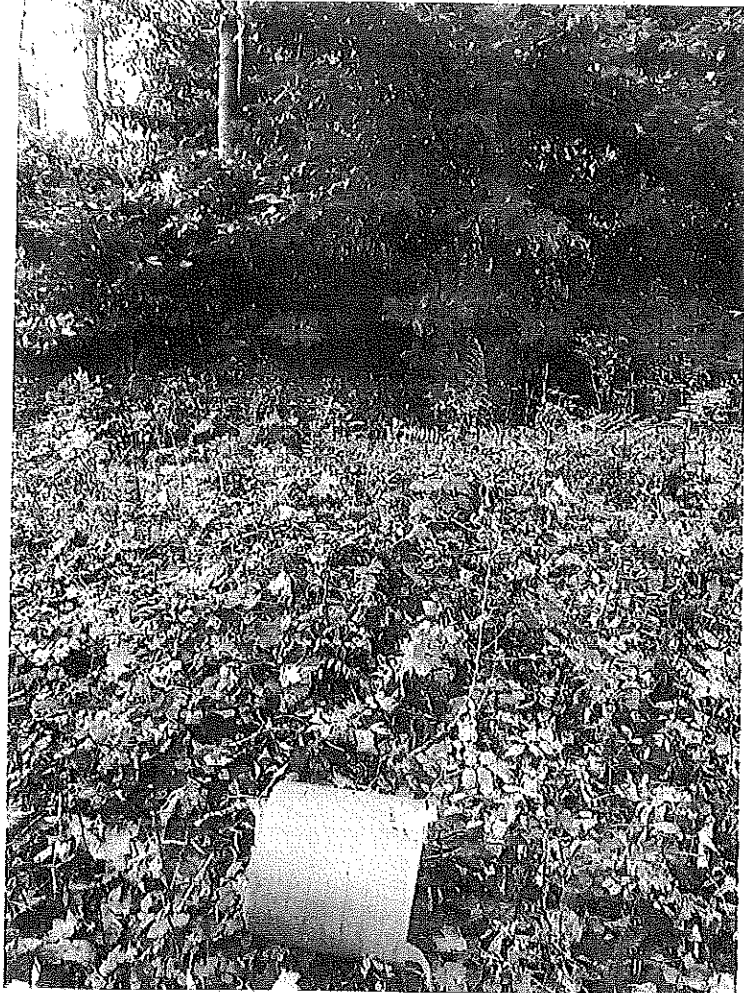


Castle Wood Management Report Update



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for Helensburgh Community Woodlands Group

C. Key issues

C1 Invasive Species

C2 Water Management

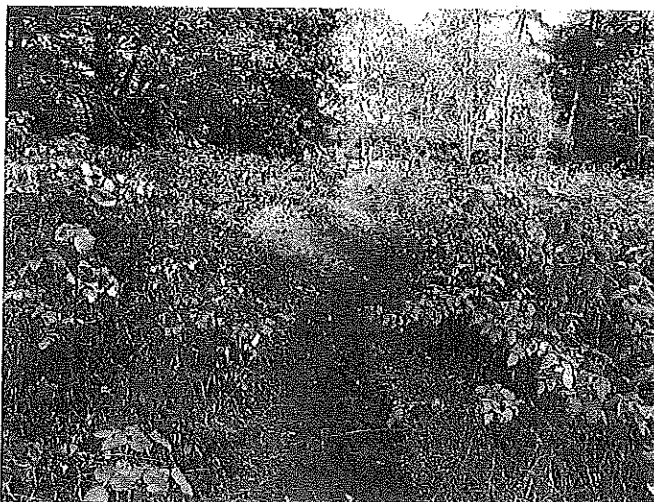
C3 Boundary Issues

C4 Human Activity

C. Key Issues

C1 Invasive Species

The area of laurel on the southern boundary has increased in width since 2015. Most noticeable has been the rapid expansion of laurel and *Rhododendron ponticum* in the rest of the wood and particularly towards the northern boundary. This is reducing access as well as shading out native plants and wild flowers, giving the wood an increasingly gloomy and unkempt appearance. Neither of these species is native to Scotland.



Another problem is the recent expansion of wild raspberry and bramble across the open glade area in the north west part of the wood. Although both of these ruderals are native species, their vigorous growth has transformed an area of open grassland suitable for family picnics, outdoor games and sitting in the sun into an area of scrub, suitable only

for walking through, along a muddy path.

C2 Water Management

No action has been taken with the open ditches which run through the wood. They join and then discharge through the soil halfway along the southern boundary. This results in the back gardens of adjacent properties being permanently waterlogged. There is also seepage out into the street where it will freeze in cold weather.

The quality of the water in the ditches also appears to have deteriorated and has an increasingly stagnant appearance with a sheen on the surface. This could lead to increased populations of mosquitoes and other undesirable insects.

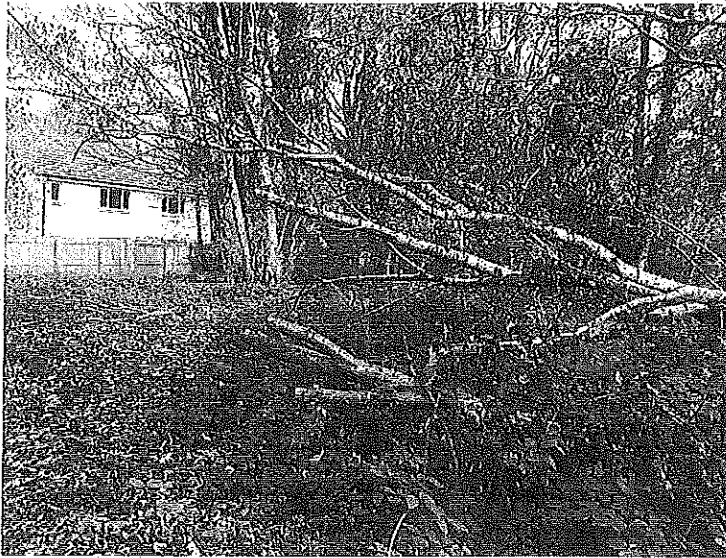


The water table for a large section of the wood, towards the eastern end, remains high and this is having a deleterious effect on the trees growing there. It is likely that trees will die and be blown over. Some could reach fences and adjacent properties. Ash trees are already suffering from Chalara disease and the high water table is affecting their resilience.

C3 Boundary Issues

The northern boundary next to the sports ground remains open and an invitation to dump rubbish in the woods. A few of the trees are suffering from grey squirrel damage. Some

overhanging branches have been sawn off and left in situ. The edge of the wood looks unkempt and uncared for. The new housing development to the west of the wood is secured by a new 6' high wooden fence. There has been no garden waste tipped over this fence to date but this is a risk.



Only one or two dangerous trees on the boundary appear to have been felled out of the 22 identified, leaving others which could be considered to be dangerous. The arisings have been left heaped up in the wood. This could be considered a fire risk, especially as a couple of drinking dens are located nearby.

A couple of small trees have blown down in the south west corner of the wood. Someone has sawn the ends off where they blocked the main desire line. Other trees have blown over elsewhere in the wood and are affecting access through the wood.

C4 Human Activity

Anti Social Behaviour has got worse since 2015. The whole of the wood is littered with bottles, cans, bags of rubbish and individual items of plastic and metal. In one place 5 or 6 black plastic bags have been dumped. There are a couple of fire sites where plastic and other items have been partially burned. The northern edge is particularly poor but overall it's quite depressing.



Conclusions

Overall, the wood has significantly deteriorated since the previous survey and Management Plan in early 2015. It looks increasingly derelict and abandoned. Access has been compromised and it currently functions only as a landscape feature, a short cut and a site for anti-social behaviour. There will always be some residual biodiversity value but this is far below its potential. The wood is crying out for management by the local community.

Donald McPhillimy

30 October 2019