



CASE STUDY

DRUMCHAPEL WOODS

Community engagement leading to health improvements, enjoyment and regeneration of local woods.



LOCATION The woods are next to Drumchapel on the north west side of Glasgow.

SITE DESCRIPTION Three sites make up Drumchapel Woods, with a combined area of around 100 hectares. These consist of a mixture of established woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. They are currently owned by Glasgow City Council and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland.



These three sites act as a stepping stone to the wider countryside sitting on the outskirts of Drumchapel. The woodlands that make up the Garscadden Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Cleddans Burn were planted by the Wise Group in the early 1990s. The other block known locally as 'Bluebell Woods' is mature woodland and forms the eastern side of Garscadden LNR. WIAT involvement has resulted in a significant reduction in the levels of anti-social behaviour through greater use by local people, and an increase in the woods' importance and value in people's lives.

BEFORE WIAT

Drumchapel was part of the parish of New Kilpatrick and became a church parish in its own right in 1923. The Old Church (originally serving both Drumchapel and Blairdardie) was built in 1901 for an increasing local population.

A huge housing estate was established in Drumchapel during the 1950s to house 34,000 people from Glasgow City Centre. Along with Easterhouse, Castlemilk, and Greater Pollok, Drumchapel is collectively known as one of the 'Big Four' post-war social housing schemes. All have similar architecture and planning and suffer from a similar range of social problems such as anti-social behaviour and mental health problems.

Before WIAT involvement, the woodlands were heavily abused, with large amounts of fly-tipping. For many residents, the woods were a 'no go' area, especially at night and weekends.

WIAT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Improved path infrastructure, including 5km of multi-user paths and waymarked trails;
- Engagement with community groups, including the Drumchapel Woodland Group, Drumchapel Living is For Everyone and BTCV green gym;
- Increased use of the site for activities such as Forest School, outdoor learning, volunteering and conservation;
- Reduced anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping; and
- Local GPs prescribing health walks for adults suffering from high blood pressure, obesity, stress, anxiety or mild depression.

“ Just a wee note to say many thanks for the walk ways that have been constructed through the woods in Drumchapel. As a dog walker and keen outdoor person I am really enjoying this, as are many more dog walkers as the trails are now busy. ”

Jamesie Johnston, local resident.



WIAT WORKS

WIAT has helped to reduce the litter and anti-social behaviour in the wood, which has resulted in an increasing number of residents using the woodlands.

The first Forest School in Glasgow was in Drumchapel, and the woodlands are now being used to improve local people's health and well-being, educate local school children and regenerate the area, creating a sense of ownership of local green spaces.

Greenwork Mates – a pilot programme with Glasgow West Regeneration Agency – aimed to provide unemployed people with the necessary skills to allow them to re-enter employment.

There is a desire for a long-term management plan to co-ordinate the long-term improvements to the woodlands, and an increase in education and environmental activities.



ON-GOING COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

- Forest School is an effective way of helping to re-establish the link between children and the outdoors. Through the different practical tasks, it helps develop young people's self esteem and confidence and their ability to work together as a team. Pupils carry out activities like den building, tracking animals, walking the forest and learning how to use forest tools;
- The 'Branching Out' participants use Drumchapel Woods as part of their recovery, improving their mental health and well-being. Participants are referred to the project by mental health services and undertake a range of woodland activities designed to keep them active, boost their self esteem and aid recovery;
- BTCV green gym encourages local people to get active outdoors, through a variety of activities including planting trees and clearing cycle paths of overhanging branches; and
- Drumchapel community events helped to raise the profile of the woods and to introduce new visitors to the greenspace on their doorstep.



TIMELINE

2005

Forestry Commission Scotland first get involved in Drumchapel

2006

GPs back health walks in Drumchapel as part of a new health promotion scheme encouraging adults to become more active.

2007

Drumchapel Woodland Group founded. In its first week, over 500 bin bags full of rubbish were removed.

Greenwork Mates – a ground-breaking project using forestry to help people back into employment – is launched.

2008

WIAT funding secured to improve access points across all three sites. Easy access tarmac entrances installed and work to make the woods more inviting undertaken.

2011

£130,000 of FCS funding secured for recreational infrastructure improvements. All 5 km of paths are upgraded to a long lasting, hard wearing surface fit for multi-user needs.

FCS agrees a 10 year lease of the woodland sites with Glasgow City Council signalling a long term commitment to the restoration and management of the sites.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

These woods are a valuable local community resource, providing opportunities for education, recreation, employment and training as well as providing healthy and thriving habitats for wildlife on the community's doorstep.

In 2011, a 10 year management plan is being developed for the sites. This will look at habitat management, as well as community engagement and recreation management. It is hoped that with the appointment of a new Community Ranger, a more coordinated approach to activities within the woods will be developed, reducing litter even more and seeing more local people using the site.

THE MAINS AIMS ARE TO:

- Create a welcoming and safe environment for all;
- Identify a management steering group who will take the site forward;
- Develop and deliver a new management plan; and
- Increase the number of visitors using the site.

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

