



CASE STUDY

CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE PARK

Partnership working and local enthusiasm means a Green Flag award winning park.



LOCATION Situated in the south east of Edinburgh, between the communities of Craigmillar, Niddrie, The Inch and Moredun.

SITE DESCRIPTION Made up of parkland, open space and woodland, the 62 hectare site is owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council.



In 2003, Craigmillar was regarded as the fourth worst place to live in Scotland*, with a legacy of high unemployment, economic deprivation and social exclusion.

A combination of local enthusiasm and partnership working has helped to transform the local park and woodlands, making them safer, more welcoming places to be.

*Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2009

Before WIAT

The park and castle have a long history dating back to the 1300s. One famous visitor was Mary Queen of Scots in the 16th Century. The National Trust for Scotland currently manages Craigmillar Castle.

Throughout the 1900s the area was neglected. During the 1940s, large scale municipal housing schemes were built in Craigmillar to help address post war housing shortages. However, these were developed with few local amenities and little regard to the park.

The park was used as a dumping ground, with burnt out and abandoned vehicles. Fires were common, with one fire resulting in the loss of thousands of trees. The park was used as an illegal scramble route for motorbikes, which damaged paths and led to local people becoming worried about their safety.

WIAT ACHIEVEMENTS

Forestry Commission Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council have worked in partnership to:

- Manage the existing woodland and improve the look of the park through thinning and selective felling;
- Create new paths and add benches;
- Improve and open up entrances, and create interpretation panels;
- Appoint a Community Officer in 2005, and ensure a regular presence with the ranger service since then;
- Organise local community consultation events;
- Encourage litter picking and general park maintenance; and
- Fund a study to look into the illegal use of motorbikes. The Council is now working with the Police to continue patrolling the site and address the problem.

Forestry Commission Scotland has invested more than £400,000 since 2005.

“ When I used to bring my children here 20 years ago, this was a wasteland. Now it’s a place where you can walk, bring your friends, listen to the birds and appreciate the spectacular views over Edinburgh. ”

John Knox, Treasurer, Craigmillar Woodland Action Group



WIAT WORKS

Craigmillar park is increasingly used and appreciated by the local communities. It achieved the Green Flag Award in May 2010, the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK.

An adventure playground was developed in 2009 providing young people with a well designed feature to enjoy. The playground is used by people from all the surrounding communities. The Craigmillar Woodland Action Group has been set up and is involved in the decision making processes of the park. Its aim is to involve local people in helping conserve and improve the park. It is made up of residents, volunteer groups and non-residents who use the park.

A legacy from Mrs Mary Emily Scott (a former Edinburgh resident, who stipulated that the money be used to manage mature woodlands) has been invested in the management of Edinburgh woodlands. A memorial feature was developed by a local artist in 2009 to recognise her generous bequest. Around £50,000 has been invested in developing the path network through a training programme delivered by the Wise Group using local volunteers. The programme aimed to help secure new work opportunities for local people experiencing long-term unemployment. The Wise Group helps to increase job and training opportunities and contributes to the regeneration of communities.



ON-GOING COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

- Local school children have been involved in a programme of outdoor learning activities since 2006, including Forest School. Forest School aims to re-establish the link with the local forest environment and through different practical tasks, develops young people’s self esteem, confidence and team working skills;
- A series of guided walks and environmental activities targeting black and minority ethnic (BME) communities have been run by Forestry Commission Scotland. The ‘Woods for You’ project aimed to increase awareness of local woodlands amongst BME communities and encourage them to use these resources for physical activity, relaxation, play and stress relief; and
- The Green Team is delivering Forest School sessions to women and their children in Edinburgh who have experienced domestic abuse. The 2-year programme is run by the Green Team, in partnership with Edinburgh Women’s Aid, Shakti Women’s Aid (for BME women and children) and Women Supporting Women. The aim of the programme is to increase self confidence and improve family relationships by involving participants in fun learning and play activities outdoors.



TIMELINE

2003

Craigmillar was the fourth worst place in Scotland for unemployment, economic deprivation and social exclusion.

2004

£400,000 from grant funding was received.

2005

A Community Officer was appointed to provide local people with a point of contact.

2006

£50,000 investment helped to develop the path network through a training programme delivered by the Wise Group using local volunteers.

Work began to engage the schools in the area in outdoor learning.

2007

The Craigmillar Woodland Action Group was set up to help with work on site, and influence the developments.

2009

Branching Out sessions began. The programme is for adults using Edinburgh’s mental health services.

2010

Craigmillar received the Green Flag Award



In 1997, **39,650** trees were planted over three days in Craigmillar by 2332 volunteers.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

“ Craigmillar Castle Park is a precious green gem in short walking distance that holds many surprises next to the magnificent sight of the ruin of Craigmillar Castle. The park is becoming more popular and hopefully the growing interest increases the readiness of all users to look after the park. Craigmillar Castle Park has great potential to serve as an outdoor classroom for local schools and community groups. ”

Ursula Busch, Chair of the Craigmillar Woods Action Group

THE LONG TERM VISION FOR CRAIGMILLAR IS:

To ensure that the park is an integral element of the regeneration of Craigmillar.

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL INTENDS TO WORK WITH PARTNERS AND INTERESTED COMMUNITY GROUPS TO:

- Increase local community involvement in all stages of management planning;
- Improve wildlife habitats and biodiversity;
- Restore the 19th Century designed landscape and improve heritage features on site;
- Encourage learning activities and local schools' involvement within the park;
- Encourage volunteering activities and training opportunities; and
- Improve the quality of life of the local communities.

CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE IS A FOCUS FOR TOURISTS FROM THE UK AND OVERSEAS.

By improving the surrounding parkland, more visitors are likely to spend time in the area.

If you would like to find out more about forestry in Scotland, please call 0131 334 0303 or email fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk/wiat

