



EDINBURGH & LOTHIAN GREENSPACE TRUST STRATEGY 2015-18

Reviewed: August 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

This Strategy summarises the key objectives and plans of the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) for the period 2015-18, as well as defining its core values and key messages.

The Trust is an independent charity, which works to develop, manage and promote quality greenspaces in and around Edinburgh and the Lothians, enabling people to access and enjoy those greenspaces through a creative programme of capital and engagement projects. The Trust has a strong track record of partnership working and project delivery, with its professionalism well established and maintained across all areas of its work, and ELGT is widely regarded as a trusted partner in the development and delivery of its projects. The Trust's staff team and annual project programmes have grown significantly over recent years as a consequence of the increased demand for its services, with overall turnover of £1m per annum for the past three years.

ELGT recognises the importance of continuing to develop and deliver a programme of work that is robust, creative and strategically aligned with national and local policy areas in order to maintain our credibility and relevance to funders and partners, whilst delivering real benefits in terms of health and wellbeing, biodiversity, regeneration and community development.

2. ELGT MISSION STATEMENT

Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust will work to make a positive difference in the quality of life for communities across the Lothians through the creation and development of sustainable, well-managed and accessible greenspaces and green networks.

We recognise that access to quality local greenspaces can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals, particularly in disadvantaged areas, and that everyone should have the opportunity to access and enjoy their natural environment.

We will work for the benefit of people, wildlife, landscape and heritage, as a leading and trusted partner, engaging with communities, landowners, local authorities and other organisations, to support the wider development of green spaces and networks in Central and Eastern Scotland.

Many policy areas in which the Trust operates are subject to the ongoing challenging economic situation and changes at a national level in the distribution of powers and responsibilities - ELGT's key strength lies in its ability to add value to a range of projects and to deliver them cost-effectively with, and on behalf of, partners, funders and stakeholders.

3. ABOUT THE TRUST

The Edinburgh Green Belt Trust was established in 1991 and re-launched as the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust in December 2006, reflecting a change in remit and area of operation. ELGT is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, overseen by a board of directors and team of 9 staff based in its headquarters at Swanston on the southern outskirts of Edinburgh.

Since 2006, the Trust has significantly increased the size and range of its project programmes and, for the past three years, has achieved an annual turnover reaching £1million. ELGT continues to develop as a social enterprise and earns fee income from its project activity that currently supports around 45% of operational overheads

Additionally, it receives a further 35% in core grant funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and the City of Edinburgh Council. Other key partners and funders (predominantly for projects) include Forestry Commission Scotland, NHS Lothian, People's Postcode Trust and Midlothian Council, with private companies, housing associations and charitable trusts and foundations also featuring among a wide range of other long-established sponsors and partners

Specific funders are sought for individual projects, with notable examples including the Mushroom Trust, which has supported a range of projects, the People's Postcode Trust for the Innertube map and community gardening projects, and the Central Scotland Green Network Development Fund supporting temporary greening work on Vacant & Derelict Land, community growing and woodland improvement projects. More recently the Trust has also built a relationship with NHS Lothian and is now receiving funding for community gardening and mental health in woodland programmes.

At present, most of the Trust's projects are based in urban areas, principally within the City of Edinburgh, although it continues to work to re-develop links within East Lothian and Midlothian with a view to undertaking more projects in these local authority areas while rural woodland and access projects remain an important part of the Trust's work.

At a strategic level, ELGT has been closely involved in the development of the Central Scotland Green Network, a national priority of the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework (NPF3); particularly through the delivery of the Lothians & Fife Green Network Partnership and as host to that partnership's manager and project officer.



The Trust usually works for, or in partnership with, other organisations. It delivers or manages an extensive rolling programme of practical projects and events ranging from park regeneration and woodland planting to community learning workshops and innovative programmes to deliver health and well-being benefits.

ELGT is dedicated to improving the green environments in and around Edinburgh for the benefit of all, promoting biodiversity and equal opportunity of involvement. Priority is given to supporting disadvantaged communities where there may be no ready access to garden, play area and countryside, or where there are special needs. Increasingly, ELGT is delivering health promotion projects, involving individuals in therapeutic programmes of outdoor activities for referred patients, or as programmes to increase physical activity levels in areas of social and health inequality, and working to tackle barriers to access and engagement.

ELGT is committed to aligning with the vision and priorities of the Edinburgh & Lothians Forestry and Woodland Strategy, particularly through the delivery of woodland creation and woodland management, by supporting land owners in the promotion of the viability and benefits of woodlands.

With funding from the CSGN development Fund and working alongside the Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership, the Trust has been able to enhance significantly its capacity to develop and deliver a programme of woodland creation and enhancement projects on the ground with a number of large scale woodland creation projects being developed for future implementation.

The Trust also operates as a buildings preservation trust and over the years has restored a number of notable heritage features, including Midlothian's Victorian railway viaducts at Bilston Glen and Glenesk. The Mavisbank Trust, a subsidiary charitable company, is seeking to restore the A-listed Mavisbank House and its grounds at Loanhead in Midlothian.



4. ELGT PROJECT PRIORITIES/VISION

The Trust regularly reviews its operational themes and priorities, aligning them to local and national policy areas relating to health, environment and planning. Many of these themes continue from the Trust's previous strategies, with emphasis on identifying new areas of work for exploration. ELGT will continue to create and improve greenspaces, including community parks, gardens, allotments, woodlands, path networks, cycleways, business premises, waterways and school grounds, involving and engaging with local communities.

Our key priority areas of work for the next three years are:

1. Better greenspaces for people and wildlife

ELGT works to create and enhance greenspaces, prioritising places and neighbourhoods where this offers significant benefits in terms of improving people's visual surroundings, and creating more biodiverse, healthy environments.

ELGT will

- 1.1 prioritise work in neighbourhoods experiencing disadvantage where our input can help contribute to a better local landscape, increased use of greenspaces, community development and greater active participation in conservation, growing and other land-management issues
- 1.2 target hard-to-reach or neglected areas of land, especially where it has a detrimental impact on the surrounding area and where new or enhanced landscaping will help overcome stigma in terms of social deprivation or anti-social behaviour
- 1.3 link, strengthen or create green networks and corridors to increase connectivity and the region's green infrastructure
- 1.4 capitalise on opportunities to bring a greenspace component to otherwise non-greenspace initiatives,
- 1.5 seek projects where a greenspace element increases its chances of success, including heritage
- 1.6 work to increase the environmental and ecological resilience of both greenspaces and the built environment, and to mitigate negative environmental impacts
- 1.7 involve local communities in the design, delivery and management of greenspaces
- 1.8 add value to other projects and we will work with a range of partners to identify and capitalise upon opportunities for exciting and innovative projects at both a local and regional/national level
- 1.9 seek opportunities to create new greenspaces providing new facilities for local communities
- 1.10 work to enhance and improve existing greenspaces, both in terms of biodiversity and living landscape, and improved surroundings to visit or pass through
- 1.11 work at a regional level to create and enhance woodlands and other large-scale sites where this will increase woodland cover and the region's ecological resilience

2. Increased active travel

ELGT recognises that greenspaces can make a valuable contribution to increasing active travel which brings benefits in terms of reduced carbon emissions and greater rates of physical activity, as well as added opportunities for visiting and experiencing the natural environment. Active travel routes provide opportunities to create and enhance green corridors and networks, bring additional ecological benefits.

ELGT will

- 2.1** work with and engage local communities to provide opportunities and reasons to visit and use local cycling and walking routes and to raise their profile
- 2.2** work to increase active travel rates by creating or improving cycling and walking routes which are wholly or principally off-street and where there is a clear greenspaces interest
- 2.3** create new paths and connections, especially where this will create or link to a wider, coherent network
- 2.4** improve existing routes and accesses to them, increasing accessibility for all
- 2.5** create or improve greenspaces alongside paths and accesses to bring added value as pleasant surroundings through which to travel, prioritising areas where positive greenspace management helps tackle negative safety perceptions
- 2.6** identify and maximise the opportunities for extending and creating green corridors along active travel routes
- 2.7** create or upgrade paths and connections where they will add value to an existing greenspace by improving access to it or increasing its usability
- 2.8** take part in the promotion and marketing of active travel corridors, raising their profile both as travel corridors and as destinations in themselves

3. Greater appreciation/understanding of greenspaces and natural capital

ELGT believes that greater awareness and understanding of the importance, value and role of the natural environment can help everyone play a role in using, appreciating, protecting and enhancing greenspaces in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

ELGT will

- 3.1** promote and showcase the breadth and variety of greenspaces, with an emphasis on those which receive less attention or which are not generally perceived as being traditional greenspaces
- 3.2** create opportunities for people to learn about and experience greenspaces, their value and natural capital importance
- 3.3** target groups and individuals with little or no tradition of experiencing or using greenspaces and work with them to increase their engagement with the outdoors
- 3.4** seek to identify and overcome barriers to greater use of greenspaces, both physical and psychological, including cultural attitudes and stigma
- 3.5** aim to address issues such as litter, vandalism and anti-social behaviour through engagement with local communities to foster a sense of ownership and respect for local spaces
- 3.6** work with external partner organisations to demonstrate the value and potential of greenspaces and natural capital to meeting their own organisational aims and objectives, as well as the wider benefits in general

4. Direct involvement in gardening, growing, conservation and managing local greenspaces

ELGT's projects strive to empower communities and individuals to reconnect with the growing process in their immediate surroundings so as to better become engaged with their local community, have a stake in its management and a desire and the knowledge to become actively involved in local projects.

ELGT will:

- 4.1** develop and support community growing, conservation and greenspace management initiatives, providing our expertise and facilitation
- 4.2** we will provide volunteering and participation opportunities allowing people to play an active part in contributing to their local greenspaces
- 4.3** we will share appropriate knowledge and skills, including providing training and capacity building for other organisations
- 4.4** we will contribute to the promotion of gardening and growing as positive pass times

5. Improved physical and mental health by engaging with greenspaces

ELGT will work to capitalise on the role that greenspaces can play in tackling social and health inequalities; and maintaining and improving people's physical and mental well-being - through visiting woodlands, parks, gardens and landscapes; using and enjoying them; as well as being involved in their maintenance.

ELGT will:

- 5.1** devise programmes, events and activities which use greenspaces to improve people's mental and physical health
- 5.2** work with those experiencing health and social inequalities, and with partner organisations who work with that client group
- 5.3** work with others to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the role that greenspaces can play in better health
- 5.4** devise programmes and projects which allow targeted client groups to be involved with and have a stake in conservation activities and the management of their local greenspaces
- 5.5** use improved greenspaces, and people's participation in them, to help overcome negative perceptions and stigma, to boost confidence and to foster community development and cohesion
- 5.6** deliver projects which make the link with greenspaces and growing to promote wider benefits, such as healthy eating and cooking

6. Maximised use of greenspaces as avenues for positive outcomes

ELGT will champion the role that greenspaces and the natural environment play in delivering positive wider social, economic, environmental and other objectives.

ELGT will devise and deliver projects which

- 6.1** use greenspace as venues for personal and social development, education and learning
- 6.2** use greenspaces and their management, their improvement and creation as opportunities for training in skills and gaining experience to increase employability
- 6.3** capitalise on the role of enhanced greenspace in increasing the attractiveness and desirability of an area for investment and related spin-off economic advantages

5. ELGT OPERATIONS & DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES

To maintain and support its business and to continue to be an efficient, effective organisation delivering greenspace improvement projects, the Trust will:

- a. Prepare and deliver an annual project programme which realise the Trust's aims and objectives and responds to relevant policy areas. Programmes will be chosen ensuring they respond to a clear demand, are visionary, focussed on priorities and achieve agreed targets.
- b. Deliver a comprehensive programme of projects throughout the Trust's operating area. This will include the continued prioritising of developing projects and relationships in Midlothian and East Lothian.
- c. Deliver a wide range of services for individuals and communities, continuing to strengthen links with existing partners and forge new relationships, particularly those representing disadvantaged and diverse groups of people. The Trust will focus on fostering a strong community development approach amongst staff and partners when developing new projects.
- d. Contribute to the development and delivery of national and regional policies relating to open space, health, greenspace, biodiversity, woodland, accessibility and active travel. ELGT will support and participate in wider networks and partnerships, including the Lothians & Fife Green Network, Central Scotland Green Network, Edinburgh Living Landscape, and will seek to deliver projects which achieve multiple policy objectives.
- e. Build on ELGT's status as a greenspace project exemplar, regional champion and key contributor to the development of national greenspace objectives and priorities for the future. We will continue to monitor policy developments to identify and address gaps in the Trust's service provision, to target new areas of work and to improve the services we offer.
- f. Seek funding to cover operational and project costs from key public sector sponsors and partners, and businesses, trusts and individuals.

- g. Explore alternative funding streams such as the development of social enterprise where this will aid in the delivery of the Trust's aims and objectives.
- h. Promote the Trust and its achievements, in order to increase awareness of greenspace objectives and outcomes, and to encourage continuing financial and other support from business and other sources.
- i. Improve the Trust's monitoring and evaluation processes, to aid reporting to funders, but also to support the effective development of new projects and to provide better evidence to support funding bids.
- j. Continue to provide appropriate support to the Mavisbank Trust and its objective of restoring Mavisbank House and environs.
- k. Manage and run ELGT to the highest standards of staff, team and business management and development, ensuring customer focus and efficiency at all times and diligent management of Trust properties and funds.

6. POLICY ALIGNMENT

The Trust's priorities, as outlined above, directly help meet national and local priority outcomes and strategies. In developing our annual project programme, ELGT seeks to deliver across multiple priorities by devising projects which both meet our priorities and those of funders, partners, and key stakeholders.

The principal strategies that ELGT responds to include the City of Edinburgh Council Strategic Plan; the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership; NHS & Health Inequalities Standing Group, as well as local plans and strategies in East Lothian and Midlothian; the priority outcomes/themes of SNH, CSGN and the Forestry Commission.

In addition, we work to deliver a range of specific targets and priorities at both local and regional level, such as the Edinburgh Living Landscape Partnership, Local Biodiversity Plans, Active Travel Action Plans, Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT), Central Scotland Engagement Strategy and local priorities such as Neighbourhood Partnership Priorities, Development Plans etc.

The principal strategies that the Trust works towards can be identified in the table below. We continually ensure that our work is informed by these and other relevant strategies as they change and are updated, and we continue to engage proactively in their development.

Scottish Natural Heritage priority outcomes 2015	CSGN Vision	Strategic Objectives Health Inequality Priority Outcomes 2015-16	City of Edinburgh Council strategic plan 2012-17	Forestry Commission - Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 (Implementation Plan 2015-18)
<p>SNH Outcome 1: A wider range of people experiencing, valuing and helping to look after nature and landscapes a) Help people to improve their health and well-being through new outdoor recreation, volunteering or outdoor learning opportunities b) Increase public awareness of and interest in the value of nature and landscapes c) Help communities to engage in issues about nature and landscapes close to where they live</p> <p>SNH Outcome 2: Better places in which to live, work and visit a) Improve green infrastructure in more populated parts of Scotland b) Improve places for people and nature c) Increase the benefits from the National Walking & Cycling Network</p> <p>SNH Outcome 3: Improvements in the health of Scotland's nature and landscapes a) Improve the condition and management of our special landscapes b) Improve the condition and management of nature on land and at sea c) Provide better and more accessible information about Scotland's natural assets and their health d) Maintain and improve the health of our protected areas</p> <p>SNH Outcome 4: Nature and landscapes are managed sustainably as a key asset for sustainable economic growth a) Increase public benefit through the strategic management of wildlife issues c) Develop and implement ecosystem-based approaches d) Increase the contribution that nature and landscapes make to sustainable economic growth</p>	<p>Themes</p> <p>A Place for Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant & Derelict Land • Green Network Businesses • Employment & Training <p>A Place in Balance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland Creation • Urban Greening • Water Environment <p>A Place to Feel Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenspace for Health & Well-being • Recreation & Active Travel • Community Growing <p>A Place to Belong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenspace for Living • Greenspace for Learning & Play <p>A Place for Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Habitat Networks • Landscape Action 	<p>HI 1: Enable people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives</p> <p>PO1 Increased social capital: reduced social isolation; increased community participation and volunteering</p> <p>PO2 Increased community capacity: communities of place and interest and cultural bridging</p> <p>HI 2: Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities</p> <p>PO4 More people live in healthy environments and use green space</p> <p>HI 3: Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention by increasing preventative interventions and improving take-up of treatment services</p> <p>PO5 Increased participation in physical activity: including walking, cycling, dance, active travel, gardening</p> <p>PO6 Increased number of people eat healthily; increased number of people know how to cook healthy food and how to eat healthily on a budget</p>	<p>Outcome 3 Edinburgh is an excellent place in which to live, study, work, visit and invest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and green • Safe • Well housed • Well maintained • Attractive places • Moving efficiently • Well engaged and well informed 	<p>Outcome 1: Improved health and well-being of people and their communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist community participation • Enhance opportunities for health and enjoyment • Contribute to growth in learning and skills <p>Outcome 3: High quality, robust and adaptable environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to tackle climate change • Contribute positively to soil, water and air quality • Protect and promote the historic environment and cultural heritage • Help to protect and enhance biodiversity

7. CONCLUSION

ELGT will continue to contribute to national and local agendas for greenspace, green networks and environmental initiatives, seizing appropriate project and other opportunities to the benefit of the people and environment of Edinburgh and the Lothians. To deliver, ELGT must work hard to continue its programmes of effective project delivery and to develop constantly its vision, partnerships and operations. The Trust must maintain the confidence of its funding partners and supporters as wide a range of sources as possible, through professionalism, effective delivery and trust. We will use this strategy to shape our development and our annual project programmes.