



Bringing change to life

The Vision

For an environmental project to be included in Scotland's second National Planning Framework is a major step forward for those of us who appreciate that our environment is central to a healthy and successful society.

This document recognises the importance of the quality of the physical environment to the target of sustainable economic growth (growth which doesn't harm the environment for future generations). It recognises that if Central Scotland is to be successful in encouraging people and businesses to stay in or come to the area, its environment, both urban and rural, must be improved. With increasing levels of personal and business mobility, having a region that is economically competitive with other parts of Britain and Europe has never been more important. The physical environment must and will play a vital role in that competitiveness.

Our vision for Central Scotland is also based on the important contribution that the environment can make to the lives of everyone who lives here. A good-quality environment offers opportunities for promoting a sense of well-being, a healthy lifestyle, active travel (encouraging walking and cycling to school, shops or work instead of driving), and safe and successful communities.

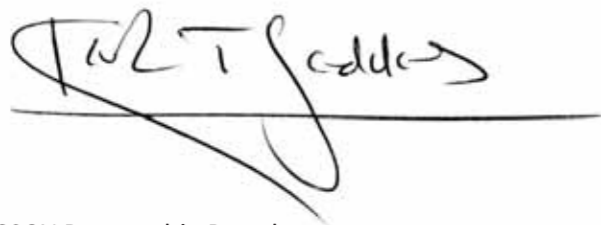
Building on what has already been achieved, we now aim to deliver across Central Scotland a high-quality 'green network' that will meet environmental, social and economic goals designed to improve people's lives, promote economic success, allow nature to flourish and help Scotland respond to the challenge of climate change.

To achieve these ambitions we have to make sure that others share our vision, including local government, health boards, urban regeneration companies, enterprise and tourism agencies, the private sector, the third sector (voluntary organisations) and, of course, local communities. No agency can hope to achieve these goals by working alone.

All of us have to break down barriers to succeed – we need to share resources, best practice and new thinking. I want to show that the CSGN can add value to the work of our partner organisations. In short, I see the CSGN as a bridge between projects that are delivering environmental improvements on the ground and policymakers, both national and local, so that policies and resources can be aligned to meet our aims for the network.

Our vision has been influenced by last year's extensive consultation process. I would like to thank those of you who took the time to contribute to our vision with practical suggestions based on your experience of working with communities and working with nature. By working together in the future, I am sure we can make real progress in helping to make Central Scotland a better place to live, visit and invest in.

Keith Geddes



Chair, CSGN Partnership Board

June 2011



Working together to
secure quality environments
for our communities



What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is a national development within the National Planning Framework which aims to make ‘a significant contribution to Scotland's sustainable economic development’. It involves public agencies and stakeholders (those with an interest in our work) working together to align their policies, programmes and actions to achieve a common aim. That aim is to change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area. Our vision for Central Scotland is that:

‘By 2050, Central Scotland has been transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people’s lives are enriched by its quality’.

The CSGN will connect green and blue spaces in our towns and cities with the wider countryside and coast.

It will be made up of the following:

Parks, public spaces (formal and informal) and gardens (public and private), street trees, green roofs and green walls in urban areas

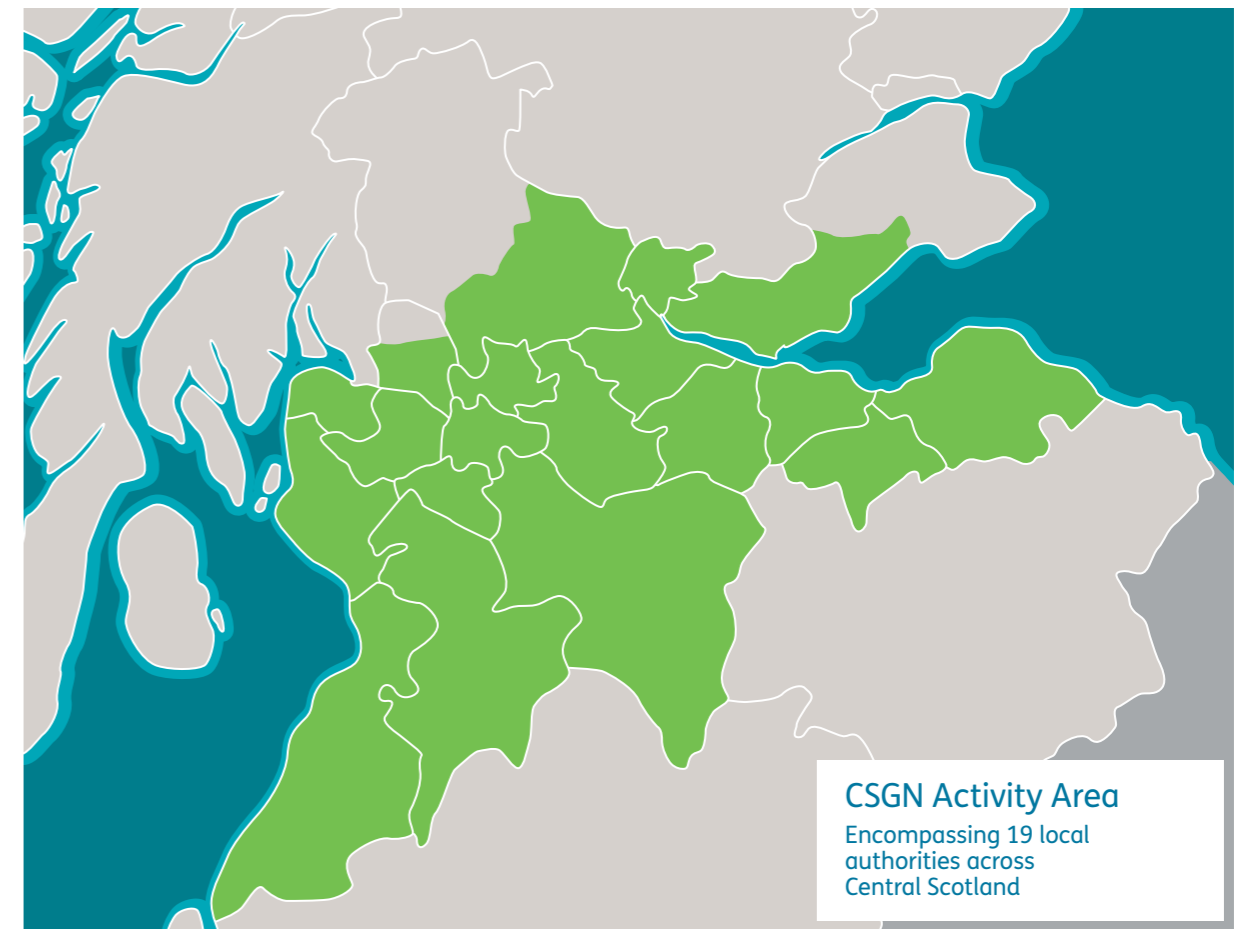
Networks of natural or semi-natural habitats, such as woodlands, hedgerows and peatland, in the countryside and linking into the urban areas

Rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands and man-made structures such as canals and ‘sustainable urban drainage systems’ (blue spaces)

The cliffs, beaches and marshland which form our coastline

Existing path and cycle networks and greened transport corridors.

Where is the CSGN?



The CSGN covers just under 10,000 square kilometres, has 3.5million residents and stretches from Girvan in the south west to Leven and Dunbar in the east. The southern boundary shares existing local authority boundaries, while in the north west it is bordered by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The north eastern boundary divides Fife, reflecting strategic planning boundaries in the east.

Although the area has a shared industrial heritage, the condition of the physical environment differs widely across it. There are areas of exceptional beauty offset by landscapes which are in significant decline. Broadly speaking, good economic and social conditions go hand-in-hand with the best physical conditions, and vice versa. We will give priority to action where the need is greatest.



What principles support the CSGN?

To be successful, work aimed at delivering the CSGN needs to respect 10 principles which define what the CSGN is and its relationship to sustainable economic growth. The principles are set out below.

Grounded in nature. The CSGN should reflect local geography, landscape and ecology, building on important natural assets such as watercourses, woodlands, and semi-natural habitats. Where these have almost vanished, restoring them must be a high priority.

At scale. To achieve a 'step change' in the quality of the environment, woodland and recreational opportunities, which is the ambition of the National Planning Framework, we need to work across the whole CSGN area.

Regenerative. The CSGN should reduce social and health inequalities as well as repairing the physical environment. Priority for action should be worked out, at least in part, by identifying where there has been significant environmental damage close to where people live.

Life enhancing. There is more to the CSGN than simply providing it. For it to be a success, it needs to be animated. This means it is vital that members of the public use and enjoy it actively (for example, for walking and cycling to school and work) and for recreation, relaxation, education, and community activities.

Connected. The CSGN is about social and physical links to join communities and green spaces together and to provide access to these. We must protect existing strategic green and blue spaces and links so that we can focus resources on improving the quality of these and adding to them. Where green or blue spaces have been reduced or links have become broken, we need to reverse this.

Functional and resilient. We should understand the function (or functions) of any part of the CSGN,

and work to make sure it delivers these functions to a high standard. Building long-lasting green and blue connections which can be adapted will be an important challenge to make sure the CSGN delivers benefits over time and as people's needs change.

Locally distinctive and respectful of the past. Communities should be at the heart of planning and decision-making and should be involved in developing assets, both new and old, which are important to the local area.

Harnessing the potential of development. We aim to work with developers, not against them. The CSGN will be improved and, indeed, achieved in some places by the delivery of well-designed development which protects and improves the local environment and secures key green or blue connections.

Beyond carbon neutral. The CSGN should not depend on the use of fossil fuels in the way it is developed, delivered and used. It should also aim to increase the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that is captured and stored in the area, through, for example, creating woodland and managing peatland.

Adding value. We need to strengthen and build on links (both physical and philosophical) between relevant local frameworks and existing initiatives. The CSGN process should add value by working with, supporting and strengthening local initiatives and strategies. This will help in making connections across administrative and organisational boundaries, filling in gaps where these exist, tackling barriers, avoiding duplicating services and building capacity in organisations and communities.



What will happen and what will that deliver?

Making the vision a reality will require radical change both to the environment of Central Scotland and in the way in which things are done.

Five themes will provide direction to deliver our vision. Each theme will deliver a range of outcomes. These themes and outcomes are set out overleaf along with specific ambitions for change over the lifetime of the initiative. They will benefit different stakeholder groups in different ways (examples of these are also set out overleaf).





A place for growth

‘Creating an environment for sustainable economic growth’.

Outcomes:

- Businesses want to be based in Central Scotland
- Increased levels of economic activity, competitiveness and employment
- Increased levels of enterprise and creativity
- A strong ‘green industry’ sector
- Increased levels of tourism

Ambitions:

- Creating high-quality environments for businesses
- Bringing vacant and derelict land into beneficial use
- Increasing employment and training in land-based, ‘green’ and low-carbon industries

Who will benefit:

- Individuals through more job opportunities
- Businesses as they will find it easier to recruit and keep staff
- Businesses through the delivery of goods and services related to the CSGN
- The public sector through increased tax income.



A place in balance

‘Creating an environment more in balance, one that will support Central Scotland to thrive in a changing climate’.

Outcomes:

- An environment that can adapt to climate change
- Communities which function well and can cope with change
- Properly maintained natural resources cost less to maintain
- Natural resources are valued and managed
- A region in greater carbon balance

Ambitions:

- Increasing woodland cover in line with the Scottish Forestry Strategy target
- Supporting water catchment and coastal zone management
- Reducing the effect of climate change by capturing, storing and retaining carbon (for example, through protecting peatland, planting trees and other land-management practices)
- Investing in our public parks, tree planting, roof gardens and other forms of sustainable urban drainage to improve the green infrastructure of our major towns and cities

Who will benefit:

- People will be less exposed to the effects of a changing climate
- Disadvantaged communities as they see environmental inequalities being reduced
- Businesses through measures to reduce the amount of energy and water they use
- The public sector as the costs associated with dealing with the effects of climate change (for example, flood defences) are kept as low as possible.



A place to feel good

'Creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and good physical and mental well-being'.

Outcomes:

- People feel good about their physical surroundings
- More people use and enjoy outdoor spaces
- Improved levels of physical and mental well-being
- A reduction in health inequalities
- A reduction in cases of preventable health problems

Ambitions:

- Creating attractive, safe, and well-maintained green space or accessible countryside within easy walking distance of every home in Central Scotland
- Significantly increasing the area of land used by the community for growing plants, fruit and vegetables, such as allotments, orchards and gardens
- Developing a strategic network of high-quality routes for active walking and cycling and recreation throughout Central Scotland

Who will benefit:

- Individuals and communities as they become healthier
- Businesses by having a healthier workforce
- The public sector through having to tackle fewer cases of preventable health problems.



A place to belong

'Creating an environment that people can enjoy and where they choose to live and bring up their families'.

Outcomes:

- People want to live here and move here because "...it's a great place to live..."
- People feel safe in and have pride in their surroundings
- People feel that they live in communities, not in isolation
- People are involved in volunteering and in community action
- More people taking part in, and appreciating, cultural activities

Ambitions:

- Everyone can use the CSGN to improve their health and well-being through physical activity and enjoying nature
- The CSGN is a community resource which encourages local pride and ownership and provides opportunities for volunteering, education, training and developing skills

Who will benefit:

- Individuals as they appreciate good surroundings and feel valued in their community
- Communities as places become more vibrant and attractive
- The public sector as the population becomes more willing, and able, to take action.





A place for nature

‘Creating an environment where nature can flourish’.

Outcomes:

Habitats and species will become more resilient as a result of an integrated habitat network

Characterful, high-quality landscapes add value to the region

Ambitions:

Delivering an integrated habitat network across the CSGN with wildlife corridors joining up important sites and habitats

Making sure that every settlement in Central Scotland sits within good-quality landscape

Who will benefit:

Individuals as they experience nature on their doorstep

Individuals and communities as everyone lives in an attractive place

Businesses as the landscape supports increased tourism.



How will it happen and over what timescale?

It will take a long time and continued effort to bring about the proposed changes. We expect that the delivery phase of the CSGN will run until 2050.

This is a 40-year initiative which will take place through many political, economic and social cycles. Public policy and programmes will play a central role in delivering the CSGN, as will the planning system for development.

The CSGN will be delivered in stages – at different times, different rates of progress will be made as varying levels of resources are used. Activities will become part of the day-to-day work of public organisations and result through behavioural changes within businesses and society. In the early phases, there will be a need for capital spending in order to build up the network’s assets. As the CSGN progresses towards completion, smaller-scale ongoing expenditure will be required to manage and maintain these assets. Using public-sector grants to encourage and influence private-sector landowners will be vital to our plans to widen the potential opportunity for action.

Who will deliver the CSGN?

The public, private and third sectors will each have roles to play. These will change over time. At first, we expect that the public and third sectors will lead on delivery and that the private sector will also carry out work, encouraged by public incentives. Over time businesses will see the value of getting involved. We will also experience an increase in wider society’s ability and willingness to become active and contribute to developing the CSGN.

A publicly supported Partnership Board will act as the focal point for the initiative. The board will be supported by the lead partners, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, which will play central roles in making sure the initiative is a success.

The CSGN covers a very large area, and most of its planning and creation will be carried out through regional initiatives, partnerships and local organisations. The private sector, especially landowners, farmers and companies involved in development, will play a vital part in making it happen.

How will we know if progress is being made?

We will record ‘baseline data’ at the start of the initiative. These are facts and figures that we will measure progress against. We will use a set of key performance indicators to track performance over time. The Partnership Board will oversee this. We have chosen indicators which are relevant, available and will last over time. We will produce reports each year showing progress to date, and we will give copies of these to relevant stakeholders and authorities. We will carry out more extensive reviews of progress every five years, and these reviews will influence future action and allow us to refocus efforts if necessary.

What will be needed to deliver the CSGN?

Supportive leadership backed by an ongoing political will to make change happen are vital to delivering the CSGN. Also, there needs to be willingness among all stakeholders to work in partnership towards shared goals. In time these aspects will be supported by the opinion of local communities and economic benefits for interested people and organisations. The scale of ambition is considerable and significant public funding will be needed over time, matched by supportive public policies and plans.

Throughout there will be a need for approaches that are both imaginative and accepting of risk if we are to bring about major change. That change, and its continued delivery, will only be maintained if early actions are seen to be making a difference.

Getting in touch

If you want more information, or would like to arrange a meeting or a presentation on the CSGN, you can contact us at:

CSGN Support Unit
Hillhousebridge
Shottskirk Road
Shotts
North Lanarkshire
ML7 4JS

Tel: 01501 824190 Fax: 01501 823919

Email: supportunit@centralscotlandgreennetwork.org



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