

6.3 Review of Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)

REVIEW OF OLD MAPPING
and
ANCIENT WOODLAND

LOMOND BANKS
MASTERPLANNING PROPOSAL
AREAS

EIA AND PPP APPLICATION

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REVIEW OF OLD MAPPING and ANCIENT WOODLAND CHARACTER

LOMOND BANKS MASTERPLANNING PROPOSAL AREAS

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Sources -

National Library of Scotland

NaturesScot Ancient Woodland Inventory

1.a WOODBANK AND STAFF ACCOMMODATION (Proposed) AREAS

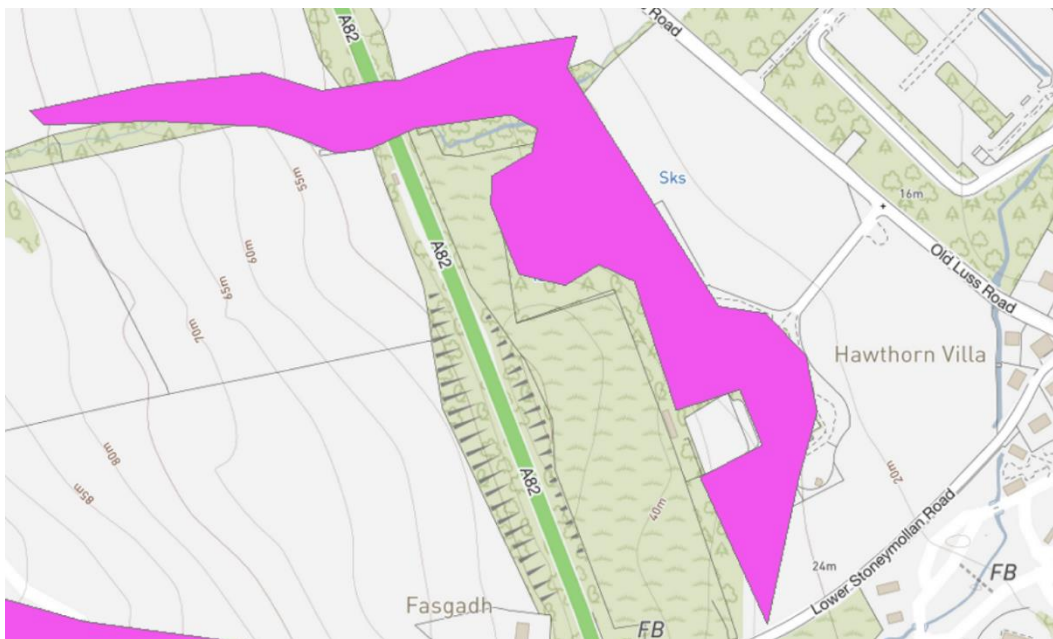
Site boundary and reference points referred to -



General observation on AWI shape - the Ancient Woodland Inventory shape around Woodbank House is slightly rotated relative to current features and is positioned about 20 metres farther north and about 10 metres farther east than current and past features indicate.

A second area of AWI shape overlaps with the west masterplanning area at reference area F. However, as will be commented on below it appears very likely from numerous indicators that this shape is too simplistic and that the AWI extent at reference area F is greater than any shown consistently on historic maps and aerial photographs. A plot of the historic wooded extent is indicated by a dashed line of the preceding plan.

Extract shape from Ancient Woodland Inventory for Woodbank area–



25 inch 1st edition, Scotland, 1860 published 1862

This shows much of the current AWI shape as woodland (broadleaf with occasional conifer symbols). A notable exception is a triangular area to the south (reference area A).

Old mapping suggests reference point B as being under tree cover, although this is apparently not part of the AWI shape.

A path already existed along and just inside the east woodland edge by then, linking the house and stables to a designed landscape feature in the northwest corner (reference point C), possibly a walled garden.

The tree cover to the east northeast of the house and stables is indicated as about the same as current.

The stables (reference point D) is depicted at its present position but this contradicts the AWI shape.

The walled garden at the west of the house (reference point E) is not yet shown on the OS mapping.

25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, revision 1897 published 1898

The walled garden at reference point E is shown as cleared. The former feature at ref point C is no longer shown.

The triangular area at reference point A is still shown as clear, up to the walled garden (reference area G). The area between the house and the walled garden (ref point H) is substantially clear.

A cleared rectilinear area at reference point I is shown for the first time.

The now-derelict bounding at point J and its surrounding area cleared is shown.

A continuous second path around the west perimeter is shown. The area between this and the boundary is shown as clear.

The woodland edge between the original path and the field is shown as clear.

Another path is shown cutting across the hillside northeast of the walled garden (ref line K) is shown.

A glasshouse is shown at reference point L is shown.

25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, 1914 pub 1919

The layout is substantially unchanged. An additional building (now ruined) is shown at reference point M.

Tree symbols have appeared around the western perimeter of the site.

Tree symbols have appeared in an enclosed area at the southern tip of reference area A.

Within reference area G embankments are indicated suggesting the origination of terracing here.

The area to the south of the house (reference point N) is shown as clear. The area immediately north of the house (reference point P) is shown as clear. Tree symbols are shown around reference point H.

Tree cover within the main woodland area is shown as sparse and almost wholly broadleaf.

25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, revised 1936 published 1938

A tree lined avenue is shown from the main road to the grounds of the house.

Tree symbols reappear in the main part of the triangular area reference A.

An additional and larger glasshouse is shown at reference point Q.

An additional smaller building is shown just north of the ruin at reference point J.

No coniferous symbols are shown within the main woodland area.

National Grid Maps, 1940s-1970, revised 1961 published 1962

The entrance avenue trees are no longer shown.

The terrace at reference area G is no longer shown but is clear.

The greater detail in tree symbols indicates occasional conifers and about equal coverage of trees and shrubs (or small trees).

The west perimeter path is no longer shown.

The area behind the hotel (reference P) is shown as a mix of tree and shrubs.

Other maps

1968 edition - no detectable changes.

The Roy highland map was consulted (c 1760) but is not detailed enough to give any extra meaningful information.

Wartime maps were also consulted but these had been edited by the War Office for national security reasons and are not reliable.

Post 1983 maps are subject to copyright and are not available at present.

1.b Conclusions from examination of maps relative to AWI shape.

The AWI shape is approximate and wrongly placed, and thus suggests historic tree cover within the field area and to the south of the site, where historic mapping counter-indicates no tree cover.

Progressive development of Woodbank House and its ornamental and horticultural facilities shows significant clearance, manmade changes in landform and path developments that together replaced about 55% of the previous land use on the site and within the corrected position of the AWI shape.

The mapping suggests changes in tree mix, reduction in cover and periods of shrub or small tree cover in large parts of the remainder.

1.c Conclusions in conjunction with tree survey information

The tree survey indicated a narrow semi-mature to early age range for most trees. Older trees were generally beech, lime and ornamental conifers.

Tree cover is dominated by non-native species (sycamore, beech, lime, ornamental conifers) and mature Cherry Laurel, Portuguese Laurel and other non-native shrubs. Native oak and birch are present to maturity or semi-maturity. To the south of the site are many young to semi mature birch and to early mature willow, which appear from positions and density to be self-seeded.

The overall impression is of a loss of natural woodland in favour of a manufactured largely ornamental landscape, now dominated by replanted non-native and native trees, surviving ornamental conifers, naturally regenerating willow and birch on disturbed ground and everywhere interspersed by invasive bamboo and other non-native shrubs and by dense evergreen Prunus understorey. The area to the south of Woodbank House, and running to the south point of the AWI shape (reference points N, G and A), may have been largely devoid of woodland cover for over a century. The walled garden area (E) and the glasshouse area (Q) has been excavated from the hillside and no original habitat can exist.

The stables area (N) has been built over and otherwise all trees may have been removed over a century ago. Only weak recent regeneration is present.

An almost continuous wall was noted running from the field corner in the NNW to behind the stables area in the SSE. It amounts to a drop of between 1m and 2m from W to E and is clearly artificial. It is likely that excavation and fill for this have obliterated any original habitat. A bridge and a level track are still discernable to the west of this edge and the track has been overrun by natural regeneration only in its north half.

In the staff accommodation area, there has been considerable disruption associated with a high pressure pipeline and existing servitude rights preclude the use of a wide strip for tree planting. Only weak young self-seeding has occurred. The pipeline swathe passes between a line of 6 tall, mature non-native trees. To the east of the pipeline, trees close to the road are generally young or semi mature, with several still bearing planting guards. Back from the road there is a general elevation of the ground that is not visible on older aerial photography, suggesting either fill to the rear or cut to the front, or both. To the rear are several individual early mature trees on the strip shown on the masterplan as buffer woodland.

The overall impression in this area is of non-native mature avenue trees, relatively young native planting and some early mature naturalised or native trees on largely manufactured terrain and sterilisation of a wide strip by pipeline servitudes.

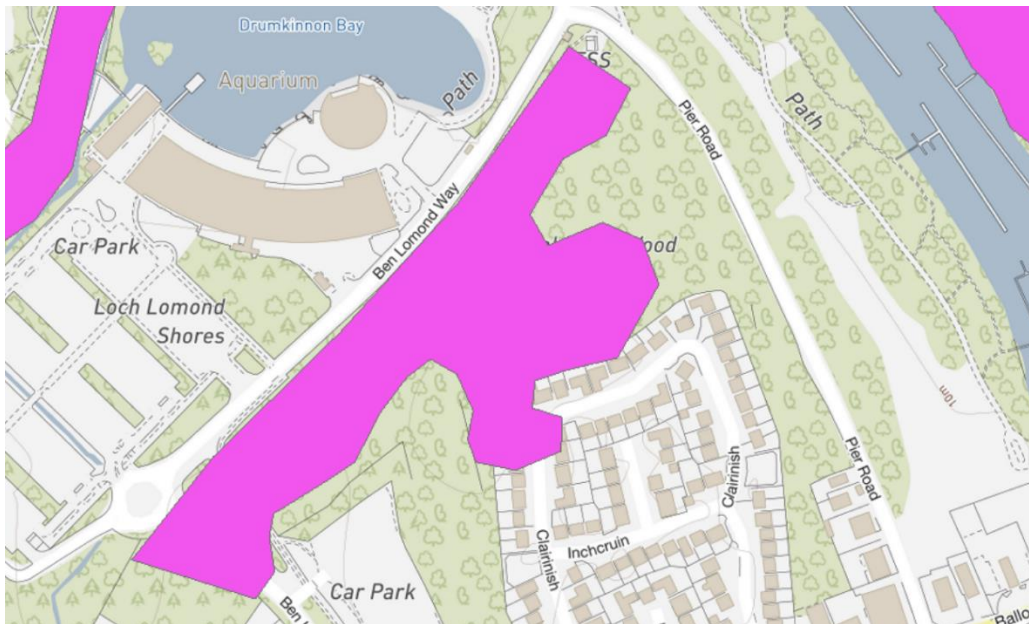
2.a DRUMKINNON WOOD AREA

Site boundary and reference points referred to –

See also preceding plan for referenced in the south west area.



Extract shape from Ancient Woodland Inventory –



As already noted, there is an almost certain possibility that the AWI shape for the Drumkinnon Wood area is plotted in the wrong position. If it were shifted, with some minor rotation, about 25 metres north eastwards it would correspond better with past and current physical features on the ground.

However, Drumkinnon Wood is not the subject of any development proposals and is not therefore necessary to assess the continuity of ancient woodland habitat to the present day, but a brief examination of the maps shows the following -

1862

An eastwards outgrowth of the AWI shape at reference point R is indicated.

The AWI shape is exaggerated in width by as much as 3x at reference point S relative to the woodland shown on the 1862 map.

There is a significant area of contiguous woodland at reference point T.

The woodland is indicated by symbols as predominantly broadleaf with some conifer.

The woodland is truncated at the northeast by the railway to Balloch pier.

A curved edge to woodland is indicated at reference point F.

1898

The wood at reference point T is replaced by two buildings and cleared land.

The northeast corner is further truncated by a railway turntable and line.

A large sand pit, accessed by a track from the west, is shown at reference point U.

The outgrowth at reference point R is no longer shown.

A curved edge to woodland is indicated at reference point F.

1919

The wooded area is further truncated to the northeast by a footpath and boundary at about the position of the current road, severing an area of woodland of about 0.4 Ac. (Reference point V)

A curved edge to woodland is indicated at reference point F.

1938

The long neck of woodland running northeast is shown split into broadleaf and conifers on its northwest side and broadleaf on its southeast side. This division continues as far as the sand pit, which is greatly enlarged and continues as far as reference point W.

A silk dyeing and finishing factory to the south of reference point X appears and an irregularly shaped incursion into the woodland is shown, nature unknown but could be a materials or effluent disposal area.

The footpath to the northwest is now indicated as a track to Balloch pier.

A curved edge to woodland is indicated at reference point F.

1963

The sand pit is further extended to the northeast to reference point Y. Only a narrow ridge remains between the pit and land to the northwest.

The incursion to the south is confirmed to be a refuse tip.

A tank and additional track parallel to the road at the northeast are shown.

Other maps

No other significant indications were found on other maps.

2.b Conclusions from examination of maps relative to AWI shape

The AWI shape is clearly shown in the wrong place, and a translation of the shape 20m or so north eastwards fits better with current and past map features.

The AWI shape is a good deal wider than any woodland ever shown on old maps. Clear mapping of the shape at 1860 should be used in preference, but allowing for the subsequent losses to railway, buildings and roads. In the north east area, the woodland has been permanently truncated firstly by railway and then by a road. This truncation correlates

reasonably well with the current AWI shape, subject to its position being adjusted as already described.

Although an area of woodland was given over to a refuse tip for several decades, this is now situated within an area of housing development.

The extensive excavation of sand in the sand pit area, which at its peak was over 100m long and 30m wide, will have destroyed any natural woodland habitat along its route.

The outer edge of the wood to the northwest is either a narrow remnant of woodland with characteristics changed by removal of ground and tree to the southeast or is indicated as replaced by a segregated area of mixed conifer and broadleaf.

The south west edge of the AWI shape is too straight relative to every past edition of OS mapping.

2.c Conclusions in conjunction with walkover and tree survey information

A high-pressure pipeline passes the length of the wood, at first following the line of the sand pit and then continuing in a north easterly direction to two small compounds just before the road. This will have resulted in additional permanent disruption of soils and habitat. Rights of access for its maintenance may prevent any meaningful replanting for 10 metres on either side. The walkover in March 2022 showed no trees growing along a strip about 400m long x 20m wide.

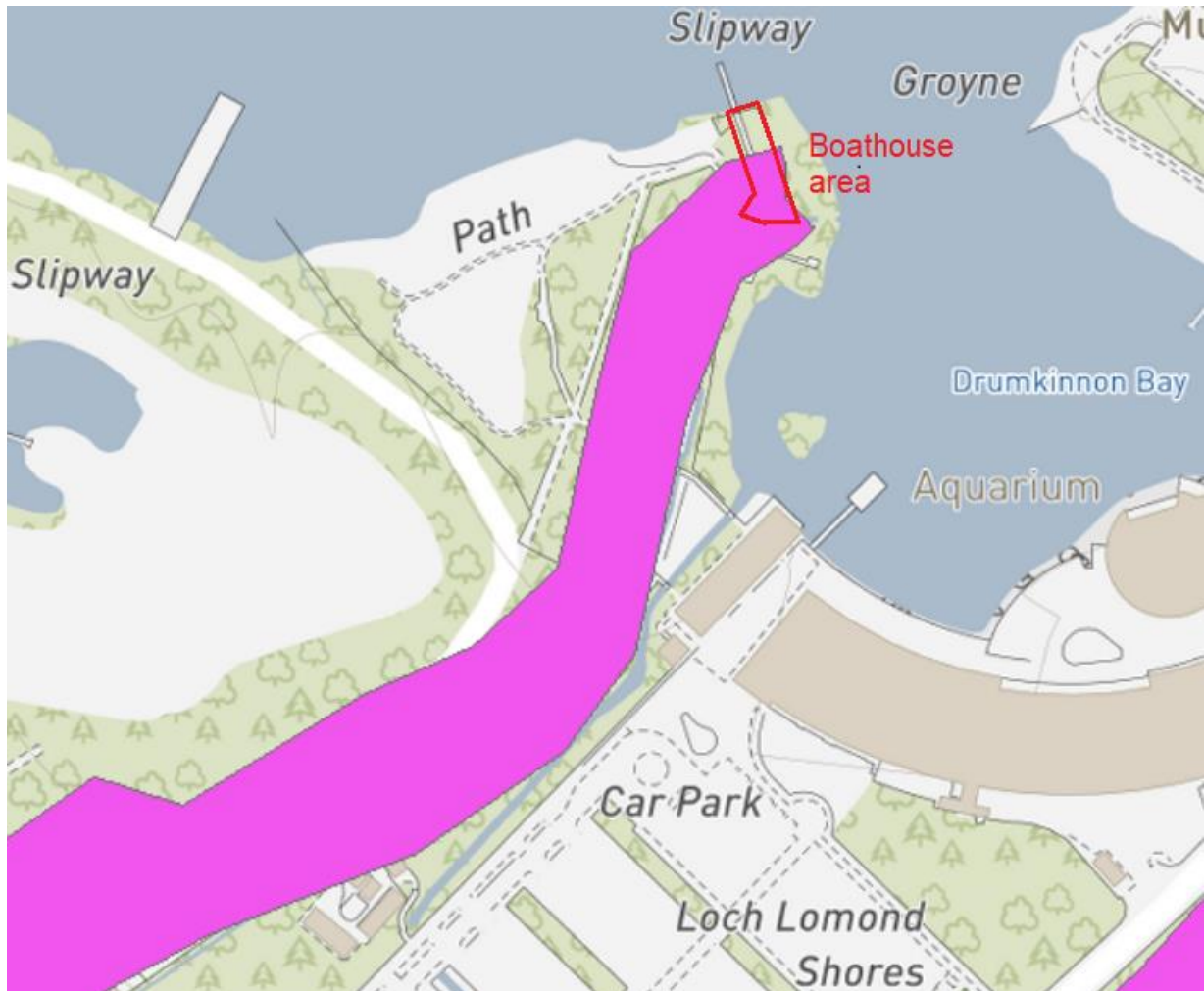
Aerial photography from the 1920s indicates almost complete removal of Drumkinnon Wood, with the exception of a narrow fringe along its north west edge.

No ancient or veteran trees were noted within the woodland. Non-native mature and early-mature trees included Douglas Fir, Beech, Sycamore and Black Pine. Native trees present at maturity or early maturity included birch and oak. Understorey informal mix of mainly native broadleaf.

A recreational path network has been created through the woods, with gates and signposts.

3.a BOATHOUSE AREA

Extract shape from Ancient Woodland Inventory, overlain with the approximate extent of the Boathouse Area –



1750 Roy map

No meaningful information can be derived. The classification of this shape as 1860 LEPO indicates that no reliance has been put on it appearing as a wooded area at c.1750.

1860

The area now comprising the promontory, part of which is the Boathouse Area, is shown as partly wooded (predominantly coniferous). The south and east edges are bounded by a stream discharging into Loch Lomond. In the modern context the east edge is now the edge of the loch and the south edge exists only as a ditch. However, these features correspond very well with historic mapping and position the extent of the 1860 wooded area unambiguously.

1896

Two boathouses and a slipway appear on the maps and there is no indication of continued woodland cover.

1914

Both boathouses are still present, as are the slipway and the stream. Symbology suggests marshy ground and there is no indication of tree cover.

1936

As at 1914, but without the symbology of marshy ground.

1958

As at 1936 but the loch shore to the east has moved back about 30 metres, making the stream on the east edge of the promontory now part of the loch shore. No mapping indications of woodland or trees on the Boathouse Area.

3.b Conclusions from examination of maps relative to AWI shape

Although the Boathouse Area appears on the 1860 map as wooded, since at least 1896 it has been developed as boathouses and a slipway, with no mapping indications of tree cover since then.

Later OS mapping is subject to copyright and is not available for analysis at present.

3.c Conclusions in conjunction with walkover and tree survey information

The promontory area has tree cover that is restricted to the regeneration of tree stubs that are (or were) no older than semi-mature. Although almost continuous tree cover including mature trees is present to the west, there is clear demarcation between that and the Boathouse Area. Thin soils, disturbed ground and exposed fluvio-glacial deposits, combined with over a century of exposure suggest that there is very low likelihood of relict ancient woodland habitat.

JM 21/4/22