

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment and Infrastructure Committee

28 October 2020

COMMUNITY GREENSPACE – WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES – DELIVERING THE PERTH & KINROSS OFFER

Report by Head of Environmental and Consumer Services (Report No. 20/202)

This report provides an update on the previous Community Greenspace 'Working with Communities' report to the Environment & Infrastructure Committee on 5 September 2018. It is an exemplar of the Council's commitment to deliver the Perth & Kinross Offer by engaging, equipping and empowering local communities to make the best of their public greenspaces.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The 1,600 public parks and open spaces managed by Perth and Kinross Council contribute significantly to the quality of life and well-being of residents throughout the area. They provide the opportunity for everyone to enjoy healthier lifestyles, are a barometer of the quality and character of an area and should be a source of civic pride.
- 1.2 Community partnership working is at the core of the ethos behind the Perth & Kinross Offer. It is also essential in ensuring greenspaces are fit for the purposes people want to use them. Communities feel a joint sense of ownership and benefit from them and this applies whether they are larger parks of 'regional' significance, such as MacRosty Park in Crieff and the North and South Inches in Perth, or smaller local amenity areas, green path corridors and play areas.
- 1.3 Partnership working opportunities drive the work undertaken by the Community Greenspace team and is actively sought whether it is for the improvement, maintenance or use of greenspaces. This is achieved as 'part of the day job' through:
 - 48 'Bloom' environmental groups participating in the Take A Pride In Perth and Kinross Campaign
 - 17 Paths Groups
 - 19 "Friends of Greenspaces groups"
 - 8 community allotment associations, and
 - local sports clubs.

- 1.4 The Bloom groups are the longest and largest of these partnerships with over 450 committee members and hundreds of volunteers in virtually every settlement in Perth & Kinross. Annually, they deliver over 20,000 hours of voluntary work to make our towns and villages places to be proud of. It continues to be a cross generational social activity too, which is positive for the physical and mental health and well-being of the individuals and communities involved.
- 1.5 In 2019, Beautiful Perth, in partnership with the Council, secured the very prestigious 'Champion of Champions' crown for Perth in the national Royal Horticultural Society Britain in Bloom awards, making the city the best in the UK. The coveted Parks and Greenspaces Award for the Riverside Park Heather Collection in Perth was also secured, and Bridge of Earn, first time entrants, were awarded Best Large Village in the UK, with a special award for their amazing work with young people. This is a true exemplar of the Perth and Kinross Offer where the community and Council work in partnership to achieve joint excellence. The strength of the Perth submission to the competition showed the breadth of work with our volunteers and council teams, not only with Greenspace but importantly with Operations, Waste, Street Lighting, Parking Services, Flooding and Community Payback all having their part to play in Perth's success.
- 1.6 This is an excellent example of a range of Council services working collaboratively with the community to achieve a common goal and sharing the success together.
- 1.7 Community Greenspace have also been proactive for a number of years in providing opportunities for people with special needs to get opportunities to benefit from social and restorative outdoor activities. People with physical and mental health challenges are involved in regular supervised work in a number of our parks and open spaces, which is rewarding for them and helps with the up keep of these areas.
- 1.8 In the last 2 years, the following has been achieved:
- **Perth Lade** – the site management plan was approved at the 22 January 2020 E&I Committee (Report No. 20/08 refers) and provides a comprehensive and ambitious upgrade plan based around what communities told us they wanted. Delivery will be completely dependent on partnership working.
 - **Crieff to Comrie Off Road Path** – working closely with the Crieff Community Trust, detailed designs and landowner agreements have been progressed and external grant funding is being actively sought to realise this project on the ground. To date £68,000 of external funding has been secured for this project.

- **St Fillans Community Trust** themed play area project was completed and officially opened in June 2019. The community successfully fundraised for this project through LEADER and PKC Community Environment Challenge Fund, together with a contribution from Community Greenspace.
- **Management Plans** for Kinnoull Hill, Perth, The Knock, Crieff and Birks of Aberfeldy have been developed, working closely with local community groups and are close to being finalised before being adopted. Partnership working has been key and The Knock and Kinnoull Hill project have both secured £98,000 each of external funding to help deliver these plans.
- **MacRosty Park** all ability play area project designed by Community Greenspace and funded by Friends of MacRosty Park was completed Easter 2019.
- **Path Group Development** continues to thrive with the volunteer path group network continuing to grow. In February 2020, 50 delegates shared experiences and best practice at the Path Group Networking day hosted and organised by Community Greenspace.
- **Take A Pride in Perth and Kinross Association** has continued to deliver projects in close partnership with the Council – ranging from community gardens, to public art and an historic fountain restoration.
- **Community involvement to celebrate Solheim Cup** in 2019. We worked closely with our communities to encourage them to give a warm welcome to visitors to this large sporting event. The Solheim Community Fund encouraged communities to apply for funding for Solheim Cup related projects and to create a lasting legacy for their community – 17 such projects were delivered.
- **Appendix 1** incorporates a number of case studies to demonstrate the breadth of ways in which Community Greenspace work in partnership with our communities to jointly maintain and improve our open spaces.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Although COVID-19 put unprecedented restrictions on society as a whole, it demonstrated that the popularity and need for well managed greenspaces has never been more important. The footfall in greenspaces has seen a significant increase and their value for physical and mental well-being has never been greater. Communities have also demonstrated a massive enthusiasm for volunteering during the pandemic and opportunities to sustain this going forward, are a key part of realising the Perth & Kinross Offer. All current greenspace groups have had to restrict their activities during lockdown. They have been very keen to keep going even with limited site activities, within government guidelines, and preparations for initiatives and projects will develop as restrictions ease. The Bloom competitions were suspended nationally this year and the impact on the appearance of settlements has been significant, but the enthusiasm is undimmed and preparations are underway to make up for lost time in 2021. The following community partnership projects and initiatives will be included in this:

- Accessible play parks – we will continue to work with communities to maximise the availability of play parks suitable for all abilities. New accessible equipment will be installed at North Inch Play area in Spring 2021 as a joint project with local community group Maisie Moo. Installation of this was delayed due to pandemic.
- Premier Park enhancement and upgrade – we have been working closely with the Auchterarder Community Sports Association to develop major improvements to the public park and final designs are being progressed.
- Friends of Cemeteries – Community Greenspace is working to develop a network of volunteers building on our experience with a large number of greenspace volunteers through the bloom and paths groups networks. A number of community groups already have a keen interest in their local graveyards. We will work with them to develop this and support them with advice, training, tools and insurance.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Partnership working between communities, the third sector and the Council has never been stronger. Building on this, as part of the Perth & Kinross Offer, will be essential. The strong foundations of the greenspace groups already active in Perth and Kinross are a great asset for the area on which to build upon.

- 3.2 The Community Greenspace service is well placed to continue and develop the models of partnership working to deliver the Perth & Kinross Offer. Community confidence thrives through having attractive, accessible and safe environments that residents, visitors and business can enjoy and be proud of. A blend of the Council's municipal grounds maintenance, enhanced and improved through partnership to meet community priorities, is a tested recipe for success. This is reflected in social well-being, healthier lifestyles and strong, vibrant communities with a positive relationship with the Council.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Committee:
- i. notes the progress made in the last 18 months
 - ii. endorses the continuation and development of the successful greenspace partnership models to deliver the Perth & Kinross Offer.

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Approved

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan

1.1 The proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/ Corporate Plan in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. It focuses on cost avoidance by being aimed at small community greenspace sites to reduce maintenance operations and create capacity for future site adoptions.

Workforce

2.2 There are no workforce implications arising directly from this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 The proposals have been assessed in terms of the requirements to manage the Council's Greenspace assets in a sustainable long term way. This will allow the areas of more importance to communities and the overall environmental quality of Perth and Kinross to be maintained to the best possible standard.
- 2.4 There are reputational risks to the Council of reducing maintenance in areas of public open space for which the Council has responsibility. The approach in this report will allow officers to continue to communicate with communities to ensure grounds maintenance resources are prioritised to areas of greatest community benefit.

3. Assessments

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

(i) Assessed as not relevant.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.3 This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.4 Through this approach the creation of small scale community gardens, allotments, orchards etc. will be considered in order to reduce the Grounds Maintenance asset stock in order to reduce maintenance operations and create capacity for future site adoptions.
- 3.5 This will include engaging, equipping and empowering local communities to participate in activities such as paths work and grounds maintenance.

Legal and Governance

- 3.6 Strong governance arrangements for partnership working have been developed over many years and continue to adapt to respond to community needs and aspirations where required.

Risk

3.7 Please see key risks below:

Risk Description	Impact Scale (1 to 5)	Likelihood Scale (1 to 5)	Action Plan to Mitigate Risk
Risk of Council reputation in reduction of grounds maintenance operations	2	4	<p>Establish & maintain open dialogue with communities, user groups and media throughout the process to ensure that the reasons for the project are explained and understood.</p> <p>Ensure a fair distribution of projects across communities.</p>
Risk of inequality of provision within and between communities	2	2	<p>Work with local elected members and communities to ensure a fair distribution of projects across communities.</p> <p>Unplanned reduction in resource should be avoided as there is a risk of increasing inequality.</p>
Risk that communities are not engaged, equipped or empowered locally to participate in activities such as paths work and grounds maintenance.	1	2	<p>Provision of adequate staff time to engage with communities.</p> <p>This will allow officers to continue to communicate effectively with communities to ensure grounds maintenance resources are prioritised to areas of greatest community benefit.</p> <p>This will build on the strong network of Bloom Groups and other community groups, many of whom have accessed the Community Environment challenge fund and other external funding sources to manage, enhance and maintain public open spaces.</p>

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

- 4.2 This report reflects on the high levels of community engagement and partnership working being fully embedded in the core business of the Community Greenspace Team and partner bodies and advocates for the continuation and development of this approach.

5. Communication

- 5.1 In the course of our on going work encouraging and supporting our communities to have pride of place in their local greenspaces we will keep stakeholders informed of maintenance activities on their greenspaces.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 Report to Environment Committee entitled Community Greenspace Working with Communities on 11 January 2017 (Report No 17/3).
- 2.2 Report to Environment & Infrastructure Committee entitled Community Greenspace Working with Communities on 5 September 2018 (Report No 18/268).

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – new case studies