

Report

Glenfarne Woods

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20.07.2023



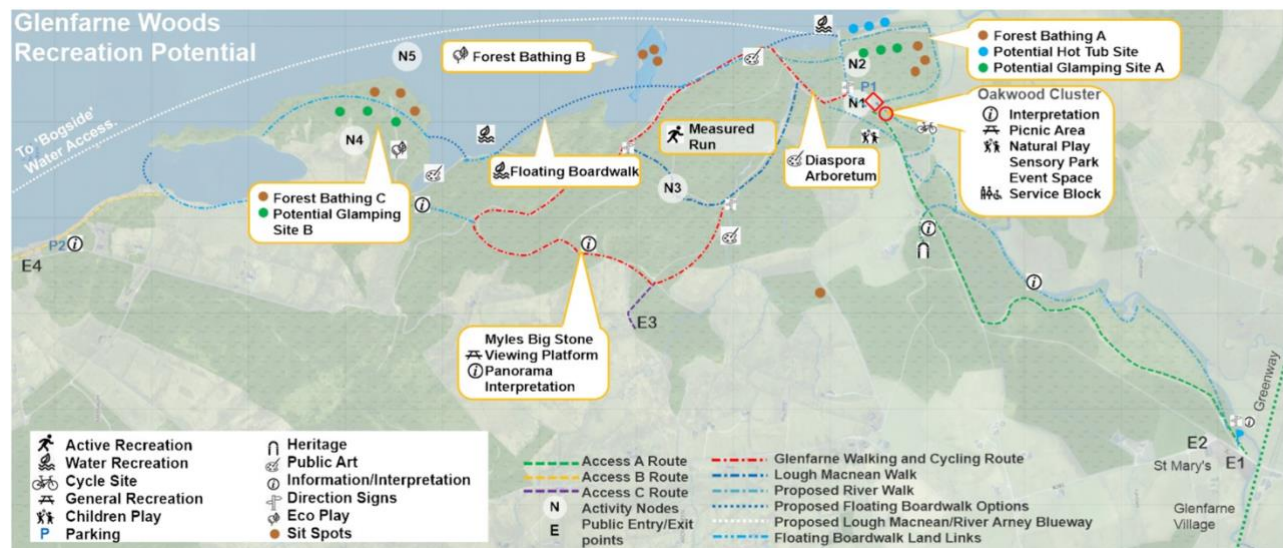
Aim of the report

The purpose of this report is to establish the outlook on the installation of the sit spots and create a forest bathing experience space for the general public, visiting the Glenfarne Forests. The report is based on the information gained from the site development proposal, discussions, and the site visit on the 17th of July 2023.

What is Forest Bathing?

Forest Bathing or *shinrin yoku* is a mindful experience, immersion of all the senses in the atmosphere of a forest. It is considered a preventive medicine technique that comes from Japan and was established there in the 1980s. Forest bathing has been proven to have many health benefits, like lowering cortisol levels, boosting the immune system, and improving mood and mental well-being. In the forest space, we can expose ourselves to many phytoncides – chemical compounds produced by trees (and other plants) that can contribute to our health. Coniferous forests are primarily known for their high levels of terpenes. The balsamic, fresh scent of pine is excellent for grounding and relaxing, and the woody aroma of spruce has a calming and stimulating effect on the mind.

The Site from woodland perspective.



- **Forest Bathing A** – A forested area on a slight hill with mixed woodland of pines, beech, ash and beech.
- **Forest Bathing B** – An island with a mixed woodland
- **Forest Bathing C** – An overgrowth forested area with Sitka spruce closer to the existing path and mature native tree species (pines, oaks, holly, ash) closer to the shoreline.

A general perspective on the value/quality of sit spots at these locations.

The idea of putting the sit spots in locations A, B and C has great potential and very high value for the overall project. A survey of the site revealed a couple of benefits of using the sites indicated on the map above:

- Mixed woodland – a beautiful mature native species that bring the value to the site.
- Natural soundscape – the site is very quiet and noticeable were natural sounds like bird songs or other sounds of forest and lake.
- Proximity to water - water waves sounds have been proven to have a calming effect.
- Easy access with a car park(s) along the proposed paths – designing a couple of forest bathing areas on the site gives the general public the possibility to find an isolated space to experience the beautiful woodlands and magnificent views.

Detail regarding specific sit spot locations at site the sites A, B and C

Forest Bathing A

Proposal for a few sit spots in the area:

Entrance to the forest

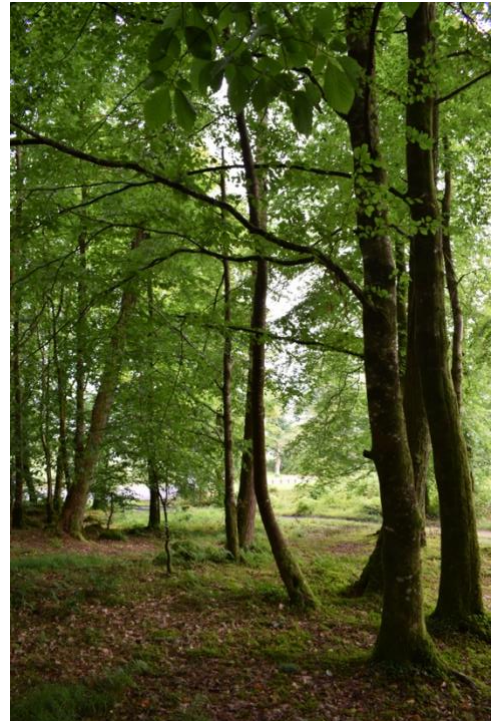
Coordinates: 54.2993869, -7.9641769

Description: “Entrance to the forest bathing experience”

– here a sign with information forest and a map with forest bathing sit spots/sites.

The information signs can include:

- The general idea behind forest bathing.
- Basic information on health benefits.
- How to go about forest bathing?
- How to use the path on site A – the importance of so-called “invitations” – simple prompts to give the users opportunity to focus the attention on being present in nature, while noticing sensations in the body and reflections they may have while experiencing nature in a different, more mindful way.
- <https://www.natureto.go.ie/post/forest-bathing-as-preventive-medicine-and-nature-connectedness-practice>



Sit spot 1

Coordinates: 54.299150,-7.964362

Description: Sit spot in the forest, near fallen trees.

This could be the first introduction, to letting go of the outside world; including breathing work.

The example invitation signs can include sentences like:

“If you feel comfortable close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Relax your body and focus on your breathing for a while. On your next exhale let go of any tension and stress in your body and leave “to do list” behind, trying to focus on here and now. Stay here for couple of minutes and enjoy this moment in nature”.

The natural sit spots could be used e.g., fallen trees with a sit graved on them or pieces of durable wood placed on the top of the fallen tree to create more stable sitting sensation.



Sit spot 2



Coordinates: 54.2989889, -7.9648452

Description: Natural Sit spot further in the forest, near the group of rocks.

This makes a wonderful spot to sit and tune into the senses – listening to sounds, watching surroundings, touching the moss on the stones etc.

The example invitation could be:

“Bring attention to your senses – look around you, what do you notice? Are there any sounds that you hear, any sound close to you or far away? Focus on the scents – can you smell anything around you? Touch the mossy stones and the bark of the trees and notice the differences in textures. Stand up and move in different directions. Do you notice any changes in the surrounding in those different directions?”

The natural sit spots could be used e.g., a few stones that are on the spot.

Sit spot 3



Coordinates: 54.2987719, -7.9659643

Description: Sit spot further in the forest that is a mixed beech forest (beech, pines).

This could be a spot to explore the differences in the trees, looking at the barks, shapes of leaves etc.

The example invitation that could be included on the sign:

“Sit under your favorite tree and look up, notice the difference between the trees around you. Explore the tree bark, leaves and branches and roots. Notice if there are any similarities between the tree and your body – perhaps you can imagine your feet being roots, grounding you, your legs are steady like the trunk and your arms are the branches, reaching out for every possibility there is for you”.

Manufactured seating could be used at the spot, preferably durable wood that could be placed at the bottom of the tree. Participants could sit under the tree, with their backs against the tree.

Sit spot 4



Coordinates: 54.2990143, -7.9643127

Description: Sit spot with more light and open space.

At this spot the focus could be on our connection to nature and reflection on how we are part of nature

The example invitation that could be included on the sign:

“Make yourself comfortable at your sit spot and spend a few minutes reflecting on your today’s time in the forest. Give yourself the gift of time and allow yourself to be fully present. Look around you and notice any good things in nature that occur to you whilst you are sitting. Continue reflecting in this way as long as your wish and then just sit and be”.

Manufactured sits could be perfect for this site.

THE MAP

The map available under the link below shows a proposed path connecting the proposed sit spots https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1HEde3Cuzy1PahE1dUKqnRY6sOk_Y_8Q&usp=sharing

There is an existing “natural” path, likely formed by animals passing the forest. The path connecting the sit spot in the area could be built from natural materials e.g. shredded wood or round timber cuts/slices. The area doesn’t need to be cleared of the fallen trees as the more natural the site looks

the better and more peaceful feeling it gives to the site user. Also, there is enough light and open space for people to feel comfortable.

RISKS:

- The area down the hill was flooded at the time of the visit and difficult to walk around. This could indicate that for safety reasons the sit spots could/should be placed on the elevated area. Needs to be assessed in detail before installation of sit spots/signs.
- Future development of the car park and event centre nearby the sit spot A area, could potentially promote noises that could interrupt the peaceful experience.

Forest Bathing B

The site was unavailable at the time of site visit, however seen from the shore.



The island has a huge potential in terms of a forest bathing trail development as the space is isolated, with mixed woodlands. This could potentially be the calmest spot, the most isolated spot in the future, in case the Forest Bathing area A gets busier. The car parks and events in the future could cause a risk of noise pollution, hence the island could be an asset for mindful practice.

The island could hold stops with signs similar to the Forest Bathing A area but also incorporate some stops with nature-related poetry that could reach a wider public.

Examples of nature-related poetry:

Wendell Berry – “The Peace of Wild Things”

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Mary Oliver – “When I am Among the Trees”

*When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.*

*I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.*

*Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.*

*And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.”*

Further exploration is required to properly assess the terrain and decide on the most convenient space for a longer forest bathing trail, that could elevate the experience of the participants.

RISKS:

- The site is surrounded by water which could play a main risk for the users. The sit spots placed on the edge of the lake need to be secured from the rising water and properly managed if the water level rises (e.g. during winter). These sit spots will also need to be secured for the sake of users to ensure safety around the water and prevent from incidents.

Forest Bathing C



The site is highly overgrown and at the time of visit, not assessed completely. However, the parts of land visible from the shore (picture above) were accessible through the Sitka forest, from the existing path. The land closer to the lakeshore has some magnificent, mature trees – pine, oak, ash,

that could play a main role in the sit spot site development. With some clearing of the smaller trees, the sit spots could be placed on the lakeshore with beautiful views.



A view to the lake



Mature Scots Pine at the site

Proposal for a sit spot in the area (reachable on the day of visit):

Coordinates: 54.3129281, -7.9695035

Description: Tree-related sit spots with specific information on native trees species.

<https://www.naturetogo.ie/post/native-trees-and-tree-week-in-ireland>

RISKS:

- The site could be subjected to flooding during the winter time. The stone wall which is close to the lakeshore, could stop the water from moving up the land. The site needs to be assessed further for other risks.

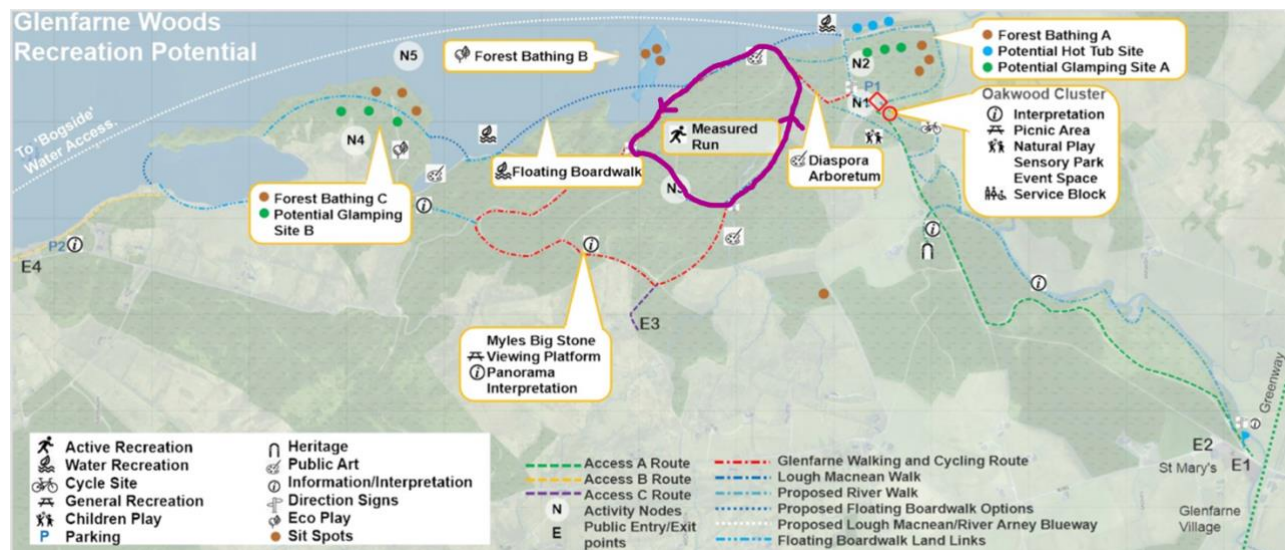
References and reading suggestions on Forest Bathing:

- M. Amos Clifford “ Your Guide to Forest Bathing: Experience the healing powers of nature” Red Wheel/Weiser
- Dr Quing Li “ Shinrin-Yoku: The Art and Science of Forest Bathing”
- Jake M. Robinson and Martin F. Breed “Green Prescriptions and Their Co-Benefits: Integrative Strategies for Public and Environmental Health”. 10.3390/challe10010009
- Ulrika Karlsson Stigsdottera, Sus Sola Corazona,*, Ulrik Sideniusa, Anne Dahl Refshaugeb, Patrik Grahnc “Forest design for mental health promotion—Using perceived sensory dimensions to elicit restorative responses”. 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.11.012 –
- Margaret M. Hansen , Reo Jones and Kirsten Tocchini “Shinrin-Yoku (Forest Bathing) and Nature Therapy: A State-of-the-Art Review”. 10.3390/ijerph14080851

Ideas beyond the scope of the report:

Nature Walk

A potential for a nature walk in the area marked in purple:



The area has great potential for the development of nature walks for families. The mixed forest and the specific humidity of the area make it a perfect spot for the growth of many species of

mosses, bioindicator lichens and unique orchids. With plenty of boulders, the area could be a highlight for future school trips, where biology classes could be organised.



The path could incorporate signs with information on the area, flora and fauna, which makes the habitats very specific as it merges the woodland and lakeshore habitats.

Example information boards from Kampinos National Park in Poland:

