

Elgin Oakwood Management Plan Summary



moray
council



Vision

Elgin Oakwood is a place where people enjoy connecting with nature.

The important oak woodland ecosystem of Quarry Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*, also known as Elgin Oakwood, is protected and improved through the removal of beech and other invasive non-native* species.

Native species within the SSSI and surrounding woodland are encouraged to naturally regenerate, gradually extending the area of biodiverse native habitat.

The woodland provides opportunities for learning and contributes to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Management of the woodland ensures it is resilient to climate impacts and contributes to climate mitigation through carbon sequestration and providing a sustainable local timber supply.

*See definitions on page 5.



Action Plan 2025 to 2035

- Beech and non-native conifers such as Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir will be selectively felled throughout the management plan area as part of an ongoing programme to restore the native woodland. The area of beech woodland to the west of the playpark on Mackintosh Drive will be left in situ.
- Regenerated beech and non-native conifer seedlings will be removed from within the wood as part of an ongoing programme of maintenance work.
- Enrichment planting of local provenance oak within the areas where natural regeneration does not successfully occur and in adjacent/ buffer woodland such as the pine woods at Spynie.
- Rhododendron ponticum to be removed from throughout the management plan area, particularly present in Spynie wood.
- Thinning, e.g. birch regeneration and mature Scots pine, will be carried out to release locally planted oak and increase the species and age diversity of the woodland.
- Some standing and fallen deadwood will be left as important habitats for invertebrates, fungi, birds and other wildlife, and to decompose as part of the nutrient cycle.
- Opportunities for community learning and engagement with the woodland will be encouraged and supported where these align with the plan objectives and SSSI restrictions.
- Public access on core path routes will be maintained and improved where possible, including paths, rest points and tree safety.



What's been happening up until now?

Previous management of the woodland was overseen by a partnership including the Council, Forestry and Land Scotland, the local community and NatureScot. This work included selective felling to create clearings for oak seedlings to have enough space to grow. The local community also collected acorns and grew them on before replanting out in the woods. Many of these trees are now growing strong and producing their own acorns.

More recently, the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund has enabled renewed action to care for the woodlands since 2023.

- Local tree surgeons removed invasive seedlings and saplings, including beech and conifers such as Western hemlock, throughout the SSSI and a small adjacent area next to the Brumley Brae road.
- The local community, including charities, volunteers, schools have been undertaking conservation activities and learning about how to restore the woodland. Acorns were collected and cared for in the Cooper Park nursery and have started to be planted back out into the woodland as they grow large enough. Small invasive trees have continued to be removed, as have old tree protectors from much earlier planting throughout the management plan area so they can be disposed of appropriately.
- Path maintenance is ongoing – linked to the Moray Core Paths Plan
- The community and stakeholders have been consulted on a woodland management plan that will cover forestry operations up to 2035 and reflect the above action plan.



One of the ways we can protect this special woodland is to gradually remove invasive trees and extend the area of native woodland around the SSSI.

But Beech is native in the UK, right?

Well, yes and no. Beech is native to the south of England. But the beech trees found in Scotland were brought here and planted by people over the last few hundred years.

The delicate ecosystems that have developed in Scottish oak woodlands over many thousands of years are vulnerable to seemingly small changes. Even just one new species like beech can have a huge impact. The two photos below show how beech suppresses surrounding vegetation and reduces biodiversity. Our local plants are not adapted to be able to thrive under beech, as they are in an oak woodland.

Oak trees support more life than any other native tree in Scotland. Over 2,300 different species!

They are also one of our longest-lived trees, providing huge value to wildlife until they are up to 1,000 years old. This life giving continues even as the dead trees decompose and return essential nutrients back into the soil.



Oak



Beech

Some of the other trees and plants that contribute to this important habitat include:



Bluebell



Holly



Heather



Blaeberry



Stitchwort

Definitions

Biodiversity:

The variety of living things in a place, including plants, animals, bacteria and fungi, and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems

Climate mitigation:

Action taken to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate impacts:

Increased risk of events such as storms and wildfires, or spread of pest/ disease and invasive species due to human driven changes to the climate.

Carbon sequestration:

The process of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and stored, for example in trees or soil.

Invasive non-native species (INNS):

Species that have been introduced to Scotland by humans (either deliberately or accidentally) and the spread of which causes damage to the environment, economy, and human health or lifestyles.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

Sites designated for protection due to their high natural heritage value. Quarry Wood was designated in 1989 “as one of the best examples of oak woodland in Moray and the lowest altitude example in north-east Scotland”.



Key

 Moray Council Ownership

 Core Paths

 SNH Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)





