Case Study 27
GN Improvements in the Vale of Leven Industrial Estate

The Vale of Leven Industrial Estate in West Dunbartonshire is benefiting from the implementation of a new integrated landscape framework. In this plan, the importance of the green network is recognised in supporting and enhancing the economic potential of the area. Proposals include the revitalisation of a stunning woodland walk on the banks of the River Leven with resurfaced paths, new signage and information boards.

Context

The Vale of Leven Industrial Estate (VoLIE) in West Dunbartonshire is part of a wider investment corridor extending over 100ha. This corridor represents one of the largest strategic industrial and business locations in the west of Glasgow Metropolitan Area. In addition to many small and medium sized enterprises, the site includes large international companies such as Aggreko, Chivas Brothers, Polaroid and also national companies like the McColl Group.

Close to the gateway to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, the VoLIE site is set within a mature wooded landscape, adjacent to the River Leven. It is easily accessible to the immediate population of around 90,000 people and well connected to the wider greenspace and core path network.

“This is a lovely pathway which local people and visitors can enjoy and also learn about the history and wildlife in the area.”
Cllr David McBride, Convener of West Dunbartonshire Council’s Housing, Environmental & Economic Development Committee.

The Local Council, Strathleven Regeneration Community Interest Company and Scottish Enterprise are keen realise the site’s economic potential. They are seeking to attract inward investment, improve the trading environment, enhance links to and from the surrounding communities and complement the adjoining Lomondgate development. Improving the local greenspace asset is considered to be essential in pursuing these ambitions.
**Project Background**

Although the site has suffered from a lack of investment, it has an attractive parkland landscape, with the mature woodland along the river providing an attractive backdrop and effective screen planting for the large industrial buildings. Substantial elements of the former Strathleven Estate planting remain, along with the A-listed Strathleven House and listed ruined buildings.

Historically, VoLIE has been under-performing, evidenced by low rentals and low occupancy. Several vacant plots and run down buildings offer little value in terms of amenity/competitiveness in attracting investment or biodiversity.

However, a new mixed use project incorporating high quality housing, manufacturing and office space has helped progress a thorough reappraisal of the VoLIE site recognising its potential to deliver a rich and diverse wildlife.

**What it did**

In 2010, West Dunbartonshire Council received £18,000 to prepare a VoLIE Green Network Enhancement Study. Outputs included a Masterplan prepared following consultation events with businesses, workers, local residents and community groups.

The Masterplan Vision is that the site will deliver sustainable economic growth, meeting national and local aspirations through the development of a high quality sustainable place. The overall aim is to balance the need for growth enhancing activities (retaining existing businesses and attracting new ones) with the protection and enhancement of the quality of the natural and historic built environment.

The Green Network Masterplan provides the framework for the creation of a high quality accessible place, which stimulates regeneration of the wider area, helping to build stronger communities. Key aims identified include:

- **Placemaking** - Improve its competitiveness as a location through the creation of an exceptional business environment
- **Enterprise & Regeneration** - Create a high quality, accessible and sustainable place through new development and regeneration of the existing natural/built heritage
- **Environment** - Enhance the green network capacity and connectivity, offering a high quality natural environment for people, wildlife and biodiversity
- **Stronger Communities** - Strengthen the accessibility to multi-functional greenspace and employment for local communities.

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**Key Points**

- The VoLIE site has lacked investment and was in need of a comprehensive review to maximise its local and regional economic, social and environmental potential.
- The site is now linked in to wider strategic investment opportunities through a Masterplan which recognises the importance of the local environment and green infrastructure.
- Following the Masterplan guidance, 2km of upgraded paths and supporting signage are now in place. These support active travel, increased recreational use and help VoLIE employees to gain access to the high quality local greenspace.
An early action identified in the Masterplan was a path improvement project. This aimed to maximise the Estate’s unique landscape setting, making it a destination for employees of the local businesses along with residents of the surrounding areas.

The improved path and associated works were formally opened in October 2013. The paths cover an area of around 2km and are now suitable for recreational use and active travel. It connects local communities and improves access to the river for employees and visitors.

New interpretation signage was developed for the site which focused on the natural history and industrial heritage of the area. A leaflet was also produced which promotes the use of the path.

In addition, a woodland survey of the land opposite Strathleven House and adjoining sites was undertaken. This identified key historic parts of woodland and suggested works required to recreate the original parkland landscape.

**Outcomes**

**Stronger economy:** A high quality and accessible greenspace is a key selling point, especially when linked into wider opportunities around the A82 corridor and into the National Park.

**Stronger Communities:** Improved access to multi-functional greenspace increases path use helping to reduce antisocial behaviour.

**Better Biodiversity:** Managing the woodland helps to safeguard wildlife habitats.

**Better Health:** Local residents and workers benefit from greater opportunities for active travel which can help to improve wellbeing and physical health.

**CSGN Learning & Support**

The Council was awarded £18,000 in 2010 from the CSGN Development Fund to produce the Green Network Masterplan for the Estate. A further £35,000 was also secured to undertake path improvements and survey woodland surrounding the historic Strathleven House.

The Estate has huge potential to become a green recreational hub for the local area. The project has been well received by local businesses and it has acted as a catalyst for the Council and its partners moving forward with other improvement initiatives in the Estate including better lighting and the creation of a Business Improvement District Steering Group.

**Future**

The Council is working with partners to consider how development sites on the Estate can be taken forward, including the creation of small workshop units. Consideration is being given to how these projects complement the objectives of the Green Network Enhancement Study for the Estate.
Location

The location of the Vale of Leven Industrial Estate is shown below within the context of the CSGN area.

Contact

Jamie McCracken
Regeneration Officer, Economic Development
West Dunbartonshire Council
Garshake Road
Dumbarton
G82 3PU
t: 01389 737 215
e: jamie.mccracken@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Project Partners

West Dunbartonshire Council
Strathleven Regeneration Community Interest Company
Scottish Enterprise

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.

Getting in Touch

To discuss this and other CSGN case study found on the CSGN website, please contact: Stephen Hughes, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, Central Scotland Green Network Support Unit. E-mail: stephen.hughes@centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

For further information on other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

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