

Our Story

The early years – 2008 to 2010

Following meetings in 2007 with interested parties, the development of a Central Scotland Green Network was proposed in January 2008 in the discussion draft of the second National Planning Framework (NPF2) and then confirmed in the final draft which was considered by the Scottish Parliament in the autumn of 2008.

The aim was to build on existing initiatives in the area (such as the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network, the Central Scotland Forest, the Millennium Canal Link, the Edinburgh & Lothians Forest Habitat Network Partnership and the Falkirk Helix), and to work with local authorities, landowners, NGOs and communities to transform the environment of the region – making central Scotland a more attractive place to live and do business.

The first meeting to begin planning for the Central Scotland Green Network took place in March 2008. It involved staff from the Scottish Government, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and representatives from Glasgow and Clyde Valley and Ayrshire Structure Plan teams, British Waterways Scotland, the Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership and Edinburgh & Lothians Forest Habitat Network Partnership and was chaired by Central Scotland Forest Trust. This group, which expanded to include a number of local authorities and other stakeholders, became known as the Interim Steering Group (ISG).

The ISG commissioned three reports on various aspects of the CSGN, with funding from SNH and FCS:

- CSGN – Defining the Concept (July 2008);
- CSGN – Examining Structure and Measures for Delivery (June 2009);
- CSGN – The Economic Contribution of Green Networks (July 2009)

With overwhelming political support, the CSGN was included in the final version of NPF2 which was published in June 2009. In this document, the CSGN was identified as one of only 14 National Developments considered by Ministers to be essential elements of the strategy for Scotland's long term development. NPF2 identified FCS and SNH as joint Lead partners and set out a series of early outputs for the initiative to deliver.

Following the publication of NPF2, the Initiative was launched formally by Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Minister for Environment in September 2009.

During the winter of 2009, the ISG agreed proposals for governance – the establishment of a CSGN Partnership Board – and arrangements to provide capacity for the Board – the setting up of the CSGN Support Unit. The ISG also undertook preparatory work on a first draft work plan and a draft consultation document, determined the draft CSGN Boundary, put in place arrangements to appoint the Chair and establish the Board and carried out transitional planning to handover the project to the new Board once it was set up. The ISG met for the last time in February 2010.

Following the appointment of the first Partnership Chair, Keith Geddes and other board members (from National Agencies [Scottish Enterprise FCS and SNH]; Local Authorities; and thematic interests), the first meeting of the new CSGN Partnership Board took place in March 2010. The Minister attended this first meeting to offer her support.

Defining the Vision – 2010 to 2011

The Summary document was further developed in 2010 following comment from government departments and ISG members. An illustrated, glossy version was then developed as the CSGN Prospectus.

The Chair's first task was to launch the Prospectus at an event on 19 April 2010 at the new Motherwell College, Ravenscraig. 2000 copies of the documents were widely distributed and the document was also made available on the website. Six stakeholder events (managed by greenspace scotland) were held over the Spring and Summer. These allowed us to engage with 210 individuals from stakeholder organisations. As well as feedback from the workshops, we received 54 written responses by the close of the consultation period in July 2010. Reports by greenspace scotland on each event and a summary report were uploaded on the website. An overall report on the consultation was prepared by George Street Research, and uploaded on the website along with an evaluation of the consultation process.

The findings of the consultation on the CSGN Prospectus were discussed by the Board in September 2010. The following months were spent drafting a new document, to reflect the comments received, and a new workplan. The draft text for the CSGN Vision document was approved by the Board and Scottish Government in May 2011, after which it was prepared for publication.

The CSGN Vision document was launched at the 2011 CSGN Forum by Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change.

The Early Years – 2011 onwards

The early focus for CSGN has been around supporting existing partnerships and developing new links to help with development and delivery of the Green Network. This has included making available grant aid through the CSGN Development Fund, the CSGN Learning Outdoors Fund and the CSGN Community Project Fund.

Some £5.3M of Funding (resourced by FCS and SNH) has been allocated over 2010 to 2015. Much of this money is making a real difference on the ground.

Direct action has included: working across government to align policy and resources to support the greening of vacant and derelict land and to encourage active travel; developing our first flagship project – the John Muir Trail; supporting development planning; and communicating about CSGN and what we are seeking to achieve.

Our first annual report (Annual Review 2011/12) was published in 2012.

At the end of 2012, the Scottish Government announced its intent to develop the third National Planning Framework NPF3. In a consultation on National Developments held in the winter of 2012 a number of organisations identified the need to retain the CSGN in NPF3.

The Main Issues Report for NPF3 was published in April 2013. There is good coverage of CSGN throughout the document. The Consultation period is open until 23 July 2013.