

BROUGHTON

Grant application goes in for woodland buyout

BY JOHN HART

Friends of Broughtonknowe retains cautious optimism for the successful community buyout of their cherished woodland. It has been a demanding few months trying to negotiate a hopefully successful application for purchase funding, to the Scottish Land Fund (SLF).

Throughout this period Friends of Broughtonknowe (FoB) has resiliently continued to pursue its dual aims of 'improving amenity and increasing biodiversity' in the woodland. Paths, benches and picnic sites are all being maintained through continuing volunteer input, particular thanks are due to Ross Robison.

On the wildlife front, Broughtonknowe biodiversity continues to develop as the various habitats mature under our stewardship. The year starts with an abundance of amphibians, frogs and toads, that use the ponds for spawning. It is truly an annual spectacle. The 'clouds' of ensuing tadpoles are impressive to even casual observation. Pond dipping equipment is available for community use in the FoB wildlife hide.

The spring woodland is now alive with birdsong. It is lovely to hear the Song Thrush's melodious, repeated phrases from all parts of the woodland. I estimated 12 territories this year. Our substantial nest-box provision has significantly boosted the populations of 'hole nesting' birds, particularly Blue and Great Tits. Continuous provision of bird seed ensures a food supply for the extra beaks! We have added 15 bat boxes this year, provided by our local Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) representative,



The rare Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly has been spotted in the woodland. Inset: the Friends' logo

Thanks, Nicole Wallace.

The peak of bird activity coincides with an upsurge in the numbers of insects, most strikingly butterflies and

bumblebees. It is with some pride that FoB can report the increasing presence of two nationally scarce species: the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly and the Blacberry Bumblebee. Records are submitted to 'Butterfly Conservation' and the 'Bumblebee Conservation Trust'.

Ongoing contact with the community is maintained through the increasing numbers joining the Friends of Broughtonknowe Facebook group - now standing at 375 members. We are piloting a programme of community events this summer using our provided amenities.

Successful guided nature walks and a foraging event were joint ventures with Green Ash Chairs using the purpose-built yurt in the quarry. Thanks are due to Peter Young.

A successful community drop-in was held at Broughton Village Hall in July, with over 40 local people generously contributing to the future plans for the woodland. Based on a draft plan developed by our woodland consultants, people gave their views on what should and should not happen within the wood in the future, if we were to be successful in purchasing the woodland through the planned community buy out. The feedback informed the Scottish Land Fund application which was submitted in mid-August.