

# Coalfield Environment Initiative



## **Native Woodland Habitat Creation: Chalmerston OCCS**

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**Natural native woodlands** are considered to be amongst our richest habitats, supporting a diverse range of plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals. Once covering much of East Ayrshire, this natural habitat has been dramatically affected by land management practices, reducing it to small fragments that today cover less than 1% of East Ayrshire. Creation, restoration and enhancement of this habitat is a priority in both local and national biodiversity action plans.

Mining is now complete at Chalmerston Open Cast Coal Site (OCCS) and the first restoration phase has been completed. The site has been returned mostly to grassland although a mosaic of habitats including wetland, woodland and peat bog are also present. The site has been assessed by the forestry commission and has been identified as a sensitive landscape character area. This indicates that the site has great potential for woodland expansion, creating an area of high nature conservation value benefiting wildlife, providing opportunities for tourism and enhancing the visual appeal of the landscape for the people of nearby Dalmellington.

### **Project Location**

Chalmerston OCCS covers 742ha and lies directly north of the village of Dalmellington, East Ayrshire.

### **Project Outline**

This exciting project sets out to increase East Ayrshire's native woodland resource by recreating the woodland habitats that occur naturally along undisturbed burns and glens throughout the region. Planting native woodland is of great benefit to biodiversity, helping to alleviate the adverse effects of fragmentation and to restore the connections between woodland habitats. Public access opportunities, including the Dalmellington-Coalburn multi-user route, are planned for this site in the future.

This project is being undertaken in partnership with East Ayrshire Woodlands who have already secured 78% funding from the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme and Scottish Coal. The CEI are committed to contributing the final 22% of the cost of this project. The project will commence as soon as the CEI secures these funds.

### ***Habitat creation***

40Ha of native woodland habitat will be planted on the stream-sides of the Caldwell and Tongue glens that traverse Chalmerston OCCS. Native woodland species such as oak, birch and Juniper will recreate natural woodland habitats found on adjacent burns such as the important local wildlife site Pennyvenie Glen.

### ***Woodland planting and management programme***

The planting and management of the site will be undertaken by East Ayrshire Woodlands over a 5 year period. After this period, maintenance responsibilities will fall to the landowner as part of the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme requirements.

### **Project Objectives**

The project aims to:

- Expand priority woodland habitats in East Ayrshire
- Encourage priority species such as black grouse and juniper
- Improve the visual quality of the Dalmellington landscape

### **Project Timescales**

This project will take place over a five year period. The planting will be carried out between December 2004 and March 2005. The site will then be fenced off during 2005 to allow the trees maximum protection from browsing. Maintenance will occur annually until March 2009.