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Cover image - Visualising the CSGN, community growing:
- increases levels of community participation and cohesiveness
- creates empowered and knowledgeable communities
- improves health and wellbeing.

Find out more at centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/visualising
Progress through Partnership

Partnership is delivering the CSGN; delivering our shared vision in helping improve the quality of life of many central belt communities.

CSGN projects are meeting many of the Scottish Government’s key priorities; tackling inequality, empowering communities and growing the economy. The CSGN is delivering positive impacts through upgrading environmental quality and by creating quality places; places which also help to improve the perception of the central belt, attracting investment and tourism.

Over the past year, alongside our colleagues at the Glasgow and Clyde Valley (GCV) Green Network Partnership and the Scottish Government’s Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services division (RESAS), we have worked on a major research project to help evidence the value and benefits of the CSGN. Three reports – ‘Costing the CSGN’, ‘Resourcing the CSGN’ and ‘Valuing the CSGN’ – identify the budget required to deliver the CSGN, how that could be resourced and the value of benefits we can expect if the CSGN is delivered. This provides a strong basis to develop a long term delivery plan for the CSGN.

The John Muir Way is one of our flagship projects, attracting 60,000 visits since opening in April 2014. The past year saw substantial work to improve the experience for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The route now includes a section through the Kilpatrick Hills with stunning views over the Glasgow conurbation and towards the Highlands.

Now that the long-distance route is established, the Central Scotland Green Network Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and a steering group of representatives from local businesses, tourism, local authorities, Scottish Government and third sector organisations have helped us to develop a business plan for the route. We are now in the process of recruiting a development officer to begin delivery of the first stages of this plan.

Our partners have continued to deliver the CSGN through on-the-ground projects such as the Forestry Commission Scotland’s (FCS) stunning Cuningar Loop which has transformed 15ha of derelict ground into a vibrant area for play, exercise and recreation. Local authority partners have also made great progress in policy and project developments in line with their CSGN concordat agreements.

With funding made available from FCS, SNH, Transport Scotland and Scottish Government we have also been able to directly support 13 projects worth £510,500 through the 2015/16 CSGN Development Fund. These projects focus on a range of activities and themes which together enhance and improve the CSGN area as a whole.

Looking ahead, a number of large-scale greenspace and green infrastructure projects in the pipeline continue to progress thanks to partners successfully securing funding. These include the GCV Green Network Partnership’s Heritage Lottery Fund application for the Seven Lochs Wetland Park project and Glasgow City Council’s urban greening plans for Sauchiehall Street through City Deal funding.

Looking forward we are working to strengthen our ties with the public, private and third sectors. Partnership adds value at any time but particularly when resources are perhaps more limited than we would like.

We look forward to continue working with you.
Scottish Natural Heritage

Image - Visualising the CSGN, upland habitat management. Find out more at centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/visualising

Image - Lorne Gill for SNH
SNH is the Scottish Government’s adviser on all aspects of nature and landscape across Scotland. SNH’s work supports the conservation, enhancement and management of Scotland’s wildlife, habitats, landscapes and natural beauty, whilst helping people to understand and enjoy nature.

Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention

SNH are the lead partner of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, which forms part of the 2014–2020 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme. The aim of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention is to create better places. By improving the quality, accessibility and quantity of green infrastructure in our major towns and cities.

£15m of ERDF will be invested in a small number of high impact urban green space and green infrastructure projects, targeted at our most deprived communities. The funding will enhance the quality of life for residents, help address inequalities and provide opportunities for better health.

John Muir Way Survey

The John Muir Way opened to walkers, cyclists and horse riders in April 2014. To gain a better understanding of users’ experience, SNH conducted a substantial piece of research into how people are using the route. The survey revealed that in 2015 there were over 60,000 visits specifically to walk or cycle on the route, with a further 200,000 visits making use of some of the popular local sections for routine dog walking, commuting and other purposes.

Other findings show that 8 out of 10 visitors were extremely or very satisfied with their visit, citing in particular the variety of views, scenery, landscapes and terrain on offer. Three quarters of the users are walkers and one quarter are cyclists.

Active Travel

A range of stakeholders are contributing to active travel routes in the CSGN. This year, SNH concluded its mapping of strategic routes in the CSGN area. This mapping sets out active travel routes that exist already, routes that are planned to be developed, routes with barriers preventing development and routes that are aspirational at this stage.

SNH Grant Programme

More than £1.3m was given to over 20 projects and partnerships in the central belt by SNH, all supporting the objectives of the CSGN. This included grants to projects delivered by local community resources, such as Lambhill Stables or Gorgie City Farm, and grants provided through partners that operate across the region, such as Volunteer Matters (Action Earth) and TCV. SNH has also supported partnerships that have developed major initiatives for the CSGN, such as the Seven Lochs Wetland Park and the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative.

EcoCo LIFE+ Project

The EcoCo LIFE+ project completed its first full year in 2015/16. This project takes a landscape-scale approach to nature conservation and aims to implement integrated habitat networks throughout the CSGN. A mapping-based protocol has been developed to select the best sites for conservation action which will deliver multiple ecological and socio-economic benefits. SNH and the partner organisations have carried out successful habitat restoration projects, developed a comprehensive monitoring framework and disseminated the project’s findings in the UK and in Europe. They are now in the process of identifying new sites for further on-the-ground work.
Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
This year, FCS has been busy managing applications to the Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 Forestry Grant Scheme which includes a CSGN contribution to support new woodland planting in the CSGN area.

Short Rotation Forestry for Biomass
FCS has been investigating the potential of publically owned woodland within the CSGN area to produce energy via biomass through short rotation forestry. Over the year, several sites have been identified in industrial estates in North Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire that are within Scottish Enterprise (SE) ownership.

SE has agreed to work with FCS to explore how their sites can be incorporated into the study and investigate the potential of using Scottish Government's Vacant & Derelict Land Fund to support the planting of temporary woodlands for biomass production and to establish a wood fuel enterprise.

Employment and Training
FCS has continued to support employment and training activity across the CSGN area. Under a £355k funding package, five training providers (Scottish Waterways Trust, Action for Children, Barnardos, Living Solutions and East Ayrshire Woodlands) helped over 22 full time trainees and 92 volunteers (more than 50% with protected characteristics) to receive skills training.

Cuningar Loop
Bounded by the River Clyde, Cuningar Loop has transformed 15ha of derelict and unused land through a £5.7m Legacy 2014 project.

15,000 trees have been planted into a vibrant new woodland park where visitors can try out features such as the bike skills park, bouldering park, or the adventure play and woodland workout area.

The site is expected to attract over 100,000 visitors by 2021. FES has been engaging with local communities during a phased opening of the park whilst in development before its official opening in spring 2016.

John Muir Way Extension
The Kilpatrick Hills link is the latest major development to the John Muir Way long distance route.

The project was delivered by FES in partnership with sportscotland and SNH. Due to the remoteness of the location and the terrain, completing the new 8km section of paths was a major undertaking as three bridges and path materials had to be airlifted on to the site by helicopter.

This new section offers a taste of the Highlands on Glasgow’s doorstep, just nine miles from the city centre with spectacular views over Glasgow and the River Clyde. The section also provides opportunities for hill walking and bike-riding and the chance to spot red deer, otter and ospreys.

Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) is the government agency responsible for managing Scotland’s National Forest Estate; Scotland’s largest national land resource, covering more than 650,000ha. Two of FES’s large scale projects in the CSGN area this year were creating the Cuningar Loop and delivering the John Muir Way extension through the Kilpatrick Hills.

FCS serves as the forestry directorate of the Scottish Government. Its mission is to protect and expand Scotland’s forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.
The council’s core path and greenspace team is supporting a training project for young unemployed people. Over three years the project has supported upgrading, signing and opening up the core path network in Fife. The project’s success was recognised at the COSLA Excellence Awards 2015, and the model of young unemployed people working with council staff and community volunteers is being used as a basis for the development of the Fife Community Works Project across the council area.

Building on a vacant and derelict land survey undertaken by CSGNT and Lothians & Fife Green Network Partnership (LFGNP), Fife Council carried out a charrette development planning event to masterplan the derelict land at Victoria Road, Kirkcaldy. The report, published in June 2015, suggests new ways to use the area such as new housing, a sports facility and land set aside for recreational use.

Fife Council was also successful in gaining Stalled Spaces Scotland funding from A+DS. From April 2015, people have been submitting their ideas to use vacant, derelict or neglected spaces in and around Fife’s town centres, such as a moveable orchard for a derelict site in Kirkcaldy.

Fife Council has been increasing the provision of allotments and growing spaces over the year. Responding to local demand, work started to create new allotments in Glenrothes to open in spring 2016. The council also worked with Floral Action Burntisland to create a new orchard for the town.

East Ayrshire Council

Over the year, East Ayrshire Council has continued to develop and enhance its partnership work to realise the CSGN and, in particular, sustainable economic development in the area.

Working with East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative (CEI) and Scottish Wildlife Trust, the council has been closely involved in the restoration of Dalmellington Moss Wildlife Reserve (SSSI). This bog is home to an array of specialist plants and animals, such as the carnivorous sundew and rare bog rosemary. Unfortunately, the bog’s unfavourable condition due to past damage to the site caused it to dry out. The CEI carried out bog restoration work in early 2015 to protect and enhance this important habitat for peatland specialist plants and animals.

East Dunbartonshire Council

East Dunbartonshire Council has been working with GCV Green Network Partnership to develop a green network strategy for the area. The strategy helped inform the Local Development Plan which went out to public consultation in April 2015. This contains a dedicated Green Infrastructure and Green Network policy and related Supplementary Guidance is being developed.

East Dunbartonshire Council was one of seven councils to take part in the national Stalled Spaces Scotland programme. £30,000 was made available to help transform open spaces for communities through the funding from Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS) and the council. The programme facilitates the temporary use of under-used green spaces, stalled development sites or vacant and derelict land, prioritising spaces in town centres.

The council recently published a report documenting its activities that have contributed to the statutory Biodiversity Duty over the last three years. This included the rehabilitation of degraded peat bog at six sites as part of the national Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project.

Fife Council

This year, Fife Council launched Making Fife’s Places which includes guidance on green infrastructure, detailing its importance and the multiple benefits that it can deliver. The supplementary guidance document highlights opportunities for greenspace enhancement and identifies development plan priorities for 73 green networks in and around settlements in the CSGN area of Fife.

All 19 local authorities have signed their CSGN Local Authority Concordat which details how each is committed to delivering the CSGN in their areas. Our local authority partners have been updating us with their recent progress.
will cost in excess of £250m, funded by the council and Scottish Government. Sighthill is also one of the early action areas to benefit from a £1bn plus City Deal programme, which includes a number of projects including the installation of ‘smart’ infrastructure such as surface water management and adaptable lighting systems, the creation of avenues of trees, segregated cycle lanes, and reductions in vehicle traffic across many streets in the city centre.

**North Lanarkshire Council**

North Lanarkshire Council has been part of a partnership with Glasgow City Council, GCV Green Network Partnership, FES, SNH and TCV Scotland developing a successful £4.5m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for the Seven Lochs Wetland Park project.

The partnership is working alongside local communities to develop 16km² of lochs, parks, nature reserves and woodlands between Glasgow and Coatbridge. The £6.8 million project plan sets out how the area’s heritage buildings, wildlife habitat and archaeology will be improved, protected and brought together to create a new attraction of national significance.

The Seven Lochs Wetland Park will become a major new hub for heritage conservation and learning and engagement, and will leave an important legacy for the communities within and neighbouring the park. When complete, the project will enable local people and visitors to experience the natural and cultural heritage of the Seven Lochs area like never before and help local communities to take ownership of the park for generations to come.

**Renfrewshire Council**

In Renfrewshire, the Local Development Plan (LDP) was formally adopted in June 2015. This includes a framework that seeks to strengthen and develop the multifunctional role of the green network within Renfrewshire. The council has worked within the context of the GCV Green Network Partnership to identify short, medium and long term priorities to augment the strategic level green network and enhance the aims and function of the CSGN.

Another important planning document was also published this year. ‘Renfrewshire’s Places’ Residential Design Guide’ sets out the considerations to be addressed in the delivery of successful sustainable places in Renfrewshire using local examples. This supports the CSGN vision by encouraging the creation of attractive and usable open spaces within new residential developments, emphasising the important role of retaining and enhancing natural features in creating places with a unique character, and recommending the use of integrated green infrastructure in placemaking to maximise the benefits of water management systems for recreation, biodiversity, as well as sustainable drainage.

A number of projects relevant to the CSGN were also progressed over the year, such as the Semple Trail Heritage Project in Lochwinnoch. This aims to create heritage destinations, deliver biodiversity education and improve access through Castle Semple Country Park and RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve. Unique visitor features known as ‘lookooteries’ have been designed to complement the area’s heritage and are installed at several locations around the trail.

**West Lothian Council**

The CSGN has been included in West Lothian Council’s new Local Development Plan which was published in autumn 2015. The council also updated its 2005 Greenspace Audit and 2010 Open Space Strategy. During this process, site visits were made to important green network sites which were not previously audited including cemeteries, churchyards, country parks and semi-natural open spaces.

Through the council’s 2014 to 2018 Capital Programme, resources have been allocated to improve 33 parks. A placemaking approach has been used to develop projects, involving as many stakeholders as possible including local residents and workers. Almondvale Park in the centre of Livingston was amongst this year’s park improvement projects, benefiting from green infrastructure improvements as well as a stunning new playpark.

Works at Easter Inch Moss have been funded by the SNH Bog Restoration Fund to remove the encroaching birch scrub from the moss and damming of ditches will help to re-wet areas. By restoring this site to a healthy bog, it is hoped that it will continue to absorb and store carbon, helping reduce the impact of climate change for future generations.
Urban greenspaces are important to the CSGN; they bring the natural world into our neighbourhoods and workplaces. They also contribute towards improving people’s physical and mental health by providing places for informal recreation such as walking, cycling, sitting, socialising and children’s play.
The Causey

Causey Development Trust aims to transform The Causey, an existing greenspace in the south side of Edinburgh, making it more people friendly and less car dominated. The space will reinforce the green network within Edinburgh by connecting existing green spaces at George Square, The Meadows and Holyrood Park.

The Causey Development Trust was awarded £18,838 to conduct a feasibility study regarding where trees should be located and to purchase and plant trees.

Cassiltoun

Cassiltoun Trust was awarded £62,705 to support Phase 3 of its highly successful and well regarded woodland improvement and employability programme based in Castlemilk Community Woodlands.

With the assistance of CSGN funding for the fourth consecutive year the project is achieving its aim of rejuvenating and encouraging access to a neglected urban woodland.

This year pathways were cleared of overgrown vegetation, leaves and litter which disuaded people from using the site. Many paths are now being used by the community for events, dog walking and jogging as it links path networks adjacent to the local football pitches.

Opening up the pathway has also helped to reduce the antisocial issues that were occurring in that part of the woodland network.

The group has also restored and replaced eroded parts of the path network and are linking two pathways to allow access along the burn.

The project is improving the employment chances of unemployed people through its voluntary placement programme (five placements every eight weeks) and through the direct employment of three unemployed people for 26 weeks. This phase saw the 100th volunteer placement.

The voluntary placement programme participants have gained valuable work experience and qualifications. The three employed participants obtained Lantra qualifications and also had the opportunity to visit forestry sites and speak to people employed in the forest industry.

Gorebridge

Midlothian Council was awarded £16,000 to supplement a project which has improved the quality of a 2.2ha open space within the heart of Gorebridge.

Prior to the works which took place between August and October 2015, approximately half of the site was derelict because of underground mine-workings and was fenced off to the public. This has been remediated through woodland creation, path creation, the installation of a community orchard and wildflower areas and improving the park frontage.

The centre of the town now has a high quality and attractive asset that will provide a focal point for community activity for years to come. The new works will be maintained by the council and there is ambition for a second phase of work to create a play area and, potentially, a skate park.
Vacant and Derelict Land

The landscape of central Scotland still presents many of the characteristics of post-industrialisation. The loss of traditional industry and more recent economic downturns have left large areas classed as vacant and derelict land (VDL) on the Scottish Government’s survey.

During the summer of 2015, the Scottish Government’s Vacant and Derelict Land Fund was expanded to include the objective to ‘Develop a diverse sustainable environment with a focus on either permanent or temporary greenspace.’

The associated guidance stresses the relevance of green networks and that the CSGN initiative seeks to reduce the extent and number of sites on the VDL register by bringing this land into beneficial use.
Craigmillar

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust was awarded £36,220 to transform a vacant site in Craigmillar which is awaiting development into a future new high school for the area.

The site is at the centre of the wider Craigmillar regeneration area, adjacent to the newly-built Community Hub and library building and with neighbouring plots at varying stages of development. As the school is not scheduled to be built before 2020, landscaping the site helps support efforts to regenerate Craigmillar.

The works includes 268m of new footpath and enhancement of existing paths. Green infrastructure improvements also include 1,200m² of new permanent woodland, 3,250m² of temporary, fast growing woodland/coppicing for landscaping and community use and an orchard in planters located in a temporary ‘town square’.

All these features help to create an attractive area of greenspace for the community with easy access and innovative and engaging green infrastructure.

Camlachie

Glasgow City Council and the West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) were awarded £156,000 for Phase 3 of the 2014 Multifunctional Greenspace Project (MGP). This award was matched with an additional £156,000 from Viridor Credits, Faith in the Community, GCC and WSHA.

The project is one of GCC’s flagship Commonwealth Games Greener Legacy projects and part of Glasgow’s Green Year 2015 celebrations and involves the regeneration of a former derelict/business park site in Camlachie. It is designed to provide a positive sense of place for a community ranked seventh in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

This phase of the project directly benefits children and young people, specifically letting their views to be heard, and focusing around delivering improved adventure play and natural play. It will also provide multiple environmental and social benefits such as ecological enhancement, increasing biodiversity within the locale and expanding the city’s green network provision.

Delivery of this project supports the CSGN partnership priorities of joining up the network (Camlachie linking in with Dalmarnock and Cunningar Loop projects), habitat creation, woodland creation and enhancement, addressing greenspace deficits, and improving access to high quality greenspace for the most disadvantaged communities.
Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a phrase used to describe all green and blue spaces in and around our towns and cities. Component elements of green infrastructure include parks, playing fields, tree-lined streets, allotments, private gardens, river banks, wetlands and woodlands, as well as green roofs and artificial structures that include vegetation such as green walls, rain gardens and sustainable urban drainage systems. High quality green infrastructure is at the very heart of the CSGN vision.

Barrhead

East Renfrewshire Council was awarded £15,000 to develop design proposals for approximately 15ha of green network within the Barrhead South Strategic Development Opportunity area, as identified within the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.

A consultant developed three detailed design proposals, one for each of the potential greenspace areas identified within the masterplan area, with the objective of creating places which function for both people and nature. Accordingly, the process by which these designs were developed and refined included a habitat survey and in-depth consultation, including a placemaking exercise, which explored the value of local greenspace.

Emerging ideas were captured as concept design options and developed as sketch layouts with supporting diagrams. Further consultation then took place which enabled detailed designs for the preferred option layouts to be developed. The final design for each location was presented as a detailed illustrated and costed plan.

Greater Easterhouse

GCV Green Network Partnership was awarded £24,950 to develop an integrated green infrastructure plan for the Greater Easterhouse Strategic Development Framework.

This brought together GCV Green Network Partnership, GCC and TCV Scotland to develop a strategy for an improved network of green spaces and green infrastructure linked to ongoing regeneration and planned new housing development in Greater Easterhouse.

A five-year plan was developed which focuses on greening over 180ha of vacant and derelict land, improving greenspace and woodland in deprived communities, identifying new green routes for walking and cycling and addressing surface water management to reduce flood risk.

As part of this work, principal activities were to use spatial analysis to identify opportunities and locations for new integrated green infrastructure as part of a high quality, multi-functional green network across Greater Easterhouse.

The plan also includes design development and costings for new and enhanced green infrastructure at key sites and a funding strategy has been developed to support the plan.
Community Growing

Growing your own food has many advantages. As well as helping to provide greenspace in urban areas, it has a positive role to play in people eating well, improving health and wellbeing and fostering community spirit by encouraging people to get together.

Anecdotal evidence and recent studies indicate that an increase in community growing is taking place across the UK. During the spring and summer of 2015, CSGNT undertook a research project, the 2015 CSGN Community Growing Survey, which sought to update our 2010 audit regarding the extent of this activity within the CSGN area.

It is estimated that there are around 233ha of community growing space in the CSGN area. Around 72% of this land is given over to allotment sites with community gardens (12%) and orchards (16%) taking up the rest.

The average size of a community growing space is around 0.6ha but there is variation in this depending on the primary function of the space. Allotments tend to be the largest, with sites averaging around 1ha. Community orchards are the second largest at 0.7ha and community gardens much smaller at 0.3ha.

In terms of numbers, over half of all community growing sites are allotments. Community gardens (28%) is the second most numerous type of community growing site and there is evidence that this has seen the fastest increase over the last five years. In 2010, there were 47 sites on our database and this increased to 84 in 2015; a 79% increase. Around 15% of all sites are orchards and 3% are described by respondents as ‘other’. An example of the latter is the small-scale edible borders approach which has been implemented in parts of Fife and Stirling.

In line with the CSGN area’s characteristics, nearly three quarters (73%) of all community growing sites are located in areas classed as ‘large urban areas’ or ‘other urban areas’. This indicates that community growing sites are making a positive impact in the creation of accessible, natural places for people to enjoy in locations near to where they live.

Fruit Futures

Forth Environment Link’s Fruit Futures Programme was awarded £50,700 to work with projects operating in areas within the lowest 15% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and/or located in or near areas of derelict or vacant land.

This project trained and supported community and eco-school leaders to design, develop and support community orchards through a series of workshops, events and networking opportunities.

A teachers’ resource pack was created, detailing a range of orchard-related activities. The project was also very successful in generating interest from the general public in community orchards. This was demonstrated by high attendance at several workshops and subsequent high turnouts at volunteer events.

In addition, the project identified and developed demonstration sites which could be used to showcase best practice within the sector. These focused on three sites under the management of Falkirk Community Trust: the Helix South Orchard and Helix Central Nuttery; Muiravonside Country Park Orchard; and, Kinneil House historic orchard re-establishment.

Image - G3 Growers
Active Travel

Active travel is about people choosing walking and/or cycling for every day journeys such as getting to school, work or the shops. This contributes towards better health and also reduces our carbon footprint. The CSGN seeks to promote this behaviour through the development of joined up greened routes within the central belt.

The year got off to a positive start with the transport minister announcing a further £10 million to be spent on cycling and walking infrastructure. This took the total budget for active travel in 2015/16 to almost £36 million, a 12% increase on the active travel budget on the previous year.

Kilbirnie

North Ayrshire Council was awarded £33,500 to create a green corridor along the former railway line between Loadingbank and Ladeside in Kilbirnie. This has brought the site which was previously on the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey Register into positive use for active travel, biodiversity and recreation.

The works involved the creation of 2.5km length of new all abilities and multi-user access path, planting 400 trees of local provenance and thinning and management of the existing trees along the railway line. In addition, improvements included the installation of new directional signs, interpretation panels, seating and bins.

This project has helped to reduced vandalism, abuse and anti-social use of local sites and path networks, especially by bringing the VDL site back into use. It has also improved the biodiversity of the area and provided increased opportunities for training, learning and volunteering in the natural environment.

Kilwinning Town Centre

North Ayrshire Council was also awarded £22,000 to construct an all-abilities and multi-user section of the National Cycle Network (NCN) and create a green network between Nethermains Industrial Estate and Kilwinning town centre. By adding 1km of paths in important areas, the project has helped to achieve the objectives of the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Paths Plan. The provision of opportunities for active travel, upgrade of the NCN and improved linkages are key actions from the strategy.

Adding further value to the project, elements of the delivery included thinning and management of existing trees. This was undertaken through an intermediate labour market training programme.

The project also improved signage, seating and installed two cycle and pedestrian counters. 1.5 ha of wildflowers were planted with the support of local groups, volunteers and schools.

It is envisaged that longer term outcomes of the project will include increased opportunities for active travel, recreation and physical activity. It is also hoped to stimulate an increase in civic pride and an improved sense of ownership of the area as a whole.

Green Routes

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) was awarded £32,026 to undertake its Green Routes Feasibility Project. Costed proposals were developed for three green routes in Cumbernauld that will link disadvantaged communities, promote active travel to and from the town centre, improve environmental quality and re-connect the woodland habitat network.
In developing the CSGN we want to create an environment where nature can flourish. A place with characterful, high-quality landscapes which add value to the region and a well-integrated habitat network across the area with wildlife corridors joining up important sites and habitats.

Renfrewshire Biomass Feasibility Study

Renfrewshire Council was awarded £22,500 to quantify and evaluate the wood fuel biomass available from the council’s existing and potential future woodlands, and to establish a biodiversity baseline in two currently unmanaged woodlands, against which the effects of future management inputs can be assessed.

A biomass feasibility study was commissioned which identified three elements to the woodfuel supply chain: user demand; raw material availability; and harvesting, process, storage and delivery.

The study reviewed 52 existing woodland sites extending to 355ha and evaluated the productive potential from 21 prospective new woodland creation projects on vacant, derelict and under-used land.

Results were communicated to key partners. One finding from the work was that, following the initial flush or conversion, the woodlands have the potential to produce some 6,017 tonnes of biomass. After this, if woodlands are managed on a steady cycle, the sustainable production would be 1,249 tonnes per annum.

Levern Water Green Network

East Renfrewshire Council was awarded £20,000 to create a new green network connecting Barrhead with Glasgow.

The path runs through the Water Works; a community wildflower project located on 8ha of derelict ground beside the River Levern. It is ideally placed to form a key link in the wider strategic green network completing a missing section. The site had previously been assessed using SNH’s habitat modelling tool which identified a local gap in broadleaved trees. In response the green network connection was improved by establishing a small woodland.

A community bee keeping project has also been supported through the grant. This makes use of vacant and derelict land whilst it is awaiting development and complements a community orchard planted in 2015.

Inner Forth Landscape Initiative

A project which is making a clear positive impact on delivering the CSGN across a range of themes including habitat improvements is the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI). This Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme focuses on the upper Firth of Forth and day to day running is undertaken by a small team of staff hosted by RSPB Scotland, the lead partner.

IFLI covers an area of 202 km² including: the river, estuary and inter-tidal zone; the floodplain and coastal margins; and the settlements on both sides of the Forth. The vision is that by 2018, the natural, cultural and historical wealth of the area will be revealed, valued, enhanced and made accessible to both the people who live there and visitors to the area.

An early review session held in May 2015 commended the high level of energy, enthusiasm and commitment shown at organisational and personal levels. This was evident from board members and project staff right through to volunteers. A key early output from this strong partnership is new ways of working with formerly disparate groups. This brings together people with different skillsets, experience and knowledge focussing energy on the Forth landscape, its wildlife and people. This approach is considered to be vital for the success of landscape level initiatives.

Over 40 IFLI projects have now been launched. For example, the dramatic extent of the limekilns at Charlestown are now apparent after clearance of the overgrowing vegetation. New wildflower meadows and three community orchards have been planted. Also conferences, archaeological digs, wildlife identification recording days and schools learning events have all taken place.
The forum had a particular focus on urban greening, emphasising the CSGN’s links to the Scottish Government’s agendas on placemaking, town centres, climate change and tackling health inequalities.

Representatives from Scottish Government, public and private sectors contributed first class presentations to an equally diverse audience, sparking discussion and debate about the CSGN initiative.

Bridget Campbell, Director for Environment and Forestry at Scottish Government, delivered the opening address to the conference. Ms Campbell expressed her support of the CSGN’s aims and activities, seeing their direct relevance to the Programme for Government.

Tom Armour, Arup’s Global Landscape Architecture Director, gave a presentation on delivering green infrastructure in our towns and cities. There was great interest in this presentation with several respondents to our delegate survey impressed by Arup’s ‘inspirational’ and ‘pragmatic’ approach.

Focusing on how to cope with flooding in our urban areas Howard M Neukrug, Chief Executive, Philadelphia Water Utility gave us insight from the US on innovative water management strategies.

Many delegates commented on the perceptive, accessible and candid observations of Sir Harry Burns (Professor of Global Public Health, University of Strathclyde and former Chief Medical Officer for Scotland) and his demonstration of the strong links between the environmental quality and good health and wellbeing.

The key notes sessions were rounded off by Julia Thrift, Head of Projects and Events, Town and Country Planning Association who drew several historic and current approaches together regarding the role of the planning in delivering healthy environments.

The final session of the day saw presentations from three finalists, all aiming to secure the 2015 CSGN Ideas Fund award of £5000.

The finalists were: Buglife with The John Muir Pollinator Vision; greenspace scotland and Youth Scotland with Young Place Changers Catalyst Fund; and NADFLY Studio with Urban Oats. After a series of questions and an audience vote, The John Muir Pollinator Vision presented by Scott Shanks from Buglife was chosen as the winning project.

The aim is to create Scotland’s first ‘B-line’ via the John Muir Way connecting Dunbar in the east to Helensburgh in the west. The award helped facilitate an essential first step for the project by identifying where wildflower meadow creation would bring multiple benefits for local communities and declining pollinator populations. A number of events were also held promoting the importance of grassland meadows for pollinators, demonstrating how to create and manage these habitats and identify the pollinators that use these sites. During a week of celebrations marking John Muir Day in April 2016, a total of 20 events were run engaging over 280 people.

All speaker presentations and extra resources from the workshops are available to view or download from the CSGN website at www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org.
This year, CSGNT staff were integral in organising the inaugural SGIF conference, ‘Green Infrastructure: a growing need’, which was held in Glasgow’s City Chambers on 6-7 October 2015.

The conference showcased some of Europe’s best examples of green infrastructure projects and celebrated Scotland’s contribution. It was opened by Dr Aileen McLeod MSP, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, who spoke enthusiastically about the role of green infrastructure in today’s society, including how it can help tackle environmental inequalities, health and wellbeing issues and climate change.

Keynote speakers included Richard Ashley, Professor of Urban Water at the University of Sheffield, speaking about multiple benefits of green infrastructure; Dr Bent Braskerud from the Norwegian Centre for Soil and Environmental Research speaking about turning sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) into standard practice in Norway; and Prof Richard Mitchell from Institute of Health & Environment, University of Glasgow speaking about whether greenspace can do more for reducing health inequalities in Scotland than politics and policy.

On the following day, inspiring presentations were given by Tony Barrett from AECOM, looking at how the UK can learn from green infrastructure projects in Australia; Sue Illman of Illman Young on the practicalities of retrofitting green infrastructure into developments; and Marc Granen from Phytokinetic talking about a range of green infrastructure projects in Barcelona.

There were also engaging presentations on what Glasgow itself is doing to address urban drainage, planning and green space issues by improving green infrastructure; biodiversity and green infrastructure, looking in particular at water voles and amphibians; and how a range of green infrastructure interventions can easily be included into new developments or re-developments.

The conference also provided opportunities for several Master and PhD projects to be presented, giving delegates an insight into current research and early outcomes.

Copies of the presentations are available to download from the SGIF website at www.sgrf.org.

The Scottish Green Infrastructure Forum (SGIF) is a group of organisations, businesses and individuals interested in promoting and encouraging the building of green infrastructure. This fits well with several ambitions of the CSGN such as improving biodiversity in our urban areas and reducing the impact of extreme flood events.
Arup and Taylor Wimpey

The CSGN cannot be delivered without the strong backing and support from the private sector. Through recent work with Taylor Wimpey and Arup we have highlighted the pro-active roles businesses can play in helping to deliver the CSGN.

Arup is a globally important firm of designers, planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists offering a broad range of professional services. It shares with the CSGN the idea that nature can help promote and restore a balance in our cities and urban environments.

Supported by the Landscape Institute and Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, Arup’s Cities Alive campaign seeks to rethink green infrastructure. Calling for the creation of linked ‘city ecosystems’ that encompass parks, open spaces, urban trees, streets, squares, woodland and waterways which can help create healthier, safer and more prosperous urban environments.

Arup maintain that to realise this vision, green infrastructure has to take a more influential position in the planning and design of cities and urban environments.

Cities Alive calls for ‘urban green’ to become a fundamental part of an urban ‘ecosystem’ which improves social interaction and physical and mental health. It requires landscapes to work harder, for multiple end-users and to improve climate change resilience.

Design creativity is a key requirement for this approach – from both city-wide strategic projects down to more imaginative uses of space within the layers of a city. By capitalising on advances in technology to measure the value that nature delivers through ecosystems services, Arup and others can optimise the planning and design of urban space to meet future demands.
Examples of projects in the UK which have adopted Cities Alive principles to landscape design and masterplanning include: Beam Parklands in Dagenham, Essex - a new 53ha wetland park; the transformation of a 2.5km² derelict brownfield site into the breath-taking Olympic Park; and High Speed 1, where Arup engineers have attempted to set the railway unobtrusively within the landscape.

Though not located within the CSGN area, these types of projects demonstrate how the private sector can support the realisation of the CSGN, and Arup’s participation and sponsorship of the 2015 CSGN Forum demonstrates how seriously the private sector is taking the challenge of delivering the CSGN.

In Scotland, a partnership between Taylor Wimpey, CSGNT, Scottish Government, C&D Associates and Abertay University has focused on encouraging greener gardens in new housing developments to highlight the contribution gardens can make to the green network and the wider environment.

Using shared resources and expertise the partnership launched The Torrance Park Water Project to look at storm water management and the green infrastructure that is needed to cope with our ever-changing weather patterns. This included the installation of a natural raingarden feature at Taylor Wimpey’s Torrance Park development in Holytown, alongside a two-year trial of an ‘in-ground’ SUDS box at Abertay University.

A Greener Gardens leaflet guide has been produced to provide prospective new home buyers with some information and guidance on how to create a home raingarden. It aims to show homeowners and prospective customers just how easy it can be to make some practical changes that generally improve garden drainage in a sustainable way.

The project won the VIBES Collaboration award in 2015.
Paths for All (PfA) has been delivering many projects, training courses and support over the past year for community groups in the CSGN area.

The focus for much of the organisation’s work is to get Scotland walking - everyone, every day, everywhere - and to support the development of good path networks for multi-use. Work is delivered through the four broad headings of: Walking for Health; Active Environments; Active Travel; and Communications and Policy.

More than 70 training courses were delivered over the year across the CSGN area. These included Strength and Balance, Dementia-Friendly Walking and those linked to a key partnership project Move More with Macmillan Cancer Care. PfA also supported walking football groups throughout the CSGN area.

In June, the 12th annual Big Fit Walk was held at the Helix Park and many workplaces across the CSGN area took part in the incredibly successful spring and autumn pedometer Step Count Challenges.

PfA rolled out training for the new national Path Grading System and published a community path guide and additional guidance to support local communities. It ran three community action days, supported 28 requests for technical path development assistance as well as providing grant support to six community path projects. PfA also ran eight training courses some of which were delivered at the national demonstration site at Oatridge College in West Lothian.

The 7th National Active Travel Conference was held in Edinburgh in June. This brought together active travel practitioners from across Scotland. Over the year, PfA has continued to work with all of the CSGN area’s local authorities. In particular, it has supported the delivery of behaviour change projects via Transport Scotland’s Smarter Places initiative which PfA administers. Examples include an innovative campaign in East Renfrewshire which promoted local active travel options to over 5,000 households and work with train operators Abellio to encourage residents of Livingstone to use the local off-road shared path network to access the railway station.

Over the year, PfA has used its extensive communications network to engage with a wide variety of organisations from community groups to government officials and supported them through good case studies and articles. PfA also responded to a number of local and regional consultations adding value to the discussion.

The National Walking Strategy (NWS) underpins much of PfA’s work. The NWS Action Plan was launched in March 2015 to deliver the strategy. Over the year PfA continued to facilitate the NWS Delivery Forum and action plan reporting.

For more information, visit the website www.stepchangescot.scot and @stepchangescot on Twitter.
We would like to extend our thanks to all our partners who are contributing towards delivering the CSGN.