

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: UPDATE ON THE CUMBERNAULD LIVING LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP
From: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS	
Date: 31 JANUARY 2017	Ref: KF/VA/TN

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of progress in delivering the Cumbernauld Living Landscape.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Cumbernauld Living Landscape partnership was formed in 2011 with a Memorandum of Agreement signed between the North Lanarkshire Council, Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Forestry Commission Scotland. Since then the partnership has expanded to include The Conservation Volunteers. Living Landscapes are a model developed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and focus on managing land at the ecosystem-scale. A steering group has been set up by the partners to take forward the project and includes officers from Greenspace Development and the Development Plans team.

2.2 The Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a long term vision to facilitate a transformational change to the town's environment. The project aims to reinforce and expand existing green and blue networks and reconnect the people of Cumbernauld to their natural environment. By engaging a wide range of stakeholders, the Living Landscape is working to benefit local people and wildlife and support the evolving regional economy.

2.3 Over 50% of Cumbernauld's town centre is made up of green spaces: parks, woodlands and gardens. However, these areas are often disconnected from one another and could be improved for people and wildlife. Working closely with the local community, the Living Landscape wants to ensure that healthy places are at the heart of the town's future. The long-term vision is for a green network in the town, providing clean air, water and retreats from the demands of everyday life.

2.4 The partnership has identified the following priority outcomes to deliver in the next five years:

- The green network is reinforced, expanded and reconnected
- Ecosystem health and environmental quality is improved (especially in deprived communities)
- People's wellbeing is improved through their connection to the natural environment
- More people value and have the skills to take responsibility for their environment

2.5 The Cumbernauld Living Landscape fulfils North Lanarkshire Council's Local Development Plan objectives to promote the natural and built environment by integrating trees and linking the green network to North Lanarkshire Council core paths. The improvement of active travel links to and from the town centre will also support Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic

Development Plan. The programme also contributes to the development of the Central Scotland Green Network.

### **3. Progress to date**

3.1 The 2011 programme plan set out 43 individual projects that will deliver the Living Landscape over the short, medium and long term. To date 18 of these projects have been completed with 25 in progress. The following significant outcomes have been achieved.

3.2 Regeneration – The partnership has made major contributions to the sustainability and natural environment themes through:

- Woodland management and enhancement - Long Term Forest Plans are now in place for Cumbernauld Greenspaces (Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserves) and Palacerigg Country Park. There have been 10 projects that improve the town's woodlands. Funding has been secured to see the delivery of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Long Term Forest Plan which covers an area of 281 ha of greenspace. The programme leaders are now looking for opportunities to deliver the next phase through a variety of funding sources including Woodland in and around Town (WIAT).
- Peatland management and restoration - The peatland management project was identified as a priority by the steering group in September 2013. This coincided with the development of the Fannyside Bog Restoration project by the Central Scotland Bog Forum. A partnership of neighbouring landowners led by Buglife and including North Lanarkshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, SWT and RSPB has successfully secured funding for a £300k restoration project covering 168ha of peatland.
- Improving water quality by expansion of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) - A unique partnership between Scottish Water and SWT ensured that the maximum environmental benefit was delivered from a major project to improve water quality. This partnership was active from early in the design stage to the final commissioning of the site and brought benefits to all parties. Over two phases, 6 wildlife friendly SUDS ponds were built and 14ha of natural habitat was created.
- Design of green infrastructure and sustainable place-making in a major planned development - The Cumbernauld Community Growth Area represents a significant opportunity to deliver Scottish Government policies of sustainable place-making and creating resilient green networks. The partnership has fostered close relationships with Planning and Regeneration and a representative from the Development Plan team now sits on the Cumbernauld Living Landscape steering group.

3.3 Health and wellbeing – Projects to improve health and wellbeing have re-connected people with their local environment and are being developed to improve mental health:

- Re-connect the urban population with their environment - The Living Landscape has been very successful at engaging communities in Cumbernauld, through its partnership with The Conservation Volunteers. A wide range of creative events have been held to support local partners and directly engage people in the town with the excellent greenspaces. Each year over 4,000 people are reached at events and workshops with local schools and groups.
- Using nature to improve wellbeing - Working with NHS Lanarkshire and Sanctuary Homes Scotland the Living Landscape has developed a programme of workshops that use the town greenspaces as a venue to improve mental health. This work compliments the Countryside Ranger Service's Branching Out programme and is aimed at people who are at risk of mental ill health.

3.4 Lifelong learning – Volunteering and skills development are a key component of many of the Living Landscape projects:

- Work placements and internships - To date the project has supported eight volunteer internships and work placements. These have given the participants the skills and confidence to go onto work and further training.
- Volunteering opportunities - Regular volunteering opportunities have been created for people living close to Cumbernauld's greenspaces. Supporting these volunteers to gain skills and confidence has led to spin off groups.

**4. Flagship projects**

4.1 The Living Landscape partnership is developing a number of high impact "flagship" projects that will deliver the current priority outcomes by 2020. These projects build on the partnership's strengths in community engagement, woodland management and urban planning. Each of the projects has a simple recognisable objective and contributes to the landscape scale approach.

- The Natural Connections project is improving the employability of young people and reconnecting the local community to and improving three important wildlife sites in Cumbernauld (St Maurice's Pond, Ravenswood local nature reserve and Cumbernauld Glen). Contributions from the Local Area Partnership (£12,000), Greenspace Development (£4,000) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust (£22,000) has unlocked Heritage Lottery funding to deliver a total project value of £115,000 for Phase I. Partners are now working with the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a proposal to expand the Natural Connections project into a second phase that will work with more groups on more sites.
- The Green Routes Feasibility project was funded by Central Scotland Green Network Development Fund and the councils Local Area Partnership (£15,000). These Green Routes seek to remove the physical and cultural barriers to active travel in the town whilst improving the environmental quality of deprived communities. Key actions were proposed for Carbrain and Cumbernauld Town Centre. To fully implement these routes will cost in the region of £1.5m and the group is working with partners to identify sources of funding to deliver this project, including the new Green Infrastructure Fund run by Scottish Natural Heritage.
- The Growing Spaces project aims to increase the capacity for community growing in Cumbernauld in response to the heavy oversubscription of the town's allotments and in anticipation of actions required under the Community Empowerment Act. The project is currently supporting the Friends of Cumbernauld Community Park in their aspiration to develop allotments in the park. Funding has been obtained via a Climate Challenge Fund Development Grant (£1,500) to develop concept designs and undertake a community consultation in early 2017. The Growing Spaces project will be seeking funding from the main Climate Challenge Fund and external funding streams for the implementation phase of a new community allotment.

**5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Implementation of the flagship projects will depend on external funding sources. The Cumbernauld Living Landscape is well placed to attract grant funding due to its track record in project delivery, location in the Central Scotland Green Network and distribution of disadvantaged communities. To date the match funding supplied by North Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust has been critical in securing this external funding.

## **6. Corporate Considerations**

6.1 The priority outcomes of the Living Landscape are in accordance with many of the key themes of the Corporate Plan. In particular the following local outcomes:

- An enhanced network of greenspace and woodland for communities and wildlife
- Improve mental health and wellbeing
- Increase the number of people enjoying a physically active life
- Create strong sustainable town centres that are attractive places to live in, work in and visit.

## **7. Recommendation**

7.1 That Committee notes progress in delivering projects through the Cumbernauld Living Landscape partnership.

7.2 That Committee continues to support the partnership and further development of the flagship projects.

7.3 That this report be forwarded to the Planning and Transportation Committee for information.



**KENNETH FORBES**  
**HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS**

Local Government Access to Information Act: For further information please contact (Vicky Abernethy 01236 780636)