

Callander Community Woodland Group has prepared the following responses to the major points raised in the representations received by FLS regarding the proposed asset transfer of Coilhallan Wood.

There are a number of common themes running through these representations and responses to each of these is included below.

We would also like to thank those who wrote with positive comments about this asset transfer request and for their continued support throughout the project.

Community support

One of the concerns expressed in several representations is that there is insufficient evidence of community support. There is no longer a legal requirement to carry out a full community ballot. However, following suggestions by a small number of residents, the group did investigate the feasibility of carrying out such a survey by delivering ballot papers to all households within Callander. The cost of this, however, was prohibitive, so a variety of methods were used to canvas opinions from the community, including but not limited to:

Social media, posters around the town and at the entrances to the Wood, articles in the local free paper, attendance at various local events and a community open evening which was attended by approximately 100 local residents – an unprecedented number in Callander for such an event.

This ongoing process produced over 280 responses, with over 80% in favour of the project. CCWG feel that this demonstrates that a substantial part of the community wants CCDT to take ownership of Coilhallan Wood. We feel that FLS are now best qualified to determine whether this is the case.

The Woodland Management Plan

The Woodland Management Plan referred to in several of the responses is an appendix to the 2017 Feasibility Study and should be read as part of that document rather than in isolation. The overall recommendation from that study is that there are risks and concerns but that, provided these are recognised, adequately planned for and mitigated against, then CCDT should progress this asset transfer request.

CCDT + FLS partnership

Some comments state that their authors would prefer CCDT to continue to work with FLS in Coilhallan Wood. The Scottish Government have put legislation in place to enable communities to purchase assets because they believe that the communities are best placed to determine what will best benefit the community and to add value to the asset.

CCDT formed the Callander Community Woodland Group (CCWG), including members with varied interests and experience, to represent the different current and potential user groups of the woodland. CCWG have now finalised this asset transfer request and FLS will evaluate that proposal and decide whether they believe that community ownership will add value to Coilhallan Wood that cannot be realised whilst in FLS ownership.

Paths

Currently the paths within Coilhallan Wood are all multi-use paths and, as such, all user groups have equal rights to use them. There are concerns expressed about possible conflict as a result of increased use of these trails by different user groups – particularly mountain bikes.

The careful addition of well-planned specific mountain bike trails within dedicated zones in the Wood is likely to reduce the number of fast-moving mountain bikes on existing trails rather than increase it, as riders and walkers have different requirements. The CCWG access group includes representatives who walk, run and mountain bike. The group would welcome a member from the horse-riding community to ensure that all user groups are represented.

Traffic and parking

CCWG share the concerns about increased traffic and parking on Invertrossachs Road and on Bridgend. We would seek to work with Stirling Council, McLaren Leisure Centre and the High School to ensure that the existing parking resources are effectively used and that any impact is well managed.

Litter

There is currently an annual litter pick around Callander and Coilhallan Wood is included in this activity. CCWG would hope that the addition of recycling bins would reduce the amount of litter in the wood rather than increase it and thus contribute to Callander's aim to be plastic free.

Volunteers

Lastly, there are concerns that there may not be a sustainable supply of volunteers to help in maintaining Coilhallan Wood. CCWG has a list of over 70 volunteers already. Long term, the aim is to work with both the primary and secondary schools, who have already expressed their support for this initiative, to establish Coilhallan Wood as a community asset that we are all invested in and that contributes to Callander as a place to both live and visit.