

What is greenspace?

Greenspace is defined as any vegetated land or water within or adjoining an urban area.

This includes:

- > green corridors – paths, disused railway lines, rivers and canals
- > natural and semi-natural habitats
- > amenity grassland, parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities, playing fields and children's play areas
- > other functional greenspace e.g. cemeteries and allotments
- > countryside immediately adjoining a town which people can access from their homes
- > derelict, vacant and contaminated land which has the potential to be transformed into 'places' for people and nature

A quick guide to Action Research

Action Research is for communities to plan and carry out their own research to:

- > understand the needs of their communities
- > promote action to tackle needs
- > improve the quality of life for everyone in their communities

Action Research skills help build strong community organisations that know about:

- > community needs and the problems that people face
- > the strengths and abilities of the community
- > services and resources available and any gaps
- > what sort of action is needed and how it can be taken

demonstrating the links action research on greenspaces

The Programme provided community groups with mentor support, training and a series of networking events.

Demonstrating the Links has been carried out by **greenspace scotland** and the Scottish Community Development Centre, with funding from Communities Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, and support from NHS Health Scotland.

The project is being independently evaluated by EKOS consultants.

greenspace scotland is hosting webpages for the project. These act as a forum and a vehicle for exchanging research ideas and findings.
www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/actionresearch

For further information about the programme, please contact Eilidh Johnston at **greenspace scotland**:
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demonstrating the links action research on greenspaces



Demonstrating the Links is a two year action research programme in which eight communities across urban Scotland have explored the impact of their own community greenspaces.

The findings show what needs to be prioritised and developed to enable more communities across Scotland to deliver national priorities on a local scale.

To find out more:

www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/actionresearch

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Demonstrating the Links is a two-year programme of community-led action research. Working with eight community groups, it has supported the design and delivery of local research projects that investigated the impacts of greenspaces on community quality of life.

The programme shows the contribution of greenspace to health and wellbeing; safer and stronger communities; community regeneration and capacity building; connecting communities with biodiversity and climate change issues.

Unlike many research programmes where communities are the subject of research and the research is in effect 'done to them', this project provided community groups with a mentor who worked with them to support the design and delivery of their research projects.

The participating groups are now beginning to use their research findings to maximise the benefits which greenspace brings to the areas where they live and work.



Eight community groups have participated in this action research programme:

1. **Ardler Village Trust, DUNDEE**

Ardler's project offers an effective community-led approach to assessing greenspace quality and aspirations across a whole neighbourhood.

2. **Abbotshaugh Community Woodland, FALKIRK**

The Abbotshaugh project is a community-led environmental improvement project; the research project carried out by the group is an example of a consultation approach to inform future development of greenspace.

3. **Balornock Urban Garden Scheme (BUGS), GLASGOW**

The BUGS project is an example of an innovative allotment project which gives over 300 primary school children the opportunity to plant, grow and eat their own organic food.

4. **Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park, EDINBURGH**

The Burdiehouse research project is an example of a flexible community consultation approach which can inform the management of greenspace so that it meets the needs of all users.

5. **Dunain Community Woodlands Trust, INVERNESS**

The Dunain project aims to take over an area of woodland near Inverness and develop it for community use. The research is an example of a varied consultation to plan and raise awareness of a greenspace project.

6. **Bridgend Community Allotments, EDINBURGH**

This allotment project provides opportunities for people to improve their health through a mixture of physical activity, healthy diet and social interaction. The research project is an example of an effective data collection and evaluation system.

7. **GOW Sustainable Backcourts Initiative, GLASGOW**

GOW's research approach provides an example of the importance of successful community engagement within a shared urban space with a broad mix of owners and tenants to maximise local regeneration and community development.

8. **Healthy Roots, ABERDEEN**

Healthy Roots combines areas for wildlife, play and horticulture on former derelict land. The group has not had the capacity to complete their research project within the programme's timescale but plan to publish a report during 2008.

Research findings

The community groups now have a greater understanding of the research process and the resources and level of commitment required to undertake such projects. There is interest, willingness and confidence to conduct further research. Overall, the projects have shown that:

- › greenspace can contribute to healthier, happier places where people want to live and work
- › greenspace contributes to the creation of a greener Scotland, provides wide range of health benefits and contributes to the creation of safer, stronger communities through local empowerment
- › greenspace adds value, generating multiple outcomes for relatively small investments
- › communities can help to make national policy connections at a local level

The participating community groups can now plan future activities based on a sound understanding of how their greenspace is perceived by the community – and they know how to develop their greenspace as a community asset that contributes to quality of life.

Research outcomes

Early evaluation of the programme shows that it has:

- › built a wide range of research and project planning skills within communities
- › developed confidence and a sense of 'ownership' and some control over local decision making
- › generated a wider community dialogue across national policy priorities such as safety, health, play, biodiversity, community assets, education and regeneration
- › encouraged community cohesion, through events, consultation and engagement

Participating community groups are keen to encourage and enable more communities to understand the potential benefits of their greenspaces and ways in which local partnerships can be fostered and resources secured.

Project Findings

There is a separate **briefing note** for each project, which describes the research processes and key findings in more detail - see weblink on back page.

Research partner statements

greenspace scotland

"Quality greenspaces are those that meet local needs and we are committed to working in partnership to engage and empower people to make their own decisions about what happens in their neighbourhoods. This research programme has helped each community to recognise the benefits of greenspace for people and place while providing the national partners with a wealth of evidence on what communities need to develop and manage their greenspace."

Julie Procter, Chief Officer, greenspace scotland

Scottish Natural Heritage

"For many years SNH has been a keen advocate of greenspace in our towns and cities. Greenspace is an essential part of urban infrastructure. Lack of quality greenspace contributes to deprivation. Demonstrating the Links has shown varying methods of engagement with communities and different ways to support local action. It means that communities can now plan all sorts of future activities based on a sound understanding of how their greenspace is perceived by the community. Greenspaces are shared places and making decisions about them empowers communities to work together for the benefit of whole neighbourhoods. These projects have shown how important a strong community is in creating sustainable places."

Roddy Fairley, Director, Scottish Natural Heritage

NHS Health Scotland

"The research programme has enabled communities to explore how their local greenspace contributes to their own health and wellbeing. The projects have shown that engaging people in assessing and developing their greenspace provides the common ground for people to begin to take control of their whole environment, to get physically active and to feel better about where they live and to share ideas and experiences with others."

Sheila Beck, Public Health Adviser, NHS Health Scotland

Communities Scotland

"Communities Scotland is pleased to support to the Demonstrating the Links initiative. It has been successful in showing how important it is to take the community with you - to ask, to listen and to act on what you hear. Greenspaces are popular with local people, particularly when they have been involved in planning them and then putting them in place. Demonstrating the Links shows that engaging with the wider community makes for better more sustainable local greenspaces."

Shona Stephen, Director - Community Regeneration, Communities Scotland

Scottish Community Development Centre

"We have gained a great deal from the opportunity to work with the local projects in the way we have, and have learned a lot about the importance of greenspace to communities, the fragile state of much community activity in this area, and the messages that we hope government will hear about why and how to support and sustain community endeavour. We thank all those who worked with us on the project. We welcome the inclusion, in the Concordat between CoSLA and the Scottish Government, of the national outcomes that 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations' and 'We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.' Projects such as Demonstrating the Links demonstrate how these outcomes may be achieved, with the full participation of communities."

Stuart Hashagen, Co-director, Scottish Community Development Centre