

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL****Environment Committee****11 January 2017****Community Greenspace – Working with Communities****Report by Director (Environment)**

This report provides an update on how Community Greenspace is working with our communities to manage and maintain parks and open spaces. It assesses the impacts of the changes on our grounds maintenance operations and standards, along with how these initiatives will be further developed in future years.

**1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 Public parks and open spaces managed by Perth and Kinross Council add to the quality of life of residents in the area and enhance the visitor experience. They are a key indicator of the quality and character of an area or community and directly contribute to a sense of civic pride and wellbeing. They provide an opportunity for a wide range of free to use, healthy outdoor activities for all. The Council maintains approximately 1,600 sites which differ greatly in size, character and the facilities they offer. They range from parks of regional significance such as MacRosty Park in Crieff and the North Inch in Perth to war memorials, burial grounds and small local greenspaces.
- 1.2 The Environment Committee agreed that our focus would be directing our resources to maintaining our high priority parks and open space sites (Report No. 13/270 refers). This report provides an update on how Community Greenspace has worked with our communities to prioritise grounds maintenance operations and maintain standards.
- 1.3 With reduced council resources, it is essential that we work in partnership with our communities to maintain, improve and promote our public greenspace for all to enjoy. Community Greenspace are very well placed to do that, given the track record in environmental improvements, partnership working with our communities and of maintenance of greenspaces.
- 1.4 A joint approach with our communities ensures we can jointly keep and improve civic pride of place, through socially inclusive environmental improvements.

- 1.5 In terms of service delivery, this partnership working and encouragement of the volunteers makes a real difference. This approach has created a sense of local ownership of greenspaces which, in turn, has made the community more cohesive, lessening the burden on the Council. This volunteer workforce often has skills found beyond those in greenspace that can be harnessed for community benefit. Together, this ensures that our greenspaces are looking the best they possibly can. Community Greenspace has been working with a large number of community groups and organisations on a wide range of sites across Perth and Kinross and some examples are shown below:

### **Take a Pride in Perthshire Association**

- 1.6 The Take A Pride In Perthshire Campaign seeks to empower communities to work together to achieve horticultural and environmental improvements.
- 1.7 A total of 46 groups in Perth and Kinross are members of the Take A Pride In Perthshire Campaign covering communities across Perth and Kinross. This is a unique body which brings together many communities in the area and unites them behind a single, common purpose: to make towns and villages better and more attractive places to live in and to visit. This creates a very strong sense of civic pride and identity in these communities. It encourages social interaction, healthy activities and innovation amongst those involved, which is immensely beneficial to the health, vibrancy and wellbeing of the settlement.
- 1.8 This effort is sustained by 450 committee members, 100s of volunteers and 20,250 hours of voluntary effort carried out on an annual basis. A study carried out in 2010 calculated that the voluntary effort of “in-kind support” and external funding was £1.13 million annually. This has resulted in many of the communities achieving outstanding success in national and international environmental improvement campaigns including Beautiful Scotland and Britain in Bloom.

### **Coupar Angus Pride of Place**

- 1.9 A specific example of this work is Coupar Angus Pride of Place. In 2006, Coupar Angus formed their own group – Pride of Place (PoP). Since then, the community have worked tirelessly to ensure the town is an excellent environment in which to live, work and visit through horticultural excellence, environmental responsibility, community participation and community cohesion.
- 1.10 Their efforts are strengthened and supported by the very successful partnership working approach between the community, officers in Community Greenspace and Grounds Maintenance operatives. As a community, they have come a long way and this is proven through their steady progression of success, firstly through the Take a Pride in Perthshire Awards, then major successes in their first time entry to the Beautiful Scotland national awards in 2012 (Silver Gilt medal, Best New Entrant and Best Community (Large Village)).

- 1.11 Outstanding successes followed in 2013 as first time Britain in Bloom entrants, winning a Gold Medal Best Large Village in the UK. In 2014, Beautiful Scotland rewarded their partnership working approach with another Gold Medal (Best Large Village) and the Champion of Champions Rosebowl, the Premier Award for the whole of Scotland. Further success followed in 2015 in the Britain in Bloom finals, when once again Coupar Angus won a gold award, the Best Large Village in the UK and a Community Champion Award. In 2016, they won the Large Village Category and Community Horticultural Award at the Beautiful Scotland awards. They also won the Improving Services through Partnership category at the Council's Securing the Future awards.
- 1.12 Team and partnership working has restored Pride of Place to the Jewel of Strathmore and is an exemplar of what can be achieved by working in partnership with the area's communities. Community Greenspace are working to encourage as many groups as possible to follow Coupar Angus's lead.
- 1.13 The full list of Britain in Bloom and Beautiful Scotland Awards for the Perth and Kinross area in 2016/17 can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **Westbank Enterprises**

- 1.14 The Council's partners in the Social Enterprise, the Shaw Trust, provide supported work placements and volunteering opportunities in horticulture and grounds maintenance.
- 1.15 The majority of local communities participating in local and national judging were supported in their efforts with plants and hanging baskets provided by Westbank Enterprises. Council hanging baskets and bedding for Council flower beds were also provided by Westbank Enterprises via a Service Level Agreement. Westbank Enterprises also operate the business hanging basket scheme, which again supports local communities in their bloom efforts.

### **Allotment Groups**

- 1.16 Several community run allotments sites have been established by Community Greenspace, working with Community Learning and Development. These included the former derelict bowling green site in Tulloch, two little used sites in Letham, a new site in Crieff, a site in Kinross and one in Auchterarder. Support varied from helping the Tulloch Group to establish from scratch to the group in Crieff who needed some technical advice and help with planning, and a lease for some ground.
- 1.17 Last year the Moncrieffe Island allotments in Perth were supported to clear up their site and rebuild fences following a large flood. Over the last few months, the Council has supported a small disused site in Alyth to become re-established and there has been a new allotment association formed in Blairgowrie which is currently negotiating a lease on a piece of land. Other activities included:

- running a number of training workshops to help groups develop growing skills
- developing a mailing list of over 30 allotment and community gardening groups in the Perth and Kinross area who are sent information on funding, events and training on a weekly basis. This will link in with the development of local food growing strategies and allotment provision through the Community Empowerment Act.

### **Paths Groups**

- 1.18 There are currently 16 paths groups working with Community Greenspace to help maintain and improve some of the 2000km of core and local path networks in Perth and Kinross. These are important in providing access for visitors and residents to enjoy the magnificent countryside of the area and provide opportunities to live healthier lifestyles. Path group activities vary from undertaking audits and providing information back to the Council to allow us to prioritise repairs and investment, to undertaking site works themselves. Some groups in communities such as St Fillans, Muthill, Blairgowrie, Kinross and Crieff are actively involved in developing and maintaining their paths. The recent surfaced multi-user path connection from St Fillans to Comrie is a good example of major improvement delivered by community groups. Crieff Community Trust are currently working with us to help realise the ambitious Crieff to Comrie off road core path link on the former railwayline and are prepared to raise significant sums of money to make this happen.
- 1.19 To help paths groups establish and get involved at whatever level they would like to reach, Community Greenspace are in the latter stages of developing a model for them to follow. This will provide advice, guidance and best practice demonstrating how to undertake a wide range of practical activities and projects. This is backed up with on site support from the team including provision of training, equipment and materials, where appropriate. Networking opportunities are also being established to allow groups to learn from each other, with the first workshops being hosted by the Blairgowrie and Rattray Access Network (BRAN) path group in February 2017.

### **Parks & Play Area Groups**

- 1.20 As well as the successful Friends of Parks group initiatives, the Council are currently working closely with the Kinnoull Hill User Group to develop a user friendly management plan for their site. It will form the focus for coordinated maintenance, volunteer activities and future investment. Over the last year, they have completed a comprehensive location and condition survey of all the assets on the site which will be a key component of the management plan. In Pitlochry, the Pavilion User Group have worked very closely with us on the Phase 1 regeneration of the play area and pavilion at the Recreation Park and the Phase 2 renewal of the viewing terraces, which is programmed for a site start early in 2017. The Perth Riverside Garden refurbishment, including the establishment of the new heather garden, has led to a longer term partnership relationship. The Friends of the Heathers group working through Perth in Bloom not only played a major role in developing the garden, but have

adopted several areas for maintenance. They work along side the Council's Grounds Maintenance squads to ensure the gardens are kept to the standard required for these high profile spaces. Several opportunities have been provided for Perth College Horticultural students and other young people to apply their newly learned skills and improve the gardens through regular action days.

- 1.21 Community Greenspace works closely with communities when undertaking play area refurbishment projects. A partnership with Methven Playing Field Committee recently saw them raise almost £200k to fund the £226k King George V Park regeneration project. The group were heavily involved in developing the design and implementation through to completion. Likewise the communities of Blackford and St Fillans are currently developing designs and raising funding for their play areas with support from the team. The Friends of MacRosty Park are working with us on an extension to their play area to provide more accessible equipment for the less physically able and to date have raised £10k towards this. A BMX Group has recently been awarded a grant from the Tesco plastic carrier bag fund to refurbish an old disused Council site in Rattray.

#### **Land Audit Management Scheme (LAMS)**

- 1.22 Perth and Kinross Council worked in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council in order to establish the Land Audit Management System (LAMS) as the first national performance indicator for monitoring the quality of public parks, grounds and streets.
- 1.23 The Council has embraced the LAMS system through the Community Greenspace and Operations teams. The system is now embedded into working practices, with the results analysed to inform management decisions and target resources. There is clear evidence that policy decisions and changes to service provision can be monitored through this quality assessment system. Perth and Kinross Council is able to balance allocation of available resources to ensure the most important greenspace assets continue to achieve good standards and that the results achieved by community volunteer 'Bloom' groups are sustained.
- 1.24 For the period of April – March, the LAMS scores increased from 46 in 2013/14 to 71 in 2015/16. The results, broken down by their component litter and grounds maintenance elements, can be seen in Appendix 2. This increase in performance followed the prioritisation of grounds maintenance activities on the sites of more importance to communities, with the work schedules for grounds maintenance being better matched to the resources available.
- 1.25 Therefore, for those sites, the maintenance standards have improved as the review and site assessment allowed for them to be proactively, rather than reactively, maintained. This is also reflected in the level of Community Greenspace customer contacts which are also shown in Appendix 2.

- 1.26 The main customer contacts to the Council are predominately in regard to grounds maintenance (grass cutting, weeding, leaf clearing, hedges and grass verges) which highlights the importance of this service to the public. Since 2012/13, the number of calls received regarding parks and open spaces has fallen by 28%. A considerable amount of work was done to reduce grounds maintenance services in areas to minimise the impact on communities and ensure it was deliverable within the resources available. Extensive consultation was undertaken with communities to ensure their priorities were reflected in the proposals. This has resulted in the public having fewer complaints about greenspace assets.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 Community Greenspace has been awarded £20k per annum for two years to undertake a transformation Engage, Empower and Equip Project. This builds on the successful work of the Grounds Maintenance review, which was agreed by the Environment Committee on 05 June 2013 (Report No. 13/270 refers). It focuses on undertaking community engagement to determine with groups which sites could be adopted locally.
- 2.2 Through this approach, the creation of small scale community gardens, allotments, orchards etc. will be considered in order to reduce the number of grounds maintenance assets.
- 2.3 This will include engaging, equipping and empowering local communities to participate in activities such as paths work and grounds maintenance. It is aimed at small community greenspace sites to reduce maintenance operations and create capacity for future site adoptions.
- 2.4 The £20k per annum has been used to appoint a part time Greenspace Partnership officer for two years who will:
- Engage with communities and partners to encourage them to take on maintenance of the sites and encourage use of them
  - Equip communities with the relevant tools and training to undertake the maintenance
  - Empower communities to take on further sites

## **3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The collective working between the communities and the third sector provides an attractive environment that residents, visitors and business can enjoy.
- 3.2 The area finds itself in an enviable position of having a strong connection between these organisations in order to deliver further enhanced services to assist and support communities.

3.3 The foundation to this is the Council's good standard of general municipal grounds maintenance, supported by the plant provision from Westbank Enterprises along with the time and effort given by our local communities.

3.4 It is recommended that the Environment Committee:

- I. notes the contents of the report
- II. requests the Director (Environment) to submit a report in 18 months to update the Committee on the Engage, Empower and Equip Project.

#### Author

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#### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Director (Environment)	24 November 2016

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/ Single Outcome Agreement 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

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 The proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan 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; and
- (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. No saving is allocated against this project. 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 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 an appropriate 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. This will allow officers to continue to communicate with communities to ensure grounds maintenance resources are prioritised to areas of greatest community benefit.
- 2.5 It is aimed at small community greenspace sites to reduce maintenance operations and create capacity for future site adoptions.

## **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.

### Sustainability

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 This will include engaging, equipping and empowering local communities to participate in activities such as paths work and grounds maintenance.

## Legal and Governance

- 3.4 The governance for the project will be monitored through the Transformation Verto system.

## Risk

- 3.5 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 &amp; 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</p>

Risk Description	Impact Scale (1 to 5)	Likelihood Scale (1 to 5)	Action Plan to Mitigate Risk
			<p>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 Colleagues from The Environment Service have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

##### External

- 4.2 This project will include engaging, equipping and empowering local communities to participate in activities such as paths work and grounds maintenance. It is aimed at small community greenspace sites to reduce maintenance operations and create capacity for future site adoptions.

#### 5. Communication

- 5.1 As part of the project a communications plan will be drafted in order partnership with local landowners and communities to maintain public open space

#### 2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 Report to Special Council, entitled Revenue Budget 2011/12 – 2013/14, on 17 February 2011 (Report No 11/56)

**3. APPENDICES**

3.1 Appendix 1 – Bloom judging results

3.2 Appendix 2 - Land Audit Management Scheme and Customer Contacts

**BLOOM JUDGING RESULTS – 2016/17**

In the 2016/17 Britain in Bloom and Beautiful Scotland Awards, the Perth and Kinross area enjoyed success with the following awards:

**Britain In Bloom**

Large Town Beautiful Perth – Gold

**Beautiful Scotland***Category Winners (PKC)*

Large Village – Coupar Angus  
Small Village – Kinnesswood In Bloom

*Gold Medal Winners*

Brig In Bloom  
Coupar Angus, Pride of Place  
Comrie In Colour

*Silver Gilt*

Blairstown and Rattray  
Kinnesswood In Bloom  
Muthill In Bloom

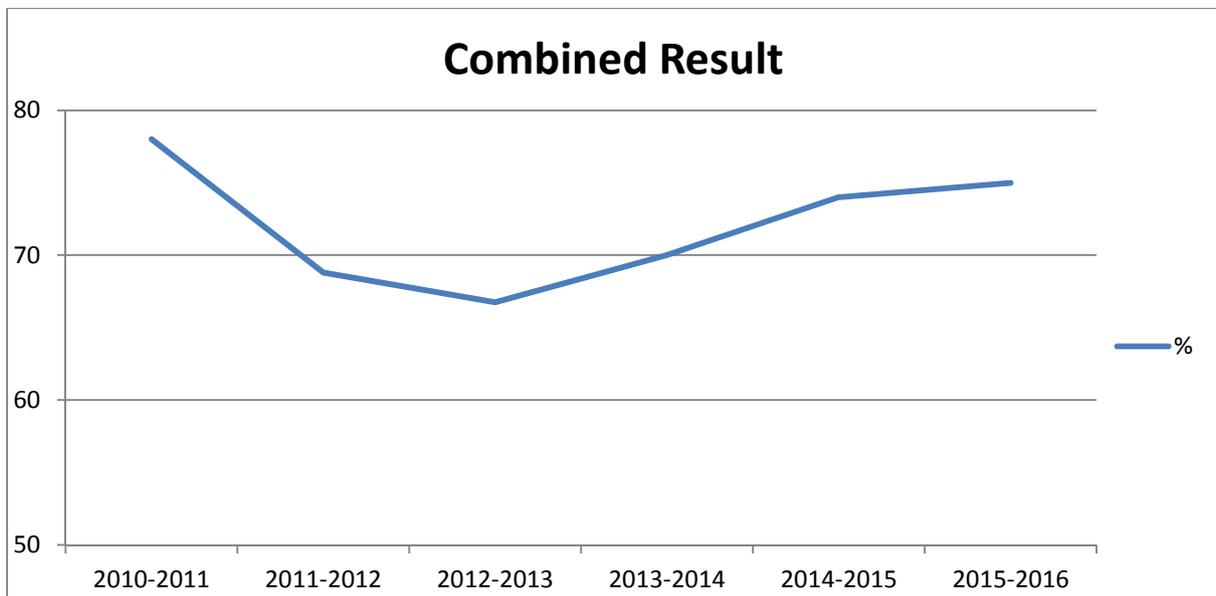
*Discretionary Awards*

Community Horticultural Award – Coupar Angus, Pride of Place

## Land Audit Management System Results 2010 – March 2016

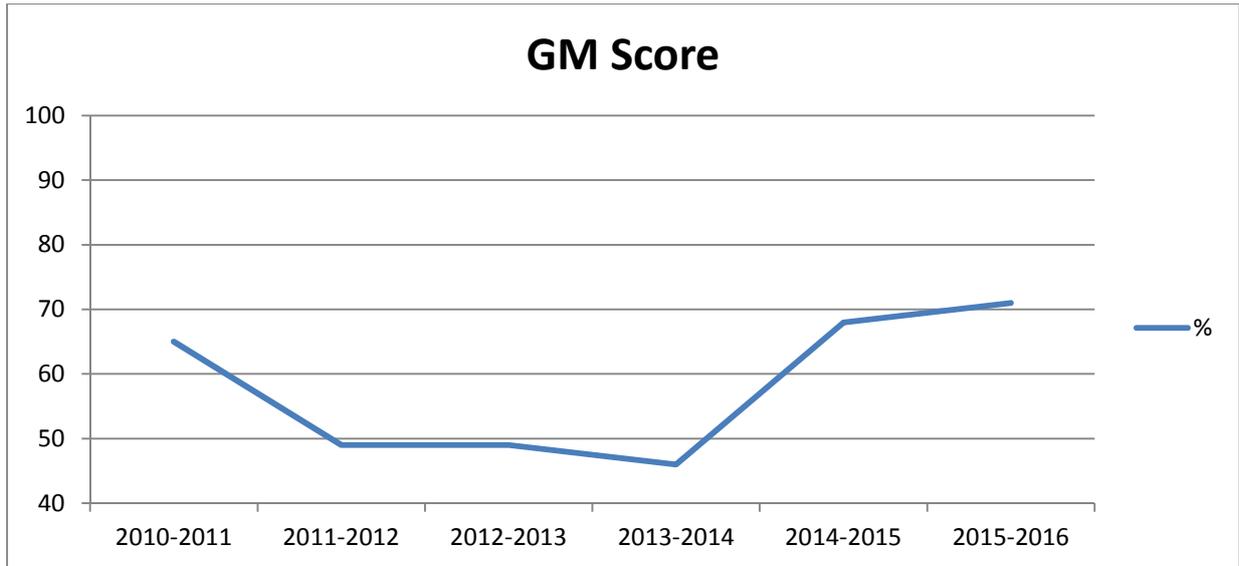
### Combined Score (Grounds Maintenance and Litter)

Year	Combined Result %
2010-2011	78
2011-2012	69
2012-2013	67
2013-2014	70
2014-2015	74
2015-2016	75



### GM Score Only

Year	%
2010-2011	65
2011-2012	49
2012-2013	49
2013-2014	46
2014-2015	68
2015-2016	71



## Community Greenspace Customer Contacts

### Total Calls Received

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total	3503	2745	2550	2510

