



CASE STUDY

DON CORRIDOR

Connecting the city to the countryside
via a wooded green corridor.



LOCATION The woodlands are situated on the River Don, which flows through the northern part of Aberdeen city and links to most of the surrounding communities.

SITE DESCRIPTION There are around 40 hectares of mature woodlands along the river banks, mostly owned by Aberdeen City Council. There are 13 woodlands in total, and the largest area of greenspace is Seaton Park.



The wooded riparian corridor creates a hidden gem in Aberdeen, connecting the urban centre with the countryside. The project aims to create a local green network, linking woodlands with open space, and land in both private and council ownership, to provide a series of welcoming woods.



BEFORE WIAT

The river was once heavily industrialised with a number of large mill sites that are now being re-developed for housing. A network of woodlands clad the banks of the river creating a green corridor from Dyce Airport to the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve. Some of the communities along the river are among the more socially deprived in the city.

Before WIAT, the woodland was difficult to access as there were few clearly visible access points, many of the paths were narrow and overgrown and slipping off the path into the river was quite a possibility. Some of the old derelict buildings were becoming unstable. Only a small percentage of local people used the woodlands.

WIAT ACHIEVEMENTS

WIAT investment has meant improvements to paths and entrances and the installation of sign-posts, improving the feel of the woodlands, and improving the level of accessibility.

Within the City the woodlands and river are home to a diverse range of birds and animal species. With the network of paths leading from residential and business areas there are great opportunities to explore and discover wildlife on the doorstep. Other activities have taken place as a result of WIAT support including:

- Forest School sessions with the local schools;
- Health walks in partnership with NHS Grampian;
- Establishment of volunteer groups to help maintain the woodlands;
- Work placements for people serving Community Service Orders; and
- Woodland management and tree safety work in Seaton Park along with some replanting of felled areas.

WIAT WORKS

The Woodland Community Ranger has been instrumental in supporting groups using sites for a variety of activities including guided walks and practical work – with volunteers gaining employment skills. The events and interaction with the community have helped to generate a sense of ownership among the surrounding communities.

The Don Valley paths are now used much more frequently. Local people use the paths to travel through the area for walking the dog and general recreation. In the past some of the areas were perceived as not being safe, but now that the paths are more open, there is a greater sense of security.

Students from the Aberdeen University Halls of Residence, adjacent to Seaton Park, now make more use of the path network along the river to get to and from the university and also as routes for jogging.

ON-GOING COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

- The Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service has been running Forest School sessions in Seaton Park and neighbouring woods;
- Seaton Park has also been a starting point for other school groups using the area for outdoor learning;
- The Donside area is a popular venue for guided walks led by the Countryside Ranger Service;
- Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Team are working to interpret and preserve the industrial heritage along the river; and
- The North East Scotland Forest Education Initiative Cluster Group and Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service have run woodland activity days as drop in sessions for the public.

“ I have worked with individuals in various woodlands around the city and personally know of men who have taken their families back to show them what they have done and can show it with pride. These feelings and values are recognised and passed down to the children in the family, creating better role models. ”

Gary Dawson, Principal Community Learning Worker, Tillydrone Youth Project



TIMELINE

2006

The first WIAT funded project which covered 13 woodlands across Aberdeen started, with work on-site beginning in 2007.



2007

The Woodland Community Ranger started work.

2007

A management plan for the woodlands was produced.

2008/9

Site work was undertaken and included tree safety work, selective thinning and re-stocking, installation of seats and removal of fly tipping.

2010

Further funding from Aberdeen Greenspace saw the installation of additional sign posts and waymarkers from Dyce to Donmouth.

Plans are being developed to submit to the WIAT Challenge Fund, to undertake further woodland management works.





LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The long term vision is creating a countryside experience close to the heart of Scotland's third largest city and to be able to walk, cycle or ride a horse along the Don from Dyce to Donmouth without needing to go along a road.

KEY ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- A mix of local expertise and consultation will direct and deliver further improvements along the River Don corridor, building on previous achievements. External funding will be sought to help deliver these improvements;
- Links with local groups will be strengthened, with a view to developing long-term partnerships;
- Woodland management will be undertaken along the valley as much of the woodland is becoming over mature with little natural regeneration;
- The history and cultural importance of the area will be interpreted using a range of innovative approaches; and
- The length of off-road path along the valley will be increased to link up the existing sections of path. This has the potential to create a regional walking/cycling route from Peterhead to Donmouth.

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

