



Alarm Bells for Bluebells Monitoring Report

November 2009



PLANTING
IMPROVING
INSPIRING

Registered Charity SC015341

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Executive Summary

The 2008 Alarm Bells for Bluebells Campaign was designed to meet targets set in the Central Scotland Forest Trust's (CSFT) Commitment to Biodiversity, to raise awareness of the conservation status of the species and promote action to enhance it in the Forest.

In response to a nationwide threat to native bluebells a list of five key goals were developed. The project took the form of a major marketing campaign, including press releases in local and national press, other media broadcasts such as radio and websites, and corporate and community events.

In addition to this, Bluebell bulb planting events were organised with schools and community events to raise awareness of the issues surrounding British Bluebells and to plant native bulbs in suitable areas of woodland.

The campaign was a great success; it delivered progress on each key goal and can, therefore, be considered to have made a marked contribution to the task of ensuring native bluebells survive in the Central Scotland for future generations to enjoy. Additionally, there were noticeable other benefits such as helping CSFT to develop new relationships with partners, schools, community groups and media contacts.

Acknowledgements

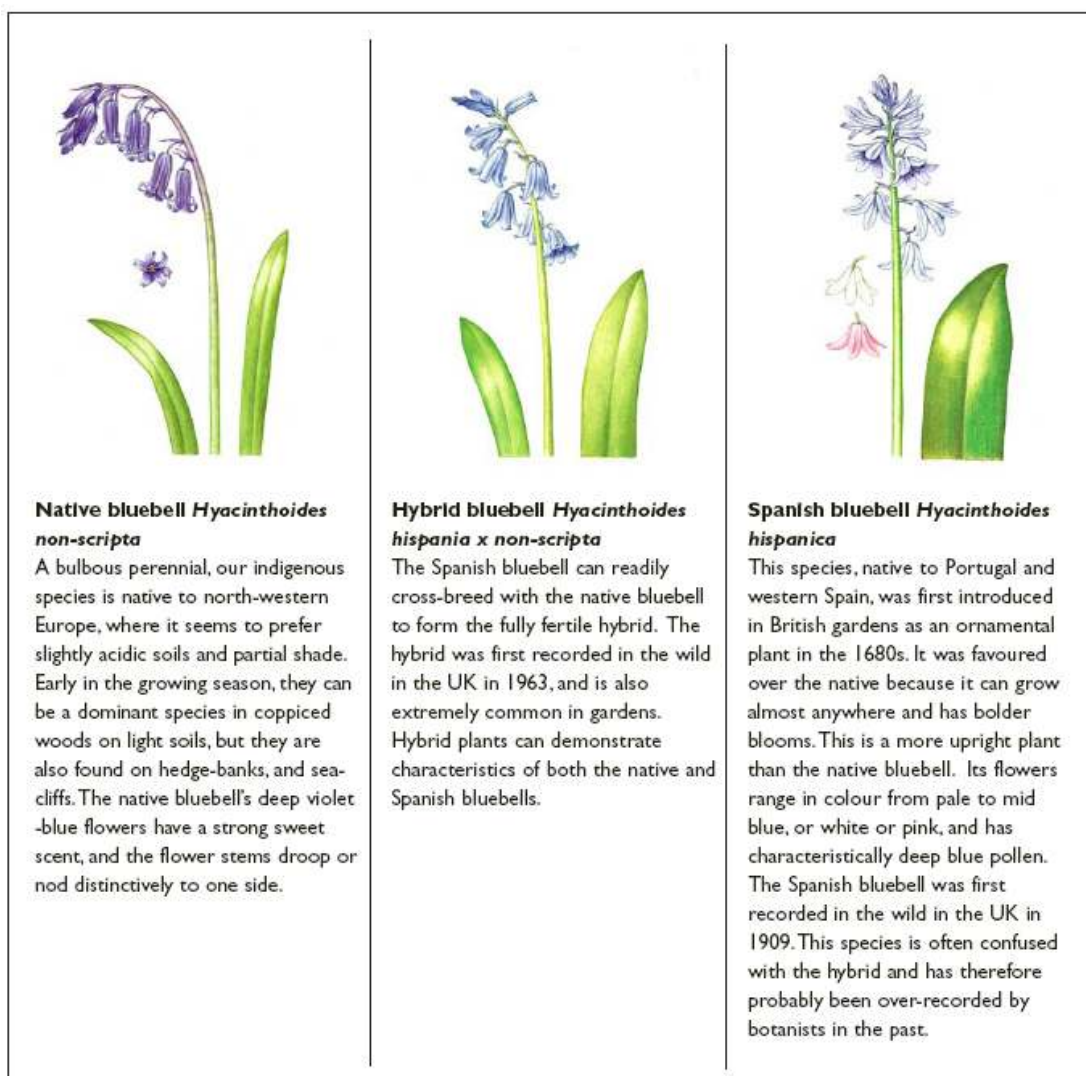
This campaign was only possible through working closely with all of CSFT's partner agencies, particular thanks go to SNH who helped fund the project. We would also like to thank the 25 schools and 12 community groups who participated in the planting events.

1. Introduction

Background to the Project

In recent years (the last 50 or so), the familiar British bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* has been joined by a garden escape known as *Hyacinthoides hispanica* aka the 'Spanish' Bluebell and, more commonly, the hybrid between the two, which is called *Hyacinthoides hispanica x non-scripta*.

Photographs and descriptions of all three taxa are shown below.



source: *Plantlife*, © Christina Hart Davies



British Bluebell
Source: CSFT



Hybrid Bluebell



Spanish Bluebell

In terms of distribution, the British bluebell is common throughout Britain. It is only absent from some of the most northerly islands, high mountains in Scotland, and some peatlands in East Anglia. The Spanish bluebell and the hybrid are now almost as widely distributed as the native plant, due to being widely planted in gardens and near habitation.

The British bluebell is typically a woodland plant, occurring in calcareous and mildly acid woodlands of all types flowering in the Spring. The most characteristic communities for it are in ash and oak woodlands, which are the climax communities over much of lowland Britain.

Some conservation organisations suggest that the Spanish Bluebell is invading and threatening the native species and that the British bluebell is in decline. This issue moved CSFT to action and, in 2008, we engaged in a programme of works called *Alarm Bells for Bluebells*.

Key Goals

Through discussion with members of the CSFT staff and stakeholders, a list of five key goals were developed. Each of these goals directly relate to the central objective of the project – to help save the British bluebell in Scotland. The five goals are:

1. Engage with and inform Forest residents on the issue
2. Train people in spotting different types of bluebells
3. Gather information as to the existing bluebell coverage within our area
4. Train people in planting bluebells
5. Source and physically plant lots of bluebells

Monitoring Indicators

To provide evidence for progress on each goal a number of indicators were selected. These indicators are measurable elements of the project. Some are numeric figures derived from in-house CSFT monitoring procedures, others necessitated interaction with the general public and participants at events and some are much more visual and qualitative including photographic evidence.

The measures chosen are listed below under the appropriate goal. Note that some indicators such as *number of leaflets distributed* are listed under more than one goal.

1. Engage with and inform Forest residents on the issue

- Number of website hits to bluebell page
- Number of leaflets distributed
- Number of planting events
- Number of schools, community groups etc engaged
- Number of partner organisations engaged
- Correspondence with general public (letter or email)
- Photos documenting engagement

2. Train people in spotting bluebells

- Number of bluebell recognition PDF downloads
- Number of leaflets distributed
- Number of people attending demonstrations/planting events
- Photos documenting spotting training given

3. Gather information as to existing bluebell coverage (database, maps, etc)

- Create a database for storing public returns
- Number of locations returned
- Map of locations
- Analysis of data in comparison with other data such as Plantlife

4. Train people in planting

- Number of people attending planting events (both CSFT and any other partner agencies)
- Photos documenting planting training given

5. Source and physically plant lots of bluebells

- Number of bulbs sourced
- Number given away at displays (eg Big in Falkirk & Royal Highland Show) – postcodes of destinations
- Number of bulbs given away at events – postcode sector of event location
- Exact location of planting event and number planted
- Photos documenting location before, during and after planting

2. Findings

Results

The table below shows the overall results of the monitoring exercise

1. Engage with and inform Forest residents on the issue	
Number of website hits to Bluebell page	4,426 Page views 3,435 Unique views
Number of leaflets distributed	30,000
Number of planting events	20 including launch event
Number of schools, community groups etc engaged	25
Number of partner organisations engaged	12
Correspondence with general public (letter or email)	42 e-mail enquiries were received at the Bluebell e-mail address, with 3 letters coming through the post, some of the above included survey cards. An additional 24 survey cards were returned.
Photos documenting engagement	See photos a, b, c & d
2. Train people in spotting bluebells	
Number of bluebell recognition PDF downloads	Views 320. Unique Views 255
Number of leaflets distributed	30,000
Number of people attending demonstrations/planting events	492
Photos documenting training in bluebell spotting	See photos e, f, h and i
3. Gather info as to existing bluebell coverage (database, maps, etc)	
Create a database for storing public returns	Database completed
Number of locations returned	33

Map of locations	See Map 1
Analysis of data in comparison with other data such as Plantlife	Plantlife data unavailable.
4. Train people in planting	
Number of people attending planting events (both CSFT and any other partner agencies)	492 See Map 2 and charts
Photos documenting planting training given	See photos h, k, l
5. Source and physically plant lots of bluebells	
Number of bulbs sourced	48,500
Number given away at displays – postcodes of destinations	24,000 (RHS, Falkirk Wheel, Ikea and Big in Falkirk)
Number of bulbs given away at events – postcode sector of event location	As above
Exact location of planting event and number planted	See Map 2
Photos documenting location before, during and after planting	See photos m, n, o & p

Analysis

At the height of the campaign over 5% of all CSFT web traffic was bluebell related. To date there have been nearly 4,500 hits to bluebell specific CSF web pages. Of these, three quarters were unique views – that is individual visitors. So we can say with some robustness that 3,435 people have viewed bluebell specific information on the CSF website since the start of the campaign. We know that visitors spent around 62 seconds per page looking at bluebell information on our website. That means that we have generated well over 76 hours worth of bluebell activity on our site.

These figures clearly show that the *Alarm Bells for Bluebells* publicity was successful in stimulating an interest in the subject and by visiting these pages, people were able to view the information which informed them on the issue.

Similarly, the 30,000 leaflets distributed also contained information on the subject as well as details of how to engage with the campaign via a bluebell identification guide and a bluebell spotting competition (see Appendix 3). We may not be able to claim that 30,000 people were *engaged* because they took a leaflet. However, it is recognised that these leaflets were either directly handed to people or they were taken from a display. It would, therefore, be anticipated that the majority of people would, at the very least, have read the title '*Alarm Bells for Bluebells*' and as such, would have got the message that bluebells are in danger.

As shown in Appendix 3, the leaflets contained a section 'I've spotted some bluebells'. This encouraged people to send back information on bluebells which they have seen via freepost. Only 33 returns were received. This was much less than hoped for, however, the quality of the responses was high as people were able to identify exactly what type of bluebells were spotted (ie Spanish, British and Hybrid). The location of these returned records can be seen in Map 1. The information gathered was also forwarded onto a national database run by the charity Plantlife UK. Plantlife UK ran a national survey for all three types of Bluebells in 2003 using survey cards and encouraging the public to send them in, in a similar way to CSFT's postal survey. We have contributed our results to the 2009 repeat survey, which is being undertaken primarily online.

In addition to direct correspondence with CSFT staff at events or on the phone or email, we received 42 enquiries to a generic bluebell email address. These were passed onto appropriate members of staff for response as were a few letters.

In total, CSFT obtained nearly 50,000 bulbs. Although it was not possible to get these from within Central Scotland, they did come from sustainable sources in Cumbria and North Wales. Around half of the bulbs were given away at events such as Falkirk Wheel, Ikea, Big in Falkirk and, notably, the 2008 Royal Highland Show. In this event CSFT commissioned a large display to promote the campaign (see photo q).

Including a high profile launch event located at the Falkirk Wheel, 20 planting events were held across the Central Belt (see Map 2). In total, 25 different organisations attended these planting sessions including schools such as Dedridge Primary School and Langless Primary School, community groups like Bellsquarry Community Woodland Group and also Conservation agencies like the Woodland Trust Scotland in Livingston. Around 500 people attended our planting events and each was given the opportunity to plant bluebells after a brief instruction / training session (see photos h through to p).

a) Launch of Campaign at Falkirk Wheel



b) Big In Falkirk



c) Shotts Nature Park, North Lanarkshire



d) Ikea, Glasgow



e) Big In Falkirk



f) Big In Falkirk



g) Royal Highland Show, 2008



h) Boghead Wood Public Event, East Dunbartonshire



i) Boghead Wood planting with Campsie View School, East Dunbartonshire



j) Shotts Nature Park, North Lanarkshire



k) Shotts Nature Park. North Lanarkshire



l) Boghead Wood planting with Campsie View School, East Dunbartonshire



m) Dedridge Plantation, Livingston



n) Launch of Campaign, Falkirk Wheel



o) Shotts Nature Park. North Lanarkshire



p) Cobblebrae, Falkirk



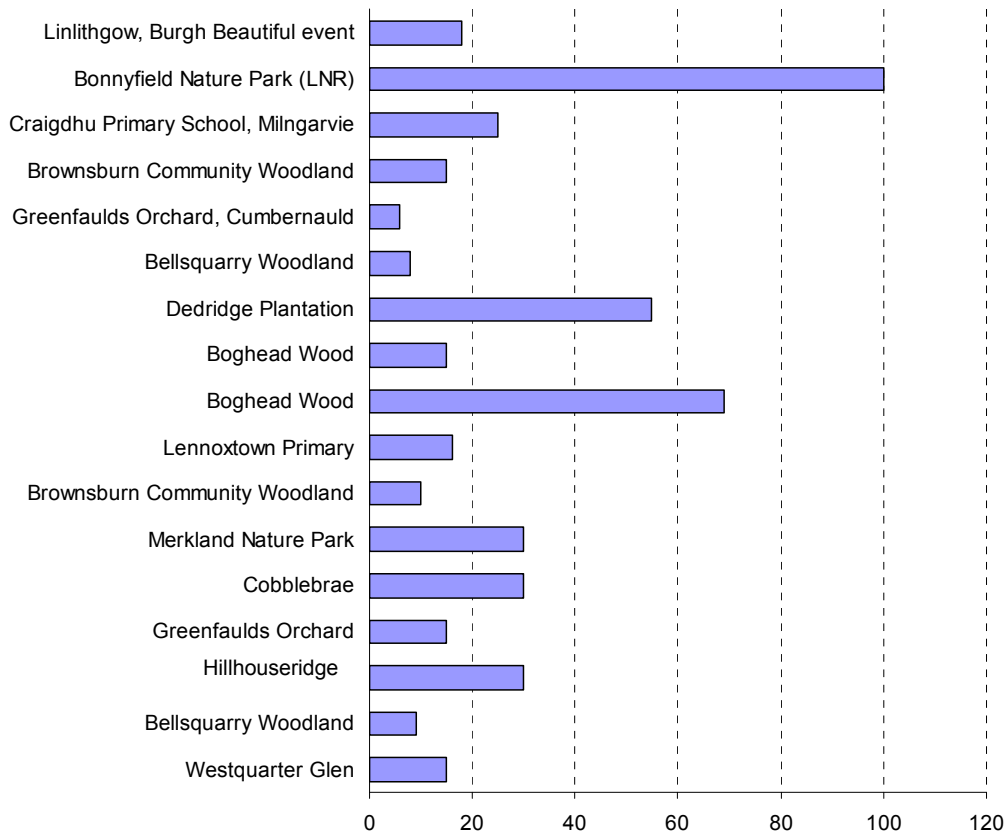
q) Display at The Royal Highland Show

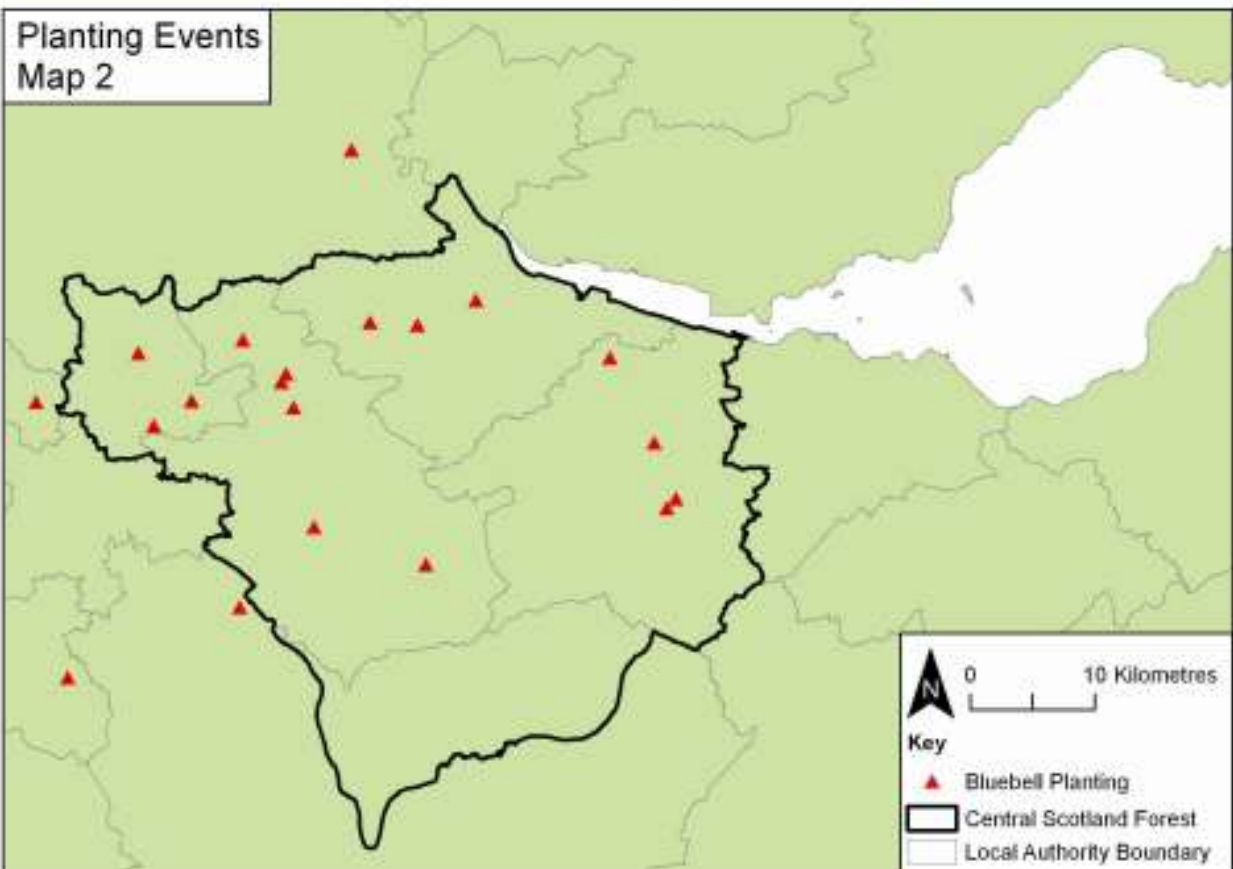
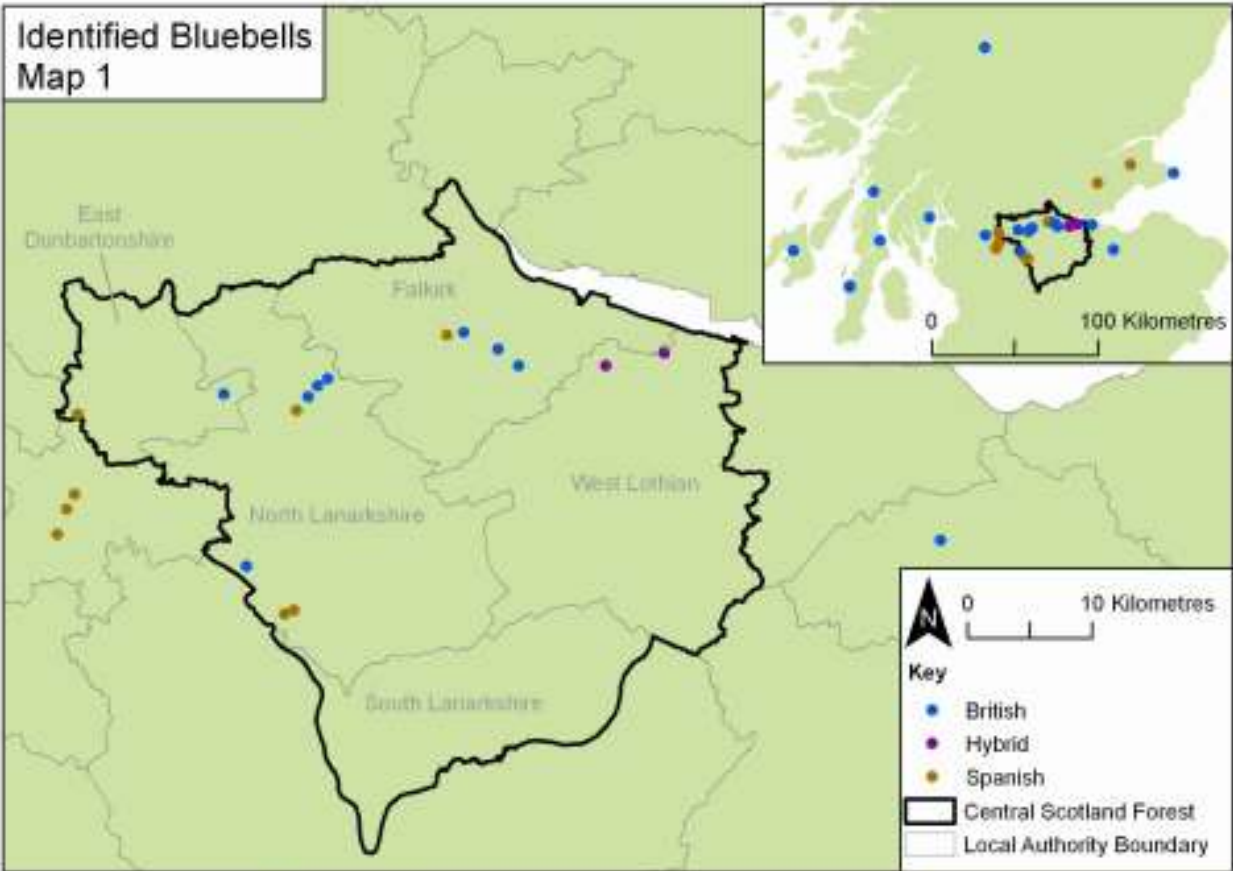


Planting Event Results

Our event monitoring records indicate that around 500 people were taught to identify British bluebells and shown the correct planting technique. At least 1,500 bulbs were planted in these 'CSFT supervised' events lasting a combined total of 47 hours.

Chart 1. Number of Volunteers At Planting Events





As shown in Chart 2 below, most of these attendees were not aware that the native bluebell was endangered. Furthermore, before the event the majority of attendees could not tell the difference between British bluebells and non-native varieties (Chart 3) whereas after the event, 8 out of ten people could (Chart 6). Similarly, less than half of the attendees said they could plant bluebells bulbs before the event (Chart 4) whereas after nearly everyone where confident about successfully plant them (Chart 5). Lastly, everyone attending the events enjoyed it (Chart 7), further evidence of this is provided in the selected comments included in *Planting Voices* section shown below.

Planting voices

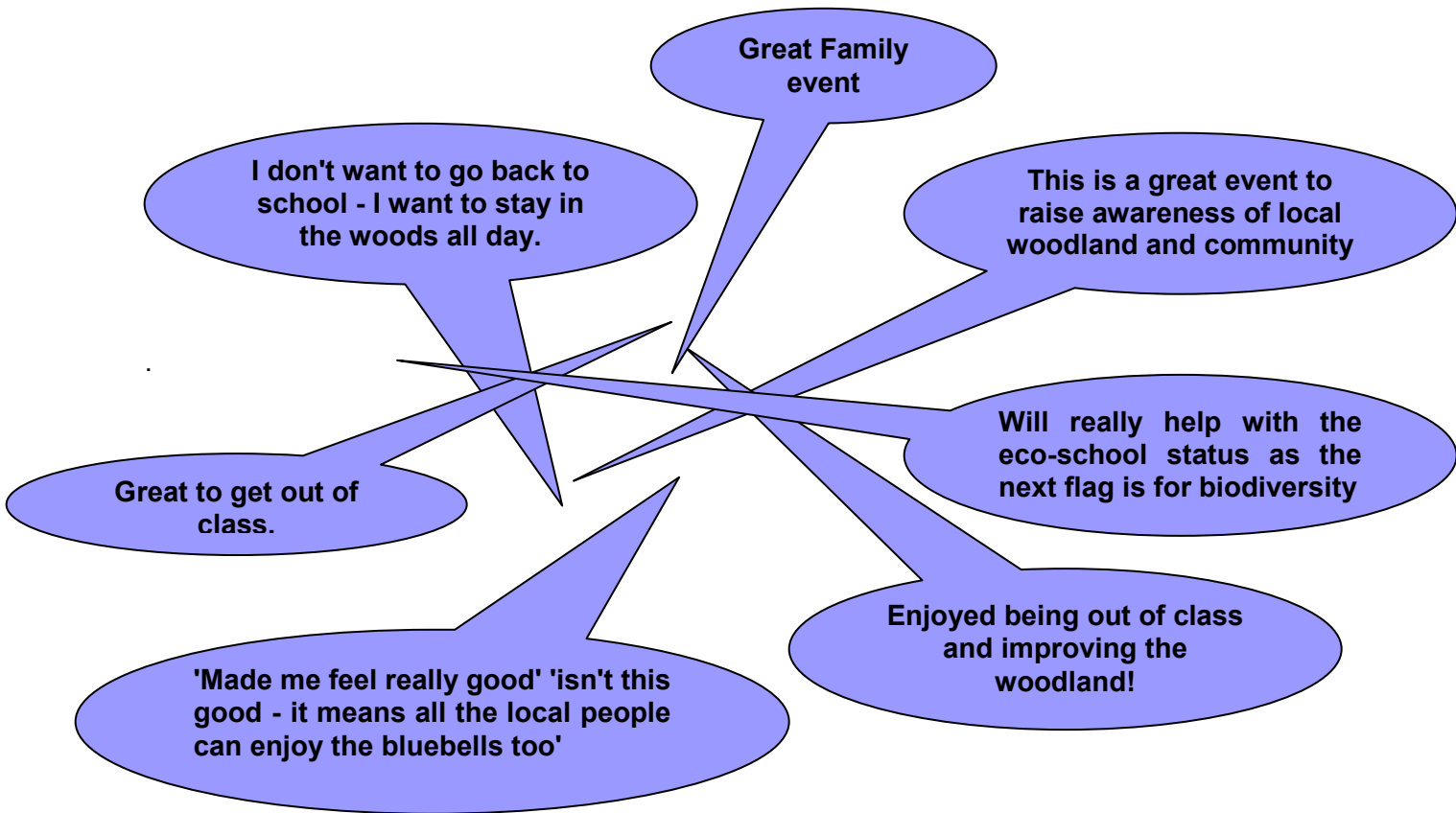


Chart 2.

Before you came to the event today, were you aware that native bluebells were endangered?

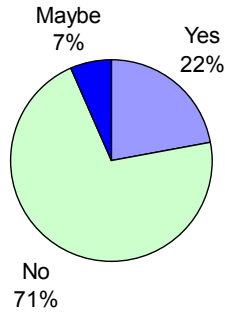


Chart 3.

Before you came to the event today, could you tell the difference between British Bluebells and non native varieties?

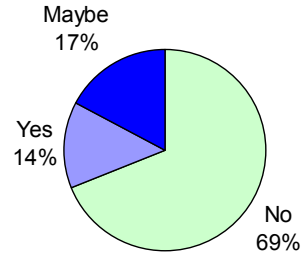


Chart 4.

Before you came to the event today, did you know where and how to plant Bluebell bulbs?

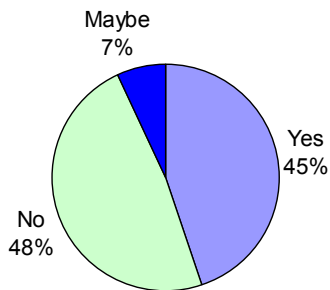


Chart 5.

After the training provided today, do you know where and how to plant Bluebell bulbs?

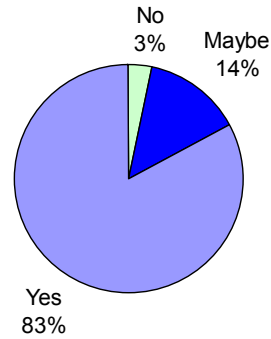


Chart 6.

After the training provided today, can you tell the difference between British Bluebells and non native varieties?

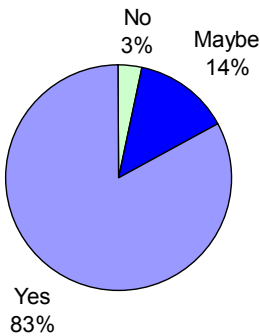
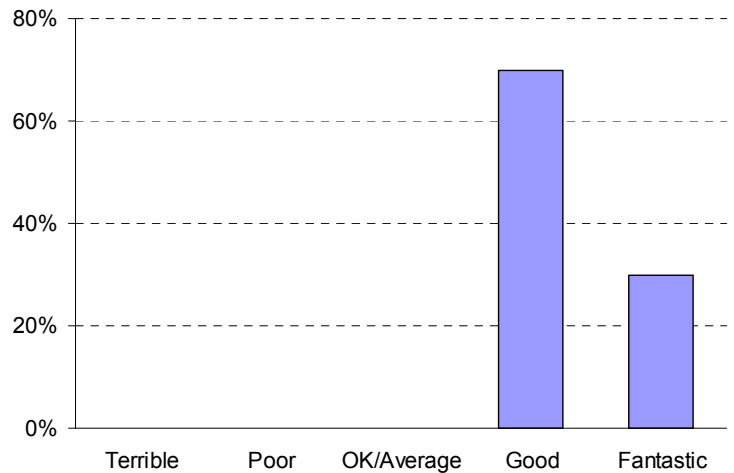


Chart 7.

How would you rate your visit to this event today?



Unfortunately it was not possible to gather a completed event monitoring form from everybody who attended the planting events. This was mainly due to the sometimes difficult logistics of working with children and also people with learning disabilities. However, a point was made to encourage teachers and carers to fill in forms. The information received formed the basis of Charts 2 to 7 shown above. In short, answers to the questions show that the events were remarkably successful in informing people about the bluebell situation and also teaching them how to plant bulbs. Furthermore, the responses and several images clearly indicate that attendees found the events to be an enjoyable and enriching experience.

In Spring 2009, all the sites planted during the campaign were revisited either by CSFT staff, partner organisation staff or community groups. All of the sites showed evidence of some bluebell growth, particularly those planted in the spring. Photos t, u, v and w show some of the bluebells in flower. In particular, photos r and s show the same area of Boghead wood, Lenzie. It is recognised that before and after images are very useful and CSFT intend to revisit the planting sites in the future and take more images.

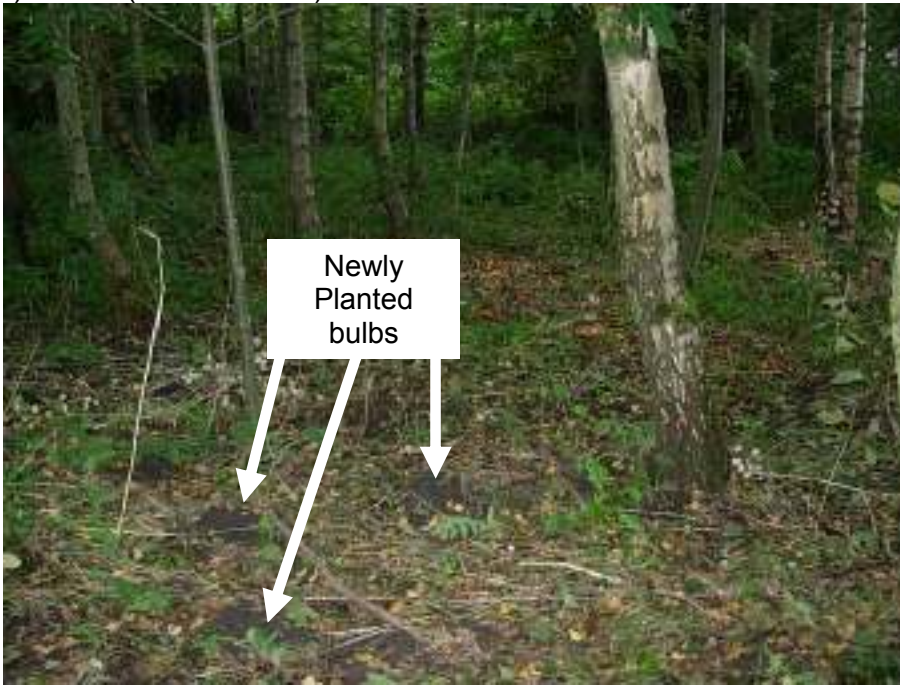
Alarm Bells for Bluebells also enabled CSFT to engage with new partners, build new relationships and establish new contacts within organisations and schools. We were able to work with community groups and schools that had not be involved with CSFT before, and work practically with partners such as the Woodland Trust and Historic Scotland, who had only been passive partners in the Forest previously.

Many of these new contacts (schools, groups and partners) have been used to promote the CSFT's 2009 campaign "Save the Wee Bees" more widely and have assisted in even more wildflower planting events.

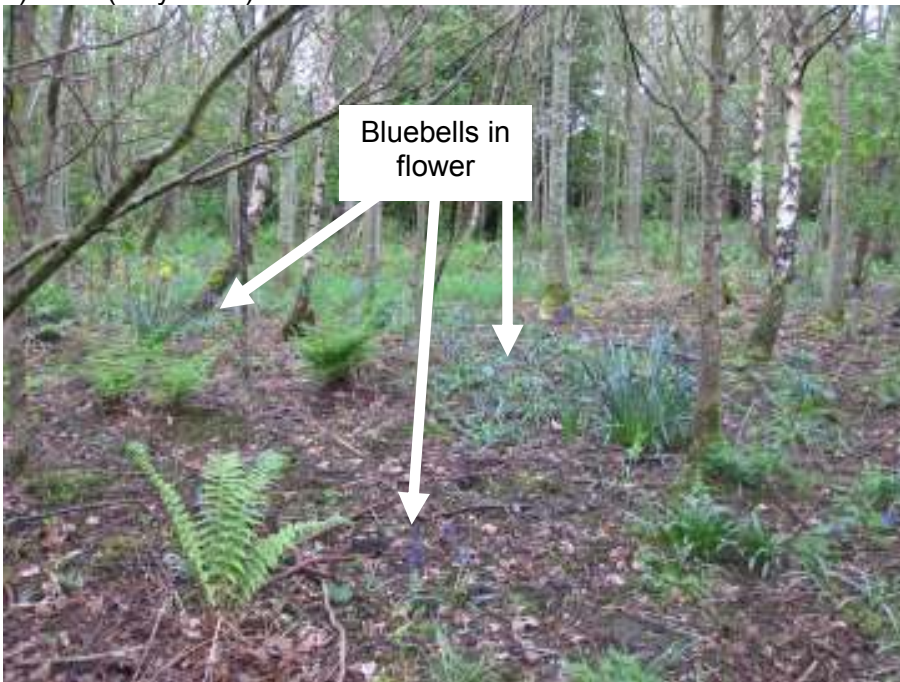
Site Images After Planting

Boghead Wood, Lenzie East Dunbartonshire

r) Before (October 2008)



s) After (May 2009)



Other Spring 2009 images:

t) Boghead Wood, Lenzie.



u) Cobblebrae, Falkirk



v) Dedridge, West Lothian



w) Westquarter Glen, Falkirk



3. Conclusions

Performance against Key Goals

Through discussion with members of CSFT staff and stakeholders, a list of five key goals was developed. Each of these directly relate to the central objective of the project – to help save the British bluebell in Scotland.

The campaign was successful in **engaging with Forest residents on the issue**, the bluebell website pages achieved significant interest with nearly 3,500 unique hits generating an estimated 76 hours of browsing activity. In addition, 30,000 leaflets were distributed conveying the key message that native bluebells were in danger and there were 42 email enquiries regarding the subject.

Regarding using the media (website, display boards and leaflets) to **train people to spot different types of bluebells** it is impossible to estimate how many people actually understood the rather technical taxonomic differences which distinguish native and non-native varieties. However, the planting events did offer the chance to convey this information to nearly 500 people with greater certainty that they understood the differences.

Although the attempt to **gather information regarding existing bluebell coverage** was not as successful as we might have hoped, the quality of responses was high and we were able to generate a map of postal returns. Correspondence with Plantlife UK confirmed that they have had similar problems with low response rates to surveys and that they were pleased to receive our data which has enhanced their Scottish bluebell data.

One of the great successes of the campaign was the **planting events**. These were an excellent platform to teach people how to spot native bluebells and why they are in danger and also provided nearly 500 people with practical experience of planting bulbs. Undertaking such direct conservation activity was a new experience for many of these volunteers and, as shown in the images and survey results, everybody enjoyed the activity.

The last goal was **source and plant bulbs**. Nearly 50,000 bulbs were purchased through this campaign, half of these were planted at events, the rest were donated to schools and given away at a variety of public events. Although in many cases it remains premature to document the bluebells in flower, we do have photographic evidence from several sites which shows that, at these locations, the planting has been successful.

In conclusion, the campaign has performed well against the key goals and can be considered to have made a marked contribution in the task of ensuring native bluebells survive in the Central Scotland for future generations to enjoy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Alarm Bells for Bluebells Event Monitoring Form



Monitoring Sheet for 'Alarm Bells for Bluebells' as part of CSFT's Year of the Bluebell Campaign

Location Date

Start Time End Time

Number of CSFT staff or Partner Organisers

Number of Volunteers

Number of attendees

Number of bulbs planted

Number taught how to identify British bluebell

Number taught how to plant bulb

General feeling as to how event went *(note factors that might affect turn out and enjoyment eg weather, traffic, footy game etc)*

.....
.....
.....
.....

Notes of any verbal responses from participants

.....
.....
.....
.....

Number of happy forms returned

Photos – please tick. *(follow up images from same perspective, particularly a, e and f).*

- a) site before planting
- b) people being instructed in how to plant
- c) people planting
- d) people (eg parents) watching the (children) planting (smiling fondly)
- e) site immediately after planting
- f) site in full bloom

Appendix 2: Alarm Bells for Bluebells Event 'Happy' Form



Evaluation Form as part of The Central Scotland Forest's Year of the Bluebell Campaign



Event location Date

1. How did you find out about today's event?

2. Before you heard about today's event ...

- a) where you aware that native Bluebells are endangered? Yes No Maybe
b) could you tell the difference between British Bluebells and non native varieties? Yes No Maybe
c) did you know where and how to plant Bluebell bulbs? Yes No Maybe

3. After attending this event ...

- a) could you tell the difference between British Bluebells and non native varieties? Yes No Maybe
b) did you know where and how to plant Bluebell bulbs? Yes No Maybe

4. How would you rate your visit to this event today?

Table with 5 columns: Terrible, Poor, Neither good nor bad, Good, Fantastic

5. What about today's event did you enjoy the most?

.....

6. What if anything could have been changed, to make your experience better?

.....

.....

7. Your post code

Thanks very much for completing this form, please return to a member of the event staff.

Appendix 3: Unfolded Bluebell Leaflet (front and back)



Tell the difference

Spotting pure bluebells
Make sure that you find the true native British variety - *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* - and not the hybrid or mixed varieties. Also, be wary of "British green" bluebells that do not have British ancestry.

How to plant and care for your bluebells
Plant native ones, either in a shady place or along the sun-enshaded, well-drained or possibly shaded pathside. Plant in clusters of 3-4 bulbs, each about 5-10cm apart. Bluebells will flower during the first few months out, but only in dry spells in spring. Where bulbs are planted in grass, we cut the grass until the stems have died back.



Hybrid British Bluebell

- Flowers are a mix of blue and white
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular



Scotch Bluebell

- Flowers are a mix of blue and white
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular



Hybrid Bluebell

- Flowers are a mix of blue and white
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular
- Flowers are a mix of bell-shaped and tubular

Help us plant 25,000 bluebells in 2008

DONATE £3* TO PLANT 10 BLUEBELLS. TEXT 'BLUEBELLS' TO 83540

* A small administration fee (25p) will be deducted from each donation.



Alarm Bells for Bluebells www.csfst.org.uk

Save Our Native Bluebell

Who are Central Scotland Forest Trust?

The Central Scotland Forest Trust is an environmental regeneration charity. We are working with our partners to create the Central Scotland Forest by stabilising long established grazing and management areas and restoring woods, woodland projects and landscape improvements. The objective is to improve the lives of those living, working and playing in the forest by restoring the woodland, economy and social to healthy conditions.

Why are alarm bells ringing for bluebells?

In recent years, the British bluebell has declined dramatically. It's now an endangered species.

Why?
The British bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is a native woodland flower that has become increasingly rare in recent years. It is a bell-shaped flower that is blue or purple in color. It is a native woodland flower that has become increasingly rare in recent years. It is a bell-shaped flower that is blue or purple in color.

What's been going on?
There is a decline in the number of bluebells in recent years. This is due to a number of factors, including habitat loss, overgrazing, and the introduction of hybrid bluebells.

Go bluebell spotting – you could win £50

We want you to go looking in your area and tell us about any bluebells you find. Send us details of your sighting and we'll enter you into a prize draw to win one of five garden centre vouchers worth £50. Five runners-up will win a family ticket (for four) to the Falkirk Wheel.

How to enter the draw
Use the guide on the back of this leaflet to tell us about any bluebells you find. Send us details of your sighting and we'll enter you into a prize draw to win one of five garden centre vouchers worth £50. Five runners-up will win a family ticket (for four) to the Falkirk Wheel.

How to enter the draw
Use the guide on the back of this leaflet to tell us about any bluebells you find. Send us details of your sighting and we'll enter you into a prize draw to win one of five garden centre vouchers worth £50. Five runners-up will win a family ticket (for four) to the Falkirk Wheel.

I've spotted some bluebells

Use this form to tell us about the bluebells you've spotted.

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Date of birth:

Tel No:

Email:

Where did you see the bluebells?
(Please give as much detail as possible to enable us to locate, verify and record your findings.)

What kind do you think they are?
 Hybrid Scotch Other

Please tick here if you'd like to receive news from CSFT.