

# Community engagement in rural and urban communities across Northern Ireland with green space

Stephen Duggan  
Contracts Manager



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# We are the Woodland Trust

- We are the UK's largest woodland conservation charity
- Our vision is a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and for wildlife
- Protect, Restore & Create



# In Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland is one of the least-wooded countries in Europe, with just 8% woodland cover
- 10% in the Republic of Ireland
- 13% across the UK
- European average of 46%



# In Northern Ireland

- The Woodland Trust cares for 50 woods across Northern Ireland
- Only 7% of people in Northern Ireland have access to a wood larger than 2 hectares within 500 metres of their home



# Social benefits of woodland

Include:

- Health
- Education
- Social inclusion



*Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast*

# Health – psychological benefits

“The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God”

*The Diary of Anne Frank*



# Health – psychological benefits

- ‘Green’ exercise
- ‘Green’ surroundings



# Health – physical benefits

- Trees and woodland provide fantastic opportunities for physical recreation
- Trees improve air quality
- A more appealing place to go exercise!

Burntollet Wood,  
Derry/Londonderry





# Welcome Site Programme

- 10 year Strategic plan (2015-2025)
- Targets to improve the visitor experience to our estate
- Uplift of 250 sites across the UK
- Improved signage, access infrastructure, web-presence and engagement activities
- A better visitor experience

*“There will be a suite of sites where we focus our infrastructure, engagement & demonstration efforts to create a better visitor experience. Whilst all sites will conform to a minimum standard, 250 sites will have clearer branding, enhanced focused engagement activities, improved entrances and access infrastructure”*

# Welcome Site Programme

- Accommodate an uplift in visitor numbers by 5-20%
- Onsite or local car parking provision and/or good public transport links
- Have intrinsic values and key features – scenic walks, views, bluebells etc.
- Able to attract other groups/organisations to use them
- Evidence that any anti-social behaviour can be cost-effectively addressed



# Making Our Woods Accessible

- ✓ Burntollet Wood 2017
  - ✓ Throne Wood 2017
  - ✓ Monkstown Wood 2018
  - ✓ Canal Wood 2018
- We will focus initially on our top 15 sites
  - Aim to roll out to the rest of our estate in future



# Making our woods accessible

- Throne Wood, Antrim Road, north Belfast (urban)
- Canal Wood, Poyntzpass, near Newry (rural)



# Throne Wood



# Throne Wood



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# Canal Wood



# Canal Wood





# Canal Wood



# Visitor Surveys



Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

The purpose of this survey is to find out how you use Canal Wood and how you think we could improve the site to provide a better experience for everyone.

It shouldn't take longer than 5 minutes and all the information you provide us with will be held in the strictest confidence.

1. What is your postcode? We just want to know how far people have come.

POSTCODE:

2. How long have you been visiting this woodland?

Less than 1 year  1-3 years  Over 3 years  This is my first visit

3. How many people (including yourself) are usually in your party when visiting Canal Wood? If this is your first visit, how many people are in your party today?

	Males	Females		Males	Females
Children under 5			Adults aged 17 – 24		
Children aged 6 -11			Adults aged 25 – 44		
Children aged 12 – 16			Adults aged 45 – 64		
			Adults aged 65+		

4. How many dogs are with the party?

No. of dogs:

5. How often do you visit this wood and with whom (on your own, with family and/or with friends)?

	Alone (inc. with dog)	With family members	With friends
More than once a day			
Daily (at least once a day)			
Often (at least twice a week / 8 times a month)			
Weekly (at least once a week / 4 times a month)			
Fortnightly (at least once every 2 weeks / 2 times a month)			
Monthly (at least once a month / 12 times a year)			
Annually (at least once a year)			
First time / one off visit			

6. If you usually visit with friends/family, would you consider visiting the woods alone?

Yes No

If no – why not?

7. What is your primary purpose for visiting Canal Wood?

Walking the dog	Education	Volunteering
Leisure walk	Running or jogging	Picnicking
Birdwatching / watching wildlife	Tranquillity / peace & quiet	Just passing through
Family outing	Getting some fresh air	Photography
Fun for children	Enjoying scenery or landscape	Geocaching
Looking at wild flowers / trees		
Other reason (please specify):		

8. How did you travel here today?

Walk	Public bus
Bicycle	Coach (organised trip)
Motorbike	Other
Car	

9. How long did it take you to get here?

<15 mins  30-60 mins  15-30 mins  1 hour +

10. How long do you usually spend at Canal Wood?

< 1 hour  1-2 hours  Half day  Full day

11. How important are the following site qualities to you?

	Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Neither Important or Not Important	Not Important
Car parking facilities				
Ease of access on site (good paths, flat surfaces etc)				
Ease of orientation – marked routes, site maps etc.				
Access to facilities (toilets/café)				
The variety of plants and animals				
Views				

# Visitor Surveys

"I had a delightful walk to the wood on Sunday and admired your good work. It is lovely to see the bluebells and primroses, and easy to imagine them carpeting the wood in years to come. It is a very special place, thanks to all you have done"

"During the summer, an evening event would be nice"

"I visit here with a cycle group of adults with learning disabilities who love this place. Great work. Keep it up"

"Off late my knees have become more painful and the unevenness of pathway through woodland limits me walking it at times"

"A lovely little wood. I'll visit again"

# Going forward...

- Faughan Valley Landscape Project
- Aim to replicate our success with the volunteer group at Canal Wood
- Focus on promoting health & well-being



# Thank you for listening

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

[StephenDuggan@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:StephenDuggan@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

02891 275 787



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