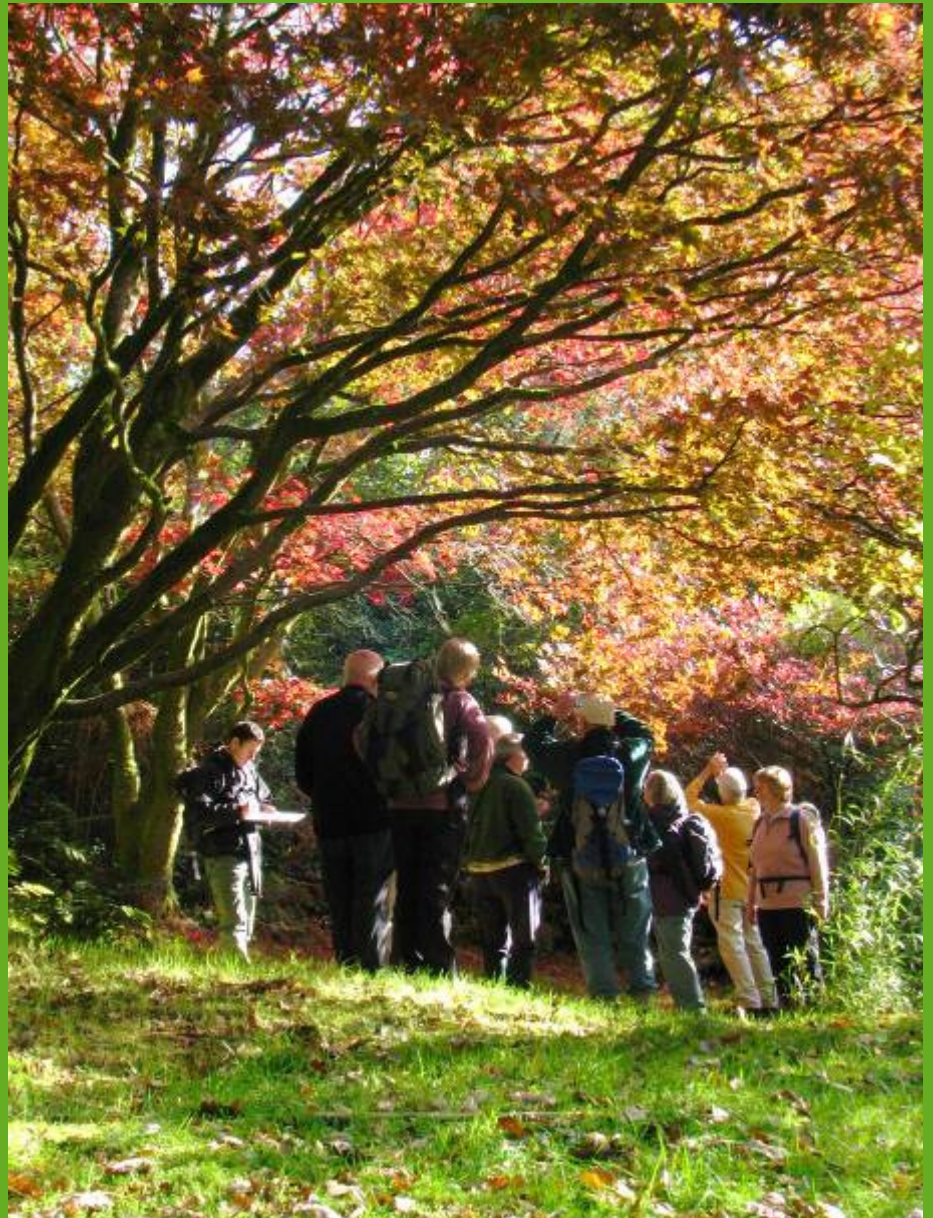


Giggle Alley Forest Design Plan Spring 2010 Review Text and Graphs



Contents

This process by which this plan has been developed is characterised by three main stages:

- 1) Understanding the forest
- 2) Developing a vision
- 3) Implementing the vision

The table below illustrates the way that the various maps, photos and text fit into the stages in the process and helps guide the reader through the plan.

Understanding The Forest	<p>Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Survey • Achievements during last plan period
	<p>Maps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location • Photo Survey Viewpoints • Current Forest Species • Recreation and Access • Community • Social and Economic • Water, Heritage and Nature Conservation • Roads and Harvesting • Landform • Achievements
	<p>All Photos</p>

Developing A Vision	<p>Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and Appraisal
	<p>Maps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Issues • Design Concept
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Implementing the Vision	<p>Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives of the Plan • Delivery of the North West England Forest District Strategic Plan • Delivery against National Policy " A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests" • Graphs
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Gareth Browning
Spring 2010

Introduction

Giggle Alley lies on a small knoll adjacent to the village of Eskdale Green on the western edge of the Lake District National Park. The woodland extends to nine hectares and is owned freehold having been purchased from the Outward Bound Trust, the owners of the Gatehouse Estate in 1961. The previous owner was Baron Rae but it was his Grandfather James Hall Rae who established the Japanese Garden and the surrounding paths

Survey

Giggle Alley is greatly valued by the local community and visitors alike who enjoy its diverse woodland character, secluded nature, and Japanese Garden all within a very small area. Its close proximity to the village of Eskdale Green encourages regular visits by local residents. In addition the gardens growing popularity sees visitors from a much wider catchment area including Gosforth and Seascale as well as visitors from outside Cumbria. The woodland is only a short walk from the Irton Road station of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway which is a very popular tourist attraction.

Whilst access within the woodland is good the main access from Smithybrow Lane is poor and not well identified. The path to the Japanese Garden has in the past been poorly signed which has led to some visitors leaving the wood never having found the garden. This has improved with new signs and entrance steps and a new threshold sign is planned.

The Japanese Garden is the most significant feature of the woodland and plays an important role in the local heritage of Eskdale. The Japanese garden came into being in 1914 having been commissioned by Lord Rea and designed by Thomas Mawson, the periods foremost landscape architect.

The garden was built for the Rea Family who owned the Gate House estate of which Giggle Alley was a part. The garden developed over the next decade and was photographed in 1923 by Mary Fair who said it had been "called into being as by a magicians wand" "a quaint and beautiful garden". Unfortunately Lord Rea who commissioned the garden had died in 1918 and so never saw the garden at its best. By 1948 the lack of resources and the impact of the war years saw the garden decline. In 1949 the woodland was sold to the Outward Bound trust who

noted that “The garden must reluctantly be abandoned” and sold off many of the shrubs.

The Forestry Commission (FC) bought Giggle Alley in the 1960’s and whilst the garden was not considered important compared to planting conifers for timber at least it was opened to the public for the first time. Since 1999 the garden has been slowly restored and developed through a partnership with Chris Jones, a local volunteer and with the support of the Eskdale Parish Council. A small booklet in the Discover Eskdale series is available from the stores in Eskdale Green and details more of the history of the garden.

The woodland that surrounds the garden is home to a wide variety of tree species all benefiting from the freely draining brown earth soils and, with the exception of Stag Wood, a southerly aspect. Excluding Stag Wood the woodland has been regularly thinned and regeneration is occurring at encouraging levels. Access for harvesting is difficult but this has encouraged management to develop a little and often approach which has helped minimise disruption to the public. The January 2005 storm caused significant damage to 15% of the woodland. The clearance of the windblow was completed by Autumn 2005 leaving three new clearings. Much of the timber from the clearance was stacked in the wood is slowly being removed as firewood by the local community.

Stag Wood is a dense area of mature pine and larch which has been almost entirely unthinned and is choked by large areas of Rhododendron. In conservation terms Stag Wood is considered to be ancient replanted woodland and a commitment was given in the first plan to transform this area into native broadleaf woodland.

Giggle Alley is a small diverse woodland area with limited significant conservation features. It does include a number of large native trees especially oak and is home to native wildlife such as badgers and Red Squirrels. Roe Deer from Miterdale make occasional forays into the wood.

In terms of historical features Giggle Alley includes 15 features of archaeological interest ranging from a possible prehistoric ring cairn to medieval bloomeries and features associated with charcoal production. In addition there are a few remnant foundations of greenhouses and building platforms from the late 19th century period as part of the Gate House Estate.

Achievements during last plan period.

During the last plan period the main achievements against this plan are listed below:

- The garden has been managed and improved with the addition of 3 new bridges.
- Access to the garden has been improved with new steps and the ramp being strimmed to keep it accessible.
- The glades created by the 2005 storm have been maintained and improved through grass strimming, raking and grass seeding and shrub planting.
- The garden and paths have been incorporated into a facility Inspection regime meaning that they are formally inspected and any problems repaired/made safe every 3 months.
- The middle wall and boundary wall have been repaired. A new gate has been constructed in the middle wall to facilitate ease of future harvesting whilst protecting the garden from grazing animals.
- The area of grass around the toilets and car park is regularly strimmed to keep grass and weed levels under control.
- New threshold signs have been purchased and will be erected during Spring 2010.
- Unfortunately the pressures of dealing with the other areas of timber windblown in the 2005 storm have not left enough time for more thinning to be organised although a thinning is planned for 2010/11.

Review and Appraisal

Giggle Alley is a unique woodland in a special part of the Lake District. Its value lies in its quiet charm and links to the past history of formal garden design. It is highly valued by the local community and the Parish Council have been great to support both verbally and financially the restoration of the garden over the last few years. A new photo survey has been produced and is provided within the plan. The review and appraisal completed in 2006 still seems to be appropriate and accurate today and so is provided mostly unchanged below.

Giggle Alley fits in well within the surrounding landscape from all viewpoints. The scattering of trees outside the Forestry Commission's boundary and links to the Outward Bound owned woodland are all important in tying Giggle Alley into the landscape. For a designed landscape that started out as a Japanese Garden on an open knoll it has become naturalised into the local landscape character.

To ensure that this fit with the landscape continues it is important that the woodland is regularly thinned to release natural regeneration to renew the woodland whilst at the same time allowing specimen trees to develop. These are important in maintaining structure and character to the woodland and continuing its link with the landscape. Clear felling doesn't fit with this philosophy and so should not be used for managing Stag Wood.

Given the difficult access and lack of roadside space harvesting should be small scale but frequent with the timber produced offered locally. Restoring the native broadleaf character of Stag Wood is important but at the same time this should not detract from the value of Giggle Alley's non native species including the area of beech. This is highly valued locally and should be retained and allowed to regenerate as long as the species does not threaten to dominate the woodland.

Given the unthinned and dense rhododendron in Stag Wood recreational access is currently concentrated on only half of the woodland area. Access to the southern half of the wood has improved in the last 5 years with new steps and the ramp being maintained. In addition better signing is planned. The future of the unmanaged area behind the car park should be explored to release benefits to the local community.

Development of the glades created by the windblow is changing the woodland making it more open and providing new opportunities to extend the garden as well as provide community space.

The Japanese Garden has come along way in the last ten years from rescue through restoration which is still ongoing but now into possible expansion. The garden is both an important heritage feature and recreational resource for the community. The continued maintenance of the garden remains a priority and any expansion must continue to be weighed up against the resources available to maintain new areas. Key to the future of the garden is controlling the Gaultheria and Sasa grass as well as securing future labour and resources.

Ongoing and Long Term Objectives

Ongoing

- Manage Giggle Alley for the benefit of the local community as a place of recreation and as part of a wider project to deliver local employment, tourism and sustainable tourism.
- Continue to maintain the Japanese Garden and look for opportunities to sustainably expand this important feature.
- Manage the woodland through Continuous Cover (regular thinning) to encourage the woodland to regenerate naturally and develop large specimen trees for their amenity value.

The Next 5 years

- In the Japanese Garden investigate options to restore water to the ponds, control Gaultheria and Sasa Grass and continue shrub planting.
- Complete a thinning of the woodland including creating gaps in Stag Wood and opening up views from Castle Rock east of the Japanese Garden.
- Start a process of rhododendron control in Stag Wood
- Continue to involve the local community and work with the Parish Council to maximise benefits to the local area.
- Improve signing and information provision around and about the Garden.

Delivery Against Regional Policy

Giggle Alley lies within the Cumbria High fells management zone of the North West England Forest District Strategic Plan (NWEFDSP) (2005 to 2009). This plan is being reviewed during 2010. Within the general description for this zone the Strategic Plan makes the statements below which are relevant to this plan.

- Presumption to thin all areas of Wind Hazard Class (WHC) 3 and below (and more sheltered WHC 4). If necessary thin steep areas at zero surplus for both aesthetic and timber quality benefits.
- Main conifer species will be Sitka spruce, larch, Douglas fir and Scots pine which grow fast and yield high quality timber when planted on appropriate sites.
- At Forest Design Plan review consider further boundary improvements to forests in zone including land swap deals to improve most visually intrusive edges where appropriate.

Detailed below are the objectives of the Cumbria High fells zone (highlighted in blue), and how the implementation of the revised Parkgate and Irton, Sillathwate, Uldale and Dent FDP will deliver against the objectives.

Forestry for rural development

Main conifer species will be Sitka spruce, Larch, Douglas fir and Scots pine which grow fast and yield high quality timber when planted on appropriate sites. Do not replant with Western Hemlock, Western Red Cedar or Grand fir as there is poor demand from saw millers, and replace with other species. At FDP revision felling will target the early removal of Western Hemlock where this does not significantly compromise other objectives to minimise problem of vigorous natural regeneration. The only exception to the above will be the retention of feature trees around the main visitor facilities.

Presumption to thin all areas of (WHC) 3 and below (and more sheltered WHC 4). If necessary thin steep areas at zero surplus for both aesthetic and timber quality benefits.

Implemented through

Given the difficulties of access within and to and from the forest it is inappropriate for the focus of management at Giggle Alley to be timber production.

Management under Continuous Cover will see a range of species regenerating and thinning will be used to selectively open up a diverse range of species to maintain the character of the forest.

The continued development of woodfuel markets is one that timber from Giggle Alley can support and one which provides a local market for timber from this small woodland.

Forestry for recreation, access and tourism

Main focus of formal recreation provision and future development will be at Whinlatter Forest Park which is now managed as a single entity with Dodd Wood.

Apply continuous cover management systems to stands of Douglas fir on lower elevation sites, particularly near recreational facilities. Preference to regenerate naturally with planting as last resort. Retain some big conifers indefinitely at Whinlatter.

Thin to improve visual amenity around main recreational facilities and at net cost if required.

In timber marketing and operations management aim to minimise disruption to recreational facilities, particularly forest walks at Whinlatter/Dodd. Market timber from Whinlatter as a long term contract to achieve greater control.

Implemented through

Thinning being managed in scale with the woodland to minimise disruption to recreational use eg closing the woodland during the day when harvesting is active but ensuring the woodland is safe and open on evenings and weekends.

Accepting mixed species regeneration will provide a diverse woodland which people enjoy.

Thinning will develop wind firm large specimen trees.

The continued restoration (and extension) of the Japanese Garden provides an important local tourist destination which adds to the tourist offer made by Eskdale.

Forestry for environment and conservation

At each 5 yearly review consider further boundary improvements to forests in zone including land swap deals to improve most visually intrusive edges where appropriate.

Consider re-aligning top boundary fences to improve visual appearance of top margins e.g. Ennerdale, Dodd.

Manage and extend Upland Oak woods according to Habitat Action Plan. In these areas nature conservation will be the prime objective.

At Matterdale and Blengdale create permanent network of open space/broadleaves at restocking so that average coupe size can be reduced in next rotation.

Work in partnership with tenant farmers to improve conservation and landscape value of farmland and open fell. In general, reduce grazing pressure from sheep to improve heathland condition.

Through a partnership with the National Trust and United Utilities develop a long term vision for the whole Ennerdale Valley based on the principle of utilizing natural processes and reflect this in the Forest Design Plan, activities and operations on the FC landholding. This is a very long term, pilot scheme which has the working title "Wild Ennerdale". There will be considerable consultation with stakeholders.

Particularly high archaeological interest at Ennerdale to be protected.

Implemented Through

Giggle Alley already fits well into the landscape and the use of continuous cover techniques will ensure this continues to be the case.

The plans for Stag Wood will, over time, see the restoration of this area to native upland oak/birch woodland.

The historic features identified will be protected during forest operations.

Delivery Against National Policy

The Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests (ETWFS) replaced the England Forestry Strategy as the core policy for forestry in England in 2008. The strategy has three themes Communities and Places, Land and Natural Environment and Working Woodlands.

Detailed below are the objectives of the ETWFS (highlighted in blue), grouped under its three themes and how the implementation of the this plan will deliver against the objectives.

Communities and Places

- involving local people in planning, managing and using local woodlands and the trees in streets and green spaces, to help achieve more cohesive communities and to show how individuals can contribute to environmental sustainability;
- making it easier for people to use and enjoy woodlands particularly in ways that benefit their physical and mental health, learning and personal development;
- creating liveable neighbourhoods, towns and cities by using trees and woodlands as part of the green infrastructure which frames and connects urban and rural areas, improves the quality of a place, and regenerates brown field and derelict land;
- using trees and woodlands to help minimise the impacts of climate change in built-up area

Implemented through

- The consultation process will include the Parish Council and a leaflet drop through neighbours houses.
- Improved information and signing will make it easier for visitors to find and enjoy the garden and woodland walks.
- Some of the timber from the thinning will be offered to local people for use as woodfuel.

Land and Natural Environment

To create, expand and maintain a network of sustainably managed trees, woods and forests that are resilient to climate change and make a full contribution to:

- protecting and enhancing our woodland habitats and associated species and facilitating their resilience and adaptation to climate change;
- safeguarding, enhancing and celebrating the characteristic elements of rural and urban landscapes and their cultural and historic values;
- maximising the full range of ecosystem services provided by trees, woods and forests, including the protection of soil and water resources now and in the future, as needs change.

Implemented through

- Managing the woodland under Continuous Cover will ensure stable and sustainable habitats as well as providing soil protection, continued carbon sequestration and water filtering services.
- Stag Wood will slowly be converted to native woodland.
- Retaining the beech, maintaining and extending the Japanese Garden will ensure these locally distinctive features continue for future generations to enjoy.
- Use of natural regeneration should ensure appropriate species which should ensure healthy and robust woodland.

Working Woodlands

The Government's objectives for this Strategy can only be delivered by a healthy woodland and forestry sector with viable businesses actively engaged in sustainable management and processing at national, regional, sub-regional and local level. This will require:

- the whole sector to have the expertise and capacity to ensure that sustainable management of woodlands delivers public benefits alongside business profitability. To achieve this, partnership programmes will involve the forestry, arboricultural, silvicultural, recreation, timber processing industries and related business sectors;
- innovation to develop new markets and modernise supply chains and infrastructure;
- Government resources targeted at the provision of public goods and at developing the capacity of the sector to adapt to future needs and diversify, creating a flexible industry run by well-trained people;

- substituting wood products for fossil fuels and other materials, as a contribution to UK targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Implemented through

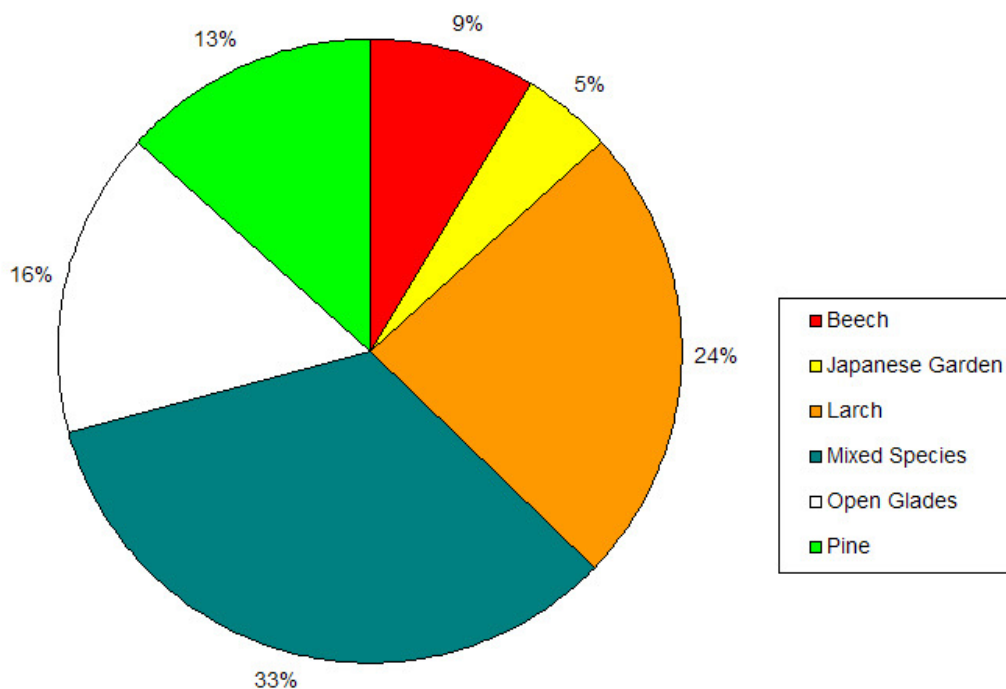
- Timber from thinning offered locally as woodfuel (no local mains gas)
- Local contracts used where possible to reduce carbon emission from travel to work.

Graphs

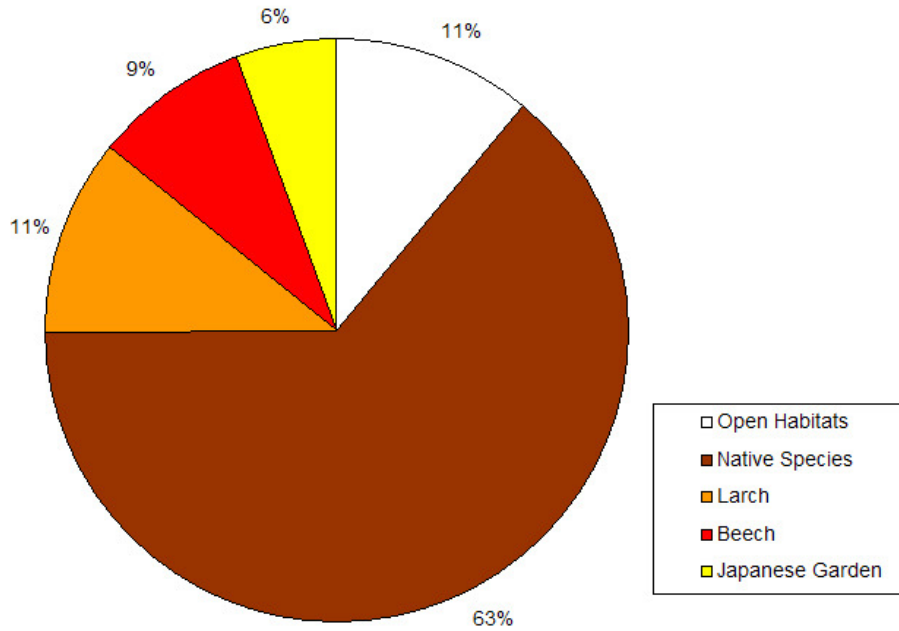
The following graphs illustrate the percentage split of current woodland species and land use, future woodland management and future woodland species.

These help to assess the plan against the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme guidelines and ensure that the plan is balanced and will deliver the objectives set out earlier.

Area of Current Species as a Percentage of Total Area



Future Woodland Species as a Percentage of Total Area



Future Woodland Management as Percentage of Total Area

