

Case Study 7

Raploch : Green & Growing



The Green and Growing project aims to revitalise redundant and neglected greenspaces in Raploch by turning them into community growing spaces. It also aims to give local people the support, skills and confidence that they need to grow their own food.

Context

Raploch is located in the heart of Central Scotland, and while neighbouring areas have witnessed significant increases in economic activity and prosperity in recent decades, Raploch has been unable to share in this prosperity.

As a result the area has become an increasingly excluded community, characterised by high unemployment rates, poor health, poor quality housing, low educational achievement and a lack of choice and opportunity.

However, many local people have a long association with the area; and have developed a strong sense of identity and through engagement with the Raploch Community Partnership (RCP) and other agencies which seek to improve the local area.

A key element of this regeneration activity is considered to be communal growing of fruit and vegetables on under-used land,

“This project gives local people an excellent opportunity and support to grow their own food. It makes good use of an otherwise derelict piece of land and provides opportunities for social development.”

Councillor John Hendry

with the recognition that such projects have the potential to improve the social, environmental and economic fabric of the area.

Project Background

The project was inspired community workers observing the poor nutritional habits of local residents who were seen to favour fast food before fresh fruit and veg. It is understood that has contributed to local health problems such as a high incidence of heart disease and obesity rates.

Key Points

- In one of the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland, the project has successfully given new life to a brownfield site, turning it into a vibrant area for community growing.
- 20 growing spaces have been created in the garden and 8 days training have been carried out in the community to teach people how to grow and maintain the garden.
- Issues have been overcome through supporting the creation of a wide cross-cutting partnership network.
- The project has developed a template which can be carried forward on other vacant and derelict land or stalled spaces sites throughout Raploch and beyond.

The growing project itself is located in Kildean, a brownfield site considered by locals to be a 'wasteland' and an 'eyesore'. It was previously the site of a special school. RCP approached the landowners, Raploch Urban Regeneration Company (RURC), with a view to setting up a community growing scheme in 2010 and the owner was keen to see the site brought into use for the benefit of the local community.

Site groundworks were undertaken early 2012 with diggers to removing turf, shrubs and rubbish. Like much of Raploch, the site sits on a thick band of carse clay which is difficult to work and grow vegetables successfully in. Because of this, and some suspected soil contamination issues, it was considered appropriate to set up large scale raised beds on the site. This also had the benefit of avoiding certain planning restrictions and makes the installation relatively easy to relocate if the land is required for another purpose.

What it Does

The local community turned out in force to help set up the project, with many participating in work days and several have benefited from eight training sessions held on the site. These sessions instructed gardening novices how to grow fruit and veg. As the project continues, it is envisaged that those trained will be able to pass on their knowledge to their peers. Demand for the raised beds is high and the scheme is considerably oversubscribed.

As the project was a pilot, developed in to see what could be achieved, a lot has been learned in a short space of time. Solutions to issues

encountered have often been solved through bringing in wider partners. For example, lack of water on the site for the opening day was resolved with assistance from the local fire service who were happy to ensure the raised beds were well watered. More sustainable solutions to water issues are also being sought using unwanted containers from a major soft drinks manufacturer and the harvesting of rainwater on-site.



CSGN Support and Learning

The CSGN Development Fund contributed directly towards the development of this innovative Community Garden. As a pilot project the growing area has been a success, not only because it has delivered a new vibrant greenspace in a disadvantaged community, but also because a great deal of learning has been gained by local residents and the organisations engaged in the project. This learning is transferable to other Raploch projects and beyond.

Several issues had to be overcome for this project to progress from an idea into a



reality. For example, short term contracts of key members of staff and a high turn-over of volunteers have hampered its development, the current economic climate has reduced the capacity of some of the partners to fully support the project to the degree that might have been hoped and at times the project leaders have been frustrated by the 'red tape' within organisations and funders.

The sustainable solution to these issues appears to lie in developing wider partnerships. In this respect, the Kildean project has been able to reach and engage with a rich variety of community groups, regional agencies, businesses and local regeneration initiatives. The reason for its success appears to be that community growing projects of this nature have the power to pull a diverse range of unlinked organisations together because they has the potential to deliver a multitude of shared outcomes.

Future

The creation of the Kildean Community Garden is seen as only the starting point of a suite of projects which will have a sustained and lasting legacy. Immediate ambitions for are to develop ties with two other local growing initiatives in Oakbank and Elmbank. There are also plans to link up with other community groups such as the Ochil Community Centre in order to distribute surplus produce to the local community through a healthy foods café. Moving on from this, the project has identified a need to generate local skills as important. In response, there is an ambition to create a full-time gardener post and part-time chef to show people how to grow and cook tasty, nutritious food.

The project hopes to continue to build its partnership network. For example, it is keen to work with young people through the 'Youth Under Focus - First' and 'Street Sport' schemes as well as the local schools and nurseries. It also has ambitions to strengthen ties with the business community and regeneration agencies working in the area.



Outcomes

Better Health: Local people have opportunity to have healthier and more active lives; eating food that they have grown and talking more exercise in the outdoors.

Reduce Carbon Footprint: Food miles and reliance on food transported into the Raploch area are reduced.

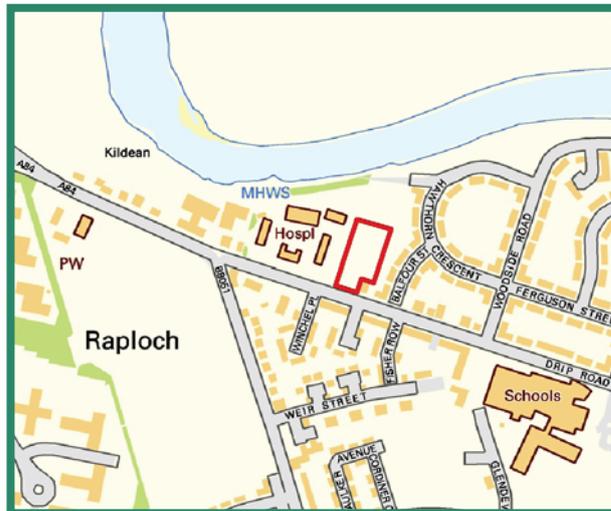
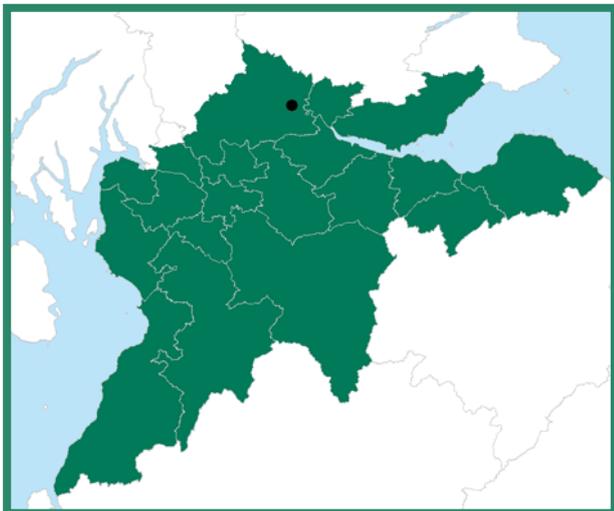
Greenspace Created: The project has created new greenspace which can be accessed and enjoyed by the local community.

Regenerate Raploch: The project has added value to the local regeneration process by developing new working partnerships with a rich variety of different organisations and groups.

Improve Biodiversity: Local biodiversity has been improved by a green transformation of a stalled space.

Location

The Maps below will show Raploch situated within the Local Authority of Stirling and the Kildean Community Growing Garden.



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Project Partners

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Raploch Urban Regeneration Company
Youth Under Focus – First

What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is a national development within the National Planning Framework which aims to make 'a significant contribution to Scotland's sustainable economic development'. It involves public agencies and stakeholders (those with an interest in our work) working together to align their policies, programmes and actions to achieve a common aim. That aim is to change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.

Getting in Touch

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For further information on other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org