



CASE STUDY

WESTER HAILES

A network of paths and greenspaces leading to increased use and enjoyment.



LOCATION Wester Hailes is in the south west of Edinburgh, surrounded by the communities of Sighthill, Kingsknowe and Longstone.

SITE DESCRIPTION Three key areas - Hailes Quarry Park, Westburn and Clovenstone Park - are all owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council. They vary in size from 1 hectare to 13 hectares and include a variety of broadleaved tree species.





Wester Hailes is within the 15 per cent of most deprived areas in Scotland.* There is an extensive network of parks and greenspaces and, through the work of charities, including the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, communities now regularly use these spaces for learning, health activities or recreation. Friends of Groups are involved in managing these sites.

*Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2009



BEFORE WIAT

In the early 1970s, the area was substantially developed as a residential area. In 1986 Wester Hailes made the lead story on the national news – Edinburgh was the HIV capital of the western world.

During the 1990s and 2000s, extensive redevelopment took place – large numbers of properties were renovated and some high rise blocks were replaced with lower rise housing. However, the woodlands in Wester Hailes suffered fire raising and fly-tipping was a major problem.

Restoration work undertaken during the 1980s established a number of narrow belts of trees, which now combine with more mature residual woodland cover to form a framework for the open spaces within the park. Large scale improvements to the path network within the park were implemented in early 2007.

WIAT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Silvicultural operations including small scale thinning, selective felling and extraction of dangerous trees;
- Improved recreational facilities e.g. new paths, picnic benches and site interpretation;
- Community event programme organised by Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, as well as a wide calendar of social activities, including first time visits, family events, Forest School, Branching Out sessions, environmental workshops; and
- The design and construction of 340m of bike track within the woodland area and setting up Hailes Quarry Park Bike Club.

“We’ve seen gradual but very real changes in the Park over the last few years and it has been important to keep the local communities involved and informed along the way through a continuous engagement programme. This has been possible thanks to a very diverse portfolio of funders, including Forestry Commission Scotland.”

Liz Stewart, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust

WIAT WORKS

There are a number of activities taking place in woodland and green space in Wester Hailes, driven by Friends of Groups, voluntary organisations and the local communities.

Hailes Quarry Park is the main venue for group activities and community engagement events, which include:

- A cycling and health programme to encourage children and adults to use the local cycle network to access schools and to encourage outdoor activities, healthy living and positive use of open spaces. The programme is run with local schools and families to raise awareness of the area as a safe place to cycle, walk, play and explore;
- The youth shelter encourages young people to spend time outdoors in the natural environment. The young people have been involved in choosing the equipment and working on a theme of ‘green parklife’, decorating the shelter using a combination of stencil art and spray paints; and
- Visits for groups of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities to provide an opportunity for social interaction amongst groups and provide access to the natural environment, environmental education activities, and environmental art – improving health and well being.

ON-GOING COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

There is a programme of organised community environmental events in the Park, including:

- Crafts on the Canal;
- Woodland Workouts;
- Wildlife walks; and
- Bushcraft/survival skills.



TIMELINE

2006

Woodland management works took place, installing benches, clearing paths and creating an entrance feature.

2007

11 events were held with schools, reaching over 250 people, delivering environmental education.

A habitat and woodland management plan was created identifying interventions to improve biodiversity.

2008

A teen shelter was installed in Hailes Quarry Park to provide young people with a place of their own.

2009

340m of bike track within the woodland was constructed and an event programme pulled together to promote cycling activities.

Delivery of 17 community engagement events attracting over 900 people.

A programme of visits for Black and Ethnic Minority groups was developed to meet the needs of diverse groups.

2010

Hailes Quarry Park Bike Club set up. Involving 54 children over six sessions, distributing free bikes to participating children.





LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The long term vision is to continue to involve the community around Wester Hailes and raise awareness of the health benefits of taking regular physical activity through the promotion of the access routes.

In 2010, GPs, Community Psychiatric Nurses, support workers and health agency staff began to refer patients to the Good Wood Project. Run by Caledonian Woodland, the project uses environmental conservation to improve mental health, well-being and confidence amongst participants.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS WILL BE:

- Increasing the use and community 'ownership' of the path network;
- Targeted woodland management work to improve the visual appearance of some of the woodland areas and help to make sites more welcoming to the public;
- Identifying further opportunities to increase the biodiversity value through increasing the extent of native woodland cover and through the introduction of native woodland ground flora. There is potential for the creation of wetland habitats; and
- Improvements to the path network and the continuous engagement work of Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust and other voluntary organisations in the area to increase the use of the sites by local people. In addition this will also stimulate the promotion of walking and cycling as modes of local transport.

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

