

FCS Skills Programme

training *for* better



greenspace and
job opportunities

05 Forestry Commission Scotland Skills Programme

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) works with a range of social enterprises and third sector organisations to deliver employment and training programmes across Scotland. The *Skills Programme* was first established via a CSGN Development Fund pilot in 2011 to tackle unemployment among 16-24 year olds. Over half of those completing the pilot continued to go on to further training, volunteer roles or employment, with one third in a job six months after finishing the programme.

Introduction

Living Solutions is one of six training providers contracted by FCS to deliver training under the Skills Programme. Participants are taught forestry and employability skills while they carry out forest maintenance tasks that are helpful to the Commission's teams and local communities. Tasks include chainsaw training, scrub cutting, high pruning and landscaping.



Image courtesy of Forestry Commission



Image courtesy of Forestry Commission

Bringing change to life



Central Scotland Green Network

Inputs

The 26 week rolling programme costs £62,000 per year. In 2012, the cost for each placement was £7,750.

Background

Living Solutions is a social enterprise based in Fife offering a range of services such as landscaping, groundworks and woodland management and delivering these works through a training programme. Most of the trainees are from the many ex-coal mining communities across Fife where unemployment rates are high. The aim of this programme is to help people into employment through the provision of training and work experience opportunities.

Since starting up in 2006, Living Solutions has worked with over 100 individuals on volunteering, training or fixed term employment opportunities. The majority have left with one or more new qualifications and a range of new skills.

The Project

The 2012 project was delivered as part of Forestry Commission Scotland's Skills Programme which was first piloted in 2011. Funding is provided by the Forestry Commission, with trainee wages being funded by Fife Youth Jobs Contract.

Living Solutions was contracted to run a 6 month work experience and training programme for unemployed 16 – 24 year olds Fife residents who were interested in working outdoors.

Trainees were given accredited training and support to carry out a wide range of forest maintenance tasks including selective felling to safeguard native trees such as Oak, keeping forest pathways clear of debris and overgrowth and dealing with dangerous trees.

Trainees worked closely with their team leader and were supervised throughout the course. Each trainee was surveyed at the start of the course, during and at the end of the programme. Trainees were also monitored for a further six month period to follow their progress.

Inputs

The 26 week rolling programme trained four people at a time and offered 8 places during 2012. Four of these completed the course within the calendar year. Courses cost around £62,000 per annum. This equates to £7,750 per placement.

Initial applications to the scheme are made via the Opportunities Fife website, with eligible applicants recruited through a competitive selection interview process.



Image courtesy of Forestry Commission

Outputs

In the year January to December 2012, this programme saw three of the four trainees progress into work, with the other trainee moving into volunteering.

Qualifications achieved during this programme include NPTC Chainsaw - medium tree felling, felling individual windblown trees, use of high pole powered saw, use of chemicals and knapsack spraying, Lantra woodchopper, emergency first aid at work and manual handling.

Through the programme trainees also gained vocational and core skills which were then consolidated throughout their placements. This resulted in significant improvements in self-esteem and confidence to compete for jobs or further education.

Vocational skills in 2012 included extracting timber, transporting timber, timber processing, felling, erecting deer fencing, milling, kilning, grass cutting, strimming, drainage, woodlands management, clearing pathways, and clearing culverts.

Additional core and soft skills were developed in order to make the trainees more employable. These included team work, interviewing skills, communication, CV writing, social skills and confidence building.

Outcomes

Working in teams provided the trainees with ample opportunities to build on core communication, problem solving, work planning and team building skills.

Along with the confidence building that comes from achieving accredited vocational skills and qualifications, trainees experienced marked improvements in their self-esteem and this combination of transferable skills has greatly enhanced their employability.

The return for the FCS has been that the Skills Programme undertakes essential maintenance and associated works on its estate. Beyond this, the project has improved FCS's ability to respond positively to communities seeking improvements in their greenspace, thereby helping to improve the quality of life for those living and working in the area. Through this and the many other schemes funded under the Programme, the Commission has also been able to make a contribution towards the Scottish Government's national drive to tackle youth unemployment.

Keys to Success

Thanks to the experience gathered since 2006, Living Solutions ensured that the skills that trainees have learned match employer requirements' in their area. To optimise its impact, training has evolved over time and lessons learned have often led to changes in subsequent training delivery. For example, in Falkirk, employers identified a lack of civil engineering training so trainees were taught how to use a



“The Commission’s training is helping open up opportunities and is giving youngsters a better chance in life. The fact that this environmental work is also helping local communities is very welcome too.”

Paul Wheelhouse, Environment & Climate Change Minister, Scottish Government

mini-digger and rollers to cater for this need.

In addition to enhancing the employment skills of individuals, the programme gives young people an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live. When working outdoors trainees often received positive feedback from members of the public, this helped to motivate them and encouraged them to complete tasks to a high standard.

The enhanced feeling of independence that comes from receiving a wage is a strong motivation to secure full-time employment at the end of the programme.

Future

Living Solutions will continue to work with Local Authority partners across Fife to deliver youth training skills and FCS is looking into the possibility of undertaking more programmes over the next few years.



Image courtesy of Forestry Commission

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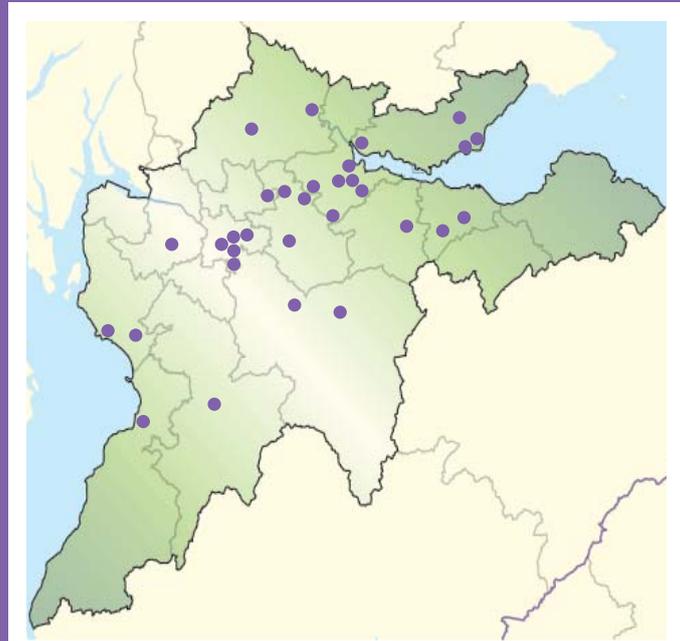
Qualifications achieved during this programme included NPTC accredited courses such as Chainsaw, Tree Felling, High Pole Powered Saw and Knapsack Spraying.

Outdoor training in the CSGN area

Key Facts

- In 2012, there were a total of 677 trainees, on 57 separate courses - 12 trainees per course.
- Courses were delivered through from 31 programmes which were administered by 24 separate organisations.
- Programmes lasted an average of 24 weeks and most schemes ran at least twice during the year.
- Of the 297 individual trainees for which we have additional data, 135 (or 46%) went directly into employment, 27% returned to unemployment, 20% went into volunteering, 5% went into education and 1% undertook a further course.
- The mean average cost per trainee was circa £6,225 (though this varies widely)

Location of outdoor training schemes in the CSGN area in 2012



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The CSGN will change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.

What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is one of the 14 national developments in the National Planning Framework 2. It is the biggest greenspace project in Europe and will help to make Central Scotland a more attractive and distinctive place to live, to visit and to do business. The CSGN has wide political and partner support and an all encompassing remit, far beyond just a 'green' initiative, with economic development central on the agenda.

Why are we interested in training?

The prosperity of Central Scotland is fundamentally linked to the skills of its workforce and we believe that the environmental sector can play a positive role in enhancing the employment prospects for everyone – especially young people. This will help to deliver not only career orientated skills but also those transferable 'soft' skills which a wide

variety of employers require. Under the 'A Place for Growth' theme, the CSGN aims to increase employment and training in land based 'green' and 'low carbon' industries with the objective of not only providing meaningful work experience and support for young people but also to improve local greenspace for everyone to enjoy.

What are these Case Studies for?

This report is one in a series of six case studies which demonstrate that for a relatively modest investment, outdoor based training and employment projects can have profound and far reaching impacts on the lives of people furthest from the labour market. The reports are intended to inspire other organisations to take similar approaches and to inform interested parties, such as Local Authorities, in order to encourage a supportive environment for such initiatives.

Getting in Touch

To discuss this case study please contact:
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For further information on the CSGN and other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

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