

**Name:** Cassiltoun Project

**Place:** Castlemilk Park

**Headline:** Castlemilk Park has become a local resource, bringing significant environmental, community and economic benefits to Castlemilk.

**Keywords:** Woodland, Community, Deprived, Anti-Social, Transformation

**Context:** Castlemilk is in the top 5% of the most deprived areas of Scotland. Located within Castlemilk and surrounded by housing is a woodland area with an extensive network of paths. Before this project began, this woodland was virtually unused. The park was poorly maintained, the paths were dangerous and there was a high degree of anti-social behaviour. The project was set up to see if an improvement could be made.

**Original aims:** The Cassiltoun Housing Association set out to improve the park – local people recognised the potential of Castlemilk Park and they wanted to put a project in place in order to try bring this potential to life. The project was initiated to stop a spiral of decline and to transform the park into a well-used community space.

### **What actually happened as a result and what was achieved?**

In 2009 Cassiltoun Housing Association conducted a large-scale feasibility study to get the views of local residents on problems and opportunities. In 2010 an action plan was developed, this in turn led to the employment of a community woodland officer in 2011. The initial focus was on getting the basics right. Flyers and posters were made, volunteer sessions were put in place and the local community were informed that a 'change' was going to happen.

'Big Clean Up' (litter picking/fly-tipping management) sessions took place, tackling anti-social issues and managing the tagging and graffiti problems. When local people saw positive change their attitudes changed and began to use the park.

The project has expanded the range of activities it delivers, including an employability programme. Since May 2012 over 100 volunteers trainees have been involved in the programme and around 30% of these volunteers have gone into further employment as a result.

Many people's attitudes at the outset were negative, for example, that there was 'no point' or it 'won't make a difference'. So far the project has been a success. The woodland is a well-used community space. The park environment has improved and is well maintained. This has been achieved with the support of the employability project, volunteers, groups and the local community. The project has helped to make people's lives a bit better, providing some with life skills, social skills, qualifications, confidence building, and mental and physical health improvements.

The project has transformed the park; it has transformed how the local community think about the park, and has positively changed local aspirations for the area.

The major benefits of this project are in the transformation of a neglected and unused green space into one that is now regularly in regular use. The project has helped people to find employment, learn new skills and gain qualifications. The local community have benefitted from the various events that have been held in Castlemilk Park and these events have also encouraged them use the park.

One unexpected outcome is the additional opportunities arising from the success of the park project. Other community and Local Authority organisations such as learning photogrammetry with the local history group have sought Cassiltoun services.

Another outcome is the support from the local community during the process of transformation and their attitude towards keeping the park well used and maintained for all. The passion exhibited and the care lavished on the park by local people demonstrates their real sense of pride and ownership of this greenspace.

### **What is the evidence for these outcomes?**

Volunteer trainees have moved onto further employment, further education and gained skills and qualifications through the employability programme.

Much of the evidence for these outcomes is anecdotal. Many people have provided positive feedback on events, the improvement in the park and the perceived changes made on people's lives. The park is a well-used and much loved space. Anti-social behaviour, although still an under-lying issue, has declined radically.

Many local people offer much of their time to volunteer within different parts of the project including; the local history group, volunteer sessions to manage and maintain the woodland/park, assisting with community events.

Participants from the weekly evening health walks have provided positive feedback; their physical health has improved, they felt encouraged to do other forms of exercise, their confidence has grown and some have attributed their ability to finally secure work to the self-assurance that being part of the project has given them.

### **What were the factors that contributed to those outcomes?**

Many of the events and activities would not have been possible if the initial spiral of decline had not been broken, the anti-social behaviour addressed and park maintenance issues been addressed.

A commitment to the project from agencies and funders. Weekly evening health walks, Photography walking group, cup of tea in the park sessions, community events, local history group, OPAL surveys, volunteer groups, employability project, school/nursery sessions,

funding provided from various organisations.

**How replicable is this experience; what is its potential as an element of a better approach to forestry?**

This experience is replicable in difficult to reach run down urban areas with the right staff, resources and local community willingness/enthusiasm. It requires adequate resources, strong leadership and local buy in. In the Cassiltoun example, it involved the Castlemilk Housing Association sourcing money to recruit project staff, who in turn have worked closely to enthuse and inform local people and groups. As an approach in run down inner city areas, it requires sensitive and careful engagement with local people, listening to their views and shaping the project to suit local needs and abilities. The final product needs to deliver jobs and skills training.

**Key messages:**

- A main strength is the way the project focuses on inclusion. When there are instances that people with no Internet access to apply for a job, for example, they have been provided with I.T services to give them an opportunity. Another example is the photography group – many people have an interest in photography but do not have the skills or funds to pursue this. The photography group allows people to borrow a camera to use and they are taught new skills.
- All the community events that are held in Castlemilk Park are free; this removes economic barriers to participation.
- Neglected woodland can be transformed into a well-used community space, bringing economic and environmental benefits to deprived areas; thus enhancing and changing people's lives for the better.

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