessary. Unwanted species will continue to be removed although conifers could be allowed to grow to Christmas tree size before removal to help speed up nutrient depletion.

Fens – Several areas of up to a hectare of wet fen-type habitat are found at Leadburn, notably around the perimeters of Leadburn Moss, south of the Top Pond extending into Rush Hollow, and in the Cottongrass Bog. These are largely free of trees and have been allowed to develop naturally apart from the removal of occasional sitka spruce.

Future work is likely to be minimal and restricted to removal of unwanted species.

Grassland – A grass ridge merges into newly planted woodland and fens along a central spine of Leadburn Wood running east of and parallel to the Dolphinton Way railway line from Alder Bank to the Cross Path. It is mostly free of heather, indicating little or no underlying peat. Although this suggests the area may be suitable for further tree planting, the rough grassland is a valuable habitat in its own right, hosting a population of small pearl-bordered fritillaries and marsh violets which add to the attractiveness and diversity of Leadburn Wood.

There may be potential to extend the grassland habitat by restricting scrub and willowherb encroachment.

Scrub and Willowherb areas – The largest area of scrub and willowherb/raspberry beds is on the Rose Flats south of Junction Wood. Other smaller areas are found bounding much of the railway lines and buildings (or their remains) and in patches through the

grassland ridge, suggesting an association with richer, less peaty soils. Rose Flats and some of the willowherb beds were planted with a variety of smaller tree and scrub species during the first years after the purchase of Leadburn Wood, notably juniper, guelder rose, willow species, crab apple, rose and gorse. Although these scrubbier species are welcome, the expansion of willowherb and raspberry beds into grassier areas is less desirable.
Future work could restrict further expansion of this area in favour of the grassland habitat.

Ponds –There are six ponds of up to 0.25ha in size in Leadburn Wood. Three ponds were created in 2009 when a WREN grant enabled us to hire Glendinnings, a local JCB contractor, to scoop the Top Pond, Middle Pond and Craigburn Pond out of the peat along the Craig Burn. At the same time, they formed the Laboratory Pond by blocking a culvert under the railway line. The Seasonal Pond south of the Laboratory Building was created in 2014 when another culvert below the railway line was partially blocked. The much smaller Frog Pond along Leadburn Way was hand dug by volunteers in July 2021 along the railway ditch. All ponds are up to one metre in depth with muddy peat bottoms and edges. Water levels are relatively stable in the bigger ponds even in summer, although the Seasonal Pond is reduced to mud in some summers and the Frog Pond every year. All ponds have lush open vegetative edges hosting an abundance of amphibians and dragonflies.
The large ponds are in good condition and little future maintenance is anticipated for these. The Frog Pond has recently had a quantity of anaerobic mud and infill vegetation removed to create a larger water surface area in summer, but this may need to be repeated occasionally to maintain an open water surface.

Burns and Ditches - The Craig Burn is the main watercourse through the woodland, running off the farmland above the Top Pond, through the Middle and Craigburn Ponds and down to the railway ditch by Leadburn Way before going under farmtrack and railway culverts into Benders Bog and downstream towards Eddleston. Nutrient-rich farm run-off may allow floating areas of glyceria to form, but also willows and planted alders to thrive. The relative flatness of the catchment and vegetative buildup retains water on site throughout the year and slows run-off during wet spells. Other ditches that keep water off the railway lines and farm track are scooped occasionally to keep the walking surfaces dry in most conditions.
Drainage ditches will require regular clearing.

Hedgerows – Two hedgerows have been created along the eastern and western boundaries of Leadburn Wood since 2018. The eastern hedgerow along the A703 towards Leadburn Junction consists of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, rose and dogwood. The western hedgerow lies along the boundary fence and drainage channel on the west side of Leadburn Moss and hosts mostly alder, birch, rowan and willow and a smattering of other species.
Future work will involve monitoring the growth of the hedges and maintenance of tree guards. Additional infill planting or layering of strong growth is desirable.

Former railway lines – The aggregate surface on and next to the former railway lines on Leadburn Way and Dolphinton Way provides a manmade habitat very different to the previous underlying peatbog. A compacted aggregate layer favours a mostly low turf hosting orchids and other flowering plants that are in turn favoured by butterflies and other insects.
O*verhanging vegetation needs to be cut back from the railway lines every summer to allow safe and comfortable access for visitors.*

Other paths – The only established access routes across Leadburn Wood prior to purchase by FLCW were the railway lines and Cross Path. The Grass Path, Boundary Walk, Cottongrass Loop and Sundew Path have all been created since purchase. These paths run across a variety of habitats that would previously have been vulnerable to erosion by footfall. They have been reinforced with an underlayer of short wooden batons in places, especially where peaty or liable to churning. The batons are sometimes topped with landscape fabric and then enough aggregate to consolidate the path and hide the lower layers. The batons and landscape fabric reduce the disappearance of the aggregate into the peat. Plank walkways and bridges have been installed across wetter areas. Increasing footfall since Covid in 2020 creates more churning which is alleviated by adding further aggregate as necessary.
The paths are much used and appreciated by visitors and their maintenance will continue to be a major focus for volunteer effort. This will involve repair of the pathways and cutting back of vegetation as necessary.

Buildings – The Laboratory Building dates from the Second World War and the nearby brick building is associated with railway maintenance from even earlier. Since purchase, FLCW has removed the asbestos inner ceiling in the Laboratory Building (circa 2016) and the asbestos corrugated roof (in 2025). This necessary safety measure has taken away cover for nesting birds, but the building is of limited suitability as it is often disturbed by walkers. The brick building had a locked wooden frontage fitted (circa 2014) with a covered bench and has since been used by FLCW as storage for tree tubes and stakes. Two barn owl platforms have also been installed and are occasionally used for roosting. Outer supports have been fixed to encourage ivy and honeysuckle.

The future of the buildings is undecided, but their existing condition will be monitored and maintained particularly with a concern for safety. Some replacement roof cover may be installed to provide a shelter in the Laboratory Building.

Plants and Wildlife:

The maturation and creation of habitats since 2007 have resulted in a corresponding increase in plant and wildlife diversity. Apart from the areas of uncut conifers, in 2007 most of the open area of Leadburn Wood had young grassland and heather communities, regenerating conifers and young birch, but also extensive areas of as yet uncolonised bare conifer needles on the previous clear-fell. Plants and wildlife communities were mostly simple combinations of young heath and grass species. In the near 20 years since then, the conifer and birch regeneration has matured (albeit in a managed fashion for the conifers), around 10,000 trees have been planted and grown well, two major areas of raised bog are re-establishing, and six ponds have been dug. Correspondingly, the plants and wildlife have flourished. Apart from planted trees, notable amongst plant species are the bog communities (including increasing amounts of sphagnum and blaeberry) and the orchids and flowers along the railway lines. There is now a much larger number of breeding birds, notably warblers and other woodland/scrub species, mammals including roe deer, hares, badgers, stoats and bats, and many amphibians breed in the new ponds. At least ten dragonfly and damselfly species are present, but most notable perhaps are the butterflies which include nationally uncommon large heath, small pearl-bordered fritillary and green hairstreak. A more detailed description of the plants and wildlife can be found at Habitats and Wildlife – LeadburnWood.
In line with the stated aims and objectives, FLCW will continue to maintain and, ideally, increase biodiversity.

Woodland Visitors:

As well as the environmental benefits of Leadburn Wood, the woodland paths provide a valuable resource for woodland visitors. The majority of these are accompanied by their dogs, but many also come for a walk, to take photographs, look at wildlife, or for lots of other reasons. The woodland also hosts walking groups, natural history groups and environmental researchers. The number of people visiting Leadburn Wood has probably increased steadilysince 2007, particularly after the community wood became better known as a result of our annual Christmas tree sale. Numbers increased further during Covid in 2020 when Leadburn Wood became a great venue for outdoor exercise and respite. This increased visitor level has continued. At a rough guestimate, the number of visitors probably exceeded 50 most days in 2025 and 10 or more vehicles can regularly be counted in the layby parking area.
In line with the stated aims and objectives, FLCW will continue to maintain and enhance the site for the benefit of visitors.

Future Management Plan:

New Planting – There are no plans for further substantial tree planting as most areas have either been planted or are being left open. In recent years small numbers of Scots pine, alder and juniper have been purchased as infill planting when suitable areas have been identified. Further infill planting would be useful to beef up and expand the boundary hedgerows. Planted aspens thrive in the less peaty parts of the woodland, but it is not known how many clones these have originated from. Further aspen planting is therefore desirable if we can source seedlings with greater genetic diversity that includes both male and female plants. A stand of bog myrtle was planted and thrives in a peaty area south-east of Craigburn Pond and is a welcome addition to the woodland understorey. Further areas could be planted if bog myrtle seedlings could be sourced, and it may be necessary to ensure sufficient numbers of both sexes of this dioecious species are included.

Future of plantations – The conifers in the plantations are now as high as they are likely to get in the exposed woodland and regularly uproot in high winds. This leads to a tangle of trunks and branches in places that is difficult to access and therefore seldom visited, but also suitable for birds that are otherwise easily disturbed. For this reason, access is not encouraged, so no paths have been created in the plantations and are not planned.

Removal of non-native conifers – Non-native conifers can be managed for fund-raising for as long as there is still an enthusiasm for selling Christmas trees from the committee and volunteers. Mature lodgepole pines are still plentiful in the wooded areas of Leadburn Wood and can often produce tops suitable as Christmas trees from the top of larger trees (10+ years old), even after an earlier cut. But younger pines also produce cones, so it would be useful to continue to thin out larger pines every year before they become difficult to cut (and less likely to produce Christmas trees). Sitka spruces are more scattered and appear only to cone when older (10+ years). There have been several summers in recent years when many sitkas have shown signs of stress by turning browner and losing needles. Sitkas may therefore become limiting as Christmas trees in the near future, depending on the survival of the many small seedlings growing throughout the site. Many of these probably originate from seed produced in our mature plantations. Christmas tree cutting has been concentrated in recent years on larger and ‘further away’ trees to try and provide younger trees for cutting that are nearer to the area close to the layby where they are sold. This should reduce the effort required to manage, cut and move these conifers in future. From a habitat point of view, conifer seedlings should not be allowed to grow to maturity on Restoration Bog or Leadburn Moss as these can shade the heaths and dry out the peat. But growth and removal of conifers as Christmas trees could be useful on the bogs to reduce the unnaturally high nutrient load in the peat (from the previous forestry era). Otherwise, regular sweeps of the bogs by our volunteers should suffice to remove excess conifers and birches, although hopefully seedlings will find it difficult to colonise if the bogs become wet enough. Elsewhere Scots pines have been planted to provide a replacement similar habitat to the lodgepoles that we cut for Christmas. These are now maturing and coning, although not yet producing seedlings.

Removal of birch – Birch is renowned as an early coloniser of peat bogs and is often accused of drying out bog areas, an unwelcome outcome for Leadburn Wood. Self-seeded birches occur throughout the site and were not managed until recently other than regular sweeps to remove young trees on Leadburn Moss prior to the recent resurfacing work. However, younger generations of the original self-seeded birches are now proliferating throughout Leadburn Wood, even on the peatbogs. Young

seedlings have been pulled out on Restoration Bog since summer 2025 to prevent any growth there and this should continue. Removal of older seedlings has been prioritised from autumn 2025, especially on areas that are still mostly open. Open areas have so far been prioritised over the tracts of woodland that have thickets of birch between 0.5m and 4m tall which have already shaded out heath vegetation and would take longer to cut down for less return. Small seedlings (less than 0.5m) will continue to be targeted in summer and autumn when they are in leaf and easier to find. Larger birch saplings need to be targeted in winter and spring to avoid disturbance to breeding birds, but also once they have dropped their leaves as piles of cuttings with leaves shade out the underlying vegetation. It is also preferable to cut these larger saplings below the soil surface (i.e. cut them in the redder root area) to prevent regrowth from the base plate.

Protection of young trees – Roe deer grazing and bark removal by antler fretting is a frustrating limitation on our planted tree saplings, requiring us to protect the trees with plastic or wire guards until the trees are relatively mature. Plastic guards are unsightly, but wire guards take longer to manage. All tree and shrub seedlings seem to be vulnerable to grazing when newly planted, though some species more than others. Originally most seedlings were planted in 1.2m tubes but these result in thinner, weaker trees than those more exposed to the elements. Species that like to bush or branch whilst still small are particularly affected (e.g. holly, hazel, Scots pine, juniper), so these are now planted in short tubes with wire protection added when they emerge from the tubes. Long plastic tubes are more suitable for single stem trees such as alder, aspen, rowan and oak. The unsightly tubes are removed once the trees get up to about 2m high and the stem is at least 3cm wide and able to support itself. However, the stems are still vulnerable to fretting by roe bucks until about 10cm diameter. We prevent fretting on such trees by stapling loose-fitting chicken wire to the trunks at a height of 30cm to 90cm. Guards cut from sheep fencing can also prevent fretting if the tree is not liable to browsing. Stapling is needed for wire or fencing as abrasion kills saplings if they are allowed to rub freely against the wire in windy conditions. Grazing or stripping by hares and voles does not currently appear to be a problem at Leadburn Wood so short guards are not used.

Establishment of hedgerows – Our hedgerows along the A703 and along our western boundary are still very young and will require management for several more years. The roadside hedgerow trees are doing well in short tubes, and show little sign of browsing from roe deer, perhaps benefiting from traffic and willowherb/raspberry protection. But the willowherb/rasps still require an annual clearing round the smaller trees and the hedgerow could be thickened by layering the trees in future. The western boundary hedgerow is more exposed but has been planted over several years and therefore contains lengths of more mature saplings as well as younger infill. Most saplings will still require protection from grazing for several more years. It is currently still quite sparse and would benefit from more planting, perhaps of alders, transplanted birch or rowan, or willow cuttings.

Raised bog restoration – Restoration Bog had achieved 100% bog vegetation cover within three years of re-wetting. Further monitoring of bog vegetation succession and water levels will inform future management. This should include ongoing removal of young birches and excess sitkas and perhaps reducing rainwater run-off with further strategic peat dams. Leadburn Moss currently has large areas of exposed peat 18 months after resurfacing, but sphagnum mosses and other bog vegetation are coming back, aided by transplantations of moss rescued from the area before it was re-wetted. Further sphagnum transplantations into barer peat areas from around the boundaries of Leadburn Moss (or from propagated sphagnum) would be useful, providing the original transplantations continue to look healthy and expand. The

approximately 15m^2 areas around the former plastic dams, now all intended as potential mossy pools, could be further enhanced by heightening the peat bunds on the former ditches and removing or continuing to cut back any rank heather still present. Further minor peat dams and bunds could also be installed around the outside of Leadburn Moss in areas of obvious rainfall run-off. Some areas at the northern end of Leadburn Moss are less peaty and may be better suited to other vegetation types or shrub and tree planting.

Retention of water – In addition to the re-wetting work on Restoration Bog and Leadburn Moss, any further rainfall retention or bog wetting throughout Leadburn Wood would generally enhance the bog woodland and other peat habitats provided visitor access on our paths is not impeded. A few peat dams have already been installed south of the Sales Stand and along the north-east edge of Restoration Bog. It could be worth examining whether small-scale damming or flattening of forestry ridges in the rank heather areas east of the Craigburn ponds or east of Leadburn Way could improve bogginess, thereby encouraging sphagnums and other bog vegetation rather than heather.

Drainage/minor flooding – Heavy rainfall can cause temporary pooling on the path network. Clearing the pathside ditches to keep them free of vegetation is required on a regular basis, along with further application of aggregates to increase run-off from the paths and suppress vegetation and mud. The Benders Bog culverts are a bottleneck for rainfall run-off in the heaviest downpours every few years, but the persistent pooling in these areas compensates for occasional days when the lowest sections of our paths are not passable.

Paths – Although fairly well trodden, most paths remain dry and walkable in most weathers thanks to the wooden plank passes, bridges and steps that have been installed, and the landscape fabric and baton-underpinned aggregate surfaces. Wire netting on the plank passes and wooden bridges reduces the chance of slipping. Overhanging vegetation needs strimmed or cut back in summer on some sections to allow easy walking, especially when wet. Surface churning on the paths is most obvious during heavy rain and affected areas can then be identified for further upgrading with underpinning and aggregate. More yellow rattle seed could be dispersed along grassier areas of paths to help encourage non-grass flowering species. Additional path markers are planned to be installed to help guide visitor access.

Buildings – Now that the asbestos roof on the Laboratory Building has been removed, we intend to provide replacement roofing on the northern side of the building for onsite shelter in the woodland. This would be a useful asset to have as shelter in wet or windy weather, both for planned gatherings or for other woodland visitors. Climbing plants on the brick building will be encouraged and protected until established.

Fences – Our boundary fences still exclude neighbouring sheep but require occasional basic maintenance and repairs when breaches are identified. Further work on fences may be necessary in future if required by neighbouring farms.

Dogs – As people with dogs are perhaps the most numerous visitors to Leadburn Wood, issues with dog poo and disturbance to wildlife are almost inevitable. Our signs encourage visitors to bag dog poo and take it home, and to keep their dogs under control especially during the bird breeding season, but not all dog walkers adhere to these requests. We do not want to lose goodwill amongst the majority of conscientious dog owners by trying to police these problems or put up further invasive signs, so hopefully the problem will remain relatively minor.

Other management issues – Layby soiling and litter is a constant issue due to busy traffic and limited amenities on the A703. Regular litter picking is carried out in the layby and whilst walking in the woodland by our stalwart volunteers and a good relationship has been forged with Scottish Borders Council for occasional uplifts of fly-tipping.

Extended Influence:

Supporters – Christmas tree buyers are encouraged to become Supporters of Leadburn Wood when they buy a tree. We then send Supporters a monthly email containing recent images from the woodland to encourage visits and ongoing support. Contacts through our Supporter network, our Instagram account, and occasional media postings have raised Leadburn Wood's profile considerably, both locally and further afield, especially amongst environmentalists, naturalists and those who appreciate open space. This degree of support is persuasive when we need to influence or get things done with other groups or individuals such as politicians, media, journalists, grant awarding bodies, conservation groups or neighbouring landowners.

Volunteering – Many of the tasks achieved at Leadburn Wood have only happened because of the superb input we now get from our team of volunteers, amounting to 1000-1500 man-hours from more than 50 individuals in each recent year. Volunteering gives many people great satisfaction, pride in what they have achieved, and a degree of 'ownership' of and investment in Leadburn Wood. Additional conservation volunteering groups (e.g. Lothians Conservation Volunteers, Green Team, University of Edinburgh's Dirty Weekenders) and corporate groups provide further work in Leadburn Wood several times each year.

Other Influences – The environmental improvement and visitor access achieved at Leadburn Wood since 2007 has shown what can be achieved by a small voluntary local team of non-professionals. We have liaised widely with other groups and individuals for advice and support and are now approached by other groups and landowners for the same. Our volunteering team has been willing to extend their tasks to useful conservation input on other land around Leadburn such as rhododendron removal at Whim (1000 man-hours per year from 2023 to 2025), glade cutting near Easter Deans, tree tube removal at Waterheads and balsam removal at Cringletie. The excess funds we have raised from selling Christmas trees has benefitted other community woodlands, volunteering and conservation bodies, and local food charities. Several research groups and individuals have carried out work in the woodland. The awareness and influence of the woodland and its community continue to snowball in new and interesting ways every year.

Notes:

1. FLCW is registered as charity with OSCR (SC027052) and also as a company (SC286916) with Companies House.
2. Funders over time have included: Leader Plus (original land purchase), Scottish Land Fund (both land purchases), SNH (now NatureScot), WREN (now FCC Communities Foundation – for the four ponds) and PeatlandACTION (Restoration bog).
3. FLCW is currently a member of the following organisations: Community Woodlands Association, Borders Forest Trust and Scotland the Big Picture's Northwoods.