The Scottish Government’s recent Position Statement on the Fourth National Planning Framework highlighted the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) as an example of innovation and action at scale.

What better time to review the scale of delivery to date and to highlight the ways in which the Green Action Trust is driving forward the delivery of the CSGN both through direct delivery and by supporting partner organisations.

This is the first in a series of short briefings which will show the ways in which the CSGN is delivering on national and local priorities.
The Green Action Trust
Positive change through environmental regeneration

The Green Action Trust is the trusted delivery partner focused on environmental and regeneration outcomes for Scotland. We work with a range of private, public and third sector partners across Scotland to turn ideas into tangible change, to build more sustainable communities and a greener country.

We are specifically responsible for the delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network, one of the largest green infrastructure and environmental regeneration projects in Europe.

The Central Scotland Green Network
Transforming central Scotland

‘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 delivers climate change mitigation and adaptation; promotes and supports healthy lifestyles and wellbeing; creates better, greener places; contributes to sustainable economic development and a green recovery.

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) is a national development within the National Planning Framework, making it one of the 14 most important infrastructure projects for Scotland. It is ambitious and far reaching in terms of its geography, timescales and objectives. It is a network of green local places and wider green infrastructure stretching from Ayrshire in the west to the Lothians and Fife in the east – an area which is home to over 3.8 million Scots, but which has many environmental challenges linked to its industrial past.

CSGN delivery involves public, private, voluntary and community sector stakeholders working together to align their policies, programmes and actions to achieve a common aim. This is delivering social, economic and environmental benefits for communities and businesses across Central Scotland.

CSGN partners include Scottish Government; all the key environmental and regeneration public agencies; 19 local authorities; environmental and community NGOs and individual communities.
Woodland creation and management

Between 2010 and 2018, public, private and community landowners increased the woodland area in the CSGN by approximately 7%.

In 2019, more trees were planted in Central Scotland than in the whole of England.

In response to Scottish Government commitments to increase the scale and rate of woodland creation, the CSGN Delivery Plan targets for 2030 (DP30) have been increased

CSGN partners are committed both to creating more new woodland and enhancing the management and connectivity of existing woodland habitats across Central Scotland.

As we collectively address the Climate Emergency, the commitment to increased levels of tree planting has a high profile both in public debate and in Government policy. Primarily this is about the need to move our society to a position of being net zero in relation to carbon.

Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland – the 2020/21 Programme for Government commits to increasing tree planting and woodland creation from the current level of 12,000 hectares in 2020/21 up to 18,000 hectares in 2024/25 as part of the Scottish Government’s low carbon investment.

But there is more to woodland than this, woodland delivers a much wider range of benefits than simply soaking up carbon emissions. Well designed and well managed woodland:

- increases resilience to the impacts of climate change (reducing flood risk and reducing soil erosion, for example)
- supports biodiversity
- creates attractive, healthy places
- provides a setting for recreation, play and learning
- provides economic returns in terms of timber but also associated employment both directly in forestry and in associated industries

If we are to increase woodland cover and to deliver the maximum benefits in terms of carbon and these wider benefits, we also need to consider how woodland is managed to maintain its value and its health (particularly as climate change continues to impact on Scotland).
The Green Action Trust in action

We play many roles in driving forward CSGN delivery from partnership support and facilitation through design and planning to project management and delivery. Below are a few current CSGN projects highlighting the way we work and what we are achieving with partners. Each title indicates the links to DP30 priority work streams.

Calculating Council land’s potential to sequester carbon
Falkirk Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed itself to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2030. The Green Action Trust worked closely with the Council to develop a scoping and assessment proposal looking at the potential for Council landholdings for creating carbon sequestering habitats – with a strong emphasis on woodland. This report has subsequently been used to inform a brief for consultants. The Trust continues to support this piece of work as a member of a steering group and will work with Falkirk Council to develop and deliver habitat enhancements on priority sites.

Woodland creation at the heart of a multi-million pound regeneration project
The redevelopment of the former Glengarnock Steel works includes the creation of a biodiverse woodland and wetland park which contributes to local habitat and access networks and provides recreation and play opportunities for local communities
Green Action Trust is working with project partners to refine the woodland creation and access aspects of the masterplan. We will also be members of the steering group overseeing delivery of the project.

Glasgow’s biggest woodland creation project in a generation.
The Green Action Trust (on behalf of Glasgow City Council) is preparing a management plan for Glasgow’s only SSSI and delivering approx. 60 ha of new woodland over three phases (phase 1 delivered in 2019). The project site is next to the community of Castlemilk and links to community activity over many years. An exciting aspect of this project is the involvement of Glasgow’s schools in the planting of phase 2 in 2021 – creating a schools’ wood for the city in the runup to COP26.

Ravenscraig Woodlands,
North Lanarkshire
(Natural Climate Solutions, Placemaking, Health and Wellbeing, Green Recovery)

A long term programme of activity bringing together two Scottish Government priority National Developments
The Green Action Trust has been working with Ravenscraig Ltd since 2016 when we initiated the study into what is now the Ravenscraig Park. Green Action Trust activities add value to the wider work of Ravenscraig Ltd in terms of environmental regeneration and building relationships with surrounding communities. Current work includes an Urban Woodland Management Plan for woodlands along the South Calder Water and planning future work to deliver this Management Plan.

A Tiny Forest in a wider green network
The Green Action Trust has been supporting the Seven Lochs Project and Glasgow City Council in the development of a project to transform a vacant and derelict site in Easterhouse to a biodiverse and climate friendly community space connected to local facilities and existing greenspaces. The Trust commissioned a consultant to carry out site investigations and produce concept designs. We then produced sketch designs and an outline cost estimate to create a multi-purpose quality greenspace. The project includes a range of woodland planting including the development of one of Scotland’s first Tiny Forests. We are currently working with Earthwatch to assist with the develop the Tiny Forest.

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