

**FALKIRK COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC POUND ANNUAL REPORTING STATEMENT  
2012/13**

Organisation Name	Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT)
Project	CSFT Falkirk Area Programme 2012-2013
Agreement Dates	1 October 2012 – 30 September 2013
Name of Lead Officer	Mandy Brown

## A OVERALL ORGANISATION AIMS

### Summary of Key Aims & Objectives

CSFT is an environmental charity leading the partnership which is creating the Central Scotland Forest (CSF). It aims, with partners, to increase woodland cover in the Forest area to 340 km<sup>2</sup> (22% of its landmass).

CSFT seeks to:

- **Champion and deliver** the strategic **vision** for the Forest;
- **Encourage and support** the creation and sustainability of the Forest;
- Influence and **connect with policies** and programmes affecting the Forest;
- **Promote** and **win support** for the Forest;
- **Deliver public benefits** through Forest projects;
- Ensure **long-term care** of the Forest; and
- Be a valued and valuable **lead** body in the Forest.

To deliver these goals the Trust and its partners aim to implement three activity themes which comply with the core element of sustainability:

- **Environmental** - to make the Forest an attractive and accessible place where people want to live, work and play;
- **Social** – to provide opportunities for communities to engage with, and benefit from the Forest; and
- **Economic** – to support economic development directly related to the Forest.

### List of Agreed Outcomes

- Develop an annual Falkirk Area Programme in conjunction with Falkirk Council's Development Services.
- Generate partnership project income to deliver an annual Falkirk Area Programme.
- Provide professional skills in environmental design, project management and community liaison in the following projects:
  - Larbert Woods phase 3

- Carron Loop – Crematorium to Mungal Link
- Carronshore to Grangemouth Access Improvements
- Carron Loop Lade phase 2
- Wallacestone Right of Way phase 2

#### Why Service/Project is Funded Externally Rather than by the Council

The Falkirk Area Programme continues to make a positive impact on the environment and quality of life for those who live and work in the Council area. CSFT's contribution is in:

- Generating partnership project income from a range of environmental grant schemes.
- Developing working relationships with the private sector, including the local farming and landowning community.
- Providing professional skills in environmental design, project management and community liaison.

Working with CSFT as an externally funded organisation has allowed accelerated delivery of significant community projects to meet Council objectives as well as contributing towards delivery of the wider CSF.

## **B ACTUAL PERFORMANCE vs. OBJECTIVES / AGREED OUTCOMES**

### Summary of Key Achievements

**Successful application for external funding** from a range of sources to deliver the Falkirk Area Programme (£172,790). Council funding will have contributed to these successful applications.

**Delivering the 2012-2013 Falkirk Area Programme** by consulting with landowners and the community on a range of environmental improvement projects across the Council area. The total CSF programme value for the Falkirk Council area in 2012-2013 was £481,270 delivering 5 projects that achieved the following:

#### Greenspace Partnership Projects: 2.1 ha existing greenspace treated

CSFT has continued to play a key role in helping deliver additional works to encourage more people into the Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) funded scheme at Larbert Forth Valley Royal Hospital. The Trust has delivered a second teaching /community space for the site, which sits at the south end of Larbert loch, and has also created more welcoming site entrances with new threshold signage and interpretation panels. These works were delivered by CSFT in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and NHS Forth Valley and were opened at a ministerial launch event on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

#### Outdoor Access: 0.25 miles (0.4 km) paths created; 2.5 miles (4 km) paths upgraded

4 of the 5 projects in the 2012-2013 Area Programme have delivered targeted improvements and additions to Falkirk Council's extensive path network:

- CSFT has created a high quality active travel link for walkers and cyclists travelling between Carronshore and Grangemouth along the River Carron.
- At the request of the Reddingmuirhead and Wallacestone Community Council, CSFT has delivered a project to improve the Wallacestone Public Right of Way / Core Path.

- The Trust continues to progress the Carron Loop path project to create a 6 mile (10 km) circular route around the River Carron to provide better recreational opportunities for the neighbouring communities of Larbert, Stenhousemuir, New Carron and Camelon. In 2012-2013 CSFT has delivered:
- A new path through the grounds of Falkirk Crematorium in close dialogue with Council colleagues at this sensitive site. Ongoing works are planned that will link the next phase of the Mungal housing development with Camelon playing fields open space and the proposed Dorrator Bridge project being delivered by Falkirk Council.
- An upgrade of the existing path along the Lade at Larbert and Stenhousemuir between A9 Stirling Road in the west and Carron Dams in the east.

#### Biodiversity

CSFT continues to support and raise awareness of national biodiversity campaigns. The 2013 biodiversity campaign focuses on 3 peatland and heathland butterflies: Large Heath, Green Hairstreak and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterflies.

During 2013, CSFT and partners have attended 14 community events to raise awareness of these butterfly species. School bog garden kits have also been produced for 100 primary schools in the Forest area, enabling them to create their own mini-peatland in their school grounds this autumn. So far, 2 of the 30 schools currently registered for a kit are from the Falkirk Council area. A promotional campaign will begin soon to encourage greater uptake of these kits in the Falkirk Council area.

Since 2012, CSFT has also organised a programme of free biodiversity training events aimed at members of community groups, or interested members of the general public. Topics have ranged from wildflower identification and foraging to invasive non-native species and practical woodland management. 3 of the 25 training events held to date have taken place within the Falkirk Council area.

#### Summary of Key Issues/ Challenges Facing Organisation

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) has now brought to centre stage the principles adopted and developed by CSFT over the last 20 years. Continuing recognition of the Trust's role in supporting the development of the CSGN will result in its transition, at 1 April 2014, into the Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT). The CSF will remain a component part of the CSGN, which has the wider aim of restoring and transforming the landscape of central Scotland. Compared with the CSFT, the CSGNT will involve 19 Councils instead of 5.

How has Organisation Contributed to Council/ Service Priorities

CSFT has been the lead body in a wide partnership of organisations and individuals working towards the creation of the Central Scotland Forest (CSF), a mosaic of woodlands spread across 1,600km<sup>2</sup> of central Scotland bounded by Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk and Lanark.

Falkirk Council Structure Plan recognises CSF's importance to the landscape and economy of the Council area together with the wider potential it offers to enhance the image of central Scotland. Since 1993, the Falkirk Greenspace Initiative has been Falkirk Council's local expression of the CSF and has been a core policy of successive Council Local Plans seeking to improve the landscape and recreational use of the green belt and urban fringes. This role will now be fulfilled by the Council's recently approved Falkirk Greenspace: a Strategy for our Green Network.

Importantly, the CSF continues to offer a vehicle for promotion and development of a wide range of other Council strategies e.g. Local Biodiversity, Economic Development and Tourism, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. It also provides the opportunity for cross boundary partnerships with local authorities and other agencies involved in the regeneration of the economy and rural environment.

The Council's support for CSFT makes a key contribution to delivering aspects of the Single Outcome agreement and the Strategic Community Plan 2010-15, the Council's Corporate Plan, Development Plan and Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. CSFT Falkirk Area Programme also makes important contributions to: Falkirk Greenspace, Outdoor Access; Transport; Urban Regeneration; Urban Woodland; Employment and Training; Biodiversity; My Future's in Falkirk; and Community Health Planning projects and initiatives.

List any Areas where there has been Shortfall in Performance

N/A

How often are Review Meetings held with Lead Officer

The Lead Officer will continue to attend quarterly CSFT working groups meetings.

Additional review opportunities exist by other means through monthly progress meetings, the inter partner annual tours, and Forest Forum.

**C FINANCIAL / RISK ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**Total Support Provided (Financial & In- Kind Contributions)

The Falkirk Area Programme 2012-2013 was funded as follows:

Falkirk Council Area Programme Development Services (Transport Planning, Outdoor Access and Environmental budgets)	£278,140
S.75 developer contributions held by Falkirk Council	£30,340
Forestry Commission Scotland	£18,790
Sustrans	£105,000
Falkirk Environment Trust	£40,000
CSFT contribution	£9,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£481,270</b>

Between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013:

- CSFT turnover was £2,780,000.
- Total CSFT expenditure was £2,850,000.
- Forestry Commission Scotland sponsorship of the Central Scotland Forest was £968,000.
- Total funding from local authorities equates to £1,000,000 (please note that this figure includes Woods In and Around Towns and Scottish Rural Development Programme funding).

Last Period of Submitted Audited Accounts

Income and expenditure reports are presented to the board at each meeting and annually audited accounts (by Chiene and Tait) are provided to partners and published in a CSFT Annual Report. The most recent Annual Report available is for 2011–12.

Future Risks (Financial, Operational or Structural) Faced by Organisation

From 1 April 2014, CSFT will become the Central Scotland Green Network Trust and will work with 19 local authorities across the CSGN area, rather than the 5 local authorities currently forming the Central Scotland Forest (CSF). The CSF will remain a component part of the CSGN.

A CSF Falkirk Area Programme is already being developed by CSFT, Falkirk Council and other partners for delivery by the new CSGN Trust between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This aims to deliver 5 projects to the value of £641,791. To date £580,321 of funding has been secured towards this programme, with contributions confirmed from Sustrans, FET, SNH, SportScotland and Tryst Community Sports Club.

It is anticipated that this partnership approach will continue in the future to enable continued development and delivery of a Falkirk Area programme to contribute towards the wider aim of CSGN in restoring and transforming the landscape of central Scotland.

Overall Risk Rating (Low/Medium/High)

Low (based on CSFT's current and previous record in achieving partnership project income to deliver the CSF Falkirk Area Programme).

## D CONCLUSIONS

### Summary/ Opinion of Organisations Overall Progress During Year

CSFT has successfully delivered the 2012-2013 Falkirk Area Programme as agreed with Falkirk Council, which has resulted in £481,270 investment in the green network within the Council area.

Falkirk Council's commitment to the concept of the Central Scotland Forest through partnership working with CSFT directly benefits our communities through providing improved greenspaces and woodlands, and through further enhancing the area's extensive path network.

## E COMPLETED BY

<u>Name</u>	Mandy Brown
<u>Designation</u>	Planning Officer (Environment)
<u>Date</u>	24/10/2013