



Central Scotland Green Network



Chatelherault Country Park

An extensive programme of access and woodland improvement work.

A key component of a regeneration project aiming to open up the path network to communities and visitors for recreation and relaxation

The Chatelherault Country Park project is helping to deliver the CSGN by:

- upgrading and improving 10kms of path network throughout the country park and opening up the park to a broader spectrum of users
- improving links to historic features and surrounding communities
- conserving and improving native woodland habitat and condition of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by removing invasive rhododendron
- enhancing the visitor experience thus encouraging more visitors to the area and aiding the economy.



Launch of the new Make Your Way Chatelherault project with Christina McKelvie MSP



Chatelherault Country Park

Chatelherault Visitor Centre and Country Park is South Lanarkshire Council's five star, flagship visitor attraction at Ferniegair near Hamilton. It lies between the towns of Hamilton and Larkhall, just a short distance from the M74.

The 5th Duke of Hamilton's 18th-century hunting lodge, designed by William Adam's, now serves as a visitor centre, cafe and venue for events visited by approximately 250,000 people each year.

Chatelherault Country Park, which encompasses part of the Duke of Hamilton's former estate, is centred on the spectacular gorge of the Avon Water and includes 500 acres of countryside and woodland, and over ten miles of pathways.

Heritage features in the park include the 15th-century Cadzow Castle, Iron Age earthworks, the ancient oak trees of 12th-century Cadzow Forest and structures associated with 18th and early 19th-century drift mining for coal.

After World War II the then owners of the park, Hamilton and Kinneil Estates, cleared over half of the native woodland and replanted with commercial conifer plantations. These had grown up to obscure much of the historic landscape and views and were significantly reducing the biodiversity value of the park.

In 2015, South Lanarkshire Council began a major regeneration project to progressively fell the conifers along the Avon Gorge and allow the cleared areas to regenerate back to native woodland. More than 30 hectares of conifers have been cleared to date, restoring views that have not been seen for half a century.

The country park has a 17km path network with three river crossings and is a wonderful recreational resource for local communities and the population of central Scotland. It is used by individuals and walking, running and cycling groups and attracts over 500,000 visitors per year.

However, the path network had degraded over the years and landslips had led to the closure of the White Bridge, a popular circular route and historic crossing point half way along the Avon Gorge.

Upgrading and improving the park's access infrastructure was a key component of the regeneration project with the aim of opening up the path network to as broad a spectrum of people as possible for recreation and relaxation.

Further resources (online links):

- [Community Action Lanarkshire virtual museum](#)
- [Path upgrades at Chatelherault Country Park](#)
- [Chatelherault trails to the past](#)
- [A 'Jewel in the Landscape' and former hunting lodge](#)
- [Shaping the Landscape: Chatelherault and the Avon Gorge](#)
- [Make Your Way to Chatelherault](#)

Connecting communities with the park, its heritage and nature, and attracting more visitors to the area to boost the local economy



Chatelherault Country Park

Green Action Trust (formerly CSGNT) worked with the council, funders and stakeholders to develop a £350,000 programme of path and woodland improvement works and secure funding to undertake the work.

The trust commissioned and managed a contractor on behalf of the council to completely reconstruct and rejuvenate the park's path infrastructure. Work included repairing and resurfacing extensive sections of the existing path network including installing new drains, culverts and gabions where the river had eroded sections of path; creating new sections of path to historic monuments and viewpoints; removing and replacing steep and degraded flights of steps with a combination of steps and slopes to open the path network to a broader spectrum of users; installing new benches and interpretation throughout the park.

Woodland improvement work included felling dangerous trees adjacent to paths and the removal of invasive rhododendron within the Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated woodlands.

There are three bridges within the park and these are critical to crossing the Avon Water and maintaining access to circular walking routes. One of these, the White Bridge, has been closed for many years after a landslide destroyed the access path to the 18th-century crossing point. The closure of this route has had an impact on the number of people using the wider path network as it requires people to make a three mile diversion to the Green Bridge, the only other crossing point further downstream.

This path has now been restored by constructing a boardwalk over the landslide. The other access route to the bridge has also been majorly renovated with the steep and treacherous brick path replaced by a meandering path with a much gentler gradient.

The path improvements also complimented the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership's Make your Way Project, linking communities of Hamilton, Larkhall and Quarter with Chatelherault Country Park. View the trails here.

A significant amount of work has also been undertaken to date to conserve the White Bridge and develop plans to repair and restore this historic crossing. A series of structural and engineering surveys have highlighted that the White Bridge has severe structural issues and detailed plans have been developed to repair the bridge's historic piers and abutments and replace the wooden pedestrian bridge with a broader wooden structure suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.

Work has also been undertaken to prevent further deterioration of the historic structure. Vegetation has been removed from the stone piers, the old bridge has been removed and the site secured on the grounds of health and safety and a haul road has been constructed to provide access for the machinery and material required to construct the new bridge.

South Lanarkshire Council and the Green Action Trust continue to work together to secure funding and the necessary licences and permissions required to restore this historic crossing and vital circular link in the local access network.



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