

# East Ayrshire Woodlands

training *for* better



greenspace and  
job opportunities

## 04 East Ayrshire Woodlands' ILM programme

East Ayrshire Woodlands manages an Intermediate Labour Market programme in forestry skills for long-term unemployed in East Ayrshire. In addition to improving the employment prospects of trainees, the programme also helps to secure and expand native and amenity woodland cover and develop access and recreation opportunities within woodland by constructing and maintaining paths and tracks.

### Introduction

East Ayrshire Woodlands is a partnership initiative supporting communities and landowners to expand and enhance native and amenity woodlands. It was created as a Millennium Forest for Scotland project in 1997 and promotes sustainable management practices that deliver a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.



*Bringing change to life*



Central Scotland Green Network

## Inputs

The 23 week rolling programme offers 27 places annually at a cost of around £220,000 per annum.

## Background

The initiative offers an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) programme which is a six month work experience and training programme for unemployed adults living in East Ayrshire who are interested in working in the land-based sector. The project is based in Cumnock with work sites throughout the local authority.

In practice, 12 to 15 trainees working in teams of 4-6 with a skilled and experienced supervisor to undertake practical woodland and countryside access management tasks in native and amenity woodland and public greenspace.

## The Project

East Ayrshire Woodlands has an active management interest in over 75 native and amenity woodland sites and these provide a diverse range of work experience. Activities undertaken include fence construction and repair, footpath maintenance and access improvements, installation of interpretation panels, benches, waymarkers, gates etc., planting and protection of young trees, felling/thinning of established woodland, clearance and chipping of invasive species, sowing and management of wildflowers and clearance of litter and flytipping.

The first two weeks of the programme are voluntary and supported under the Sector Based Work Academy scheme. The intensive induction programme covers a broad range of health and safety matters and begins to address the barriers and constraints to achieving the future employment aspirations as identified in a personal development plan which is drawn up with each person.

Following the successful completion of the induction programme, trainees are employed on a 23 week work experience contract. The working week is 30 hours and employees are paid at the statutory minimum wage for their respective age group.

## Inputs

The current programme is delivered as part of East Ayrshire Works' Employability Pipeline which began in July 2011. Funding is provided under Priority 5 of the European Social Fund, matched by East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and East Ayrshire Council.

Client referrals are made by Employability Pipeline partners and eligible applicants are recruited through a competitive selection interview process. The 23 week rolling programme offers 27 places annually at a cost of



around £220,000 per annum. Recruitment is staggered in order to operate a workforce which has a range of skill levels and can, therefore, tackle a wide variety of tasks.

Co-operating organisations currently involved in the strategic management of the programme include East Ayrshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and The Coalfield Communities Federation.

## Outputs

The ILM programme has, over the last 15 years, supported and trained 437 people, largely residents of the coalfield communities of East Ayrshire.

Qualifications that have been achieved include Lantra Strimmer and Brushcutter, Lantra Woodchipper, NPTC Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross-cutting, NPTC Felling Small Trees, NPTC Use of Pesticides Foundation, NPTC Hand Held Applicator Module, Emergency First Aid at Work.

The ILM programme has seen trainees gain vocational, as well as core skills, which were then consolidated throughout placements. Vocational skills gained in 2012 included footpath improvement, woodland management, landscaping, fencing and habitat enhancement.

Core skills covered included team work, problem solving, work planning, communications, time keeping, managing a wage, personal development and goal setting.

## Outcomes

Achieving accredited vocational skills and qualifications has greatly enhanced the employability of the trainees. The work was, at times heavy, so improvements in strength and physical health were also experienced by most trainees. The opportunity to undertake meaningful labour outdoors and achieve a waged income for their efforts was welcomed by the participants and this helped to improve mental well-being.

The nature of the training provided fostered the development of a teamwork approach to problem solving and work planning. This helped the trainees to develop core transferable skills such as effective communications and also helped to increase confidence. The works undertaken also increased opportunities for the general public to access local greenspace and benefit from this resource in terms of health, recreation and education.



*“This is an excellent project which combines investment in the people and greenspaces of East Ayrshire. Developing a flexible and skilled labour force improves our ability to respond positively to communities seeking improvements in their parks and woodlands; reverses deterioration in these valued community facilities and contributes to improved quality of life for those living and working in the area.”*

**Councillor Robert McDill,  
East Ayrshire Council.**

*“I have now managed to move into my own place. Without your support I might still be unemployed, depressed and sitting about my parents’ house.”*

**Stuart Harper - Trainee.**

## Keys to Success

In addition to enhancing the employment skills of individuals, the programme gave 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 which helped to motivate them and 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.

Another key feature of the success of this programme is the fact that East Ayrshire Woodlands works closely with local employers to ascertain what skills gaps they have and what type of person they are looking to hire. It then develops the trainee programme to directly meet these local labour market needs and requirements.

## Future

East Ayrshire Woodlands will continue to work with Local Authority partners across North, South and East Ayrshire to deliver an Intermediate Labour Market programme in forestry and estate maintenance.

It is also seeking to work further with Forestry Commission Scotland under the Skills Training for Young People framework agreement in order to expand the training programme in North and South Ayrshire.



## Outputs

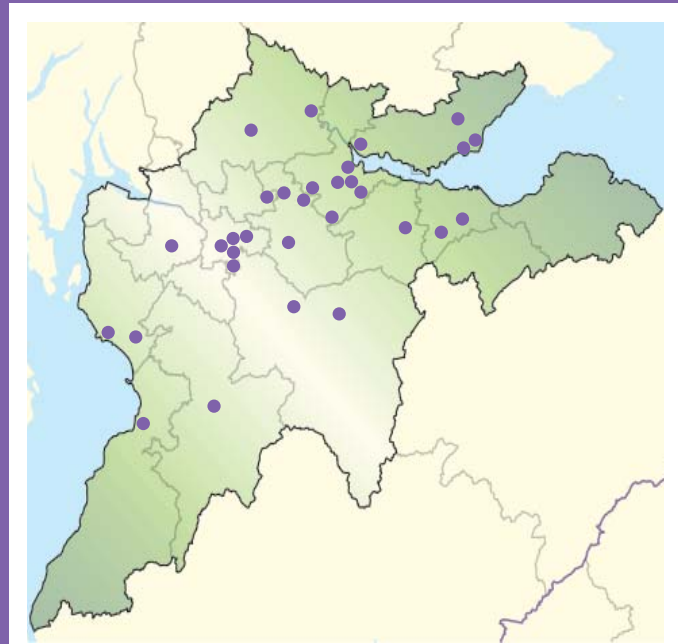
By August 2012, over 1,000 certificated qualifications had been achieved by participants and the ILM had assisted 101 long-term unemployed people into work. In the year January to December 2012, the ILM programme saw 15 of the 27 trainees progress into work, 2 into education and 7 return to unemployment (3 destinations unknown).

## 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

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For further information on the CSGN and other case studies please visit: [www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org](http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org)

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