The past year has been encouraging.

Our first Annual Forum was held in Cumbernauld in June when 140 delegates heard Stewart Stevenson, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, launch our Vision document. The Vision sets out our intent to transform the landscape of Central Scotland as tasked in the second National Planning Framework. It is supported by the 2010 Baseline report against which we will track progress over the next 40 years, which was also published in 2011. It is our intention that each year’s Forum will showcase the best in Green Network development both internationally and here in Central Scotland.

The Board is aware that the CSGN concept was conceived in times of plenty but has to be delivered when the economy is now not as buoyant. In this context we are driven by the need to do as much as we can to create jobs and provide much needed resources to local groups to help them add environmental value to their local community.

In this regard I am delighted with the progress that has been made in developing the John Muir Way. An economic benefits study commissioned by SNH, who have been tasked with delivering the project, found that with 9,300 potential users in the first year an extra spend of some £3m could be generated along with some 130 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs being created or safeguarded. Over the first five year period walkers could help generate up to £25m of direct expenditure and create or safeguard over 1,000 FTE jobs.

And of equal importance, plans are now being developed by Event Scotland, Creative Scotland, Visit Scotland, East Lothian Council, our two national parks, the John Muir Trust, the John Muir Birthplace Museum, ourselves and other partners to celebrate the life and works of John Muir in 2014, the centenary of his death. We believe that his inspirational work can help connect more Scots with nature and lead to greater interest in pressing issues such as climate change.

At a local level the CSGN Partnership Board, through the Development Fund, Community Projects Fund, NHS Estate Greening Fund and Learning Outdoors Fund has, over the last two years, been able to support in excess of 200 local projects by offering grants of over £2.67m. These projects are beginning to make a real difference on the ground throughout the CSGN area and we are examining ways of boosting funding to help satisfy the growing demand for local environmental projects.

We are investing significant resource in securing a supportive policy and planning framework which will help us and our many partners to drive forward delivery of the CSGN. Each of the 19 local authorities in the CSGN area has begun work on new Strategic and/or Local Development Plans (SD/LDPs) and each is required to incorporate the CSGN in its plans. We are delighted by the level of support for the CSGN set out, for example, in the draft Glasgow Clyde Valley SDP and the draft LDPs for Falkirk and Stirling – models that others can follow.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the CSGN Partnership Board members for their helpful contributions and advice. And on behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the CSGN Support Unit who, with a limited resource, has delivered more than could be hoped for.

We have recently signed off a new work plan for 2012 - 2015 which sets out clear milestones for the next 3 years. I am confident that, with the on-going support of the Lead Partners, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and with our local authority and other public and private sector partners that the momentum achieved this year can be sustained.

Working together we have begun the process of improving the quality of life of our communities by delivering CSGN on the ground - a good beginning to what is a significant but worthwhile task.

Keith Geddes
Chair, CSGN Partnership Board
June 2012
Our main focus for action in 2011-12 was to support projects to address Vacant & Derelict Land and to encourage Employment and Training.

**Addressing Vacant and Derelict Land (VDL)**

Scottish Lowlands Forest District (part of Forest Enterprise) progressed woodland planting on a number of sites in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley area.

Over £134,000 of CSGN Development Funding was awarded to the following VDL projects:

- Active Stirling developed a proposal to restore land at Forthbank Loop in Stirling into an outdoor sports and recreation facility.
- East Renfrewshire Council assessed sites and developed costed plans for community woodlands and short rotation coppice on sites around Bannockhead. A feasibility study also looked at the scope for biomass production.
- Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust and City of Edinburgh Council examined the potential for greening three sites in Granteron and Craigmillar. Works on site included tree planting and path works.
- Glasgow City Council created new community gardens and growing spaces on six ‘stalled’, vacant sites and installed bee hives at a further four sites.
- Fife Council looked at the potential for greening five sites including habitat and access improvements, new community growing spaces, the creation of a learning space for use by local schools and the installation of a BMX bike skills loop.
- West Dunbartonshire Council undertook a contaminated land study of Clyde Valley Community Park, adjacent to the Golden Jubilee Hospital at Clydebank to inform planning for an ambitious expansion and enhancement of the Park.

**Employment & Training**

Several training schemes got underway:

- The Wise Group, with the help of £123,000 of CSGN Development Funding, provided advice, training and skills development for young people working on FCS owned land at Lesmahagow.
- Central Scotland Forest Trust, working with Falkirk Council, provided training for young people on the Helix site.
- FCS pilot projects also got underway with the Wise Group at Forth and Easterhouse, and with the Waterways Trust around Nethercroy and Barrhill.
- FCS tendered six skills and training packages for young people to organisations to work on parts of the National Forest Estate and other land.

Effort under this theme was focused on woodland creation, urban greening and improving the water environment.

**Woodland Creation**

- Glasgow and Clyde Valley area.
- Forest Enterprise progressed woodland creation.
- Scottish Lowlands Forest District (part of Forestry Commission Scotland) piloted woodland creation.
- West Dunbartonshire Council undertook a contaminated land study at Clyde Valley Community Park.
- Greenock Community Group worked to address vacant land around the Golden Jubilee Hospital.
- Fife Council looked at the potential for greening five sites including habitat and access improvements, new community growing spaces, the creation of a learning space for use by local schools and the installation of a BMX bike skills loop.
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**Woodland Creation**

A number of partnerships and local authorities worked on forestry and woodland strategies to guide new woodland creation to the most appropriate locations. Progress has been good and there should be full coverage of the CSGN area by autumn 2012.

CSGN Development Funding of just over £105,000 supported the following projects:

- Central Scotland Forest Trust prepared a woodland framework for Clackmannanshire and Stirling (within the CSGN area), which identifies opportunities for improved use and management of local woodlands, carbon capture and wood fuel production, training and skills improvement, business development, biodiversity and habitat network enhancements and community involvement/ownership of woodlands.
- Lothian and Fife Green Network Partnership progressed Phase Two of the Pentland Hills Woodland Action Plan. This involved detailed consultation with landowners, surveying four estates and preparing a landscape plan for the north-east slopes of the Regional Park. Projects are being followed up, including new native woodland creation and improved management of existing woodlands, hedgerows and trees in the landscape.

Changes were made to the Scottish Rural Development Plan grants for woodland creation, including the introduction of a new CSGN Woodland Creation model, which reflects the particular circumstances and costs encountered in the Central Belt.

**Urban Greening**

In March 2011, we participated in the inaugural conference of the Scottish Green Roof Forum in Edinburgh. CSGN is providing support to the Forum, which is currently developing online guidance for its website and looking to develop pilot projects.

Glasgow City Council used a £50,000 grant from the CSGN Development Fund to pilot a baseline survey to inform the future management, protection and enhancement of the city’s trees and woodlands. A new city-wide ‘tree trail’ was also created and promoted through a new leaflet, identifying Glasgow’s specimen trees, as part of the Commonwealth Games Legacy.

**Water Environment**

We developed projects with local River Basin Management Planning partners (including SEPA, Forest Research and Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership) to identify and test the feasibility of projects to address improvements in water quality by creating or improving the management of integrated habitat networks around key watercourse. Four funding-ready schemes have been developed for both the Clyde and the Forth Sub-basin Districts.
Considerable progress was made in respect of our health, access and community growing strands.

Greenspace for Health and Well-being

The Green Exercise Partnership continued to promote greening by the area’s health boards. FCS and the NHS launched a £150,000 NHS Estate Greening Fund to secure greening proposals to enable health boards to draft proposals for hospital grounds. At the year-end progress was as follows:

- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has selected Gartnavel Royal Hospital as its initial site and has applied for support from Sowing and Growing Everywhere (SAGE) to develop a plan for community gardens and allotments at the site.

- NHS Forth Valley is working with FCS and Trellis on a therapeutic garden and orchard proposal for the grounds of Forth Valley Royal Acute Hospital in Larbert where FCS and Central Scotland Forest Trust are already improving the wider greenspace around the Hospital including the woodlands and Larbert Loch. Architecture + Design Scotland will progress a design competition to develop plans for a viewing platform over the loch.

Recreation and Active Travel

Building on the Aecom report, Planning for Outdoor Recreation and Active Travel (SNH, 2010), SNH has developed and consulted on a statement on promoting and developing a network of longer distance routes for recreation. Potential routes and network gaps were identified and further liaison with Local Authority Access Officers will allow the network to be finalised and a costed action plan to be developed in 2012.

SNH continued to develop proposals for the John Muir Way, which will be strap-lined ‘From Birthplace to National Park’. A draft route was consulted upon over the summer of 2011 leading to a detailed technical survey in the autumn. The results of a cost benefit study and information on project costs were reported to the Partnership Board in January 2012 and to a joint meeting of the relevant local authorities in February. SNH has committed funding for the next two years, with the intention that the route can be opened, signed and promoted in time for 2014, the centenary of John Muir’s death.

Over £374,000 of CSGN Development Funding was awarded to access projects:

- East Lothian Council resurfaced and reinforced the Prestonpans section of the John Muir Way to repair damage done during floods in 2010 and to protect the route from future flooding.

- The David Livingstone Trust prepared a Landscape Masterplan for the development of the grounds of the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre, South Lanarkshire, and an adjacent woodland Site of Special Scientific Interest. The plan includes designs for a new path network (linking with the Clyde Walkway), viewpoints and crossings, woodland planting and woodland management, and a new natural play area.

- Glasgow City Council developed proposals and delivered improvements to the Clyde Walkway at London Road and Carmyle, including path surface upgrading, improved signage and entry points, wildflower planting and a new viewing platform on the Clyde. The improvements will also enhance access to the new Commonwealth Games athletes’ village.

- Inverclyde Council had detailed, costed designs prepared for new strategic green links and neighbourhood parks in and around Greenock and Port Glasgow.

- The Communities Along the Carron Association replaced a dangerous bridge with a new all-abilities bridge across the River Carron, reinstating a missing link in the local path network and improving access to the countryside for local people.

- Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership undertook detailed consultations and developed funding applications for the next stage of developing a major new wetland park at Gartloch-Gartcosh on the border of Glasgow and North Lanarkshire.

- Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company planted trees and wildflowers, improved signage, provided new seating, outdoor gym equipment and picnic benches, and upgraded paths to provide all-abilities access at Irvine Beach Park and on the Irvine New Town Trail.

- Midlothian Council developed proposals for a new longer distance recreational route along the South Esk River including a strategy for access links, signage and promotion of the new trail. Volunteers also implemented access and path improvements along parts of the route.

- Clackmannanshire Council upgraded a core path from Sauchie to Gartmorn Dam Country Park and woodlands. The main car park was also resurfaced and improved signage provided at the entrance to the Park in advance of its centenary in 2013.
Community Growing

Our Growing Spaces Audit, part of the background to the 2010 Baseline report, presented the findings from research undertaken in 2010/2011. It describes the current situation regarding community growing in the CSGN and highlights where needs are not being currently met.

The following ‘growing’ projects shared over £204,000 from the CSGN Development Fund:

- Carr-Gomm Scotland created a new community growing space, the Lochend ‘Secret Garden’ in Edinburgh and provided training, advice and support for local people to grow their own fruit and vegetables on the previously unused space.
- Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust created a new community garden on vacant land at the Venchie in Craigmillar.
- Kilsyth Community Garden set up Kelvin Valley Honey, a project to create new habitats for bees and establish beekeeping enterprises in North Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk and Inverclyde. The sale of honey and related products should enable a self-sustaining social enterprise to be set up and create opportunities for self-employment through beekeeping.
- Raploch Community Partnership transformed a stalled development site into a community growing space as part of their Green and Growing Raploch project. As well as new growing plots, training events have been delivered to teach local people how to grow their own food.
- Forth Environment Link delivered the Forth Valley Orchards’ Initiative, a programme of promotional events, advice, training and support for community groups and landowners to manage existing and plant new orchards in Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The grant also supported a second round of the CSGN Orchard Grant Scheme which distributed £17,000 to a further 60 orchard projects.
- Thornliebank Tenants and Residents Association transformed a derelict site in Eastwood into a new allotment with raised beds and a greenhouse for use by local residents and schools.

Under this theme we focused on supporting volunteering, community action and schools.

Greenspace for Living

TCV Scotland (formerly BTCV Scotland) and FCS worked on a pilot volunteering initiative within the CSGN area with volunteers carrying out environmental improvements on land owned or leased by FCS. The aim of the project was to match people wanting to undertake environmental volunteering with TCV to suitable opportunities on the National Forest Estate, thereby creating a ‘win-win’ for both organisations. The pilot began in May 2011 and operated until the autumn.

Also within the National Forest Estate, Project Scotland and FCS worked on a volunteer project in the Galloway Forest in parts of Ayrshire, to support training for young people, working with partner organisations such as Apex, Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus and Volunteer Development Scotland.

In the autumn of 2011, FCS developed a CSGN Community Projects Fund to support small-scale, community-driven action to improve the green network locally and to raise the profile of the CSGN initiative and the regional green network partnership bodies with local communities. The fund operated as a grant to the four regional bodies to be administered on behalf of FCS and invited applications from community groups in the four CSGN regions for grants of up to £1,000. The Fund proved very popular and a total of £57,000 was awarded to 65 projects.

Greenspace for Learning and Play

Grounds for Learning and FCS launched a CSGN Learning Outdoors Fund during autumn 2011, to provide up to £500 to support schools and nurseries to develop school grounds and neighbouring woods and greenspaces for learning and natural play; to purchase outdoor learning equipment; or to contribute to staff training and the purchase of resources for outdoor learning. Just under £49,000 was allocated to over 100 nursery, primary and secondary schools. An online audit tool was also created to enable schools to self-evaluate how best to improve their grounds and nearby greenspace to support outdoor learning and play.

Auchenlodment Primary School in Johnstone, Renfrewshire used nearly £9,000 of CSGN Development Funding to create a new mini-fitness trail, climbing wall and outdoor teaching area. The new facilities have enabled teachers to engage in more adventurous and active outdoor play.
Effort in 2011 was focused on Integrated Habitat Networks and Landscape.

**Integrated Habitat Networks**

A significant achievement during the year was the completion of Integrated Habitat Network (IHN) Model leading to the generation of a CSGN-wide geo-linked database of integrated habitat networks. Forest Research generated new IHN models for Ayrshire, Stirling and Clackmannanshire, upgraded the Edinburgh and Lothians Forest HN to an IHN model, and updated the models previously produced for Glasgow & Clyde Valley and Falkirk all to a consistent methodology and standard. (A new IHN for Fife was completed independently of the CSGN in early 2009). Combined, these models allow, for the first time, a complete CSGN IHN to be viewed. These maps are available via the SNH website and are accompanied by key messages to aid users in their use and implementation.

As well as dissemination events, training events (organised through the Planning Improvement Service) and one to one meetings to promote the data, web-based guidance was also prepared showing a range of end users (such as planners) how the outputs of an IHN can be used. A wider dissemination plan has been developed, along with technical guidance notes, aimed at a broader audience, such as Architects and Developers.

SNH also produced a CSGN habitat connectivity indicator so we can now measure – and, therefore, monitor and potentially target – habitat connectivity not only across the whole CSGN area, but also at Local Authority and local scales. Work is underway to identify how this indicator can be used for practical purposes. For example, in Single Outcome Agreements and monitoring the effectiveness of rural priority habitat creation schemes.

CSGN Development Funding of £37,000 supported two habitat focused projects:

- Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust surveyed habitats along 37km of cycleways throughout Edinburgh, prioritised the improvement works identified and delivered early projects working with community volunteers. Physical improvements included woodland management, path clearance, removing invasive species and fly-tipping.

- East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative provided support for land managers and recruited and supported volunteers to deliver habitat and biodiversity improvements in the Nith and Lugar Water catchments in East Ayrshire. The project’s focus was on enhancing biodiversity, tackling invasive species (such as mink) and dealing with diffuse pollution from agriculture.

Landscape Action

Work on a CSGN-wide landscape audit also started in 2011, with the collation of existing data on: landscape character; experiential/place-making; special qualities and built and historic landscapes. A draft of the audit and proposed landscape actions was discussed at a workshop with stakeholders in June. Detailed responses were also received from a number of stakeholders and this feedback informed the drafting of a final report and recommendations for landscape action which was discussed by the Board in January 2012. The report is available on the SNH website.

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust used just under £22,000 of CSGN Development Funding to review and update an earlier report into the feasibility of developing a Landscape Partnership project for the North and South Esk River valleys in Midlothian. This resulted in a pre-application submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund and a first stage application has been prepared for up to £2m of project funding.

In this short review we have described just a few of the many projects being delivered by the growing numbers of partners who are now engaged in making the CSGN reality. Together, we have made an excellent start and with the continued support of our partners and funders, we look forward to building on these achievements throughout 2012; making Central Scotland a greener, more successful and more sustainable place.