

# your *green.* business opportunity

## Case Study **06** Ecosse Regeneration Ltd: Heartlands

Heartlands is a new £650m residential, retail, business and sporting destination being developed by Ecosse Regeneration Ltd. This is one of the largest regeneration projects in Europe and is being achieved using cost cutting sustainable practices which are good for the environment and the local community.



*Bringing change to life*

## Business Benefits

- The creation of a viable growing medium from waste material has saved money.
- Creating an attractive environment accelerates the sale or lease of land.
- The successful redevelopment proves the capabilities of the company to future investors.

## Wider Benefits

- Vacant and derelict land regenerated and the environment enriched for local people.
- Local economy has been boosted by an increase in employment during the construction phase.
- Biodiversity improvements: a local river cleaned, new woodland and wetland habitats created.

## Awards

RTPI Planning Awards 2011, Local Regeneration and Renewal Category, Commendation.

Institute of Groundsmanship Awards 2009, Finalists.

Scottish Waste & Resources Awards 2008, Best Partnership Initiative.

## Context

Heartlands is a 610ha development on the former Polkemmet Colliery site on the outskirts of Whitburn, West Lothian. Coal mining started here in 1922 and flourished during the 1940s and 1950s. In 1958, around 4,000 tonnes of coal were being extracted daily.

Following the closure of the mine in 1986 and the subsequent demolition of the pit buildings, the area quickly became derelict. More than 4 million M<sup>3</sup> of colliery spoil - heaped up into numerous 'bings' created a barren lunar type landscape. Over the years, the land was devalued further as it was used as a dumping ground for burnt out cars, litter and waste.

In the late 1990s, Terry Walker, (now the Managing Director of Ecosse Regeneration Ltd) started to form a plan to regenerate the area. However, it was clear that to clear, decontaminate and re-generate the land a massive project would be required that would take years to undertake, be incredibly costly, and technically challenging.

West Lothian Council was supportive of the plans to regenerate Polkemmet and, once the project's funding partner, Royal Bank of Scotland, was secured, Ecosse Regeneration Ltd was formed to deliver the Heartlands project.

## The Works

The first stage in reclaiming and redeveloping the site was the removal of the remaining coal by open-cast mining. This commenced in 2004 with 6 coal seams being worked. The huge holes left from the mining were then backfilled with the bing material on-site and compacted to enable future development of these areas. This process included the removal of Bing 3 - the notorious 'Burning Bing', which for years had cast a sulphurous smell across the locality. In 2008, the bing was finally levelled following years of work including the removal of nearly 2.5 million m<sup>3</sup> of spoil.

*"The extensive remediation that has been undertaken on site at the Heartlands Development has made a huge difference to the environment. The opportunity to open this former mining area in West Lothian to housing and business developments shows what can happen with vision and determination."*

**Fiona Hyslop, MSP for Linlithgow.**





Although the project will take another 15 years to complete much of the physical rebuilding of the site has now taken place.

Core to the development are natural looking ponds and wetland areas which have been created around two new golf courses. Covering an area of approximately 30ha, the courses have been designed in such a way that they blend seamlessly into the natural surroundings of Polkemmet Moor and beyond.

After decades of absence, a local stream once again flows through the site, harnessing innovative “socks” to form the banks. These water features create new habitats and improve biodiversity. Semi-mature trees have also been planted on the Business Park for colour and structure.

**To date, Ecosse Regeneration Ltd has invested over £112 million on the remediation and redevelopment of Heartlands. Why?**

## Better Environment Leads to Sales

Ecosse Ltd recognises that the provision of a quality environment is an effective marketing tool. It not only attracts housing developers and businesses to locate in the area, it also encourages people to visit to take advantage of the greenspace and associated leisure

facilities. Research has shown that such spaces are more attractive to buyers and investors and that people are willing to pay more to live in higher quality environments.

## The Profit in Recycling

In possibly the first project of its kind in the World, the two golf courses are being built with an innovative method that combines screened colliery waste with locally produced compost. As a result, Ecosse Regeneration has avoided the traditional method of importing 250,000 tonnes of new topsoil and slashing the cost of regenerating the land.

Furthermore, this material drains exceptionally well and has proven to be an excellent growing medium for the golf courses. It has also enabled a wide variety of other vegetation to be grown on the site including red alder which is being cultivated as a bio fuel.

## Enhanced Reputation for the Company

The site is widely known as one of Scotland’s biggest contaminated sites, infamous for the ‘Burning Bing’ and associated noxious fumes. The sustainable approach to remediating this huge project raises the profile and reputation of Ecosse Regeneration Ltd. Successfully redeveloping the area proves the capabilities of Ecosse Regeneration Ltd to investors and supports bids for other projects, such as the Almondhall Canal basin project on the Union Canal near Falkirk.

## Social and Economic Benefits

The ambition is that Heartlands can help to drive forward the economy of Scotland’s central belt. The local economy has already been boosted by an increase in jobs during the construction phase. However, further employment opportunities for up to 4,000 people will be created once new businesses are established on the site.

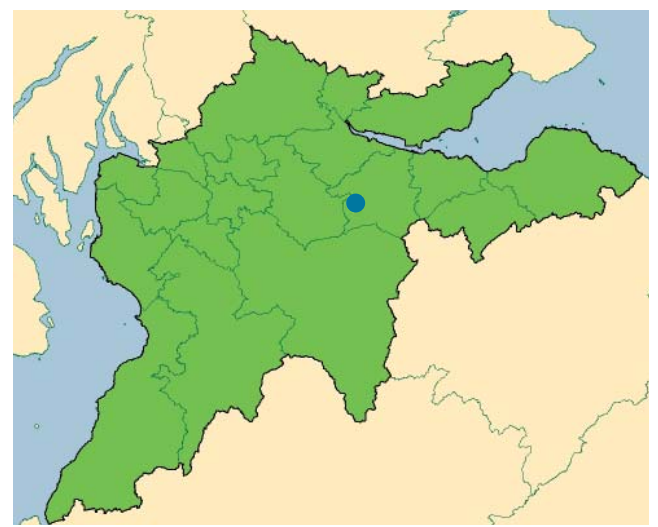
The housing designs for the area mean that people will have the opportunity to live near to where they work, or go to school and shop. It is anticipated that this close proximity and the creation of sustainable transport links through a high quality greenspace will help to support a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community.



## Costs and Value

- The company saved around £4.5 million in the creation of the two golf courses by recycling on-site bing material into an ideal growing medium.
- This also ensured that 250,000 tonnes of top soil would not be required to be sourced, purchased and transported.
- It also saved the Central Belt's road network from around 60,000 lorry journeys, with associated negative impacts as regards CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, noise pollution and congestion.

## The map shows Heartlands in relation to the CSGN area



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***The CSGN will change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.***

## What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is one of the 14 national developments in the National Planning Framework 2. It is the biggest greenspace project in Europe and will help to make Central Scotland a more attractive and distinctive place to live, to visit and to do business. The CSGN has wide political and partner support and an all encompassing remit, far beyond just a 'green' initiative, with economic development central on the agenda.

## What are these Case Studies for?

These case studies demonstrate that green network and green infrastructure approaches can save money and create better solutions for businesses. They are intended to inspire other businesses to take similar approaches and to inform interested parties, such as planning authorities, in order to encourage a supportive environment for such initiatives.

## Getting in Touch

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For further information on the CSGN and other case studies please visit: [www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org](http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org)

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