

**FALKIRK GREENSPACE
A Strategy for our Green Network**

SETTING THE SCENE

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) is Europe's largest greenspace initiative which seeks to transform Central Scotland into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people's lives are enriched by its quality.

Falkirk Council has signed up to the CSGN's Local Authority Concordat, which recognises its commitment to helping deliver the CSGN vision and highlights its fundamental role in helping achieve the network's aims.

Falkirk Council has pledged to embed the CSGN in all relevant policies, strategies and plans and to ensure it is integrated, as appropriate, into its development plans, frameworks and design briefs. The Council has also committed to enhancing its partnership work to realise the CSGN.

This Falkirk Greenspace Strategy will help make this happen.

"We have a great environmental legacy in the Falkirk area and this concordat will help us progress a range of new ideas. We look forward to successful partnership working in the future and seeing our communities benefit from this work."

Cllr Craig Martin, Leader of Falkirk Council

FALKIRK GREENSPACE

A Strategy for our Green Network

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Falkirk Council and its key partners have an excellent track record of delivering projects that have transformed the landscape around Falkirk and its neighbouring settlements. The award winning Falkirk Greenspace Initiative has helped encourage inward investment, created and enhanced the network of paths, greenspace and woodlands across the area, and has played a crucial role in helping deliver the Central Scotland Forest.

National and local policies recognise the value of these landscape-scale green network projects and, with an emerging vision for a Central Scotland Green Network, it is a good time for Falkirk Council to review and update its approach to greenspace enhancement and delivery.

Falkirk Greenspace: A Strategy for our Green Network aims to build on the successful greenspace delivery that has taken place. Assisted by the Central Scotland Green Network partnership, the intention is to continue to deliver for the people living in the Falkirk Council area. As well as refocusing our priorities, this strategy will ensure we maintain our record in delivering quality greenspace and enhance our partnership performance to make the area the “place to be”.

Through its delivery, the strategy will connect areas of natural, semi-natural and man-made open spaces within our towns and villages, and create links into the wider countryside. The development of a high quality, multi-functional green network will provide a range of benefits for people, business and wildlife across our area.

Our over-arching vision is a Falkirk Council area where the quality of our environment continues to encourage sustainable economic growth, and the area enhances its position as a place where people want to live, work, and spend their leisure time.

To achieve this we have identified 9 thematic priorities that will be the focus of greenspace activity over the next 5 years:

- Economic development and placemaking.
- Tackling vacant and derelict land.
- Outdoor access.
- Community growing.
- Education services and schools.
- Woodland.
- Water environment.
- Biodiversity.
- Landscape.

The strategy sets out a vision for each thematic priority, a set of objectives to achieve each vision, and priority actions that describe how we will meet these objectives.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUMMARY

Falkirk Council and partners have an excellent track record with over 20 years of concerted effort in greenspace creation and enhancement.

The strategy aims to update the existing Falkirk Greenspace Initiative to:

- better reflect changing priorities
- re-position the area's strategic vision and approach; and
- maintain and enhance greenspace delivery in the Falkirk Council area.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Since 1993, the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative has successfully improved the landscape setting and recreational use of the green belt and urban fringes in the Falkirk Council area. This has encouraged the development of high profile visitor attractions and created significant woodland and path networks around Falkirk and its neighbouring settlements.

In light of the success of this initiative over the last 20 years, and with the emerging vision for a Central Scotland Green Network, this strategy reviews and updates Falkirk Council's approach to greenspace enhancement and delivery.

This Falkirk Greenspace Strategy allows the Council to refocus its priorities and meet a range of policy objectives from outdoor access and woodland management to place-making, community growing and enhancing links with education. This strategy defines a locally relevant, achievable programme to help maintain a quality record on greenspace delivery and enhance partnership performance to meet the ambitions of the CSGN.

1.3.1 FALKIRK GREENSPACE INITIATIVE

The Falkirk Greenspace Initiative (FGI) began in 1993 through a partnership at that time of Falkirk District Council, Central Scotland Woodlands Countryside Trust, Central Regional Council and Forth Valley Enterprise.

It was developed in response to the need to transform the image and environment of the area in the interests of local quality of life and increased attractiveness to inward investment. The innovative nature of the Initiative quickly gathered agency partnership support and became enshrined in successive Development Plans both as a strategic concept and as a set of detailed proposals.

The FGI envisaged the creation of a continuous, well-wooded parkland or greenspace encircling Falkirk where new amenity woodland would link existing and proposed recreational spaces, public parks and gardens, the corridors of the River Carron and the canals, nature reserves, the Green Belt, former policy woodland and designated countryside around the urban area; and in which recreation, leisure, heritage facilities and new development would be focussed. A key feature of the Initiative would be the establishment of a circular off-road route around and through the parkland ring.

The Initiative was both innovative and visionary for its time and became the expression of the Central Scotland Forest in the Falkirk Council area.

It was recognised that the Initiative would require long term strategic commitment to ensure success and through the 20 years from 1993 to 2013 the emergent partners of Falkirk Council and Central Scotland Forest Trust have continued to implement the vision through close working, community involvement and intensive resource commitment.

The success of the project can now be measured in terms of its transformational impact on the local environment and the resource it has created for recreation, natural heritage, housing and business developments. Notable examples include the creation of the policy frameworks, concerted partnership effort and enhancement of landscape settings for flagship projects such as:

- The Falkirk Wheel
- The Helix
- Canal corridor and linkages
- Callendar Estate Bespoke
- Larbert Forth Valley Royal Hospital wider estate
- Numerous access, community woodland and community scale projects

These projects have, collectively, delivered a critical mass of environmental enhancements as set out in the original FGI vision.

The delivery of this vision culminated in formal recognition of success in 2012 when Falkirk Council and Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) were awarded Overall Winners of the Scottish Government's 'Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning' for the FGI.

1.4 TOWARDS A NEW GREENSPACE STRATEGY

The original, award winning, FGI has delivered transformational change to the Falkirk Council area. However, changes in the policy context and governance structures, emerging funding challenges and opportunities, all suggested the need for a renewed strategic approach within the Falkirk Council area.

This strategy develops, both spatially and thematically, the core objectives of the FGI. With a continued focus on partnership working, we remain well placed to respond to the range of changing policy objectives and resource challenges.

Falkirk Council's emerging Local Development Plan recognises the importance of green networks. This strategy expands on both the thematic and spatial priorities identified in the policy objectives of both the Council's Local Development Plan and Open Space Strategy.

Why is a new strategy required?

Key reasons for a revision and update of the FGI include the need for:

- **A wider geographical focus** covering the whole Council area not just the urban/ urban fringe focus of the FGI.
- **Greater detail and clarity** on both thematic and spatial priorities for action than is available in the Green Network section of Falkirk Council's Local Development Plan.
- **Clearer local expression of priorities** aligned with the Central Scotland Forest Strategy and CSGN objectives at a local authority level.
- **A renewed strategic approach** to align future partnership effort and delivery mechanisms on priorities for action.

Through the delivery of this strategy, Falkirk's green network will connect areas of natural, semi-natural and man-made open spaces within our towns and villages, and create links into the wider countryside. The development of a high quality, multi-functional, green network will provide a range of benefits for people, business and wildlife across the area.

In particular the green network will provide:

- A framework for **landscape and regeneration place-making** initiatives.
- **Urban open spaces** including parks, play spaces, sports areas, green corridors, and natural and semi-natural open spaces for community, educational and visitor use.
- An important opportunity for facilitating **climate change adaptation** through sustainable flood management and woodland planting, and by enabling species migration.

- Spaces for **recreation and active travel** through creating safer, more pleasant walking and cycling routes.
- **Habitat and biodiversity value** by providing and enhancing areas where flora and fauna can thrive.
- **Sustainable water and soil management**, and help reduce air and water pollution.

1.5.1 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A GREEN NETWORK?

As well as providing good quality spaces that enhance biodiversity and recreational opportunities, the green network can improve the economic potential of our area by encouraging investment and making it a more attractive place to live and work. There are many benefits to enhancing the green network within the Falkirk Council area:

Improving the quality of place – providing a high quality environment to make Falkirk Council area a more desirable place to live, visit and do business.

Inward investment – providing the setting and landscape framework for new investment making the area a more attractive place for sustainable economic growth.

Climate change adaptation – helping the area adapt to unavoidable climate impacts through flood alleviation, woodland planting and management, and creating linked-up habitats to enable species migration.

Active travel and outdoor recreation – providing safer and more pleasant walking and cycling routes through natural and semi-natural places.

Biodiversity enhancement – creating and enhancing sites to allow wildlife to flourish.

Volunteering, education and training – providing inspirational places to learn outdoors.

Health & well-being – encouraging more people to increase their activity levels by providing attractive natural spaces, with new opportunities for fun and enjoyment, relaxation and reflection.

Food production – providing an environment for community growing and local food production and a support system to help communities and small businesses grow.

2. POLICY CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

2.1.1 CENTRAL SCOTLAND GREEN NETWORK

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) is a national development within the second National Planning Framework (NPF2). This extends across 19 local authority areas in central Scotland, including Falkirk Council. CSGN aims to make “a significant contribution to Scotland’s sustainable economic development”.

CSGN’s vision is that *“by 2050, Central Scotland has been transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people’s lives are enriched by its quality”*.

CSGN sets out its priorities for achieving this vision through **5 strategic themes**:

A place for growth	‘Creating an environment for sustainable economic growth’
A place in balance	‘Creating an environment more in balance, one that will support Central Scotland to thrive in a changing climate’
A place to feel good	‘Creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and good physical and mental well-being’
A place to belong	‘Creating an environment that people can enjoy and where they choose to live and bring up their families’
A place for nature	‘Creating an environment where nature can flourish’

2.1.2 CENTRAL SCOTLAND FOREST

Falkirk Council is signatory partner of the Central Scotland Forest (CSF) Strategy. However CSFT, it has recently been decided, will from April 2014 be known as the CSGN Trust and will lead the wider partnership of 19 local authorities in delivering this national development. Falkirk Council will continue to work with the new body to deliver the CSF. The Forest partnership’s overall aim is to increase total woodland cover from 18% to around 24% of the Forest area over the next 20 years.

The Strategy also identifies a number of priorities for the Falkirk Council area:

- Enhancement of former estate landscapes.
- Ongoing enhancement of the River Carron corridor.
- Development of upper catchment flood management schemes.
- Opportunities to enhance the Forth & Clyde Canal as a regional green corridor.
- Habitat and access enhancement opportunities identified through the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative.
- Enhancement of the Antonine Wall Buffer Zone landscape through restoration of the Avon landfill site and enhancement of Avon Valley riparian woodlands.

2.1.3 LOCAL CONTEXT

Falkirk Council has developed this greenspace strategy to update the FGI so that it addresses the challenges of delivering the CSGN vision at a local authority level. This strategy will also steer future partnership activity with a range of organisations, and delivery of the Central Scotland Forest within the Council area.

The greenspace strategy responds to the goals and vision set out in both Falkirk Council's Corporate Plan and its Strategic Community Plan. These seek to position Falkirk Council as the "place to be" by creating a sustainable, fair and prosperous place with safer communities and healthier people.

2.3.1 Single Outcome Agreement

Falkirk Community Planning Partnership has developed a Single Outcome Agreement that will help measure the progress made locally to achieve a shared vision for the Falkirk Council area and meet the following national outcomes:

	NATIONAL OUTCOMES	
1	We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.	*
2	We will realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.	*
3	We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.	
4	Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.	*
5	Our children will have the best possible start in life and are ready to succeed.	*
6	We will live longer, healthier lives.	*
7	We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish Society.	*
8	We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.	*
9	We will live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.	*
10	We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.	***
11	We will have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.	*
12	We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.	***
13	We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.	
14	We will reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.	*
15	Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.	

*** Primary goals / outcomes for the Greenspace Strategy

* Secondary goals / outcomes for the Greenspace Strategy

2.3.2 Falkirk Council Goals and Outcomes

The Corporate Plan (2012-2017) sets out the ambitions Falkirk Council has for our area and our services. The Greenspace Strategy will help deliver on these goals, outcomes and priorities:"

1. Further developing a thriving sustainable and vibrant economy*

- Our area will be recognised as having a culture and ethos of aspiration and ambition
- The wealth and prosperity of our area will increase
- Our workforce will be highly skilled
- The quality of our infrastructure will help promote the growth of the local economy*

2. Continuing to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens and communities*

- Our citizens will be supported to make positive health choices and lifestyles in order that they can live longer*
- People will have equitable access to local health, support and care
- Our citizens and communities will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing*
- Our citizens will be protected

3. Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination*

- Our citizens continue to access critical services that meet their needs
- Our housing continues to meet the needs of people who live and may wish to live in our area
- Vulnerable children will be protected
- Disadvantaged communities will benefit from better services*

4. Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live and visit***

- We will be greener ***
 - We will improve the built environment***
 - Our open spaces will be attractive, accessible and safe***
 - Our profile will reflect our area as a destination of choice***
-

***** Primary goals / outcomes for the Greenspace Strategy**

*** Secondary goals / outcomes for the Greenspace Strategy**

2.3.3 Development Plan

The Local Development Plan (LDP) will guide development in the Falkirk Council area for the period 2014 – 2034. This sets out a vision, spatial strategy, policies and proposals indicating how the Falkirk Council area should develop over the Plan period, including new housing, economic development, infrastructure and green network proposals.

The implementation of spatial policy within the LDP will provide the opportunity for green network delivery that is functional and sustainable and is characterised by the elements set out in section 1.5. The LDP defines the green network in the Falkirk Council area by means of a series of components which are highlighted on map 1, and associated strategic opportunities, including:

- Development of strategic corridors/routes.
- Enhancement/creation of urban open space corridors.
- Habitat enhancement areas.
- Development/enhancement of recreational nodes.

Map 1: Green Network Corridors and Components



3. OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

The FGI demonstrates how 20 years of steady partnership working can transform a landscape and attract investment. Since 1993, the Initiative has delivered:

- Over 100 greenspace projects.
- 1000 ha of land treated.
- Around 750,000 trees planted.
- Approximately 150km of paths created or upgraded.
- Over 400 Ha of existing woodland brought under management.
- More than 340 community events.
- 30,000 work days created.
- £5,000,000 worth of project value.

For over 20 years, Falkirk Council and its partners have been committed to a range of activities resulting in genuine and positive changes to our landscape. Whilst we have achieved a great deal in some of these activities, additional focus on other areas will further enhance Falkirk Council as the place to be.

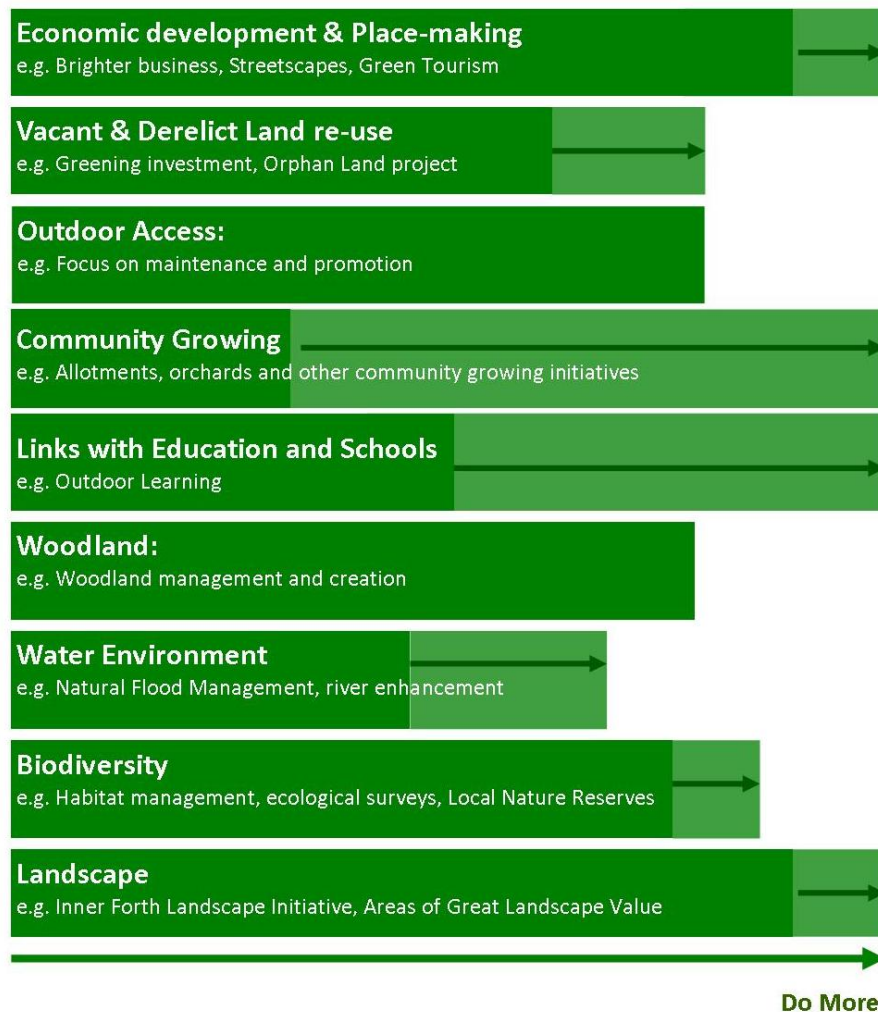
The following graphic shows relative progress to date on the key themes:



3.2 WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

Falkirk Council has come a long way in creating a good quality accessible green network within our communities. To build on this success we need to focus our attention on a number of areas whilst continuing to build on our strengths.

The following graphic shows progress to date on the key themes and an estimate of future partnership effort:



4. STRATEGIC VISION AND AIMS

4.1 VISION FOR FALKIRK'S GREEN NETWORK

Our over-arching **vision** is a Falkirk Council area where the ***quality of our environment continues to encourage sustainable economic growth, and the area enhances its position as a place where people want to live, work, and spend their leisure time.***

The **strategic aims** are:

- To update Falkirk Greenspace Initiative to promote the ongoing landscape-scale transformation across the Falkirk Council area.
- To develop a more co-ordinated approach to the broad range of activities that contribute towards a good quality green network.
- To steer partnership activity and target investment to best deliver a good quality green network within the Council area.

4.2 HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS? – Vision into Action

In order to achieve our vision, we have identified **9 thematic priorities** that we will focus on to provide a local context for the 5 strategic themes set out in the CSGN:

Thematic Priorities	How do these fit within the CSGN themes?
Economic development and place-making	<i>A place for growth; A place to belong</i>
Tackling vacant and derelict land	<i>A place for growth</i>
Outdoor access	<i>A place to feel good; A place to belong</i>
Community growing initiatives	<i>A place to belong</i>
Education Services and schools	<i>A place to feel good; A place to belong</i>
Woodland	<i>A place in balance</i>
Water environment	<i>A place in balance; A place for nature</i>
Biodiversity	<i>A place for nature</i>
Landscape	<i>A place in balance</i>

5. PRIORITY ACTIONS

Falkirk Council and its principal partner CSFT have come a long way in delivering real change across the landscape setting of our area. We want to build on this success to achieve our over-arching vision, to contribute towards the CSGN, and to help the area become the “place to be”.

Our 9 thematic priorities are defined in this section of the Strategy. These are set out alongside our vision for each theme, a set of objectives to achieve the vision, and priority actions that will help us meet our objectives.

5.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING: *Making Falkirk “the place to be”*

Approximately 17% of Falkirk Council’s land area is built up urban land and associated gardens. A number of priority sites for growth and economic development are identified within the emerging **Local Development Plan**, and these are seen as major opportunities for placemaking, environmental and landscape enhancement. The majority of new housing will be focussed within the 12 Strategic Growth Areas, and the 5 strategic business locations identified will be key drivers of economic growth and regeneration for the Falkirk Council area.

“**My Future’s in Falkirk**” is the economic development initiative for the area which pulls together projects related to regeneration, business, employment, infrastructure and opportunities for young people. The initiative also includes a commitment to ‘Transforming Places’, to improve the sense of place and quality of the environment across the Falkirk Council area.

Related to this, Falkirk Council’s **Tax Incremental Financing Initiative (TIF)** is being used to fund a major package of infrastructure interventions which will unlock and accelerate the development and economic potential of the Council area, including the **Grangemouth Investment Zone**. The potential of the area to contribute significantly and uniquely to national economic performance has been acknowledged by government and is reflected in the progress of the TIF initiative to date. The anticipated outputs of TIF over a 25 year period include 400,000 sq. m. of new-built business space, 8,300 long-term jobs and £415 million annual GVA. The initiative will make an important contribution to placemaking and has much potential for area enhancement.

Another project making a major contribution to the placemaking agenda is the Helix. This internationally recognised environmental regeneration project is creating a new Central Park, visitor attractions, public art features and canal link between Falkirk and Grangemouth.

Vision

A green network that supports and attracts business development and contributes positively to achieving a sense of place.

Objectives

To provide a high quality landscape setting and a sense of place for business to invest and for people to live and work.

We shall achieve this by carrying out these actions:

Master Planning:

To ensure a more co-ordinated approach to creating a sense of place a green network component will be integral to development briefs, master plans and development frameworks exercises. In particular, all major housing and economic development should:

- Create good quality places where people want to live and work, and where businesses want to invest.
- Enhance the green network within the development site, and ensure good integration with surrounding areas.
- Incorporate all aspects of the green network within new development, or on nearby land, maximising opportunities for recreation and active travel, biodiversity and habitat enhancement, landscape considerations, and community growing.
- Identify opportunities for permanent or temporary greening in advance of development.

Addressing areas of deficit to meet our Open Space Strategy targets:

We shall help more people enjoy and take advantage of the benefits of the green network by concentrating our efforts on:

- Addressing areas of open space and access deficit as identified in the Open Space Strategy, the Core Paths Plan, and where little green network enhancement activity has taken place. For example, the east urban fringe of Larbert / Stenhousemuir and Carron.
- Ensuring that new development is better connected with its surroundings through improved links from the site to local facilities, open space, and the wider countryside.

Landscape and environmental enhancement around businesses:

To complement recent positive action on placemaking in Bo'ness, at the Helix site, and through My Futures in Falkirk and town centre regeneration projects, we will continue to enhance the landscape setting of our towns and create high quality environments for business. In particular, we shall:

- Work with Falkirk Business Gateway and Falkirk For Business to **raise the profile of the CSGN**, promoting assistance available to businesses, for example active travel and travel planning advice, and opportunities for physical landscape enhancements.
- Carry out an analysis of Council-owned industrial estates and business parks to **assess the potential for landscape enhancement and benefits to biodiversity and the natural heritage** to improve their contribution to placemaking and delivery of market-ready employment land. This will involve:
 - Identifying Council-owned business sites and industrial estates.
 - Identifying sites where there are empty units waiting to be let.
 - Focusing on improving site boundaries of key sites.
 - Identifying enhancement opportunities for sites earmarked for industrial / business use to create the landscape framework in advance of development.
- Work to tie into existing initiatives* and **deliver physical environmental enhancements** around key business and industrial sites. This will involve:
 - Developing a pilot project in the Grangemouth area focussing on West Mains Industrial Estate, Powdrake Industrial Estate and Inchyra Road Industrial Estate.

* Existing initiatives include:

 - My Future's in Falkirk
 - Tax Incremental Financing Initiative (TIF)
 - Tourism Action Plan / Green Tourism
 - Helix
 - Town Centre Regeneration
 - Falkirk Wheel
 - Bo'ness Townscape Heritage Initiative
 - Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative
 - Industrial site landscaping and / or retrofitting green roofs or walls
- Continue to investigate mechanisms available for securing developer contributions to off-site greenspace initiatives detailed within this strategy. This will be done through using Development Plan Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance where appropriate.

- Work with partners including Scottish Enterprise to improve the major arterial road corridors into the area, for example through the **“Living Gateways” project** and development of an **appraisal of street trees** to showcase Falkirk Council area as a place to do business:
 - Survey and analyse major arterial routes to identify tree maintenance and opportunities for street tree planting.
- Continue to support **Bespoke Community Development Company** in its aims to promote the sustainable development of outdoor leisure and recreational facilities in the Falkirk area. This includes the operation, maintenance, development, improvement and promotion of the area’s path network and Callendar Estate mountain bike trails.

Employment and Training

There are currently a number of local training opportunities operating within the Council area which contribute towards the creation of a network of good quality greenspaces:

- Falkirk Council’s Employment Training Unit (ETU) provides 2 teams of trainees managed through the Council’s Operations Services Estates Management team. This project manages the Council’s annual **path maintenance programme**, cutting some 400 km of paths across the Council area.
- The **Housing Estate Regeneration Outcomes (HEROs) Project** is also delivered through Falkirk Council’s Estates Management and supported by the ETU. This delivers environmental improvements within communities through training opportunities for young people not in employment, education or training.
- **CSFT** supported a partnership project between the Helix project and ETU which included management of the **Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) training scheme**. At its peak, there were 25 trainees on this programme, achieving a number of qualifications and certificates, including SVQ Level 2 in Landscaping and it is hoped that this will be an ongoing initiative.
- The **Helix** project is also working to involve community groups in greenspace management through the **Green Gym scheme and community stewardship**.
- **Waterways Trust Scotland** has been developing a number of initiatives to provide employment and training opportunities associated with the canals:

Green Action is a 12-week volunteering and employability project for young people from Falkirk and the surrounding area to gain practical work experience and training in environment and tourism. Training is provided by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and includes landscaping, tree planting, maintenance and gardening. The tourism programme is based at the Falkirk Wheel and includes retail, catering, waterway operations and customer service skills.

Canal College is a skills and employability programme targeting disadvantaged 16-25 year olds from Falkirk and Edinburgh. This 2 year project provides training for around 144 trainees in 14 week blocks delivering environment and heritage skills training along the canals and culminating in 2 accredited qualifications. The canal college will also engage with, and involve, older volunteers from communities in Falkirk and Edinburgh.

Scottish Canals plans to build on the success of these schemes using the canal as a platform to **create social enterprise opportunities**.

We shall build on this expertise, and expand the opportunities available by working with partners to **support development of a range of green employment and training initiatives**. We shall:

- Continue the Employment and Training Initiatives organised through Falkirk Council. These will implement a range of environmental improvements and provide training and job opportunities.
- Work with the CSGN to provide training opportunities through projects delivering greenspace enhancement and management.
- Work with CSGN to identify other opportunities for training and employment programmes such as the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative rural skills training programme; and Communities Along the Carron Association (CAAtCA) path development and habitat management training opportunities.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Inward investment
- Active travel and outdoor recreation
- Health & well-being
- Biodiversity

5.2 TACKLING VACANT AND DERELICT LAND: *Transforming space*

The Scottish Government describes **vacant land** as land that is considered appropriate for development, but that is unused for the purposes for which it is held. Vacant land may have been subject to previous development, or it can be land on which preparatory work has been carried out in anticipation of development.

Derelict land is defined by Scottish Government as land so damaged by development that it is incapable of development for beneficial use without rehabilitation.

Development Plan policy encourages development involving the rehabilitation and reuse of derelict land. Falkirk Council has made significant progress in applying this policy over the last 10 years which has resulted in the successful reuse of brown-field land.

The Scottish Derelict & Vacant Land Survey 2012 identifies 72 vacant and derelict land sites in the Falkirk Council area covering 139 Ha (0.5% of our land area). Of these, 28 sites (79 Ha) are derelict countryside sites, and 49 (60 Ha) vacant urban land.

Given the potential ecological role these sites could play in enhancing the green network across our area, some refinement in quality analysis, an investigation into temporary greening opportunities, and an assessment of existing site designations will help us make better informed decisions about how sites should be used.

Vision

Where appropriate, vacant and derelict sites within Falkirk Council will be managed to enhance the overall green network, to encourage inward investment, and for the benefit of biodiversity and local communities.

Objectives

To strategically assess all vacant and derelict land within Falkirk Council area against their ability to deliver green network priorities through the assessment of a site's contribution to meet social need, economic and environmental benefits.

To achieve these objectives we shall:

Classify vacant and derelict sites to identify priority sites that can secure the following outcomes:

- Temporary greening.
- Opportunities for advanced greening to create and / or enhance the landscape setting to encourage future development.
- Identify sites that meet or exceed the quality required for designation as wildlife sites.

- Identify sites that merit further intervention to benefit biodiversity or that may provide opportunities for recreation and community benefit.

Where beneficial outcomes can be secured, develop an implementation programme with partners, Falkirk Council, CSGN and Forestry Commission Scotland, to remediate vacant and derelict land within the Falkirk Council area.

Retain areas of Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land

- Work with Buglife, the invertebrate conservation trust - to use the results from their report “An Assessment of the Importance of Brownfields in Falkirk for Biodiversity” to improve planning and development decisions for those sites identified as being of most importance for Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land and associated invertebrates:
 - Identify a series of “stepping stone” sites and manage accordingly for invertebrate species that depend on open mosaic habitat.
 - Carry out detailed invertebrate surveys on those development sites identified as being of most importance for invertebrates.
 - Work alongside Buglife and Local Biodiversity Action Plan partners to provide advice regarding appropriate and practical mitigation measures that could be incorporated into development proposals for these sites.

Support Litter Strategy’s Orphan Land Project and Clean Zone campaign to secure community-led greening opportunities on appropriate vacant sites:

The **Orphan Land project** is run by Falkirk Council’s Litter Strategy team, and helps people take ownership and transform pockets of unmaintained land for the benefit of their community.

Part of Falkirk Council’s “Litter: There’s No Excuse” campaign, **Clean Zone’s** are designated areas of land which are adopted by a community or school group. These groups take responsibility for regular maintenance and for keeping their adopted area free from litter.

The Greenspace Strategy will support these initiatives by:

- Promoting the Orphan Land project and Clean Zone campaign, and associated funding opportunities to encourage groups to take part in temporary greening projects, or habitat improvement works.
- Identifying appropriate Vacant and Derelict Land (VDL) sites where community gardens or community growing space could be created.

- Exploring the potential of support from CSGN in delivering Orphan Land Projects in partnership with Falkirk Council's Litter Strategy.
- Working alongside the Litter Strategy team and Biodiversity Officer to provide advice regarding clearing up sites, cutting back overgrown vegetation, tree and shrub planting and habitat management.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Inward investment
- Biodiversity
- Volunteering, education and training
- Health & well-being

5.3 OUTDOOR ACCESS: *Creating an accessible green network*

Over the last 15 years, a great deal of work has been carried out to develop the path network in the Falkirk Council area. There are approximately 400km (240 miles) of core paths, with the full network (including core paths, public rights of way, canals and towpaths) extending to just over 600km (375 miles).

The focus over the next 5 years will be to prioritise investment in key areas of access deficit, and on maintenance, management and promotion of the existing path network.

Vision

We shall have a well used, managed, maintained and marketed path network serving people living, working and visiting the Falkirk Council area.

Objectives

To manage our outdoor access network, monitor its' use, and market and promote the extensive path network to encourage greater use.

To continue to carry out our statutory duties, work with communities on local priorities and partner organisations to develop strategic priority projects.

We shall achieve this through:

Carrying out our statutory duties in relation to access, specifically:

We shall fulfil the duties placed on us by the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 by:

- Reviewing Falkirk Council's Core Paths Plan in 2013/14.
- Enforcing the Land Reform (Scotland) Act and the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 as required.
- Supporting the Falkirk Area Local Access Forum by agreeing a mechanism for ongoing secretariat support to the Forum.

The **public's right of access can be affected by new development**. We shall seek to **minimise negative impacts** and, in line with **Development Plan policy** regarding outdoor access we shall:

- Ensure access considerations are built into reviews of supplementary guidance.
- Develop standard development conditions regarding access.
- Develop standard on-site signage requirements of development.
- Seek, where appropriate, developer funded greenspace enhancements, including access, as per Development Plan Policy for new developments.

Management and Maintenance:

To encourage more path use, we shall make sure the network is safer and more welcoming by:

- Carrying out regular path inspections and safety audits with an average of 2 visits per path per year.

- Developing and promoting an easy-to-use system for members of the public to report path problems by March 2015.
- Delivering 250 km (155 miles) of well maintained paths through an employment training scheme and / or contractors maintenance programme.
- Prioritising path investment, including maintenance and upgrade works, based on:
 - Path designation (e.g. Is it a core path or public right of way?).
 - Community need (e.g. Is there an open space or access deficit as identified in the Core Paths Plan, Open Space Strategy or Development Plan?).
 - Current levels of path use.
 - Need and/or aspiration for an upgrade to a multi-use route for walking, cycling and horse-riding.
 - The potential to encourage visitors / tourism at key attractions in the Falkirk Council area.

Monitoring:

To make informed management decisions we need to know how many people use the path network, so we shall:

- Work with partners including Sustrans, CSIGN and Falkirk Council's Transport Planning Unit to develop a monitoring strategy. We shall adopt a flexible approach using counting technology and user surveys to better understand path usage by:
 - Identifying where counters should be installed.
 - Agreeing appropriate counting equipment for each location.
 - Monitoring data to show the impact of work done and help prioritise future path investment.

Marketing and Promotion:

To encourage greater use of our paths we shall:

- Work with partners including Falkirk Council's Communications team and Economic Development Unit, Falkirk Community Trust, the Fieldfare Trust, and the Falkirk Area Local Access Forum to identify and deliver key promotional opportunities.
- Tie in with Falkirk Council's Tourism Action Plan to develop a communication and promotion plan for outdoor access activities. This will identify existing and new ways to promote outdoor recreation and active travel through a range of media to maximise opportunities in both the "Year of Natural Scotland 2013" and the "Year of Homecoming Scotland 2014".

- Identify and fill gaps in our current promotional activities and leaflet provision, and annually review existing path leaflets, and their web provision, to ensure they are kept up-to-date.
- Work with community groups or organisations and assist them in developing their own promotional materials (e.g. community leaflet, an event, or interpretation boards), specifically where significant partnership effort has taken place to deliver new path infrastructure.

Community Support

We shall continue to support local community groups by:

- Providing advice, support and guidance for groups wishing to work on specific projects or local sites to enhance access and / or biodiversity.
- Working together to hold opening events for strategic priority projects.
- Continue to support Callendar Estate Cycle Trails and Bespoke Community Development Company activities.

Working with partners, we shall develop strategic priority projects identified in existing strategies through:

- Working towards implementing deficiencies in the access network as identified in the Open Space Strategy and the Core Paths Plan.
- Working with Communities Along the Carron Association (CAAtCA) and other partners to deliver a River Carron Trail.
- Maintaining and seeking to extend the River Avon Heritage Trail.
- Working with Historic Scotland and other partners to deliver an Antonine Wall Trail to promote the Falkirk Council sections of Antonine Wall: Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site.
- Assisting Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the CSGN in the delivery of the section of the flagship John Muir Trail within Falkirk Council area.
- Commissioning a study and investigating the development of a North Larbert – Denny – Torwood path loop.
- Continuing works to improve connections to the lowland canal network for our communities, and continuing a phased upgrade of the urban sections of the Union and Forth & Clyde Canal towpaths.
- Working with partners to improve access as part of the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative project.
- Assisting with development of the 15-20 year masterplan for ongoing management and promotion of the Helix.
- Working with partners to develop a “Cycle Falkirk” project similar to the “Cycle Stirling” campaign. This would enable partners to work together for a “Cycle Forth Valley” project.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Active travel
- Volunteering, education and training
- Health & well-being

5.4 COMMUNITY GROWING INITIATIVES: *Creating space to grow*

Community growing includes allotments, community gardens, land-share, community-supported agriculture, workplace growing, and edible landscapes. There is perceived high demand for all types of community growing space across the Falkirk Council area, and clear educational links and opportunities within school grounds. To help address this, some recent activity has taken place.

Allotments and Orchard development:

- The council has run a successful **pilot allotment project** in partnership with the Falkirk Allotment Society.
- 18 local **primary schools** have created an **orchard** in their grounds.
- The Helix project has secured a site for **allotments**, including provision for an **orchard**, and there is a related **community bee-keeping** project up and running.
- **Grow Your Own Scotland** seeks to create a single resource for all grow your own and greenspace organisations across Scotland.

“Orphan Land” scheme:

- Falkirk Council’s Litter Strategy “Orphan Land” project aims to bring communities together to look after small pockets of unmaintained land. This provides an opportunity for community growing projects.

Forth Environment Link:

- Since 2011, Forth Environment Link has co-ordinated the **Grow Forth Local Food Network** to bring together groups across the Forth Valley that are interested in local food.
- **Forth Valley Orchard’s Initiative** encourages the creation of new orchards and management of existing orchards across the Forth Valley. Through the CSGN Development Fund, Forth Environment Link has awarded funding to projects in the Falkirk Council area, enabling 8 schools, community groups, and Falkirk Council to plant 54 fruit trees and bushes.
- In 2012, Forth Environment Link provided a programme of **orchard support** for 3 schools in the Falkirk Council area, and held the 3rd annual **Forth Valley Orchards’ Weekend** in October 2012 – ‘Go Fruit & Nuts!’ at Callendar House which attracted over over 300 visitors.

Vision

People wishing to grow their own fruit and vegetables will be able to choose from a range of community growing opportunities in their area.

Objectives

To meet increasing demand for community growing space.

To review allotment provision and other community growing opportunities within Falkirk Council area.

We shall achieve this by:

Identifying appropriate models for increasing provision for community growing space:

- In liaison with the 'Grow Your Own Working Group', Scottish Allotment and Garden Society (SAGS), Forth Environment Link, regional food networks and other community growing projects, research and investigate different models for increasing provision for community growing space.
- Consider opportunities for including aspects of 'edible landscapes' into physical project delivery.
- Review all Council-owned sites (with Education Services, Litter Strategy, Falkirk Community Trust and Corporate & Neighbourhood Services) to investigate sites for potential allotment provision and community growing initiatives:
 - Identify who is responsible for each council-owned site identified in Falkirk Council's Open Space Strategy for potential allotment, community growing and orchard development.
 - Survey sites in liaison with Environmental Health and the landowner to establish the potential for community growing.
 - Develop an action plan for 5 priority community growing sites across Falkirk Council area. This should include:
 - A community engagement strategy to build interest and skills.
 - A marketing strategy to raise the profile and link to other local projects.
 - Provide support and signposting to groups and organisations interested in food growing:
 - Identify a single point of contact within Falkirk Council for community growing projects.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Volunteering, education and training
- Health & well-being
- Food production

5.5 EDUCATION SERVICES AND SCHOOLS: *Making space for outdoor learning*

Education Services is the main provider of education in the area through its primary and secondary schools. It also provides our community learning and development function across the Council area.

School education is provided for more than 20,700 pupils in 50 primary, 8 secondary, 2 special schools and 3 day units. The service provides over 4000 places in 8 nursery schools and day nurseries and 45 nursery classes for children in their pre-school years and co-operates with local private sector providers to ensure a comprehensive, high quality pre-five service across the whole Council area.

‘Learning to Achieve’ is Falkirk Council’s key strategy to raise attainment and achievement within the context of **‘Curriculum for Excellence’**, and it endorses a broad view of achievement within the perspective of an inclusive approach to education. A pivotal role for this greenspace strategy is to bring together concerted action from a range of Council functions and external partners to assist Education Services to meet their objectives for **outdoor learning and learning through play** as part of the “Curriculum for Excellence”. This includes the potential for on-site improvements to **school grounds and play facilities**, and includes the **development of community growing space, orchard planting and wildlife sites**. Off-site enhancements in greenspace areas near schools could also provide suitable outdoor learning space in the wider community environment.

Falkirk Council’s Ranger Service has built up excellent relationships with many schools, youth and community groups across the Council area. To date our Rangers have worked with 5 of the 8 High Schools and 26 of the 51 primary schools on a range of activities. As well as providing **advice and assistance in wildlife garden development**, the Ranger Service has organised **supported visits to local greenspaces**, and encouraged school involvement in local biodiversity projects.

An initial review has highlighted those schools within Falkirk Council with access to orchards and wildlife gardens within their grounds:

- To date, Development Services has completed 2 phases of orchard development across 18 Primary Schools in the Council area, and 26 school wildlife gardens.
- Since 2012, Forth Environment Link (FEL) was awarded funding from the CSGN Development Fund, enabling 7 Falkirk Council schools to plant 124 fruit trees.
- During 2012/13 FEL has provided a programme of orchard support for 3 Falkirk Council schools.

At present, 32 of our 51 primary schools have no orchard, and 21 have no wildlife garden within their grounds. Of the 8 High Schools in the area, only 1 has a wildlife garden, and 1 has an orchard.

Whilst we recognise the range of work already being done with schools, partnership activity could be targeted, with greater emphasis on the outdoor learning aspects of the “Learning to Achieve” strategy, in close working liaison with colleagues in Education Services. By providing better targeted support for those schools most in need, i.e. with less well developed school grounds or deficiencies in local greenspace provision for outdoor learning opportunities, we shall encourage greater involvement and engagement by young people in green network activities as well as helping to meet educational targets.

A successful partnership project with Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley, Forestry Commission Scotland and CSFT has provided an **exemplar grounds improvement project** in the **woodland adjacent to Forth Valley Royal Hospital**. This has provided an ideal site for outdoor learning which supports Falkirk Council’s Learning to Achieve strategy and the Larbert and Stenhousemuir cluster in particular. Similar sites for each school cluster could provide high quality outdoor learning space for young people across the area.

Falkirk Community Trust is also engaged in a number of **outdoor activities with young people** (e.g. water and cycle sports, bushcraft, supporting young people to achieve their John Muir or Duke of Edinburgh Awards). There is an emerging focus on making use of local greenspaces for this type of activity, both in sustainability terms and given the extent of local greenspace now available that could, with enhancement, meet this demand.

Vision

Young people across Falkirk Council have access to high quality, safe greenspace within their school grounds, and/or within walking distance of their school for educational and recreational use.

Objectives

To build on the success of existing activities and identify priority schools and sites for future enhancement for outdoor learning activity.

To develop initiatives in partnership which will help us exploit the educational potential of our existing network of greenspaces through improving our links with Education Services and schools.

We shall achieve this by carrying out:

School Grounds Projects:

There is potential for significant expansion in this area through developing school wildlife garden and orchard initiatives.

There is an opportunity for clearer, agreed, **joint working** programmes between CSGN partners, Outdoor Learning, Landscape and Ranger team colleagues to:

- prioritise where wildlife gardens should be developed.
- deliver added value projects incorporating orchards and wildlife.
- support and develop school grounds for learning and play.

We shall provide **good quality spaces for outdoor learning within school grounds** through the following activities:

We shall continue to support the Eco-Schools programme, Learning through Landscapes, School Travel Plans and Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning by helping create effective outdoor spaces for educational use within school grounds, and will work in partnership with Education Services to:

- Involve schools in self audit of their school grounds to give a clearer baseline survey of all schools, which in turn will assist in establishing where there may be opportunities for school wildlife gardens and community growing projects, and assess the level of support required from schools to develop this initiative.
- Visit school ground sites and greenspace sites identified in the Open Space Strategy site audit to assess potential for improvements.
- Work up an action plan detailing 10 priority schools per year to target for school ground improvements or 'Adopt-a-Greenspace' initiative.
- Encourage and support schools to develop new orchards in school grounds where there are currently no orchards and provide ongoing support for all schools with orchards to assist with annual maintenance training through:
 - Falkirk Council support to schools: Development Services, will work with 4 schools per year to develop new orchards.
 - FEL support to schools: Schools will be encouraged and supported to apply for funding to plant orchard trees, to develop their maintenance skills, and to enlist the support of the schools project officer through the CSGN grant scheme offered by FEL from 2013 – 2015.

Outdoor learning in local greenspaces

We shall work with Education Services and other partners (e.g. CSGN, Forestry Commission Scotland, FEL, Scottish Wildlife Trust, and CATCA) to **develop and support outdoor learning in local greenspaces**:

We have worked with some schools, encouraging use of local greenspaces for educational purposes. However, there is potential to formalise this approach, providing good quality spaces for outdoor learning through an **“Adopt-a-Greenspace” project** with school clusters across the Council area.

We shall support Falkirk Council’s Learning to Achieve strategy by working with Education Services and other partners to identify and **develop high quality outdoor learning space for young people across the area.**

We shall:

- Identify and/or create at least **one exemplar Outdoor Learning site** in a local greenspace **for each school cluster** in the Council area.
- Explore opportunities for **improving access to greenspace sites** for outdoor learning.
- Explore opportunities for **greater engagement with Outdoor Learning in local greenspaces by High Schools** across the Council area:
 - Identify and develop educational opportunities for all 8 High Schools in the Council area.
 - Continue to work with Larbert High School and CAACA as a current priority, to deliver educational opportunities associated with the adjacent Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Volunteering, education and training
- Biodiversity
- Health & well-being
- Food production

5.6 **WOODLAND: *Planting, protecting and managing woodlands***

Partnership success in delivering woodland creation projects over the last 20 years has resulted in woodland now accounting for approximately 18% of land cover within the Falkirk Council area. Since 1997, **woodland creation** in the Falkirk Council area has seen 564.4

hectares of land planted with 1,352,674 trees.

Tree planting is an important component of the Central Scotland Forest and should continue to be a key aspect of this strategy. However, the amount of woodland planted year on year has fluctuated for a variety of reasons. There are a number of factors which have collectively contributed to the reduced level of grant driven woodland expansion. This includes planting not being considered to be as competitive in comparison with other agricultural activities and concern about uncertainty over different new grant schemes. Notwithstanding this the total amount of new planting achieved is significant and may explain, at least in part, why new planting and new planting opportunities are perceived to be “tailing off”.

A gradual, continuing change in partnership effort to focus on the **management of existing woodlands** looks set to continue. **Scottish Government Policy on Control of Woodland Removal** highlights the guiding principle that there is a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland’s woodland resources. In addition, the **Woods In and Around Town (WIAT)** initiative is one of the most significant initiatives undertaken by Forestry Commission Scotland, and its partners, to highlight the role of urban woodland management in delivering economic, environmental and social benefits. This initiative has particularly benefitted the Falkirk Council area.

WIAT funding has enabled delivery of the Falkirk Urban Woodland Strategy 2006-2011, allowing Falkirk Council and its partners to carry out several key woodland management projects across the area including:

- 81 hectares of woodland brought under active management.
- 5-year Management Plans have been completed for council-owned woodlands at Cobblebrae, Polmont Woods, Bonnyfield and Kinneil Local Nature Reserves.
- All Callendar Estate WIAT-eligible woodlands are under active management including Chasefield, Westquarter/Mavisbank, and Lionthorn woodlands.
- Carron Glen and Carron Dams woodlands are being actively managed by Scottish Wildlife Trust.
- CSGN manages its woodland estate at Roughcastle, an important backdrop and setting adjacent to the Falkirk Wheel visitor attraction.
- On behalf of Scottish Lowland Forest District (SLFD) CSGN’s predecessor, CSFT, developed the Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP) for Larbert Woods and, through a successful partnership approach, the woodland has been brought back into management.
- CSFT also developed a 20-year Long Term Forest Plan for Kinneil Estate woodland which details how the area’s complex management issues will be addressed. This work will now be progressed by the CSGN.

- Forestry Commission Scotland will revise the Forest Design Plan (FDP) for Callendar Wood in 2013. This 10-year management plan will also indicate long-term management aims and objectives for the site.

This greenspace strategy enables us to update our vision and goals for both woodland creation and woodland management within the context of the wider green network.

Vision

A well-used, well managed and accessible woodland habitat that provides excellent recreational and educational opportunities, is of high biodiversity value and contributes to an extensive and effective integrated habitat network.

Objectives

To build on the success of these woodland projects, Falkirk Council will continue to work with partners to develop projects that help deliver Central Scotland Forest Strategy priorities.

To achieve these objectives we shall:

Explore woodland creation opportunities to help deliver the Central Scotland Forest by:

- Identifying opportunities for increasing the area of native and mixed woodland. Where possible, this will be achieved by linking existing areas of similar native woodland with new planting.
- Working with partners including Forestry Commission, SNH and CSGN to identify priority development sites with potential for woodland and other habitat creation, linking with the Integrated Habitat Network (IHN) study for the Falkirk Council area and analysis for woodland expansion developed for the CSF Strategy.
- Exploring opportunities for habitat creation (including woodland) within Council-owned land, particularly where there is currently mown grassland and/or where there is an accepted Service need for a change in open space use or maintenance regime.
- Extending the existing woodland habitat network and maximising physical linkages between existing woodlands to create functionally connected habitat.
- Identifying appropriate ground for new woodland planting within Council-owned sites, including sites on the Vacant and Derelict Land Survey register.

- Exploring opportunities highlighted within the Central Scotland Forest Strategy for multi-purpose riparian woodland creation, for example:
 - Enhancing the River Carron corridor in partnership with the Communities Along the Carron Association (CAAtCA).
 - Enhancing and extending the River Avon Heritage Trail.
 - Upper catchment and riparian natural flood management schemes.

Identify and develop opportunities for woodland management to encourage greater involvement in, and use of our woodlands:

- Bring existing Council-owned woodland sites under active management, improving all habitat types to ensure ecologically healthy woodlands.
- Identify and write management plans for key council-owned woodlands not in receipt of partnership development activity to date so these can be brought into active management, for example at Dorrator Woods, Larbert and Deanburn Glen, Bo'ness.
- Implement Woodland Management Plans created through the Urban Woodland Strategy 2006-2011, carrying out extant and ongoing woodland management works at Cobblebrae, Kinneil, Polmont Woods, Westquarter Glen and Bonnyfield.
- Prioritise areas where there are existing community groups or where there may be some community interest in managing a woodland site, for example The Friends of Kinneil Foreshore Group, Polmont Woodlands Group, and Falkirk Community Trust / Community Council interest in Muiravonside Country Park woodland estate.
- Work with partners including CSGN, Education Services and landowners to identify key woodland sites close to schools that can be used for educational purposes through an "Adopt-a-Greenspace" or Outdoor Learning project.
- Work with public agencies , such as the NHS, to actively manage and improve key greenspace sites on their estate that can provide recognised educational, recreational and health benefits:
 - Continue to support Forth Valley Royal Hospital board steering group to encourage use of the former woodland estate following completion of the current phase of practical works to the exemplar greenspace project on the wider NHS estate at Larbert Hospital.
 - Explore opportunities for greenspace enhancements within the grounds of Falkirk Community Hospital.

Improve accessibility of woodland sites to encourage more public use:

- In partnership, work with private landowners to connect existing woodland areas with the wider woodland network to create:
 - path links from settlements to woodland areas.
 - path links between woodlands.
 - paths within woodlands.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Volunteering, education and training
- Biodiversity
- Health & well-being
- Climate change adaptation

5.7 WATER ENVIRONMENT: *Protecting and enhancing the water environment*

The EU **Water Framework Directive** is a significant driver for the protection and enhancement of the water environment, and the **Scotland River Basin Management Plan** aim is for **98% of all our waters to be in a good condition by 2027**.

Improving the water environment will help Scotland adapt to climate change by increasing resilience to drought and contributing to sustainable flood management. Actions identified for the protection and improvement of the water environment will also benefit the green network through woodland planting, the installation of buffer zones, the control of non-native invasive species and the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

The Scotland and **Forth Area River Basin Management Plans** have been prepared to protect and improve the water environment, which includes rivers, canals, lochs, estuaries, wetlands, coastal waters and water under the ground.

Within the Falkirk Council area, the water environment comprises the **Forth Estuary South Coastal Catchment, along with the catchments of the River Avon and the River Carron**. This forms a valuable ecological and recreational resource as well as contributing to “blue space” aspects of greenspace and their obvious contribution to quality in any place making objectives.

As part of the effort to align the CSGN and River Basin Management Plan objectives, the **Forth Multiple Benefits Project** is being delivered by Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Forestry Commission, SNH and the CSGN Support Unit. The key aim of the project is to identify sites which, if restored, would improve the ecological status of the water environment by addressing river basin planning pressures and identifying where restoration would also strengthen and increase connectivity of woodland, wetland and grassland integrated habitat networks. This has identified a number of sites in the Falkirk Council area:

- Bonnyfield Local Nature Reserve as an opportunity to target biodiversity related projects.
- Falkirk Wheel and Castlecary Low Wood as an opportunity to target improvement to woodlands whilst addressing Water Framework Directive (WFD) issues.
- River Carron and Craigieburn as an opportunity to deliver access improvements whilst addressing WFD issues.
- Tamfourhill or “Portdownie” as an opportunity to target areas that could have green infrastructure added prior to, or as part of development proposals to address WFD issues.

The lowland **canal network**, and associated towpaths and other infrastructure, provide a valuable recreational “blue space” resource in the Falkirk Council area. As well as health benefits associated with encouraging walking and cycling, the towpaths also link communities, connect villages, and provide good quality off-road access into Falkirk Town Centre and many of the key visitor attractions en route including The Falkirk Wheel and The Helix.

In looking after the water environment we can help maintain and improve water quality and water habitats, contribute to flood management, and help adapt to the effects of climate change. All these elements of our water environment and the targets associated with River Basin Management Planning contribute to the quality of our green network.

Vision

The water environment in the Falkirk Council area is actively protected and enhanced.

Objectives

To maintain and improve the ecological quality of the water environment within the Falkirk Council area.

To contribute to flood management and help us adapt to the effects of climate change.

To maximise the water environment's contribution to the placemaking agenda, and towards a range of Council policies and priorities.

To achieve these objectives we shall:

Focus on the canals as a placemaking priority providing development and tourism opportunities for continued regeneration of the canal corridor

- We shall continue to work with Scottish Canals to:
 - Develop regeneration opportunities in the canal corridors.
 - Improve and enhance access to the canals.

Carry out improvements to the water environment through delivery of projects within this strategy, and by facilitating opportunities arising through proposals brought forward by developers:

- We shall investigate opportunities for enhancing the water environment as a key part of all the proposals identified in this strategy. For example, riparian planting and buffer strips that are maintained in permanent vegetation around water bodies, or removal of non-native invasive species will help control soil and water quality, promote biodiversity, and improve the connectivity between the water and terrestrial environments.
- Opportunities to address physical pressures on watercourses such as de-culverting, realignment and removal of fish barriers (e.g. weirs) will be considered where appropriate.

- We shall explore opportunities for securing SEPA funding to facilitate developer-led water environment improvements.

Work with partners to enhance the Forth Estuary area through the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative:

- We shall work with community groups and partner organisations to carry out enhancement projects delivering access, biodiversity and wider water environment benefits.
- We shall develop opportunities for volunteering, community involvement and training in traditional and rural skills, interpretation and habitat enhancement.

Continue to support community groups involved in projects that enhance the River Carron corridor:

- Building on the excellent community successes made to date, continue to support and develop projects taken forward by the two key environmental champions of the River Carron: Communities Along the Carron Association (CAAtCA), and the River Carron Fishery Management Group (RCFMG).
- Continue working with these groups and a range of other partners including SEPA, Scottish Water and landowners, to improve the River Carron and its tributaries, most notably the Bonny Water and Red Burn, to achieve “good” ecological status.

Continue to support community groups involved in projects that enhance the River Avon corridor:

- Work with CSGN, landowners and angling groups to explore options for riparian planting, woodland creation and management, habitat enhancement, invasive species control and access improvements as part of river restoration projects. For example:
 - Support River Avon Angling groups in their river restoration project, exploring opportunities for access enhancements as part of a River Avon Heritage Trail extension between the villages of Avonbridge and Slamannan.

Work with partners to address wetland priorities:

- Continue to work with groups such as Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), CAAtCA, Larbert & Stenhousemuir Environmental Regeneration group (LASER) and Larbert High School to support and develop the Local Management Group in managing and enhancing Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Work with partners to develop projects identified in SEPA's Forth Multiple Benefits Project that address River Basin Management Plan targets and Water Framework Directive (WFD) issues:

- Identify and develop priority projects throughout the Falkirk Council area which deliver multiple benefits including water environment improvements, for example by:
 - Investigating biodiversity enhancement projects that also address issues highlighted in the Forth River Basin Management Plan at Bonnyfield Local Nature Reserve.
 - Improving the condition of woodlands through woodland planting and management opportunities at Castlecary Low Wood and Falkirk Wheel to help address water quality issues.
 - Identifying opportunities for advanced greening at key development sites where developers would be required to address WFD issues, e.g. Tamfourhill, Portdownie.
 - Develop projects that improve water quality and contribute more widely to green network delivery through wetland and woodland development along tributaries to the River Forth including the Pow Burn.
 - Identifying opportunities for advanced construction/installation of flood defence and flood mitigation works as part of any emerging Forth and/or Forth Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan (circa 2015).

In line with the Development Plan we shall work with partners to explore opportunities for natural flood management as part of any emerging Forth and/or Forth Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan on a catchment by catchment basis through:

- Commissioning, through partnership effort, a suitable consultancy or academic survey and analysis, to inform FRMPs and identify priority locations for cost/benefit natural flood management options.
- Identifying key upstream tributaries that contribute to fluvial flooding issues downstream in the Falkirk Council area.
- Implementing, where appropriate, natural flood management options, including woodland planting, in these areas in upper riparian catchments.

We shall work with partners to deliver peatland restoration projects to benefit biodiversity and secure vital ecosystem services such as flood alleviation and carbon sequestration through:

- Investigating opportunities for securing appropriate restoration of Letham Moss following cessation of peat cutting.
- A programme of peatland restoration across the Slamannan Plateau.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Climate change adaptation
- Active travel and outdoor recreation
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Health & well-being

5.8 BIODIVERSITY: *Protecting and enhancing the variety of life*

The Falkirk Area Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2011-2014) seeks to safeguard the local variety of life.

Since 2002 the **Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)** process has been working with a wide range of partners to deliver action to protect and enhance biodiversity. Over 400 actions have been completed to date, with key projects including:

- Integrated Habitat Network (IHN) study for Falkirk.
- Bonnyfield, Kinneil Foreshore and Carron Dams Local Nature Reserves (LNR) designated.
- Barn owl and tree sparrow nest box and bat box projects.
- Pond creation and enhancement for great crested newts.
- Altered grass cutting regimes at several sites including Bo'ness Foreshore .
- Monitoring and protection of the Slamannan Plateau Bean Goose flock.
- Biodiversity management and enhancement works at Carron Dams SSSI.
- Central Scotland Peatland Forum established to progress bog restoration work.
- Falkirk Invasive Species forum working on the control of key invasive species.

Vision

Falkirk Council is home to a diverse range of wild plants and animals, thriving within a robust network of natural habitats. Across this habitat network there are accessible sites where people can enjoy and appreciate their local natural environment.

Objectives

To support and deliver priority projects for biodiversity, as identified within the LBAP, across the Council area.

To achieve these objectives we shall:

Carry out our statutory duties in relation to biodiversity, specifically:

We shall fulfill the duties placed on us by:

- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, which placed a duty on all public bodies in Scotland “to further the conservation of biodiversity” in the course of exercising their functions.
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, which strengthens legislation in relation to certain areas of biodiversity conservation and requires public bodies to report on how they have met their duty to conserve biodiversity.

Manage and enhance a range of habitats for biodiversity through:

- Developing a targeted management scheme focusing on locally important Council-owned grassland sites which have been designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or as Wildlife Sites.
- Reviewing mowing regimes on Council-owned grassland sites and open spaces.
- Developing and implementing a raised bog restoration project for the Slamannan Plateau, with the Central Scotland Peatland Forum.
- Carrying out woodland management and enhancement for biodiversity (see Section 5.6: Woodland).

Carry out surveys to identify and prioritise projects by:

- Carrying out pond surveys with involvement from members of the public.
- Undertaking a programme of surveys for Carron Dams SSSI to inform future management. Surveys will be carried out with Larbert High School, local community groups, and other interested members of the public.
- Using the Integrated Habitat Network study to prioritise key sites for habitat protection, enhancement and creation.

Work in partnership to deliver actions identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan:

- Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status has been achieved for Bonnyfield, Kinneil Foreshore and Carron Dams. We shall continue to develop and support the Local Management Groups for these sites.
- Working with the Invasive Species Forum to monitor and manage invasive species, particularly on sections of the River Carron and the River Avon.

Protect a core network of ecologically important sites:

- Review and update the system of locally designated Wildlife Sites and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and produce supplementary planning guidance to support their designation and protection.
- Identify and survey potential new Wildlife Sites or SINC, and designate any sites meeting the designation criteria.
- Identify and designate a first set of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) to protect key areas of geological interest with potential of educational or recreational access.
- Investigate protecting a number of key brownfield 'stepping stone' sites by local designation where appropriate.

Promote biodiversity enhancement in association with development, as a vital element of successful placemaking:

- Use the Integrated Habitat Network study to identify opportunities for biodiversity and habitat network enhancements in association with developments.

- Investigate use of funds provided by developers as compensation for ecological impacts that cannot be mitigated, to fund key biodiversity enhancement projects within the Council area.

Develop and deliver key strategic projects to enhance biodiversity across the Council area, including:

- Inner Forth hedgerow project: providing support to CSGN, and through education and awareness raising activities.
- Working with schools to develop their school grounds and encouraging them to join in with our “Adopt-a-Greenspace” initiative.
- Peatland restoration projects in the Upper Braes Gardrum Moss to Easter Fannyside area, and at Dunmore Moss and Letham Moss.
- River enhancement projects at the Westquarter Burn, within the River Carron corridor, and within the River Avon corridor.
- Inner Forth Landscape Initiative projects along the foreshore area, particularly around Skinflats and Kinneil Kerse/East Grangemouth.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Climate change adaptation
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Volunteering, education and training
- Health & well-being

5.9.1 LANDSCAPE: *Protecting and enhancing our landscapes*

The term, 'landscape' means different things to different people. It has been defined by the European Landscape Convention as:

'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'.

Landscape is about the relationship between places and people and provides the setting for where we all live, work and spend our leisure time. It results from the way that the natural components of our environment (geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural components (historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) – interact together and are perceived by us. It is a resource and is much more than a matter of only aesthetics and visual amenity. Particular attention needs to be given to it because of the importance that is attached to it by individuals, communities, businesses and public bodies. Landscape is important because it provides:

- An environment for flora and fauna.
- Opportunities for aesthetic and physical enjoyment, mental wellbeing, inspiration for learning and other forms of creativity.
- Sense of place and sense of history which in turn can contribute to individual, local, national and European identity.
- Economic benefits – directly as a resource to support livelihoods, especially in agriculture, forestry, mining, recreation and tourism, and indirectly through its now widely acknowledged benefits for health and wellbeing.

Landscape is not constant. Familiar landscapes change over time and will always do so. The aim is not to prevent change but to accommodate it in the way that benefits most and disrupts least. For development to be successfully integrated into the landscape full attention has to be given to all of the particular characteristics of each place.

Landscape results from the interplay of the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes in different places, allowing character areas to be mapped, analysed and described. Character is not just about the physical elements and features that make up a landscape but also embraces the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of the landscape that make different places distinctive.

Recently there has been growing emphasis on the need to accommodate such change and development in ways that are sustainable. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is about finding a balance between economic, social and environmental matters. Protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is an important part of this.

Vision

People living in, working in and visiting our area benefit from an attractive, diverse and flourishing landscape which is maintained and enhanced to provide a locally distinct 'sense of place'.

Objectives

To ensure projects and developments maintain and enhance Falkirk's landscape by carrying out Falkirk Council's statutory duty on landscape in development planning and development management functions.

To prioritise projects where sites and features of adverse landscape and visual impact are reduced or mitigated against.

To monitor the landscape benefits of projects.

To achieve these objectives we shall:

Carry out our statutory duties in relation to landscape by

- Fulfilling the duties placed on us by The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2010.
- Seeking, where appropriate, developer funded landscape enhancements as per Development Plan Policy for new development.
- Undertaking a review of Tree Preservation Orders by 2016.
- Ensuring landscape considerations are built into reviews of supplementary guidance.
- Ensuring developments are carried out in accordance with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and associated legislation.
- Ensuring that sustainable development is a core consideration of development plans and proposals.

- Ensuring built and cultural heritage is a core consideration of development plans and proposals.
- Ensuring the needs and aspirations of communities are considered.

Actively encourage use of established landscape and visual impact assessment guidelines (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition) in the preparation of all development proposals to ensure the most appropriate and beneficial design solutions for the landscape.

Update existing landscape character assessment to ensure these remain a useful guide for development planning purposes.

Use, and encourage the use of, established landscape and visual impact assessment guidelines to identify pressures for landscape change.

Protect and manage historic and designed landscapes:

- Identify sympathetic green network linkages to projects adjacent to historic and designed landscapes.
- Identify areas of the landscape of the Antonine Wall WHS where enhanced management will ensure its setting contributes effectively to its visitor appeal.

Maintain and enhance the landscape character and quality of Areas of Great Landscape Value through focused planting, landscape management and green network linkages with other projects.

Deliver projects through the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative (IFLI) that promote the distinctive local character, so the natural, industrial and cultural heritage of the inner Forth estuary is better appreciated and understood by those who live and work in the area:

- Restore and create new wildlife habitats, particularly in and around the intertidal areas and wetlands that have been affected by past agricultural and industrial use.
- Restore features of the landscape's cultural heritage that illustrate its importance during Scotland's agricultural and industrial revolutions.
- Interpret the natural and cultural heritage of the landscape, and increase understanding and appreciation of its value by local people and visitors.
- Create new opportunities for people to access and explore the landscape and provide a focus for visitor time in the area.

- Increase participation in conservation and heritage projects through volunteering and training schemes, building skills and local ownership of projects.

BENEFITS

- Improving the quality of place
- Inward investment
- Climate change adaptation
- Active travel and outdoor recreation
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Volunteering, education and training
- Health & well-being
- Food production

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW: *Are we delivering?*

6.1 Measuring Success

This greenspace strategy identifies specific priority proposals showing what we want to achieve. The following indicators have been chosen to measure progress against.

Greenspace Strategy outcome	National outcome	Indicator measure	Data source
More people feel a greater level of satisfaction and involvement with the quality of their local greenspace.	<p>We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.</p> <p>We have strong resilient communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.</p>	<p>Proportion of people who agree their local greenspace is attractive.</p> <p>Levels of public involvement in the management and development of local greenspace.</p> <p>The % of educational establishments achieving Eco School awards and Green Flag status.</p> <p>Number of community litter clean ups organised.</p>	<p>Greenspace Scotland: Omnibus Survey.</p> <p>Falkirk Council Single Outcome Agreement report.</p>
There is a more equitable distribution of high quality green infrastructure across the Falkirk Council area.	<p>We live in well-designed sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.</p> <p>We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.</p>	<p>Proportion of people living within 500m of an accessible woodland of at least two hectares, within 400m of good quality open space, or within 1200m of natural or semi-natural greenspace.</p>	<p>Woodland Trust: Space for People Survey.</p> <p>Falkirk Council's Open Space Strategy.</p>
There is a greater area of urban greenspace delivering environmental services.	<p>We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.</p>	<p>Area of greenspace created or managed for biodiversity.</p> <p>Assessment survey scores of cleanliness in public places.</p>	<p>Local Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Falkirk Council Single Outcome Agreement report.</p>

Greenspace Strategy outcome	National outcome	Indicator measure	Data source
The improvement in the environmental quality of our urban areas makes Falkirk Council an attractive place for doing business and the destination of choice.	<p>We live in well-designed sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.</p> <p>We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.</p> <p>We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.</p>	<p>Total area of urban vacant and derelict land.</p> <p>Area of greenspace / urban greening projects created on vacant and derelict land.</p> <p>The % of parents who rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live.</p> <p>Total annual visitor expenditure in the area.</p> <p>No. of trainees placed in work based training by the Council.</p>	<p>Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey Register.</p> <p>Falkirk Council Single Outcome Agreement report.</p>
More people are able to access and enjoy the benefits of a high quality green network.	<p>We all live longer, healthier lives.</p> <p>We will reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.</p> <p>We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.</p>	<p>Number of adults actively travelling to work.</p> <p>Number of children actively travelling to school.</p> <p>Confidence in individual safety in local areas during the day and at night.</p>	Falkirk Council Single Outcome Agreement report.

6.2 Reviewing and Reporting Progress

It is important that we learn from our successes and failures so we can continuously improve our greenspace for people, for business and for biodiversity. We must review progress to determine if we are achieving our priorities.

To this end, we will review and report on progress annually to the relevant Falkirk Council Committee(s), CSGN and Scottish Government (if required), over the 5 years of the strategy.