

Public perspectives of woodland creation, expansion, management, and maintenance

Woodland walk discussion groups in Wales, England, and Scotland



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Contents

This document presents the findings from three woodland walk discussion groups carried out by Forest Research as part of a core-funded work programme.

- Background
- Methodology
- The three study locations
 - Craig Gwladus, Wales
 - Gair Wood, England
 - Carmunnock, Scotland
- Summary



Background

The Science and Innovation Strategy for forestry in Great Britain

The [Science and Innovation Strategy for forestry in Great Britain](#), published in autumn 2020, provided a cross-border statement of research needs to underpin sustainable management and expansion of woodlands and forests.

Forest Research delivered seven research programmes over five years (2021–2026) to address those research needs. This slide pack relates to work undertaken in [Programme 3](#).



BACKGROUND

Programme 3

This document summarises the findings from three woodland walk discussion groups from Wales, England, and Scotland in 2023 and 2024. The discussion groups followed an [evidence review](#) carried out in 2022.

Societal benefits of trees, woods, and forests focuses on the wider societal wellbeing benefits of and relationships with trees and woodlands to explore how these change over time across the urban-rural continuum, and how to maintain and improve the delivery of these benefits as new treescapes are created and existing ones expanded.

Programme 3 has two work areas; this work was completed under Work Area 1: **Societal benefits of trees, woods, and forests**, which focuses on synthesising and updating existing evidence on how publics engage with trees, woods, and forests, and preferences for and understandings of choices made in managing and creating trees and landscapes.

BACKGROUND

Evidence review on public perspectives

In 2022 the project team completed a review to synthesise existing evidence about:

Public perspectives of treescape expansion, creation, management, and maintenance.

The review identified a number of gaps, including:

1. a need to understand more about British people’s perspectives on new peri-urban woodlands
2. public views about the management of ‘small’ woodlands, such as those in peri-urban locations, semi-rural locations, and agricultural landscapes.

Link to the report





Public perspectives of treescape creation, expansion, management and maintenance

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The Research Agency of the Forestry Commission

Methodology

To address some of the evidence gaps identified in the review, three woodland walk discussion groups were organised, as follows:

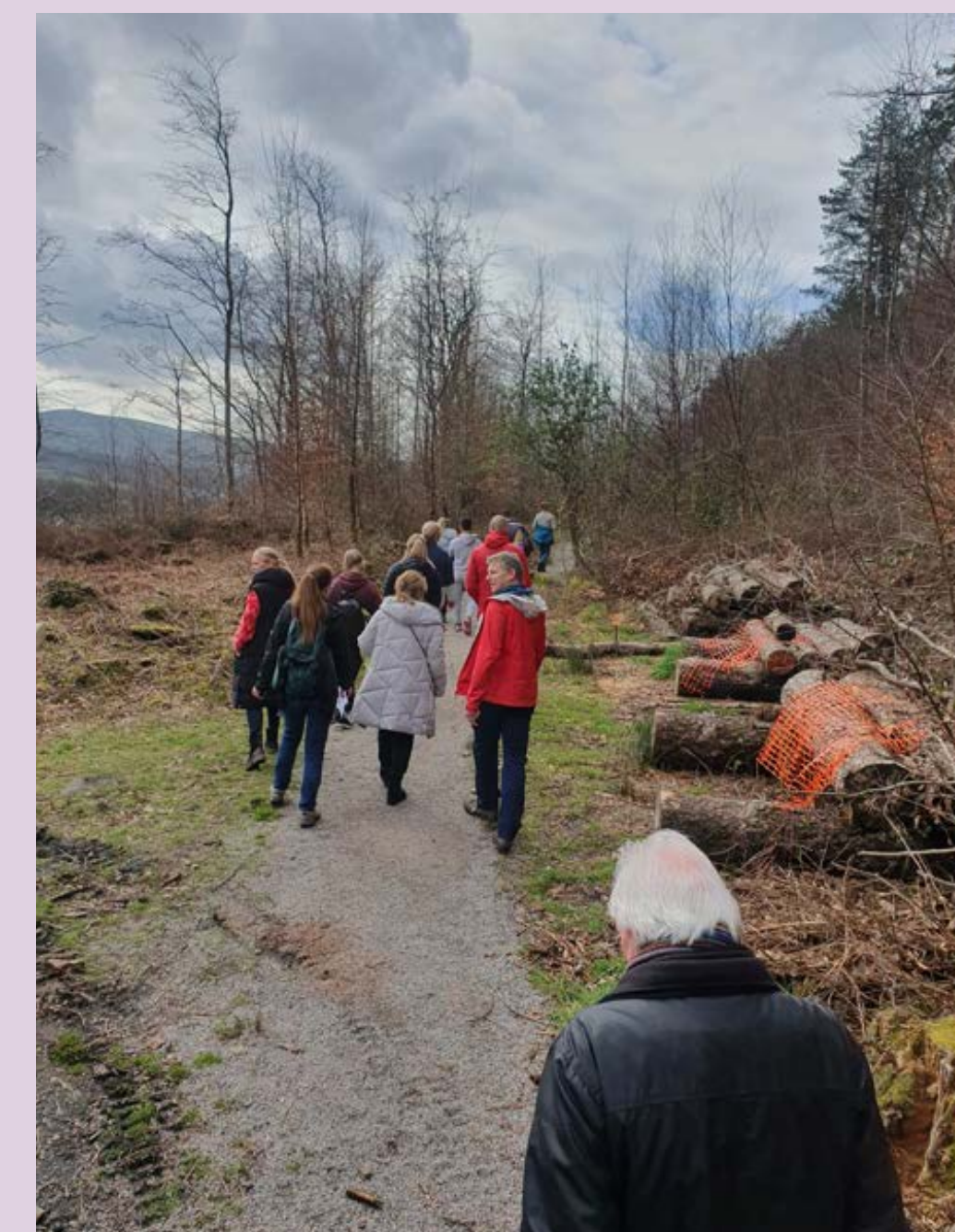
Wales March 2023 **11 participants**

England July 2023 **11 participants**

Scotland May 2024 **11 participants**

Discussion group components

- 1** Recruitment of participants from the local area who were not regular woodland visitors or active outdoor people.
- 2** Screener questionnaire (as part of the recruitment) including demographic questions.
- 3** Pre-walk short survey asking about their reasons for joining and for three words that come to mind when thinking about woodlands.
- 4** 2–2.5 hour woodland walk (participants split into two groups). The walks included 3–5 predetermined stops providing an opportunity to discuss different woodland management issues ‘in situ’ and gain peoples’ impressions and thoughts.
- 5** After-walk short survey asking about their experiences that day and for three words that come to mind when thinking about woodlands.
- 6** Reflections at the end of the walk, including a short talk about the area from a local woodland manager.



METHODOLOGY

What questions were asked?

Each of the woodland walks included 3–5 predetermined stops which provided an opportunity to discuss different woodland management issues 'in situ' and gain people's impressions and thoughts.

Open questions were asked at the stops in order to prompt discussion.

Example questions

Do you like what you see?

How does it make you feel?

What do you think about what is being done here?

Can you imagine what this might look like in years to come?

How does it compare to other places you might know?

What are your first impressions as you look around you?

What are your thoughts about what you see?

Do you know what is being done here?

The three study locations

In consultation with the Programme 3 steering group, three locations were identified for the discussion groups, one each in England, Scotland, and Wales. These three provided opportunity to discuss a range of issues in different contexts.



Craig Gwladus Wales

- Tree felling (coniferous and broadleaves)
- Re-planting (broadleaves)
- Natural regeneration after clear fell
- Volunteer management (scrub clearance)



Gair Wood England

- Established urban fringe managed park with wooded areas
- New tree planting on grazing land (saplings in tree guards planted same year)
- Mature unmanaged woodland with long distance footpath running through it
- Dead hedge barrier



Carmunnock Scotland

- Tree-lined walkway on village edge linking communities
- New planting on hillside fields (planting within deer fencing; 4-5 years old)
- Established (planted) unmanaged woodland
- Old coppice being brought back into coppice management

Findings

Structure of the results

In the next section the three discussion groups are presented, including the following information in each case:

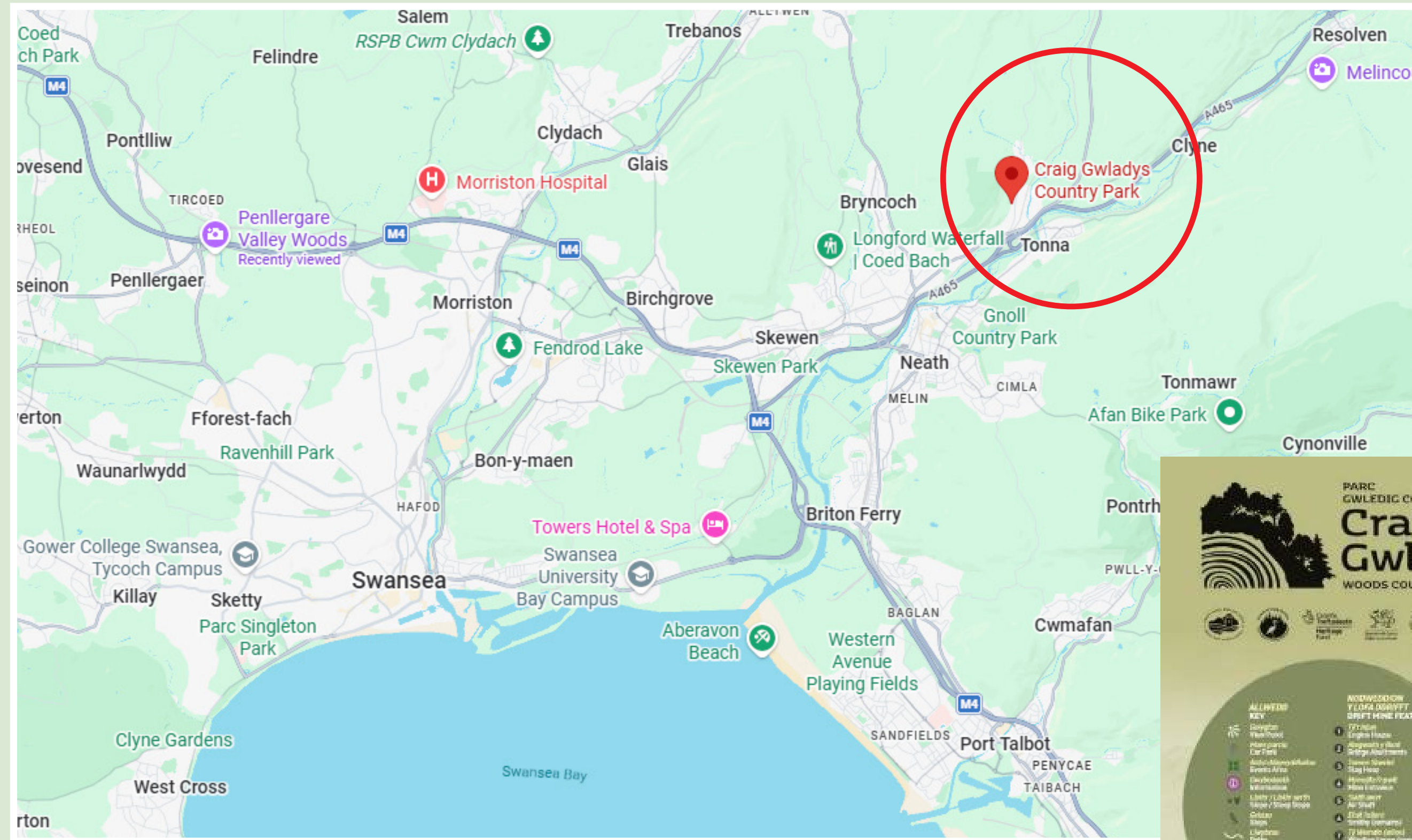
- Details of the location, including maps of the walking route
- Information about who participated
- Results from the 'before' and 'after' surveys
- Results including key themes and quotes from participants from each stop on each walk

FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

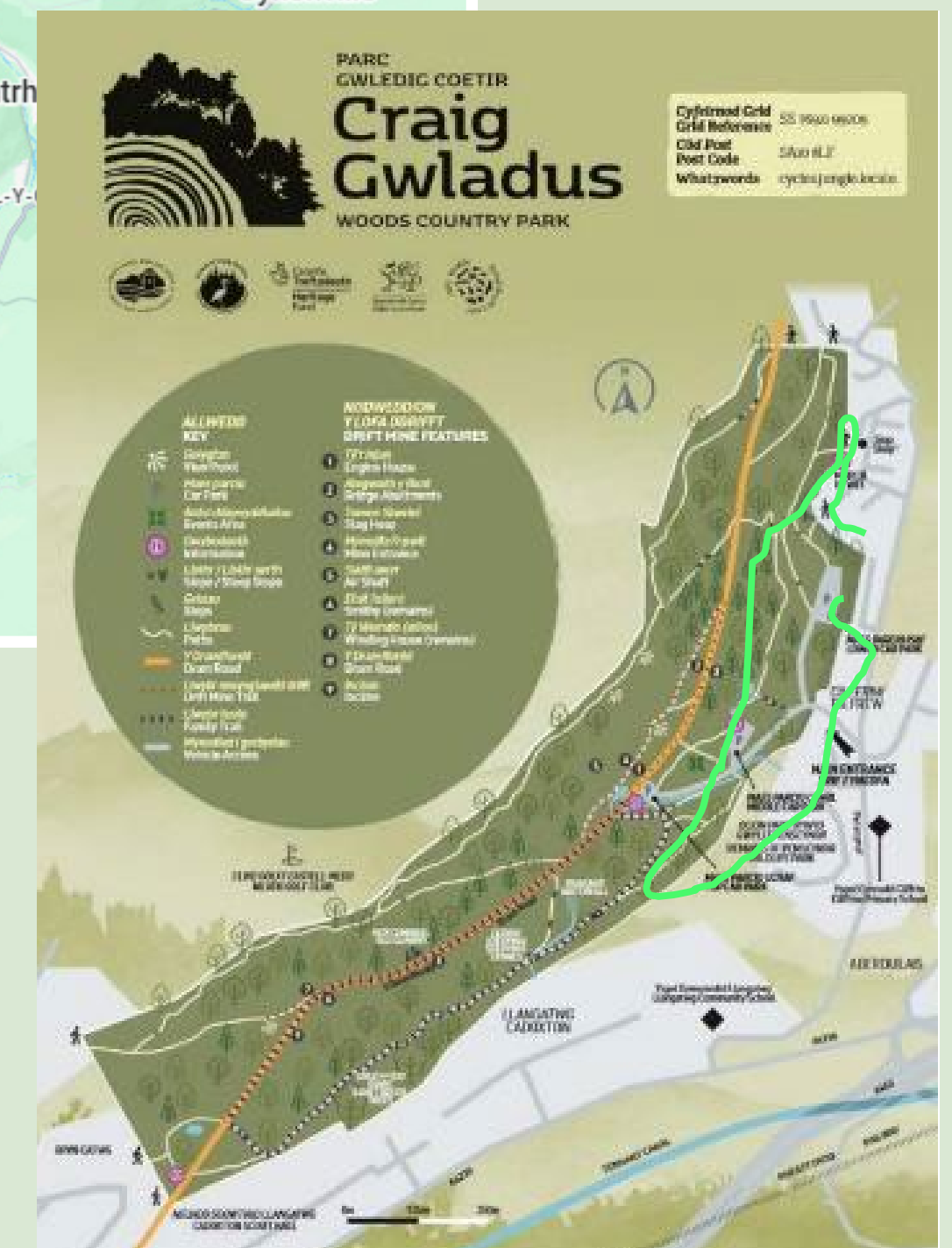
Woodland walk discussion group – March 2023

- Craig Gwladus is a well-established mixed woodland, spread over wooded slopes with a network of paths.
- The wood is 1.8 km by 300 m. It rises 150 m from the valley bottom and has views across the Neath Valley.
- There are car parks, picnic areas, interpretation boards, and remnants of the coal mining heritage.
- The woodland has a lot of community involvement through volunteers and youth groups.
- It is managed by Neath Port Talbot Council.



The map shows the location relative to Swansea. The green line on the map below shows the route walked.

Imagery © 2026, Map data © 2026 Google



FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus participants

Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Ethnicity
Male	80	A levels	Retired business owner	White British
Male	54	Degree	Teacher	White British
Male	42	A levels	Maintenance worker	White British
Female	19	GCSEs	Hospitality worker	White British
Female	49	Degree	Auditor	White British
Female	72	O levels	Retired hairdresser	White British
Female	27	Degree	Solicitor	White British
Male	22	Studying degree	Student	White/black Caribbean
Male	32	Degree	Hospitality manager	Greek/Korean Asian
Female	47	NVQ Level 4	Rehabilitation support worker	White British
Female	44	NVQ	Community support worker	White European

FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Participants were asked before and after the walk: 'What three words come to mind when you think of woodlands?'

The **more frequently** a word was mentioned the **larger** it appears in the word cloud.

These word clouds demonstrate how peoples' perspectives may be influenced by experience.



Pre-walk



Post-walk

FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Participants were asked why they decided to join the walk (before the start of the walk) and what the best thing was about the event (after the walk).

Results are presented here verbatim. Rows with the same colour are comments with a similar theme.

Why did you accept the invitation to join?
Interested
Generally interested
Because I was interested to find out the reasons for what is going on
To learn more
To learn more about woodlands in my area
Somewhere I'd never been
I like the outdoors
To experience outdoors
I enjoy outdoors

Best thing about today?
What I've learned – why things are done
Educated on what trees are in the woodland and what they bring to wildlife
Found out a lot of interesting facts about the woodland
Interesting
Getting outdoors
Having a walk
The walk
Have a reason to walk
Fresh air and exercise
The volunteers all coming together to help the woodland
Seeing the volunteers look after the woodland
Hearing how the workers make changes for the best
Seeing how the community is getting involved
Quiet, peaceful, and calm
Meet other people

FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 1: Inside the woodland

Stop 1 was just inside an entrance to the woodland from a residential street, at the back of houses (not the main entrance).

Theme	Example quotes
Reactions to the woodland: Positive	Very peaceful. Calm. It's quiet which is nice. Peace and quiet. It's nice actually. The view is lovely. Lovely colour.
Reactions to the woodland: Not positive	Disappointed. Other entrance is nicer. It's very muddy. The trees are quite damaged.
Opinions about the location	You've got a housing estate and it's on your doorstep. I think it's wonderful you've got a place like this [so near all the houses]. It must be incredible for these people [living here].

FINDINGS

Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 2: Felling carried out in November 2021

Stop 2 was along the path from Stop 1 and still at the back of the houses.



Theme	Example quotes
Reaction to tree felling	If you look at this landscape without trees, it'd be nothing, would it? Sad that they've cut the trees down. Looks like they've been cut down with no thought or care to them.
Aesthetics	It looks quite messy doesn't it? It's not very attractive. It does look just a little bit scruffy.
Lack of management	Everything's just been dumped everywhere. It just feels a bit abandoned here. They just chopped this down and it just looks left really.
Understanding why felling is necessary	I think [elsewhere] there was a lot of disease, is that why they were cutting the conifers down? And that's fine, you can understand that; maybe it was because they were unhealthy. I do think if they came down in a storm, they'd be through that [the row of houses alongside]. I'm just guessing they were unsafe but I don't know. Maybe too big ... if it's windy they are falling. They may have had to do it for light, I don't know.
Ideas for management (post-felling)	Maybe plant more trees. Like I've gone places that they've cut a tree down and then they make it into a little seat or something for the kids to make it still worthwhile. Yes, in some places ... they do those bee hotels things, don't they, out of the leftover stuff but it just feels a bit abandoned here. And like maybe some bench put here would be good for people. Like a picnic area because it's already clear and not everyone can walk too far. So if it's here, just sit and watch, it's nice.

FINDINGS

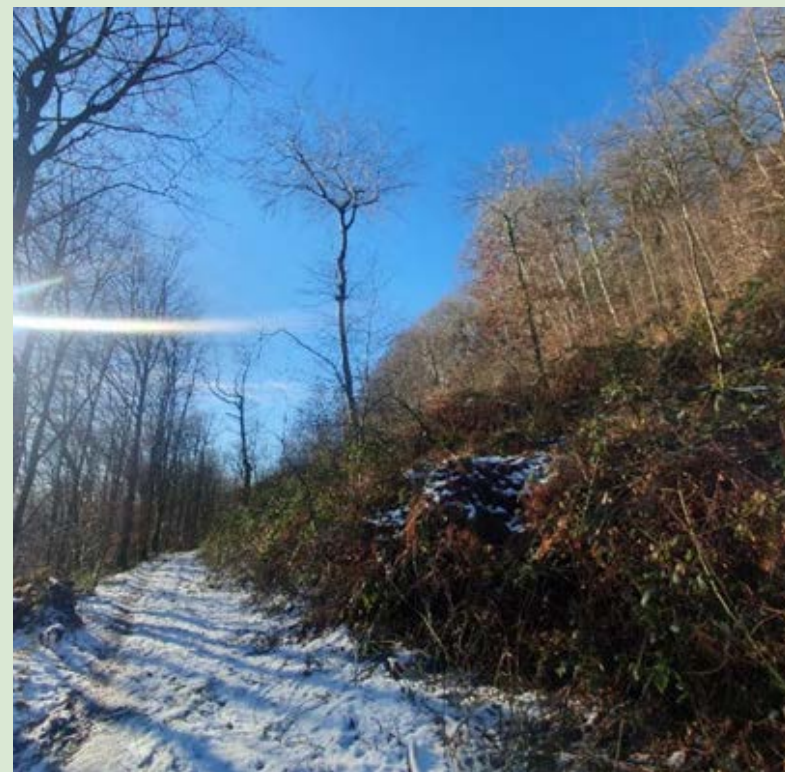
Craig Gwladus, Neath Port Talbot

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 3: Clear-felling of larch eleven years ago

Stop 3 was some distance from the first two stops, further up the valley side where larch trees had been felled 11 years ago and there was natural regeneration.

Theme	Example quotes
Aesthetics and sensory responses	There's no colour but I think it's nice. Any woodland to me is just good woodland. It's lovely and quiet. I like it because it is quiet and you can just hear the wind and the birds, it's not the busiest. You're just you and the woods, which is quite nice. It's more dense, a bit more enclosed really, which is nice.
What they think of natural regeneration	I think if it was 2012 [when the larch were felled] I can't believe how quickly it's come up - without planting as well Well it's, honestly, it's amazing. I can't believe they just grow naturally. I can't believe how big they are just in ten years as well.
What management they would like to see	I think it's lacking a little bit here [management]. Want to tidy this place a bit though, just clear some bits and pieces, just to make it look a little bit more managed. I think you've got to retain a lot of it but it could be bracken first, you know, get rid of it, it's no good.

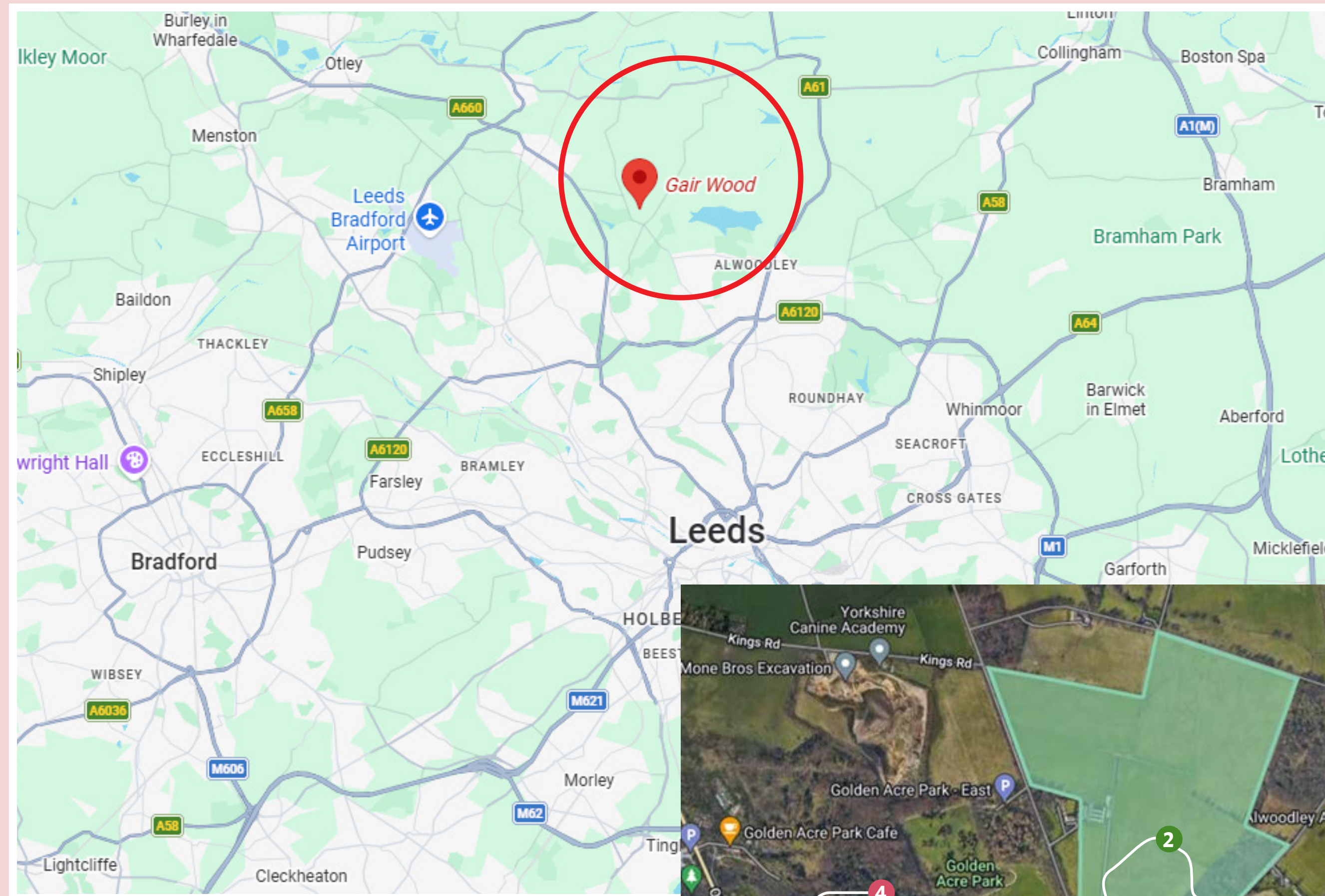


FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Woodland walk discussion group - July 2023

- Gair Wood is located to the north of Leeds and neighbours Golden Acre Park.
- In 2023 over 60 000 broadleaved trees were planted (including oak, hazel, and willow) across a 36-hectare site.
- The Gair Wood site is owned and managed by the University of Leeds.
- Golden Acre Park is managed by Leeds City Council.



Imagery © 2026, Map data © 2026 Google

The walking route passed through Golden Acre Park and onto the Gair Wood planting site (and back).

- 1st stop**
Back of hotel, just inside park
- 2nd stop**
Gair Wood, in the centre of the new planting
- 3rd stop**
Unmanaged university woodland
- 4th stop**
Alongside dead hedge

FINDINGS

Gair Wood participants

Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Ethnicity
Female	56	GCSE / NVQ Level 1, equivalent	Business development executive	White British
Male	64	GCSE / NVQ Level 1, equivalent	Cleaning supervisor	White British
Male	44	A levels / NVQ Level 3, etc.	HGV driver	White British
Male	46	GCSE / NVQ Level 1, equivalent	Support worker	White British
Female	35	A levels / NVQ Level 3, etc.	Disabled	White British
Female	33	A levels / NVQ Level 3, etc.	Dental nurse	White British
Female	40	A levels / NVQ Level 3, etc.	Disabled	White British
Female	50	University degree or equivalent professional qualification, NVQ Level 4, etc.	Solicitor	White British
Male	34	A levels / NVQ Level 3, etc.	Prison officer	White British
Female	37	University degree or equivalent professional qualification, NVQ Level 4, etc.	Midwife	White British
Female	35	University degree or equivalent professional qualification, NVQ Level 4, etc.	Hospitality Manager	White European

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Participants were asked before and after the walk: 'What three words come to mind when you think of woodlands?'

The **more frequently** a word was mentioned the **larger** it appears in the word cloud.

These word clouds demonstrate how peoples' perspectives may be influenced by experience.



Pre-walk



Post-walk

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Feedback from the pre- and post-walk surveys

Participants were asked why they decided to join the walk (before the start of the walk) and what the best thing was about the event (after the walk).

Results are presented here verbatim. Rows with the same colour are comments with a similar theme.

Why did you accept the invitation to join?
I enjoy outdoor places
I find nature interesting but for some reason I never find the time
Need to get out more often
Interested to know more
Was contacted and never heard of half the places
Interested in what we would learn
Something different
Interested to see if I can manage it so I can do more with kids
As a dad of a newborn wanting to get out and about with the pram, less town centre more green and fresh air
I like to help shape our world

Best thing about today?
Visiting the woodland at the side of the fields with planted trees
Made me see outdoors for how it is, a thing I had forgotten
Opening my mind to what is around me
Seeing places I never knew existed
Being outdoors
Nice having a walk
Learning what's happening on my doorstep
Learnt about future plans
All the information given
The work the university and councils are doing to support climate change
Seeing the start of a project
Being at the start of a project
Seeing the start of something new
Meeting new people

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Pre- and post-walk survey results

📍 Stop 1: First impressions

Stop 1 was just inside Golden Acre Park, off the Meanwood Valley Trail.



Theme	Example quotes
How it looks and feels	It's very quiet. You can hear the birds. It's nice to feel you've got some space, isn't it? It does make you feel like you're far away from the city bustle and noise which is nice.
Maintenance	It's a clean path and it looks well maintained. You've got a litter bin nearby. If you're going somewhere where it's not really particularly muddy it's fine on your feet and things.
Accessibility	It's quite accessible as well if you've got a wheelchair. So it's wheelchair friendly. Is there parking here? Where would you park? It is accessible for a double buggy, that's something that's quite good.
Nature contact	I think if you're in touch with nature this is quite nice really. When you're out you do feel better. I do think it wakes your mind up when you are actually in a place like this. I work in hospitality so for me finding a place to get lost and just not having to deal with people talking, music, loud sounds, just listening to this is amazing. You just want silence, nature sounds. So this is like a perfect place for that.
Vegetation	This is a nice mix with the different types of plants and trees. There's a lot of woodland where they plant all the same and far too close together, basically it's dark underneath and nothing grows.
Perception of personal safety	I'm not sure I'd come on my own this way. I'd go to the café area where there's more people. I think actually a place like this is quite good for people that do run as well because you're not running on a main road. I would feel body conscious about running on a main road, whereas I think behind trees and in and out of places like this feel probably a little bit more confident to do that. You wouldn't feel safe just walking somewhere like this on your own.

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 2: Gair Wood planting

Stop 2 looked across the site where new trees had been planted.



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Theme	Example quotes
Impressions	It's open at the moment and yes nice. That road spoils it. If it weren't for that road, it's not too bad. Visually pleasing. It's lovely, it's very pretty. it's always nice to see spaces like this. Obviously, we can't have them [trees] all over country, [we] wouldn't have anywhere to live.
Forest for the future	It'll look completely different in 20 years' time. It'll be a forest for future generations. I see the future. So these all grow, so 20, 30 years' time, it'll be just like that one there I guess. [a mature woodland next to the planting] like in generations and generations it will become an actual tree.
Climate change	I think it will be good. We're always going on about greenhouse gases and CO ₂ ; we do need more trees and also to stop the water running off the land.
Development versus trees	If we keep putting in for housing – people want houses – but then where are we going to grow trees. Countryside, more wilderness, and things rather than Asda, Lidl at the end of the street. Or loads of poorly built homes that nobody can afford.
Ongoing management	My concern with some of these planted tree areas is often they get funding to plant the trees but less than actually half of them survive because they're not maintained and if it's dry nobody comes and waters them, so they don't last. This quantity, nobody's going to go round them with a watering can.
Farmland versus trees	Because it's flat it's also waste of a good arable field. This is a good field for crops and things. I don't know, I like it as a farm. I think you need the animals as well. It depends what they're farming. Was it just like crops?. For me I'd go for trees because they're going to be there for at least hundred years, give off loads of oxygen and wildlife and things. It looks nicer.

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Pre- and post-walk survey results

📍 Stop 3: Unmanaged wood

Stop 3 was an unmanaged mature woodland adjacent to the new planting site.



Theme	Example quotes
How it looks and feels	<p>I feel more away from the city in here. This is a lot more natural. I kind of love that it's unspoilt and it's untouched and you just come and you just like, this is so nice.</p> <p>Although that's an open space it feels fresh and calmer in here. There's definitely an atmosphere in here than what you get out there. [comparing it to the newly planted field] There's more to see as well. More to seen means more to learn.</p> <p>It's very nice, very peaceful. More secluded. Yes, it feels more secretive. Here I feel bit I'd get lost.</p> <p>It's all very natural, it's like untouched. I feel more away from the city.</p> <p>Quiet – you can't hear the roads.</p>
Wildlife	<p>You can hear the birds. I can imagine you somehow look to your left and spot a bunny rabbit.</p> <p>I think it's good for wildlife.</p>
Management	<p>It looks like how it should be; It doesn't have to be ultra-clean and ultra tidy all the time. I think they should be kept like this if it's a woodland area, not turn it into a park.</p>
Maintenance	<p>Path may be muddy in winter.</p> <p>If branches fall, they should be moved off the path so that people can get past.</p> <p>Need to maintain the safety aspects.</p> <p>Need a bin. Just having a bin [is important], there's no bin for people to put rubbish.</p>
Access(ibility)	<p>It's no good for wheelchairs. Not good access for disability, for disabled.</p> <p>It's not too bad underfoot but ... you've got the roots, you'd have to really pay attention. I don't think I could watch my two kids and walk behind them without tripping over.</p> <p>Where would you park?</p>
Children and childhood	<p>Great for kids – they would see a tree and want to climb it. A kid would look at that tree and say I can climb it whereas we just walk past it. They would look at it in wonder as well wouldn't they, with imagination. When we were kids we had more freedom [to go off into the woods to explore].</p> <p>I wouldn't let my kids do what we used to do.</p>

FINDINGS

Gair Wood, Leeds

Pre- and post-walk survey results

📍 Stop 4: Dead hedge

Stop 4 was a dead hedge, back in Golden Acre Park



Theme	Example quotes
Re-use of woodland material	They're using what's fallen down so it's being re-used. Recycled. Instead of using bricks or planting more they're using stuff that are dead. Making use of the trees that have either been chopped down, sort of bit more eco. It'd have to be get transported out or burnt, or just left or stored somewhere so it's good that way. I noticed it straight away, I thought it was brilliant, great idea.
Naturalness	Natural. It's in the right place. You either leave it and it looks messy or you tidy it up as it is. It's interesting and, I like it, I think it's got a good look to it. My first impression is that it's obviously environmental, it's natural.
Longevity and maintenance	I imagine it'll last for a long time. I suppose it'll be easy to maintain as well because you potentially just keep refilling it when it could possibly drop down over time.
Wildlife	Animals will be in there. It's home for insects and bugs – it's perfect bug hotel. You'd get hedgehogs and stuff nesting in them. I suppose that's a really good habitat for them. Could that be a possible like problem for wildlife though, things getting stuck in between
Barrier to keep people out	Keep people away. Can also stop people climbing over the fence and damaging it.
The work involved	It's not just thrown together either, it's placed. There's some graft there isn't there. I've seen them where they've been cut and folded down and weaved. [like hedge laying].

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Woodland walk discussion group - May 2024

- The location of this walk was between Carmunnock and Castlemilk on the south side of Glasgow.
- More than 20 000 trees have been planted on former pastureland on the southern edge of the city since 2021, including nine different species of native broadleaved trees.
- There is a network of paths that link neighbouring communities and the greenspace.



Imagery © 2026 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data © 2026 Google

The walking route.

- 1st stop**
First impressions (at start of track)
- 2nd stop**
Just inside deer fencing part way along track to view new planting
- 3rd stop**
Just inside established, unmanaged woodland near old water tank/trig point
- 4th stop**
Additional stop part way down the field: new planting appeared to be slightly older here
- 5th stop**
Just outside coppice area (not reported)



FINDINGS

Carmunnock participants

Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Ethnicity
Female	67	Degree	Retired teacher	White Scottish
Male	63	National 5	Retired systems analyst	White Scottish
Female	29	NVQ Level 3; Scottish SVQ Level 3	Support worker	Asian scottish
Female	43	Advance Highers	Housewife	Asian Scottish
Male	18	Advance Highers	Student	White Scottish
Female	26	Degree	Environmental health officer	Asian Scottish
Female	63	Degree	Retired librarian	White Scottish
Male	24	Advance Highers	Estimator	White Scottish
Female	61	Degree	Retired theatre nurse	White Scottish
Male	42	Advance Highers	Firefighter	White Scottish
Male	51	National 5	Refuse collector	White Scottish

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Participants were asked before and after the walk: 'What three words come to mind when you think of woodlands?'

The **more frequently** a word was mentioned the **larger** it appears in the word cloud.

These word clouds demonstrate how peoples' perspectives may be influenced by experience.



Pre-walk



Post-walk

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Feedback from the pre- and post-walk surveys

Participants were asked why they decided to join the walk (before the start of the walk) and what the best thing was about the event (after the walk).

Results are presented here verbatim. Rows with the same colour are comments with a similar theme.

Why did you accept the invitation to join?
I'm keen to get more active and enjoy peace while doing so
I have more time to myself now to enjoy nature
Want to get more into the countryside and find more routes
Just to get into walking
To get out and be active
Trying to get more active
Interested in doing walks now I have a dog
To learn about new walks
To learn
To explore
Chance to explore
It sounded very interesting
Interesting subject
New experience
Experience

Best thing about today?
Getting out in my local area
Spending time in nature
Enjoying nature
Getting out into the woodlands
Getting out in the fresh air
Fresh air
The views
Discovering a new walking trail
Discovering a new walk
Finding new walks/exploring
It was a lovely walk that I didn't know was on my door-step
Educational
Very informative
Learning about resources
Hearing about greenbelts and woodland management
Learned things I didn't know
Learnt about woodlands

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Pre- and post-walk survey results

📍 Stop 1: Village edge tree-lined path

Stop 1 was a hedge/treelined walkway just beyond Carmunnock village edge.



Theme	Example quotes
Positive first impressions	One minute you're in the village, the next minute you're in nature. Right away there was a beautiful smell. Fresh air and flowers too. Yes, it's nice and quiet and peaceful up here. It has quite a nice feel doesn't it. It's nice and clean, tidy. We could tell it's been kept like the nature, it's still the way it should be, it's not overgrown. It's quite natural. Nice and peaceful. I think it calms you down. It's nice to hear the wildlife, the birds chirping, it's nice. I know you don't see them, but you can hear them.
Negative first impressions	It's a bit overgrown as well. It's ruined and stuff with the graffiti.
Accessibility	I like how it's pathed because obviously I've got a son and he's one, so I'd probably like to do more walks like this, so it would be good that I can actually bring the pram out or his wee trike.
Preferences for enclosed versus cut back woodland	It's quite enclosed. It feels almost like an archway, it's quite nice. I think that's why I like this, it's a bit more enclosed. I prefer more open spaces. I'd want it trimmed back a bit ... Just to clear the way I think a wee bit. But then that's decimating the trees isn't it? I would just leave it alone.
Safety	I wouldn't go out by myself, just as a woman I wouldn't go out. Even walking, I just wouldn't go out by myself if there was nobody else around. You don't know who's hanging about. Putting lights up would detract from the ruralness wouldn't it.
Seasons	And I get it's nice because of what season we're in, like with the flowers on the trees and stuff. But I don't know what it's going to be like in winter. I think that will make it a wee bit more depressing, I think. Yeah, I'm not sure I'd be walking it in winter.

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 2: Among the newly planted trees

Stop 2 was inside the deer fence in the new tree planting area.



Theme	Example quotes
Preferences for open view versus trees	Beautiful view. It's nice and colourful. You can say yes, it's nice with the trees but then you're losing the view. It's beautiful because you can see like, in the distance the houses and the landscape but I think, it's nice so it is but I can see obviously people do want to plant trees but kind of obviously more beneficial to the environment but I think it's really beautiful the way it is now.
Nature	A place where nature can thrive, insects, small animals, I like the flowers, this is what I'm looking at. I like the whole wild meadow concept that's what I think is nice. I think it's beautiful, I know obviously like, people might think it's obviously unkept, but I think that's the way it should be, like because it's nature, I think it's nice.
Thoughts about the newly planted trees	I'm a bit confused like why they would plant them... because it will take over the view and things, I don't know. Well I'm thinking there must be a really good reason to do that because I like it the way it is, the wildness, I don't think in 20 years I would like this just to be all trees. I think there's maybe been too much clearing of trees that we now need to replant ... we need them kind of thing to keep the air clean and things. You see when you're looking at it now it's everywhere, there's loads everywhere, because I didn't spot them before but now that I'm looking it's literally all the green bits have got trees planted. It might be cool to have like apple trees and things because I was just thinking, for kids to come and, there's a pear tree, there's an apple tree, let's go and have a look. It's good to plant more trees but I like it the way it is.
Nature contact	You do feel quiet, you just feel let's sit here, relaxed. You kind of forget everything else, don't you?

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 3: Established woodland

Stop 3 was inside established unmanaged woodland on a narrow rough track.



Theme	Example quotes
Positive and negative feelings about the space	<p>It smells nice. Very enclosed but peaceful. It's nice for there to be a bit of shelter. Well it's a good bit of shelter as well. You could hide here when it rains. I'd be interested in walking, but I wouldn't go up through woods because if I go for a walk I might see views and get a couple of pictures when I'm out. I think it is gorgeous, beautiful, I think it's actually stunning just being in the middle of all this. It's as if you're transported to somewhere else, you don't feel like you're just 5/10 minutes from the village. Damp and cold. This is less appealing. I wouldn't come here and walk. There's not much sunlight so it's a bit cold. The temperature drops, stops light coming through.</p>
Safety	<p>I would come but I feel like out there's more safer looking. Like you can see what's going on. I would never walk down here myself but if I had somebody with me I definitely would. I mean I'm not at all averse to woodlands, it's not that. Yes we go to ones that we know. I don't think you would want to be in-between the trees when it's getting dark in the winter.</p>
Path and accessibility	<p>Obviously if you had a pram or wheelchair, yes it might be a bit tricky. It's uneven but you would expect it. It's more with nature kind of thing. To create a path would be damaging to the trees kind of thing. Like this is more natural I think. It's not really accessible for people that are like have got disabilities or like young kids that are like not confident at walking.</p>
Nature	<p>I'm just wondering if there's squirrels, I was looking up to see if this is squirrel territory or not. I imagine there's different wildlife in here perhaps. And there's lots of ferns growing here. Definitely a good variety of trees, different trees.</p>
Children	<p>I do take the kids through woods sometimes just so they can explore and see what's going on and pick up things on the floor and be like oh wow. My ones would love it in here, my grandbairns would love it in here. Yes, let them be free, burn off energy. They learn a lot. You show them all the different wee plants, wee shrubs and as soon as you dig in then you'll find the wee beasties, you show them the ones you can touch. Don't go near that, that will bite you and all that. Bairns pick all that up.</p>

FINDINGS

Carmunnock, Glasgow

Pre- and post-walk survey results

Stop 4: Among the newly planted trees

Stop 4 was inside new tree planting halfway down a field.



Theme	Example quotes
Noise from the road	You're near the road, it's noisy. It's not quite as peaceful, it's much more peaceful up there than down here. But I think they [the trees] [will] keep the noise of the road away.
Positive and negative feelings about the trees and the view	I don't know if that will end up looking like that last bit we were in which may ruin it a wee bit. I still think all the trees will spoil it. It doesn't feel the same as up there. The second point we stopped at was nicer because you could have a bit of a view. I suppose there's probably a reason for all these trees.
Value of open space (particularly for letting children run around)	I get the whole thing like the trees and the forest walks and all that but I also think like if you're coming to somewhere, say you want to bring your family or your kids, you want to come somewhere where you want to sit down and you just want your kids to run about where you can see them whereas if you go [into the woodland] you're not going to let them run about because you wouldn't find them again.
Contrasting areas: the more mature woodland and the open hillside	Nice little walk and it's open and the air, it's not enclosed and dark and you can see so much. It's kind of nice to walk through. The two areas have benefits to what they do. Outside [of the woodland] is more appealing. They could do both, which makes it nice because you could go in there and then come out here.
Benefits of walking in greenspace and walking with a group	I'd probably walk up here, come here and spend about an hour, two hours, and then before you know it, walk back, it's half your day and clears your mind. I'd probably come, get a group; if you get a community group kind of thing, more interesting isn't it? More to talk about and more things to do, yeah, encourage each other.
Get more people into nature	Just getting people back into nature and walks, I think that's what's missing in the world now. It's a generation gap isn't it. They don't advertise it much either though so, we wouldn't even know about it.

Summary

The following section summarises some of the key issues that arose across the three woodland walks, across the different stops, and across the different groups of people.



Key issues



Woodland creation

Recognised need for trees.
Sometimes preferred existing views.



Woodland management

Concerned about lack of management, but also liked 'natural unmanaged' woodland.



Woodland maintenance

Paths, litter, and dog mess raised as important issues.



Tree felling

Some knowledge about need for felling – for disease and safety.



Access(ibility)

Identified a need for paths that all can use, but this produces a dilemma because they like naturalness.



Sensory responses

Woodland spaces often described as calm, fresh, peaceful, with just sounds of nature (birds) and nice smells. But sometimes cold, gloomy, damp.



Wildlife

Recognised importance of trees for nature.
Always positive reactions to hearing or seeing wildlife.



Aesthetics

Changing landscapes from open fields to planted trees not always received positively.



Woodland for dogs, children, and wellbeing

Recognised the importance of woods for exploration, learning, imagination, play, nature contact.



Safety

Very frequent concern, particularly for women.
Reluctance to access wooded areas alone.



Land use conflict

Preference for trees over development but mixed views about tree planting versus farmland.



How times have changed

Frequent mentions of how it used to be different when they were children and could run off to play in the woods.

Concluding comments

The previous section highlights some of the tensions that arose from the woodland walk discussions.

- Wanting to see management and maintenance of woodlands so that they are tidy and cared for versus wanting places that look and feel natural
- Wanting good accessibility and well-maintained paths but wanting woodlands that look and feel natural
- Wanting open views but knowing there is a need for trees
- Wanting agricultural land but knowing there is a need for trees
- Not wanting trees to be felled but recognising that there are sometimes good reasons for this
- Liking the idea of running amongst trees so as not to feel body-conscious like when running along a road versus not feeling safe amongst trees.

The implications of these dualities generate challenges for woodland managers seeking to create and manage wooded environments in peoples' local communities. Overall, the discussion groups have provided new evidence to address the gaps from the literature review that were highlighted, namely:

- A need to understand more about British people's perspectives on new peri-urban woodlands
- Public views about the management of 'small' woodlands, such as those in peri-urban locations, in semi-rural locations, and in agricultural landscapes.

More information

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For more information, visit the webpage for [Programme 3 Societal benefits of trees, woods and forests](#) – Forest Research.

Link to the report

