



Doune Community Woodland Group

Management Plan for Doune Ponds

2014-2024



MORAY ESTATES



Kilmadock Community Council

Interim Review, June 2020

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Foreword

The last 5 years have seen great changes at Doune Ponds, so much so that it is sometimes hard to recall exactly what the Ponds were like before the Doune Community Woodland Group got involved. This interim review of the management plan is timely because most of the larger projects that were required in 2015 have now been completed. For the record, these have included:

- Implementing a ten-year Management Agreement between Moray Estates and the Doune Community Woodland Group;
- The significant repair of the steps connecting the Ponds to the Lundie Road and the Commonty Road at the north end of the Ponds;
- 1400 meters of new all abilities paths have been constructed and over 500 meters of existing path has been substantially improved;
- Purchased and lined a new container, built a lean-to to house all the equipment;
- Installed strategically placed lifebuoys to improve safety;
- Additional seating installed in various locations;
- A new bridge constructed over the outlet channel from the main pond to the Dragon Burn;
- The resurrection and implementation of the coppicing plan for Kate's Corner;
- The revitalisation of the both the Picnic Area and the Meadow into usable and attractive areas;
- The introduction of the annual Easter Egg Hunt, fun run and the Family Fun Day;
- Recording and monitoring of Red Squirrels as part of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels Project;
- Installing a new pontoon jetty on the Main Pond;
- Planted 350 native bluebell bulbs in the wood behind the notice board;
- Working with Stirling Council to erect directional road signs;
- Changing public feeding habits of ducks and swans to healthier alternatives;
- Rebuilding Susie Shaws bridge and laying 160 tonne of stone and type 1 along 350 metres of the most boggy areas of Commonty walk

Recognition of our success includes the completion of a case study with the Scottish Land Commission, where the Ponds have been used as an exemplar for landowners working with the local community in managing land; winning Scotland's Finest Woods Award for Community Woodland in 2017; presentation with the UK Parliament Early Day motion for the creation of All-abilities path network 2018; receiving Highly Commended in Scotland's Finest Woods award 2018 and being shortlisted for the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards 2019.

This has all been done with a volunteer labour resource, contributing over 7000 hours of volunteer labour, which is a marvellous achievement. Moray Estates are extremely grateful for all the effort that has been put in by volunteers at the Ponds over the past 5 years. This effort has produced a significant asset and a very attractive recreational area for the whole of the community of Doune and all involved should be extremely proud of what they have achieved and the effort that they have put in.

Having said all that, it is important that both the estate and the Woodland Group don't rest on their laurels – there is still much to be done. On-going maintenance will be required, and whilst it does not necessarily gain the accolades of the bigger projects, a lack of maintenance will soon become very noticeable. A continued focus will need to be given on preserving and enhancing biodiversity within the Ponds, and there are recommendations within this review about that. We must also find more and interesting ways of engaging other members of the community, particularly young people to make sure that the Ponds continues to be the fine place that it is for many more years.

Rory McLeod

Doune Estate Manager, Moray Estates – February 2020

Background and Site Description

Doune Ponds History

The nature and amenity area of Doune Ponds has seen both geological change and land use change in its lifetime. The site is 16 hectares (40 acres) in size with underlying geology of old red sandstone. During the retreat of the ice following the last ice age 13000 years ago, vast quantities of fluvioglacial sand and gravel from the River Teith were deposited over the area forming undulating ground of limited fertility. In the middle ages the land was used as rough pasture and woodland with some cultivated plots known as 'The Crofts' in the east and heathland on the rising ground to the north. It was later owned by The Earls of Moray - now Moray Estates Development Company Ltd.

In the seventeenth century this land, together with land now forming Doune Riggs housing, was utilized for the Doune Fairs as the village was a major center for cattle fairs, being on the junction of several droving roads. At its height upwards of 10000 head of cattle were sold in one week. The standing stone, at one time referred to as the 'Devils Head', stood in the middle of a small wood appropriately known as 'Bluebell Wood'.

In 1858 the Dunblane to Callander railway was opened, running along the southern boundary of the ponds. This closed in 1965 and was replaced with housing. In 1903 the western part of the ponds was utilized as a part of the Doune Golf Course which operated until the Second World War.

Between 1950 and 1972 a minerals lease between Moray Estates and The Springbank Sand & Gravel Company resulted in most of the extensive sand and gravel deposits in the area being extracted. This covered the whole area of Doune Ponds and included the area now covered by housing. Some of the excavated areas were partly infilled with silt washings as part of the extraction work and later with builders' rubble and debris.

After excavation ceased the area was not suitable for restoration as good agricultural ground and remained almost unused for 10 years other than some limited tree planting and use by the British Trust for Shooting & Conservation who carried out some planting, fencing and shrub clearance including building the first hide (overlooking the west pond). During this period some informal public access, predominately by dog walkers, established rough paths throughout Doune Ponds area.

In 1982 the landowner entered into a 20-year Access Agreement with Stirling District Council over the area with 3 main aims: The first aim was to restore and develop the site; the second to make provision for public access; the third to encourage nature conservation. These aims allowed the site to become Doune Ponds as we know it today. Over the next few years and with grant aid from The Countryside Commission (now Scottish Natural Heritage) and great help from volunteer groups the Ranger Service carried out a significant amount of tree planting with associated fencing, built the second hide looking over the central pond, constructed a car park at the entrance, relocated the standing stone nearby and provided disabled access over the eastern part. However, with decreasing resources available to the Council they were unable to maintain standards and they relinquished responsibility for management in early 2014.

When 150 new houses were built in the period 2012 to 2014 to the east of Doune Ponds, it brought the area right into the heart of the community. It involved the construction of a new car park and the relocation of the standing stone to yet another new position at the entrance.

Following the Council's withdrawal from management, Moray Estates entered discussions with the Kilmadock Community Council over local community involvement and a steering group of interested local people formed

brought forward the project culminating in the formation in October 2014 of the Doune Community Woodland Group. Currently they, Kilmadock Community Council and Moray Estates have negotiated an agreement for the long-term management of this nature reserve with similar objectives to the original 1982 agreement with the Stirling District Council.

Fauna & Flora

Since extraction of sand and gravel, the ponds area has become an important local and national location for fungi, with 492 species identified, including one species – the salad fungus - only found here.

The uninterrupted regeneration of scrub and wetland plants has led to a rapid colonisation of the site by a wide range of invertebrates including beetles, butterflies and dragonflies. At least 23 species of birds have been recorded as breeding within the site. Feeding and roosting Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) also frequent the site in autumn and winter. The resident waterfowl population is boosted in winter with birds attracted to the site by its sheltered location and food supply. The number of waterfowl is restricted by the limited open water available and the limited clear flight path to and from the ponds. Records from the mid 1970's note a variety of wading birds using the site. The rapidly encroaching scrub has now excluded most of the waders although Oystercatchers can still be seen.

A diverse bird community has moved in including several woodland species. In summer there are good numbers of Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) breeding on the site with Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), House and Sand Martins (*Delichon urbica* and *Riparia riparia*) feeding over the surface of the ponds. Voles, field mice and common shrews occur in the undergrowth, moles and possibly hedgehogs are present. The small mammals attract visiting stoats, foxes and kestrels. Red squirrels, roe and red deer are present in the wooded areas, originating from the woods to the north. Rabbits have caused some erosion of the banks, especially in the northern part. The Main and North ponds have some pike and perch due to historical fishing activities, but fishing is not currently allowed in Doune Ponds.

Doune Ponds is now actively managed by the Doune Community Woodland Group, Kilmadock Community Council and Moray Estates Development Company Ltd together with a group of willing volunteers. See the site map in Figure 1. For a more detailed site description, please see Appendix 1: Site History, Geology, Fauna and Flora.

Contact details:

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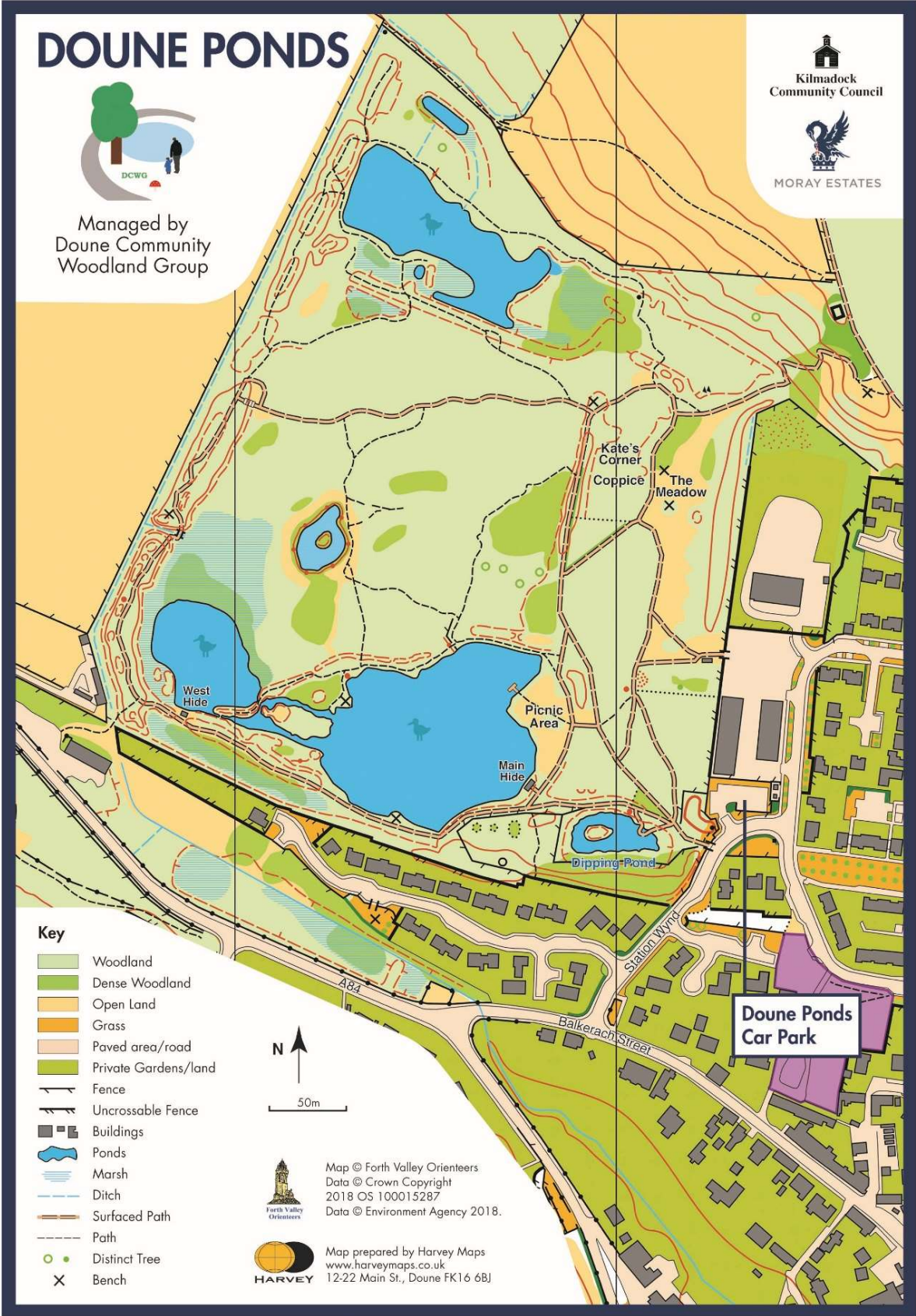


Figure 1: Doune Ponds and surrounding area

Management Evaluation 2014-2019

The following progress has been made against the objectives and urgent tasks set out in 2014.

Table 1: Objectives set out in 2014

	Objective	Progress
1.	Draw up a site-specific management plan in cooperation with the landowner.	Done.
2.	Conserve and enhance the site's biodiversity and specifically record notable species and their habitats.	Ongoing, with the view to increase focus here in 2020-2024.
3.	Develop and maintain an educational programme to encourage participation by local schools and organisations.	Doone Primary and Doone Nursery regularly use the ponds for nature walks. Pond dipping days organized by DCWG have been well attended.
4.	Maintain a recreational programme with due regard to enabling accessibility for all.	Access has been greatly improved, with wheelchair and buggy access around the main ponds. Annual Ponds Family Day and Easter Egg Hunt well attended by the community. Annual summer fun run around the ponds and surrounding area.
5.	Maintain a programme of activities to maximise the use and skills and knowledge of the volunteer group.	Ongoing.
6.	Develop and maintain a communication strategy to improve awareness by the community.	Ongoing.

Table 2: Urgent Tasks Identified in 2014

	Task	Progress
1.	Replace steps at the north end of the site from Commonty Walk.	Done.
2.	Add a new seat at the top of the new steps.	Done.
3.	Complete the main entrance with the addition of a gate and defined path.	Done.
4.	Open up the view of the main pond in the picnic area and create 2/3 small viewing areas along the water's edge.	Done.
5.	Inspect and carry out necessary repairs to the structures.	Ongoing maintenance.
6.	Clean and treat picnic tables and carved seating.	Ongoing maintenance.
7.	Communicate no fishing or fires on the site.	Done.
8.	Change notice boards.	Done.
9.	Repair rear bridge.	Brand new bridge constructed Done.
10.	Repair/build a new rear path and steps (identified black on the attached map).	Done.
11.	Cut back grass area to manageable length.	Ongoing maintenance.
12.	Monitor trees at the back of Pistolmakers Row.	Ongoing

13.	Clear main paths of dirt and dead foliage.	Ongoing maintenance.
14.	Investigate the possibility of a storage on site.	Done.
15.	Gradually remove fallen trees and create nature piles and stack usable firewood.	Ongoing maintenance.
16.	The existing woodland has not been managed to any degree in the last 10 years. As such the woodland is denser than might be optimum in silvicultural terms and should be thinned to an agreed programme.	Ongoing maintenance.
17.	Develop a wildlife strategy.	To do.
18.	Add more seating and picnic tables.	Done.
19.	Obtain a container for the site.	Done.

Objectives and Actions 2020-2024

Based on the good progress made since 2014 in addressing the shortcomings in access and general maintenance, the following objectives have been identified for the period 2020-2024. These focus on the increased safeguarding and enhancement of biodiversity, and the continued provision of a community woodland which gives the entire community the opportunity to benefit from outdoor recreation, fitness, well-being and education:

1. Conserve and enhance the site's biodiversity, in particular:
 - a. Increase wildflower areas and enhance conditions for native wild orchids.
 - b. Protect and enhance rare fungi habitats.
 - c. Increase invertebrate diversity and abundance.
 - d. Increase amphibian diversity and abundance.
 - e. Increase waterfowl and wader diversity and abundance.
 - f. Create roosting sites for bats.
 - g. Increase the diversity of native tree species.
2. Consolidate the Dipping Pond into a permanent feature, not dependent on water table.
3. Construct new pontoon.
4. Evaluate the issue of encroachment on properties in Pistolmakers Row.
5. Manage invasive species. Consult with the landowner to take appropriate action when new invasive species or expansion of known species is found. In particular:
 - a. Grey squirrels
 - b. Rhododendron ponticum
 - c. Giant hogweed
6. Develop and maintain an educational programme to encourage participation by local schools and organisations.
7. Maintain a recreational programme with due regard to enabling accessibility for all.
8. Maintain a programme of activities to maximise the use and skills and knowledge of the volunteer group.
9. Develop and maintain a communication strategy to improve awareness by the community, complemented by the production of a Doune Ponds leaflet.
10. Safeguard the future of DCWG by recruiting new volunteers.
11. Keep first aid qualifications up to date.

12. Maintain insurance covering public liability, tools & equipment and volunteers.
13. Maintain a felling licence.

Table 3 outlines a list of objectives for the period 2020-2024, along with the actions required.

Table 3: Revised objectives 2020-2024

	Objective	Action	Progress
1.	Conserve and enhance the site's biodiversity, in particular:		
1a.	Increase wildflower areas and enhance conditions for native wild orchids.	Source and plant native English Bluebells.	350 planted autumn 2019 & 350 in 2020
		Refrain from strimming identified wild orchid areas until winter	Ongoing
		Add wildflower and orchid identification guides to the notice board	Ongoing
1b.	Protect and enhance rare fungi habitats.	Complete a fungus survey. Seek expert advice on how to protect key habitats.	Due in September 2020
		Organise children's fungal foray	Due September 2023/24
		Add fungi identification guide to notice board	
1c.	Increase invertebrate diversity and abundance. (See Appendix 4: Invertebrate Conservation Plan Nick Cooke, CLEAR Services for further details.)	Establish two new glades within the birch woodland similar in size to the current area at Kate's Corner by coppicing trees and encouraging ground flora / nectaring plants for pollinating insects, and maintain these as open areas with removal of bramble and willow herb scrub as necessary.	Due in spring 2024
		Create a bare earth bank or scrape in one of the two new open glade areas above.	As above
		Plant bankside aquatic plants / pondweed etc at Dipping Pond.	Not required following Froglife visit
		Remove fallen trees at the waterside and excavate as necessary to re-establish an open wetland/marsh habitat to the northern extension of the West Pond.	Ongoing
		Do the same with the Island Pond and excavate a shallow watercourse channel with the West Pond; plant bankside aquatic plants.	TBC

	Objective	Action	Progress
		Carry out a survey of main invertebrate families (dragonflies, butterflies /moths, bees/ wasps) to establish and maintain a database of records.	Part of the community 2023 programme
1d.	Increase amphibian diversity and abundance.	Work with Froglife to complete restoration of the dipping pond. DCWG to build agreed walkways to ease access and viewing	Completed 2020
		Create hibernacula with Froglife and Doune Primary.	Completed
1e.	Increase waterfowl and wader diversity and abundance.	Record current numbers and investigate possible reasons for lack of breeding success of ducks, coots and moorhens.	Ongoing
		Complete a fish survey to investigate the possibility of pike predated newly hatched waterfowl.	
		Remove overhanging lateral branches on the section of west hide path to improve water quality, and to provide habitat diversity and potentially attractive feeding grounds for waders.	Due in Autumn 2020
		Maintain a No Fishing rule	Ongoing
		Seek advice from RSPBP on ways to protect newly hatched chicks.	Ongoing
1f.	Create roosting sites for bats.	Build and install a small number of bat boxes along a tree line, 4m+ high on a South facing aspect.	
1g.	Increase the diversity of native tree species.	Create a Forest Plan in conjunction with Moray Estates.	Completed in late 2022
		When re-planting, use a mix of deciduous lowland woodland species, as described by Forestry and Land Scotland. Focus on native oak as it supports a large amount of biodiversity.	Ongoing as we plant each year
2.	Consolidate the Dipping Pond into a permanent feature, not dependent on water table.	Work with Froglife conservation organisation to line the Dipping Pond. See Appendix 2: Froglife Pond Restoration Project	Completed
3.	Construct new pontoon	Dismantle old pontoon	Completed
		Build larger pontoon and landscape surrounding area.	Completed June 2020

	Objective	Action	Progress
4.	Evaluate the issue of encroachment on properties in Pistolmakers Row.	Moray Estates complete a tree survey.	Completed February 2020
5.	Manage invasive species. Consult with the landowner to take appropriate action when new invasive species or expansion of known species is found. In particular:		Ongoing
5a.	Grey squirrels	Monitor for signs of presence. Work in conjunction with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels.	Ongoing annual survey.
		Add to notice board: Advice on how to report red and grey squirrel sightings at https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/squirrel-sightings/	Completed
5b.	Rhododendron ponticum	Complete regular checks for regrowth at old sites. Break off new growth. Do not re-apply herbicide, as oak seedlings have been found at the sites.	Ongoing
5c.	Giant hogweed	Check for regrowth at Green Shed entrance. DO NOT HANDLE as the plant is highly poisonous. Stirling Council is responsible for eradication.	SC dealt with it as part of Park & Stride
6.	Develop and maintain an educational programme to encourage participation by local schools and organisations.	Arrange meeting with the head teacher of Doune Primary to discuss opportunities. See School and nursery engagement, page 21.	Completed. Whole school carried out a visit in March 2020
7.	Maintain a recreational programme with due regard to enabling accessibility for all.	See Easter egg hunt, Family day, Christmas fair, fun run, orienteering, page 21.	
		Purchase new picnic tables	Completed June 2020
8.	Maintain a programme of activities to maximise the use and skills and knowledge of the volunteer group.	See Resources, page 19.	Dependant on projects but ongoing
9.	Develop and maintain a communication strategy to improve awareness by the community.	See Community Engagement & Communication, page 21.	Ongoing
10.	Safeguard the future of DCWG by recruiting new volunteers.	Links with Objective 4, Doune Primary engagement.	Ongoing

	Objective	Action	Progress
11.	Keep first aid qualifications up to date.	Arrange first aid refresher training for volunteers. See Training, page19.	Refresher training completed January 2020.
12.	Maintain insurance covering public liability, tools & equipment and volunteers.	See Resources, page 19.	Annual renewal
13.	Maintain felling licence as current licence expires Dec 2021.	See Resources, page 19.	Moray Estates

Maintenance

Along with the objectives listed in the previous section, the volunteers undertake maintenance tasks throughout the year, outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Maintenance Schedule

Area/Description	Goal	Required Work	Responsibility & Timescale
Car Park	Maintain in good order	Carry out regular grass and shrub maintenance. Repair potholes.	Doune Riggs homeowners nominated contractors
Main Site Entrance	Maintain main access	Mow grass, trim nettles Weed and sweep path Keep gate in working order.	As required As required Regular checks
Standing Stone	Maintain in good order	Trim	Doune Riggs homeowners nominated contractors
Dog poo bin	Maintain in good order	Clear out twice weekly	Twice weekly by Stirling Council Environmental/Land Services (Twice weekly)
Dog poo bags	Place bags around the site for visitor use	Refill bag stations	Weekly
Information Board	Maintain in good order		Periodically
Dipping Pond	Maintain in good order	Weed and sweep path Apply non slip mesh to wooden walkways	As required Prior to completion
Picnic Area	Maintain disabled access	Cut back trees, mow, remove fallen branches and leaves. Apply	Weekly checks, repair as required

	Keep picnic benches in good order	wood treatment, repair as needed.	Regular checking
Area/Description	Goal	Required Work	Responsibility & Timescale
Main Hide	Ensure safe and useable	Regular maintenance & clearance of rubbish	Weekly checks, repair as required
		Carry out inspection	Every two years
Open grassland/meadow area	Maintain open play area	Cut/Strim agreed play area during growing season allowing wild orchids to flourish	Weekly in growing season
	Remove Ragwort	Hand pull Ragwort	Early August
	Maintain path linking the existing path to the bottom of the northern steps	Sweep, strim	As required
Kate's corner	Create coppice area	Please see Coppice Plan in Appendix 3. Build brush hedge additional for wildlife	Ongoing
Central pond	Maintain open area	Remove fallen trees where appropriate.	Regular monitoring
	Carry out water quality check		TBC
	Maintain new pontoon and floating platforms and duck houses	Check for disrepair	Regular Monitoring
		Annual clean	During winter months
West hide pond platform	Maintain	Check for disrepair	
		Clean when required	During winter months
West hide path	Maintain	Regular maintenance. Open up a viewing area	Regular checks Ongoing

Area/Description	Goal	Required Work	Responsibility & Timescale
West hide	Maintain	Regular maintenance of hide Apply special wood treatment for preservation	Check weekly, treat when needed.
Western steps	Maintain	Keep clear Apply treatment to handrails Maintain by-pass path Carry out strimming during growing season	Ongoing As required As required As required
Woodland areas & Coppice area	Maintain according to woodland plan and coppice plan	Regular checks	Ongoing
Western path	Maintain access	Regular checks Remove fallen trees where necessary	Ongoing As required
Bridge/walkway	Maintain	Regular checking and repair as necessary.	Ongoing
Path	Maintain	Regular checking	Ongoing
Carved Seats	Maintain	Wash off and treat with Sandolin Ultra, Heritage Oak. Pick out features with darker colour.	Every three years, next due 2020
North steps to Lundie Road	Safe access	Apply wood treatment to hand rails Strim/mow during growing season.	As required Ongoing As required

		Resurface steps Maintain new seating at top to steps	Ongoing
Area/Description	Goal	Required Work	Responsibility & Timescale
Viewing Seat (top of steps)	Maintain	Regular checks for litter Cut surrounding grass	Ongoing As required
Pillwort	Report	Ongoing	Remove as required
Swans & Ducks	Monitor	Ongoing	Record number of signets annually
Path verges	Monitor	Clear to 12in of path	Ongoing as required
Storage container & lean-to	Maintain	Regular checks Build Lean-to	Maintain watertight as required
Access gate (by container)	Maintain	Maintain easy access clear	Weekly

Resources

Our aim is to manage and improve Doune Ponds for the benefit of the whole community. As we are a totally voluntary organisation, this will require a major input from two areas:

1. Voluntary help
2. Funding

Volunteers

As an organisation, we have an exceptional input of local voluntary help. It is hugely important for the next phase of our management plan that these volunteers are an integral part of the plan.

We have a weekly 'Wednesday' group of volunteers, mostly retired, who turn up to do most of the routine maintenance of the Ponds, as well as working on all our major projects to improve the facilities. They are practical and hands-on with a wide range of skills and experience.

We also have volunteers who are unable to help on a Wednesday but who carry out a lot of administrative work and others who have specific skills and come and help when required for example managing Social Media, insurance advice, tree surgery and assisting as a licensed digger operator. We also have the volunteer help of a professional fully licenced digger operator

Whenever we have any major projects, which can take 6 months or more to plan, the numbers swell hugely to get the job done. We rely on this voluntary effort, and will encourage it to the best of our ability. In the first 5 years of the programme, we have generated over 7500 hours of voluntary help. We record all volunteer hours for use with funding applications and as we do not employ contractors.

We also receive help in kind through our strong relationship with CEMEX and plan to continue with their "lend a hand days".

Our volunteer policy is attached in Appendix 5.

Tools and equipment

We have a wide range of normal tools to enable us to carry out most tasks. We also have a mini Kubota tractor and driven mower with front loading bucket, and trailer, it is maintained in line with the manufacturer service requirements by RTA. We also have two strimmers with harnesses, a blower and a hand mower that are maintained annually by Dykes of Thornhill. In June 2020 a new brush cutter hand mower was purchased.

Training

We have three trained First Aiders and carry out refresher training when required.

Insurance

As part of the agreement with Moray Estates we have public Liability (£5 million) and volunteer's insurance. We maintain insurance for our tools and equipment. We maintain insurance for our mini Kubota Tractor including road use. **We are not insured for chainsaw use.**

Felling licence

The current felling licence expires in December 2021 and is due for renewal.

Health and Safety

We carry our risk assessments for all our projects. All chainsaw work is carried out by certified users from Moray Estates. We have a range of H&S protection equipment including ear defenders, gloves, helmets, glasses and hi vis jackets.

Expertise

We use recognised expert help when required. Volunteer Marco McCool is a practical expert digger driver with all the necessary qualifications. Nick Cooke provides expert help and guidance on bugs and butterflies. We receive advice and help from Moray Estates, RSPB through our relationship with CEMEX.

Fundraising

Strategy

When we inherited the Ponds, the infrastructure was in a very poor state, due to the lack of funding and input from the previous managers – Stirling Council. In our first 5 years therefore, we needed to raise substantial funding to pay for all of the urgent improvements that were needed to bring the Ponds back to a condition where it was accessible to all.

In this period, we raised over £60,000 to fund improvements, and to purchase the equipment needed to maintain the Ponds.

This funding came from a wide range of funding sources, and we will continue to approach these sources for future funding.

We have always approached these organisations on a specific ‘project ‘ specific basis.

As we move from Capital Projects, like paths, bridges, and jetties, the funding bodies we apply to will change – rather than ‘Paths for All’ type organisations, we need to approach more environmentally and nature focussed organisations as we move to the ‘softer’ management phase of our programme.

We have to date not paid any contractor to carry out work for us.

Funders

We also receive huge support from Moray Estates, in terms of finance, materials, and logistical support, and we hope that this continues in the next 5 years. We will continue our relationship with RTA who also provide help with hire equipment and resource.

Own Fundraising

However, for our general funding, to include such things as insurance, we have relied on our own self-funding activities, supported by the Kilmadock Windfarm Trust.

Our approach will be to continue with this over the next 5 years. We do not charge an entry fee for these activities but solely rely on people donating what they want.

Community Engagement & Communication

Easter egg hunt, Family day, Christmas fair

We will continue to host both the Annual Easter Egg Hunt and an Annual Family Fun Day. Both these events have been extremely valuable in raising the profile of the work that the Doune Community Woodland Group have done at the Ponds. We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors of the Easter Egg Hunt.

We will also continue to support the Christmas Fair and the Doune Fayre as long as we are able to commit volunteer time to doing so.

School and nursery engagement

We will try to get better engagement with both Doune Primary School and the various nurseries in and around Doune. We need to raise the profile of the Ponds as an excellent location for outdoor activities for children, and also make the Schools and Nurseries aware that there are volunteers available to educate and inspire children through the work that has been done. In addition, we need to make opportunities available for children to get involved in some of the volunteering activities themselves.

Other clubs and groups

We will continue to promote links with other relevant bodies, such as the local Cubs and Scouts, Forth Valley Orienteers. We have created good links with the Orienteers, so much so that they have assisted with producing maps of the Ponds, in addition to creating a permanent orienteering course in the Ponds. We'll continue to look at ways that the local Scout and Cub Groups could get involved, particularly with volunteering at the Ponds.

We did have a strong relationship with the Camphill Community at Blair Drummond, who did send volunteers to assist on Wednesday mornings. We will look to find ways of re-igniting that relationship.

More recently we are aware of the activities of the Kilmadock Climate Action group. We hope that we will be able to enjoy a fruitful relationship in the future.

Links with the Kilmadock Community Council

We have particularly strong links with Kilmadock Community Council. The KCC were instrumental in setting up the DCWG, and actually were responsible for the works to the steps at the Ponds, before the DCWG was inaugurated. KCC continue to have two committee positions on the DCWG board as of right and there is no reason to think that this relationship will not continue into the future.

Social media

Doune Ponds main Social Media outlet is the Facebook page which is maintained by a volunteer member - <https://www.facebook.com/DounePonds/>

The page is regularly updated with notifications of events, volunteering opportunities and wildlife sightings amongst other things.

It is important that we continue to monitor permissions for the publication of photographs on the Facebook page and in other outlets.

Local newspapers

We have created a very positive relationship with both the Bridge and the Stirling Observer, who will regularly take and publish articles about events at the Ponds.

Leaflet

One item that has yet to be completed is the production of a new leaflet for visitors to the Ponds. This should be completed as a matter of priority.

Police

We receive good support from the community and wildlife police.

Appendix 1: Site History, Geology, Fauna and Flora

Site Description

Location and Size

Doune Ponds is a local nature and amenity area approximately 16 Ha (40 acres) in size centered on Grid NN 724 022 and landscaped from a formerly worked out sand and gravel quarry situated immediately north-west of the center of Doune. Three large excavated ponds dominate the site whilst one much smaller pond (Island Pond) becomes seasonally dry. The woodland around the ponds is dominated by naturally regenerating Birch, varying in age up to 40 years.

Ownership

The site forms part of the Doune Estate owned by the Moray Estates Development Company Ltd. In 1982 Stirling District Council entered into a 20 year Access Agreement with the Moray Estates Development Company to restore and develop the site for both public access and nature conservation. The access agreement, which was extended in 2002, was in 2014 rescinded by Stirling Council providing opportunity for the Doune Community Woodland Group in conjunction with Kilmadock Community Council to enter in to a new Access Agreement with the Moray Estates Development Company Ltd.

Access

The main pedestrian access point is via the car park reached via Station Wynd. (Restricted vehicular access to the Ponds for maintenance requirements is gained through a locked field gate 200m north of the car park). Further points of pedestrian access are via the Green Shed at the south-western corner of the ponds and Lundie steps to the northern end of the site.

Designations

Doune Ponds has no official designations however it is an important site within the Stirling area and is heavily used by both residents and visitors. Although the Standing Stone at the main entrance to the ponds is not in its original position, and has no official designation, it is very likely that it is a Bronze Age Standing Stone and as such should be maintained as an historic artefact.

Current Land Use

Owing to the infertility of the surface materials remaining after excavation ceased in 1972 the site could not be readily reverted to agricultural use other than poor pasture. To the west and north the neighbouring land is agricultural or woodland, the large field on the western edge being used for livestock grazing, whilst to the north rising up towards Blackpark Wood is permanent pasture and coniferous woodland on Currachmore. The track to Wester Lundie forms the north-eastern boundary above the steeply sloping steps and area of birch, willow and willow herb. Below this bank lies the former industrial depot of A & E Russell. South of the Russell depot and waste ground is the public car park. The southern perimeter is bounded by the houses along Pistolmakers Row.

Historical Land Use

Prior to excavation in the late 1940's the site contained a mixture of pasture and woodland clumps; in particular the 'Bluebell Wood' which was an oak woodland situated on a low hill lying approximately where the Central Pond is now located. Further to the east a series of cultivated plots, 'the Crofts' existed prior to World War 2. Regular markets called the Doune Fairs were held in the south-eastern part. In addition, it is thought that the site near the North Pond may well have included a heathland habitat. A lease granted to the Springbank Sand

and Gravel Company between 1950 and 1972 resulted in the excavation of most surface deposits of sand and gravel. Some of this was replaced with silt washing from this site and other local quarries.

Owing to the infertility of the surface materials remaining after excavation ceased in 1972 the site could not be readily reverted to agricultural use other than poor pasture. During the period 1972 – 1983 much of the site was extensively colonised by native trees and shrubs. There was also some tree planting and the construction of a bird hide at the West Pond by local members of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation with the Estates approval. During this period the area had been visited by walkers creating a network of rough paths. Until 1980 the area east of the Central Pond was subject to frequent tipping of builder's rubble and concrete waste. This was subsequently curtailed by the fencing at the eastern boundary.

In 1983 grant aid from the Countryside Commission was used to implement a major fencing and tree-planting programme. Following this hired machinery was used to transform the derelict east end into an attractive landscaped area. A shallow pool was excavated, and a substantial bank raised parallel to the southern boundary. The entire area was then seeded and planted with a range of native trees and shrubs mainly within rabbit proof fences. The Community Programme funded by the Manpower Services Commission completed the tree-planting and related works. Semi-aquatic plant species were also planted around Island Pond. Some of the existing pedestrian routes were surfaced to disabled access standard to create a network of circular walks which emanate from the main entrance and range around the eastern side of the site. These paths link to the picnic area, the two pond dipping platforms and the two bird viewing hides. The remaining unsurfaced paths can become very muddy, and at times unusable, during autumn and winter months.

Archaeology

On the 4th March 1954 during excavation of the Bluebell Wood (at Grid NN 7241 0191) an early Bronze Age stone burial cist containing the remains of a child was revealed (Antiquity No. NN70 SW 2). This has been dated as at c1800 BC and probably relates to the 'Beaker Folk' culture. This society may also have erected the Standing Stone (Antiquity No. NN 70 SW 30) which more recently became known as the 'Devils Head'. The stone is said to have been a Roman Signal Stone and now rests at the main entrance to Doune Ponds.

Biology

Trees & Shrubs

Since this closure as a sand and gravel quarry in 1972 much of the western part of the site and the area surrounding the North Pond has been extensively colonised by native shrubs & trees, predominantly Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Sallow, Osier and Willow (*Salix viminalis*) with the Birch mainly on the drier areas. There is also a dense growth of tall sallows in the damp depression running parallel to the southern boundary whilst some oak is established on the bank south of the Central Pond. Planted trees include an extensive strip along the western perimeter of Scots Pine, Larch, Beech and some Poplar with the area north of the North Pond also containing Poplar. The extensive planting scheme on the eastern part of the site consists predominantly of broad-leaved trees and shrubs on seeded landscaped areas. Many were selected for their berry crops and autumn foliage. There are several very small enclosed mixed plantations which were planted in the early 1980s and are fenced off against rabbits. The introduction of Alders has led to extensive Carrs of Willow and Alder over the western edge of the West Pond.

Within the site one area known as 'Kate's Corner' was to have been managed as a coppice management demonstration site. A variety of tree species including hazel, alder, rowan and willow had been managed on a rotational basis.

This has now been superseded and brought back to life as detailed in a separate coppice plan in part three of this plan.

Ground Flora

The ground flora is variable and includes a wide range of bryophyte, lichen and vascular plant combinations. The former settling pond contains extensive areas of marsh horsetail with several types of mosses and leafy liverworts as well as a number of typical wetland herbs. Tall herb communities, notably rosebay willow herb and ragwort have colonised many of the dryer woodland and grassland areas.

Natural grassland is scarce away from the vicinity of the North Pond while rushes are largely confined to an area north of the West Pond. Water horsetail and bottle sedge predominate on the shallower margins of the ponds whilst pondweeds and the unusual pillwort exist in the north pond. The rate of colonisation from the 1980s by emergent plants has led to sections of the West Pond becoming a sedge fen community.

Doone Ponds are extremely important in terms of their huge variety of fungi. Quite a few survey visits have taken place and 492 species identified and recorded. This number does not include many of the micro fungi (those whose reproductive structures are too small for the human eye to see). Perhaps the rarest fungi is Salmon Salad (*Guepinia helvelloides*) with Doone Ponds being the only location this has been found in Scotland. Quite a few other species are rarely found in Scotland. The site is special for fungi because the management has been that of a nature reserve and not a woodland used for commercial tree production. The high humidity and moisture levels have encouraged the establishment of wood rotting fungi and the abundance not only of dead wood on the ground but also dead branches on living trees which provide a habitat for different types of fungi to flourish.

200 vascular plants have been identified and recorded including the locally and nationally rare native aquatic fern Pilwort (*Pilularia globulifera*).

Fauna

The uninterrupted regeneration of scrub and wetland plants has led to a rapid colonisation of the site by a wide range of invertebrates including beetles, butterflies and dragonflies. At least 23 species of birds have been recorded as breeding within the site. Feeding and roosting Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) also frequent the site in autumn and winter. The resident waterfowl population is boosted in winter with birds attracted to the site by its sheltered location and food supply. In summer there are good numbers of Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) breeding on the site with Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), House and Sand Martins (*Delichon urbica* and *Riparia riparia*) feeding over the surface of the ponds.

A diverse bird community has moved in including several woodland species. The number of waterfowl is restricted by the limited open water available and the limited clear flight path to and from the ponds. Records from the mid 1970's note a variety of wading birds using the site. The rapidly encroaching scrub has now excluded the majority of the waders although numbers of Oystercatchers can still be seen.

Voles, field mice and common shrews occur in the undergrowth, moles and possibly hedgehogs are present. The small mammals attract visiting stoats, foxes and kestrels. Red squirrels, roe and red deer are present in the wooded areas, originating from the woods to the north. Rabbits have caused some erosion of the banks, especially in the northern part. At the western end of the site there exists a scots pine and beech plantation of approx. 1.29Ha which provides a suitable habitat for a small local population of red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) but are not yet in residence.

Aquatic

The deeper North Pond and Central Pond are believed to contain some pike and perch. Prior to the access agreement the owners permitted a limited number of persons to fish the North and Central Ponds and until 1981 local BASC members issued unofficial permits to local youths. Fishing is no longer permitted.

Around 50 resident birds, primarily Mallard but also a small population of tufted ducks, swans and coots, utilise Central and northern ponds. The population of ducks on Central Pond probably could prove detrimental to water quality, aquatic plant and invertebrate life. The North Pond which is less populated by ducks has a record of the nationally rare native aquatic fern Pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*). The present day existence of the species requires confirmation and where necessary specific management.

The group may consider carrying out water quality checks from time to time.

Physical

Climate

The Doune area has a climate typical of West-Central Scotland with a mean temperature ranging from 3°C in January to 14°C in July. The slope to the North protects the site from cold northerly winds. Prolonged frost can be a feature in late winter. Rainfall is in the order of 1000 – 1225 mm per annum. As most precipitation occurs in autumn and winter the underlying water table can rise by at least 1m from October to April.

Geology

The site is situated on the northern edge of the post-glacial flood plain of the River Teith. The northern bank is the base of the slope rising northwards to the Braes of Doune. The underlying geology is lower Old Red Sandstone. Substantial deposits of fluvioglacial sand and gravel containing Dalradian schists and quartzite (Broomhouse Formation) were deposited by the meltwaters after the Main late-Devensian ice sheet began to retreat about 13000 years ago.

The Standing Stone in the south-eastern main entrance of the site is a particularly interesting 'erratic' of schist left behind by the melting ice sheet.

Geomorphology

The approximate altitude of the site after levelling is 37m with the western half being especially flat owing to its former use as a settling pond. The remains of this can now be seen in the shallow West Pond while the North and Central Ponds are deeper as a direct result of excavation. The western and southern edges are marked by peripheral embankments while the banks in the area east of the Central Pond form part of the landscaping work.

Hydrology

The two excavated ponds are relatively deep with the North Pond being up to 3m in depth and the Central Pond being up to 1.5m in depth. The West Pond averages a mere 0.5m and can almost dry up in late summer. Apart from a drainage ditch along the western perimeter there is no marked surface drainage feature. In winter a piped stream issuing from the woodland on the northern boundary flows into the North Pond and there is a westward seepage of excess surface water from the area north of the West Pond which discharges into the boundary drainage ditch. Island Pond was dug out in 1983 and the water level here, as in the other ponds can rise by at least 1m during the winter months.

Soil characteristics

Past excavation work has removed most of the original topsoil although some of this is still contained in the peripheral banks consisting of rich sandy loam. The western area north of the West Pond is consolidated silt and clay. Some unworked clay and gravel deposits may remain between the Central and West Ponds. Digging in the eastern part uncovered coarse glacial soils with quantities of buried concrete pipes and other assorted debris resulting from the tipping by local firms. Most of the superficial tips of builders' rubble were buried during the landscaping in 1983.

Cultural & Aesthetic

Landscape

There is a large amount of water in the surrounding area but most of this is in the form of streams and rivers or lowland bogs making ponds such as Doune Ponds unusual and important.

Public benefit

Doune Ponds potential as a resource for environmental education is high. Doune Primary School and nurseries use the site regularly along with the local Scout, Guide and Community groups for both recreational and educational activities.

In terms of recreation Doune Ponds is a valuable local resource both for the village and for individuals and families from further afield.

Evaluation

Formal Status

Doune Ponds has no legal designation.

Rarity

Ponds and marshes are habitats that are under threat nationally and locally. Other water bodies in the vicinity include gravel pits at Blairdrummond and Cambusmore while larger natural water bodies exist at Loch Watson (SSSI) 2km to the south-west and Loch Mahaik (SSSI) 5.1km to the north. In addition, the River Teith which drains Lochs Katrine, Venechar and Lubnaig flows within 800m to the south of the site.

The nationally scarce pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*) has been recorded in the North Pond. At least 11 fungi found on the site are nationally rare. As a result Doune Ponds is considered to be a site of local and national importance in terms of its fungi and this combined with its amenity value should be high on the agenda when considering future management plans.

Vulnerability

Doune Ponds is vulnerable to the dynamic processes of regeneration by birch and willow. Doune Ponds flora and fauna is also vulnerable to the increasing load of public use due to an increase of houses in the area.

Diversity

There is a broad diversity of habitat types including open water, marsh, willow carr, birch wood, pine plantation, heath, gravel banks and herb rich grassland. Species lists are not complete except for fungal flora records which indicate an exceptionally wide range of species to date. Accurate land use records are available from 1950. Bird and plant records from 1978 and fungi records from 1986.

Appendix 2: Froglife Pond Restoration Project

Site Background and Description

Doune Ponds is a former sand and gravel extraction quarry but has been managed for wildlife since the 1970s when extraction ceased. The site is owned by Moray Estates and was formerly managed by Stirling Council, but has been managed by Doune Community Woodland Group since 2014. Since taking over the community group have undertaken significant action to improve public access to the site while keeping a strong focus on managing habitats for wildlife. Improvements have included the installation of an accessible path which runs right round the site and a number of community events, such as family fun days, have been held on site in recent years. Doune Ponds is also regularly used by Doune Primary School and nurseries, along with the local Scout and Guide groups for both recreational and educational activities.

Current Management and Volunteering

Doune Ponds has an existing management plan in place, which runs from 2014-2024 and aims to improve the site for both people and wildlife. The site is entirely managed by volunteers, with a regular group meeting on a Wednesday. The running of corporate volunteering days is also used to help with management.

Site Proposals

Need for Site Works

There are three existing waterbodies on site. Two very large ponds, North Pond and Central Pond, are both believed to contain fish and support a number of waterfowl species. Aquatic vegetation is very limited in both these ponds and they are not considered particularly suitable for amphibian breeding. The third pond is smaller in size and does not currently hold water through enough of the year to allow for amphibians to breed successfully. The site would greatly benefit from the restoration of this pond as it would provide a much-needed diversity of aquatic habitat, benefiting different species and allowing for amphibian breeding.

Specification

An existing pond, which has succumbed to succession, is to be restored to provide suitable breeding habitat for common frog and other amphibian species. The pond was dry at the time of site visit and is significantly overgrown. Vegetation and silt will be removed to form a deeper pond with gently sloping banks. The new pond will be lined to ensure that it holds water year-round and can therefore be used for breeding by amphibians.

Doune Community Woodland Group have worked hard to make the Doune Ponds site accessible to all. The pond to be restored can currently be viewed from a boardwalk path which is linked to the main path via short sections of track. One section of track has quite a shallow gradient (see image below), however the other section is quite steep. In order to enable everyone to view the pond following its restoration an additional section of boardwalk will be added to create a loop, thereby enabling both entry and exit via the gently sloped track.



Figure 2 Pond to be restored – overgrown and dry at the time of site visit



Figure 3 Current public access to pond via single section of boardwalk

Access and Welfare Facilities

Access is via Station Wynd. Care should be taken to limit disruption and damage to the smallest possible working area. Welfare facilities are not available on site and will need to be provided by the contractor.

Pond restoration (incl. lining)

- Mark out new pond and levels and excavate, creating gently sloping banks, shallow marginal shelves and an anchor trench for the liner
- An experienced contractor will be used to re-excavate the pond to a new size of 15m x 20m, with a final depth of 1.5 metres at the deepest point, allowing for underlay beneath liner, overlay and 300mm of subsoil covering liner
- Remove all stones, roots and debris at the surface of the formation level that may subsequently damage the liner. Tamp down the formation level to form an even finish, rechecking for sharp stones
- Excavated spoil is to be retained on site. Some subsoil is to be used to cover liner, remaining spoil is to be used to create basking banks and to cover hibernaculum
- Lay a suitable geotextile underlay across the whole of the excavated and prepared profile and finish in anchor trench. Install in accordance with manufacturer's/supplier's instructions
- Install a suitable liner on top of underlay and finish in anchor trench. Install in accordance with manufacturer's/supplier's instructions
- Lay a suitable heavy-duty geotextile overlay on top of the liner and finish in anchor trench. Install in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- Fill anchor trench and cover the liner and geotextile layers with 300mm of subsoil and tamp to even finish
- Underlay, liner and overlay to be specified by contractor, with justification for choice

Terrestrial Works

- Brash and logs resulting from clearance around the pond restoration will be used to create hibernacula close to all the ponds on site, offering additional hibernation habitat
- Volunteer sessions will be utilised to carry out terrestrial habitat management for the benefit of amphibians on the site

Strategy

Froglife will coordinate the project, in full consultation with Doune Ponds site staff, and all works will be supervised by a Froglife staff member. Following completion of the works Froglife staff will revisit the site in years 1, 3, 5 and 10 to carry out monitoring surveys and assess management requirements. The site staff and volunteers will be provided with training on managing the created and restored habitats and on amphibian survey techniques to enable them to manage and monitor the site in the future.

Appendix 3: Coppice Management Plan for Kate's Corner

Aims of the coppice project

- To manage the site (Kate's Corner) under a coppice regime.
- To bring community benefit in terms of new skills, walks, materials and education.
- To identify uses for coppiced products for use within the site and locally.
- To maintain and enhance the amenity and native biodiversity.
- To improve the aesthetic look of the coppice area.

The Coppice Regime

Coppicing has been practiced at least since the Iron Age. Felling a broadleaved tree promotes regrowth from its stump (called a stool). Coppicing takes advantage of this by felling trees and clearing undergrowth in separate compartments, at different times to achieve two aims. The provision of a useful product and the creation of a more diverse habitat that is very attractive to plants, animals and humans.

A Coppice regime is a method of managing a woodland area in order to produce a crop of timber regularly – on a 'coppice cycle'.

The coppice cycle refers to the splitting up of an area into compartments with different ages of trees with each compartment being planted, thinned and harvested in different years producing an on-going coppice product. The regime planned here is a 'short rotation' i.e. 7 – 10 years from 5 compartments of varying ages.

The Coppice Rotation and planting

The rotation for hazel and osier is short – 7 years and for the ash, birch and alder is longer possibly up to 11 years. This is determined both by their growth rates and end products and the species of tree we decide to plant – this may need to be revisited once the regime is established.

The rotation also depends on the number of compartments which we set out to establish – the current plan is to set up 5 compartments although this could be extended to other areas in the future.

Up to three times as much light reaches the ground floor after harvesting of the coppice product. With less canopy to stop light, dormant seeds germinate, new plants which have survived the shade thrive. More plants mean more flowers and butterflies visit more often. Fungi and insects, such as woodlice and beetles and the habitat piles will soon become thriving homes.

Once the area is cleared of ground vegetation and tree felling completed it is our desire to use hand tools only.

Coppicing

This is a wintertime job though it can be carried out later into the spring than planting. Ideally coppicing should be finished by the end of April otherwise the new shoots emerge late in the summer and are still small by the following winter. Cut coppice stems cleanly to near ground level taking care not to damage the bark.

Potential coppice products

Once the saplings reach suitable size then it will be possible to produce traditional coppice products sourced from our managed coppice.

Beanpoles, pea sticks and other plant supports, fencing and other garden structures, hedge stakes are just a few of the sustainable products which could be produced.

Operational tasks

Maintain regular clearance of brambles and general undergrowth to enable easy access and control in each of the 5 compartments.

Clear and stack any small saplings and scrub bushes which will immediately allow much more daylight into the compartments and which will encourage new growth.

Moray Estates will identify any trees which require felling and then cut them to a manageable size. The cut timber can either be sold or used on site and the brush used to create a boundary fence.

Plant remaining compartments with a selection of rowan, wild cherry, silver birch, common oak, field maple and grey willow and protect them with staked poly tubes to allow healthy growth.

The coppice fence will be completed to form a boundary around the entire coppice area.

Gradually introduce a programme of thinning at each of the coppice compartments when the trees reach usable maturity.

Coppice Plan Reviews

Initially carry out quarterly reviews to check on progress and update the plan as necessary. Thereafter carry out annual reviews as part of the Management Plan review process.

Appendix 4: Invertebrate Conservation Plan

Nick Cooke, CLEAR Services

Much of the woodland and other habitat at Doune Ponds has developed over the last 50 years and is now being influenced by selective coppicing, which has considerable value for monitoring the rate of species colonisation by Lepidoptera. Recently, there has been a massive increase in public awareness of the value of moths and butterflies as environmental indicators, along with public concern over the significant decline in their population across much of the UK. As pollinators and part of the food chain for birds etc, invertebrates such as Lepidoptera are a key component of Doune Ponds as an important 'new' wildlife habitat.

Much of the Doune Ponds area is currently a birch woodland monoculture which provides an attractive amenity but has a relatively limited biodiversity. Similarly, the former open wetland areas, e.g. to the north of the West Pond, are now drying out and being overtaken by scrub vegetation and trees as part of a natural succession – a dynamic process that will reduce biodiversity without active intervention. The overall aim should be to create a 'mosaic' of woodland, open glades, paths, wetland and open water.

I suggest the Plan includes a new Objective to increase and monitor invertebrate diversity and abundance.

Actions to implement this in 2020 – 24 could include:

- a) Establish two new glades within the birch woodland similar in size to the current area at Kate's Corner by coppicing trees and encouraging ground flora / nectaring plants for pollinating insects, and maintain these as open areas with removal of bramble and willow herb scrub as necessary.
- b) Create a bare earth bank or scrape in one of the two new open glade areas in (a)
- c) Plant bankside aquatic plants / pondweed etc at Dipping Pond
- d) Remove fallen trees etc and excavate as necessary to re-establish an open wetland/marsh habitat to the northern extension of the West Pond
- e) Do the same with the Island Pond and excavate a shallow watercourse channel with the West Pond, in conjunction with (c)
- f) Carry out a survey of main invertebrate families (dragonflies, butterflies /moths, bees/ wasps) to establish and maintain a database of records. I have started to compile a database of Lepidoptera records based on periodic moth trapping visits over the past 2 years, which I would be keen to continue. These records are submitted to the County Moth Recorder, David Bryant, who has published a very good local field guide on moths.

Actions (b) (d) and (e) will require use of a mechanical digger. In all cases, a programme of annual maintenance work will need to be put in place to maintain the habitat value.

Actions (b) and (c) will provide scope to involve Doune Primary School children in educational projects to monitor the increase in invertebrate species resulting from the enhanced habitats.

Action (f) will generate a permanent record of Doune Ponds invertebrate wildlife which can be publicly accessible via the Kilmadock Heritage & Information Centre.

Nick Cooke, CLEAR Services

June 2020

Appendix 5: Scottish Land Commission Report

Following on from a visit to Doune Ponds sponsored by Scottish Land and Estates in March 2019, representatives of the Scottish Land Commission who attended the event, asked if the management of the Ponds could be used as a case study for their series of Community Engagement in land use and land management. We were very happy to do this and the case study below was published in December 2019.

DOUNE PONDS – MANAGING THE LAND IN PARTNERSHIP

Moray Estates and Doune Community Woodland Group

Overview

A former gravel and sand quarry, Doune Ponds is a 40-acre Local Nature Reserve owned by Moray Estates and managed in partnership with Doune Community Woodland Group (DCWG) since 2014. Moray Estates initially approached the community through the Kilmadock Community Council (CC) to explore local involvement, and after positive response DCWG was set up.

Approach

Doune Ponds is actively managed by DCWG, Kilmadock CC, and Moray Estates. A ten-year Management Agreement (2014-2024) is in place between Moray Estates and DCWG, with a focus on restoration, access and conservation.

A nine-member Management Group was created to hold overall responsibility: Moray Estates hold a permanent place along with two CC representatives. Monthly meetings have resulted in an effective partnership between landowner and community, sharing liability, investment, skills and ideas and working towards their 10-year plan.

Achievements and Benefits

The active management of Doune Ponds has seen an area of neglected land regenerated into an accessible, well-used community greenspace: 1,400 metres of new footpath, steps, footbridges, bird hides and picnic benches have been installed and many existing paths refurbished. A haven for wildlife and biodiversity, the reserve is home to ducks, swans, roe deer, red squirrels, pike and perch, as well as being an important site for fungi.

Active involvement has given the community a strong sense of ownership. Used daily by walkers and regularly by groups including the school, Doune Ponds is a valued public amenity: it won the Small Community Woodland Award in 2017 and was Highly Commended in 2019 at the Scottish Finest Woods Awards.

A key benefit of land-owners and communities working side-by-side is the opportunity it allows both to get to know each other, building a relationship based on open, regular communication. Moray Estates recognises that this has led to further partnership working with the Doune community and is committed to community engagement on future development plans for the estate.

Volunteers are the lynchpin of the partnership's success. DCWG currently has 45 members who have volunteered 7,000 hours to date. The majority are retirees who take pride in developing a site that has value for the wider community and environment. Wednesdays have become 'site day' where volunteers gather, share the

workload and enjoy the company – a valuable social benefit in itself. Lady Moray often joins them for a cup of tea and chat.

Moray Estates invests financially and through in-kind support from staff, while DCWG has accessed grants, community benefit funding from a local windfarm, community donations, and in-kind plant hire and materials. Combined with volunteer hours, this has transformed the site in a very short time. The shared liability for Doune Ponds is valued by both Moray Estates and DCWG.

What's Next

Happy with the relationship and way of working, Moray Estates and DCWG believe that this model would benefit landowners, communities and the sustainable management of small woodlands across Scotland. Having identified few challenges, the Management Group is focusing on volunteer succession, proactively planning and recruiting for this. There is a long-term commitment to continue managing Doune Ponds in partnership, maintaining it as a productive, valued community asset.

Find Out More

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Appendix 6: DCWG Volunteering Policy



Doune Ponds

Managed by

DOUNE COMMUNITY WOODLAND GROUP

Information and Heritage Centre

61 – 63 Balkerach Street, Doune, FK16 6DF

Tel. No. 01786 841250

E-mail douneponds@gmail.com

Private & Confidential

This policy covers voluntary work and includes vulnerable children & adults and youngsters up to the age of 18 who are engaged in any volunteering capacity at Doune Ponds.

Protecting Vulnerable Adults, Children and teenagers under 18 years of age.

Children & adults deemed to be vulnerable will only be allowed to carry out specific volunteering duties when accompanied by a parent or qualified carer who has overall responsibility for them and will work with them at all times.

Teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 will be allowed to carry out specific volunteering duties only when the permission of their parent or guardian has been given for them to do so and who will be supervised by two or more adult volunteers.

Children under twelve will only be allowed to carry out specific volunteering duties when accompanied by their parent or guardian and who are responsible for their welfare.

Safeguarding

ADULTS at RISK are at risk of harm because

- they are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests
- they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected

The following are the main forms of harm that have been identified:

- Physical – pushing, shoving
- Sexual - unwanted/non-consensual touching; sexual comments
- Psychological/emotional - humiliation; blaming; controlling; privacy removed
- Financial or material - use or misuse of money or property
- Neglect and Acts of Omission nutrition, clothing, heating privacy or dignity
- Discriminatory - age, gender, disability, race, colour, cultural, sexual/religious
- Information – withholding excluding
- Human Rights - liberty, fair hearing, freedom of speech or religion

Anyone can abuse and harm others and the harm may be perpetrated with or without deliberate intent.

Equal Opportunities

DCWG is committed to providing equality of opportunity in volunteering, and to eliminating any discrimination based on age, disability, economic status, ethnic or national origin, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

Diversity

DCWG is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make the project more effective in meeting the needs of all concerned.

We are committed to developing and maintaining an initiative in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences can participate and contribute. We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity.

Health and Safety

It is the policy of DCWG to provide and maintain safe working conditions and systems of work and to provide training as necessary for this purpose.

DCWG Management team has overall responsibility for the policies and it is part of their role to ensure their implementation.

Volunteers must adhere to all instructions of the leader on the day and can only use tools and equipment when they have demonstrated they are competent to do so. Any breach can result in the volunteer being asked to leave.

Accident/Incident Procedures

Any Accident or Incident must be reported for any situation where a volunteer becomes injured or distressed.

Should an accident require first aid then the volunteer should seek medical from a trained volunteer and the incident reported to the project leader.

Fire Safety

Volunteers are not allowed to light any fires at Doune Ponds

Confidentiality

DCWG will endeavor to maintain the confidentiality of volunteers who are supporting and working alongside each other through the following procedures;

Only information about the volunteer that is directly relevant to the volunteering relationship will be given to the volunteer

Volunteers must not pass on any information to others

All information held by DCWG regarding a volunteer will remain confidential.

Managing Difficult Volunteer Situations

To maintain supportive and effective volunteering it is our policy to deal with any volunteering issues, whether raised by a volunteer or about a volunteer, appropriately and efficiently.

Volunteers must always act in the best interests of Doune Community Woodland Group and Moray Estates, the landowners. Inappropriate behavior could lead to a volunteer being asked to leave.

Health

I confirm I am fit and healthy and able to carry out the required tasks.

Personal details

Name:	
Address:	
Mobile number:	
Email address:	
Emergency contact name:	
Relation to volunteer:	
Emergency telephone number:	
Please confirm any medication or health issues so our first aiders so they are aware of your situation.	

Signed:

Date: