



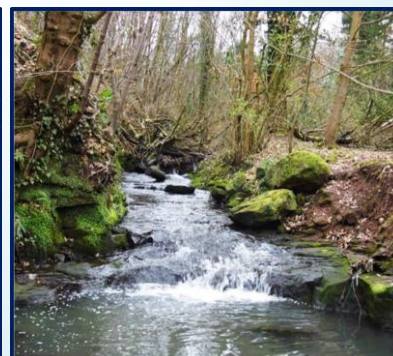
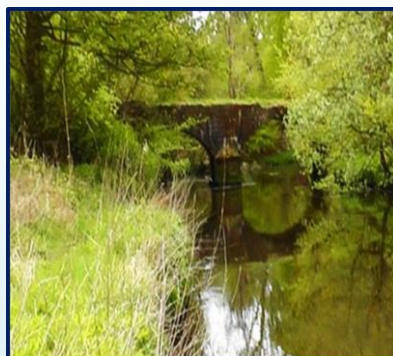
## A Green Lung for Viewpark

---

**The Douglas Support  
Estate Proposal for a  
Community Acquisition**

---

**JULY 2018**



# Contents

Introduction.....	2
Historical Background and Context.....	3
Aim and Future Use .....	9
Preparation and Planning.....	12
Risks and Liabilities .....	13
Management - Skills and Expertise.....	14
Finance, Fundraising and Income Generation .....	15
Partners and Supporting Organisations .....	16
Summation .....	16
Appendices.....	17
Appendix 1 .....	18
Appendix 2 .....	20
Appendix 3 .....	21
Appendix 4 .....	22

## Introduction

The Viewpark Conservation Group (VCG) wish to acquire the Historic Douglas Support Estate as a community asset for space for recreational and leisure activities. The land owners have indicated that the area to the south of the M8, plus the farm complex to the north, would be made available at an indicative price of £500,000.

The Viewpark Conservation Group is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), governed by its constitution.

We believe that the area, also known locally as 'The Glen' and 'Our Glen', is an essential part of the fabric of the community, and of its future well-being. The following points support that claim:

- The community of 16,500 (approx.) is 'boxed in' by the M74, A721, A725 and the new M8 extension, making the need for such a facility adjacent to the community essential (see map at Appendix 2).
- The well-known degradation of air quality caused by the transport network is partly ameliorated by greenbelt and woodland planting<sup>1</sup>.
- The glen and adjacent woodland provides a significant barrier between the current community, and the M8 extension and Strathclyde Business Park developments. This provides significant audio and visual barriers to the urbanisation of the surrounding area, as well as providing our 'green lung'.
- The glen and adjacent areas have a long historical use with a local and Scottish significance, giving the new and expanding Viewpark community a 'sense of place'.
- The protection and possible restoration of some of these historical features is an important community goal and can only enhance our understanding of Scottish history and protect our heritage.
- With the increasing urbanisation of the area, conservation of the remaining small areas of historical significance is important to provide contrast and not to lose the character of the original landscape.
- The community has developed a number of initiatives based on the glen and adjacent areas, including a conservation group, a fishing club and wildlife walks with the local Primary school. These types of initiative would not be possible without the glen.
- The glen has provided many in the community with a focus. In an area where many are either out of work, retired or unable to work, the opportunity to make a voluntary contribution; ranging from tree management to path maintenance, wildlife observation to historical research is critical for the wellbeing of many community residents.

A community project for the development of the glen would provide opportunities for young unemployed community members to gain new skills and provide a new focus on life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Transport Emissions Partnership (STEP), and others

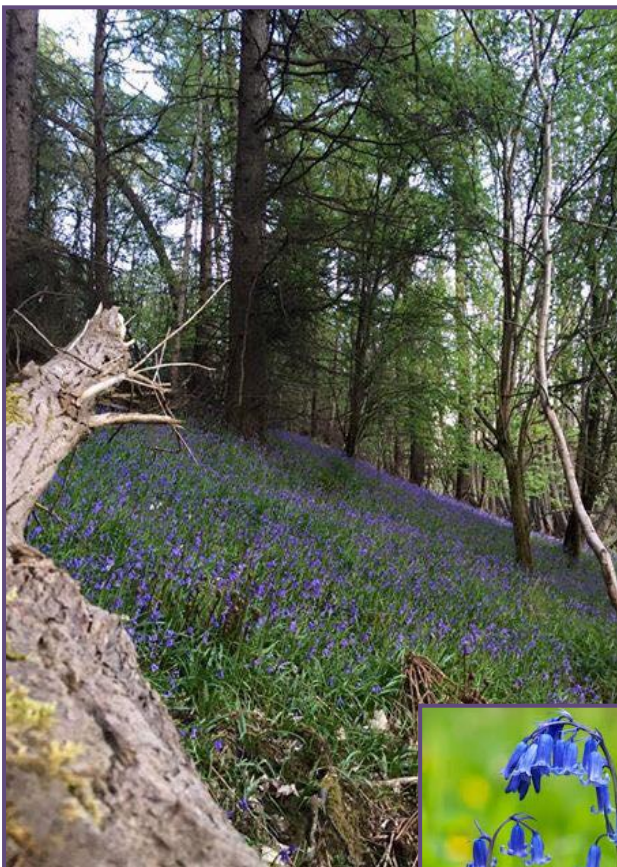
With the current emphasis on obesity and ill health in the Scottish population, the glen area provides exercise opportunities for the community without having to travel to other locations. The recent healthy walks initiative was exactly conceived to realise and support opportunities such as this.

Having this facility in the community reduces significantly the number of car journeys to other non-urban areas, which would otherwise be required for recreation.

The glen forms part of the North Calder river valley, a significant green corridor linking green areas (Drumpellier and Strathclyde parks) to the Monkland canal and Clyde river valleys. This enables the movement of wildlife through the dense urban and road network that enrich so many of the community's daily lives.

The wildlife corridor principle, threading through the landscape as it currently does, has enabled species of significance to populate the glen; from Otters and Kingfishers to Badgers and Roe deer.

A community project such as this has many on-going benefits, including an increased use of existing and new footpath and cycle links. The glen can provide recreation opportunities for others outside the community area, helping to integrate communities cut off by urban and transport barriers.

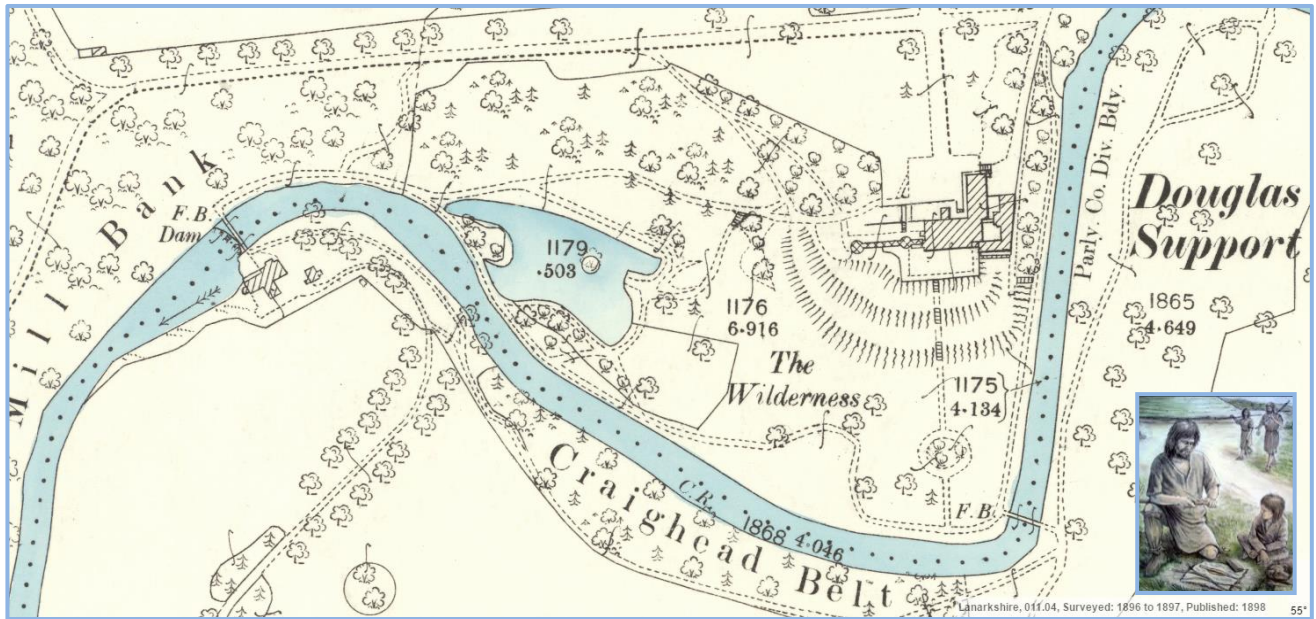


A facility like this ensures a better quality of life and a more sustainable environment, raising house prices in general and making the area more attractive as a place to live and work.

A community project would improve access and make the glen a safer place to visit for people of all abilities. It would conserve aspects of the historical landscape and features for future generations, stop further degradation of the landscape and enhance habitats through projects such as tree planting and grassland management.



## Historical Background and Context



Although evidence of activity stretches back to the Beaker people (2000BC), the origins of the Douglas Support Estate can be found in the 17th century. The existence of a well-established and extensive area of policy woodland and parkland seems to be confirmed in a plan of 1752. By 1859 the OS plan shows the designed landscape and the later plan of 1898 shows a formal landscape setting for the mansion house (Douglas Support), gardens which incorporate riverside walks and circuit paths, policy woodland and parkland incorporating scenic drives from lodge houses. The house was demolished in 1939 and the subsequent neglect and abuse (exacerbated in recent times by vandalism and fly tipping) has resulted in the degradation of the quality and integrity of the designed landscape.

During the latter half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, there were 2 collieries within the northern half of the site, including a series of mineral railways.

Planning permission was granted in 1992 for the "Infilling, Grading and Restoration of Land and Formation of Temporary Haul Roads" within the site. This allowed for the removal of the Alderston Bing (to the south of the site) which then facilitated the development of the Strathclyde Business Park. Two parts of the site (extending to around 14 ha) were raised using the bing material and subsequently shaped and landscaped.

In the early 1990's, Monklands District Council and the Trustees of the estate created a joint venture company with a view to promoting the site for business and industry. This agreement lapsed following Local Government re-organisation and Park Lane Palisade was appointed by the Trustees to continue with the promotion in 1997.

In the early 1990's, the Scottish Office had plans to complete the motorway connection between Newhouse and Baillieston. This was designed to allow for the retention of the existing A8 as a local distributor road which was to be supplemented by a new "off-line" 6-lane motorway. Within the application site, the new motorway was to have been sited within the northern half of the site (roughly from a line from the north-west corner towards half way

down the eastern boundary). These plans were at an advanced stage (tenders approved and land acquired through Compulsory Purchase Orders) when they were shelved in 1997. The motorway was eventually constructed through the estate during 2014 - 2017.

The Douglas Support Estate extends to approximately 225 acres, of which 171 acres are being offered for sale, and is located between Bellshill and Coatbridge alongside the A8, west of the A725 at Shawhead. The Douglas Support Estate is currently administered by a solicitor and land agent on behalf of the Trustees of the “1969 Blythswood Trust”.

The boundaries and immediate surroundings are described as follows:

#### North

The estate is bounded to the north by the A8. Areas to the east and west were subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders and are currently excluded, but some may be reverted to the estate once the motorway construction is fully completed. Until recently, there were small areas protruding northwards at the Old Lodge Cottage and Shawhead junction. These, too, are excluded from the land under consideration. The farm complex situated in this area is being offered for sale.

#### East

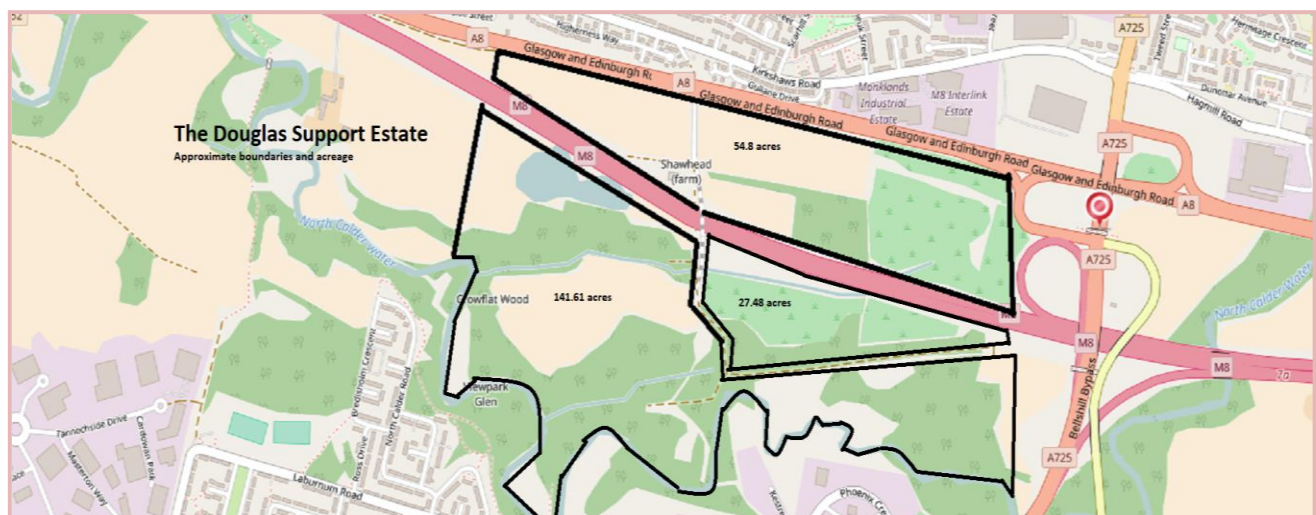
For the most part, the A725 Bellshill Bypass marks this boundary although part of the area was subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders and is currently excluded from the land under consideration, but some may be reverted to the estate once the motorway construction is fully completed.

#### South

The wooded valley of the North Calder Water bounds the entire southern edge of the site. The north-most edge of Strathclyde Business Park and Righead Industrial Estate share a boundary with the estate at this point. The Business Park is now well established although there are further development areas at the north-east corner of the Park. At the south-west corner of the site lies a residential area which forms part of Viewpark.

#### West

This comprises a field boundary and adjoins agricultural land of Bankhead Farm further west where the farm buildings are given over to industrial purposes.



The topography of the estate is one of gentle undulation, with the steep valley sides of the North Calder Water along the southern boundary. Ground levels vary from 87m AOD at the north-east corner to 57m AOD at the south-west. In general, the estate can be separated into 3 distinct areas

The top half of the site is characterised by gently undulating agricultural grazing land interspersed by some blocks of woodland and tree belts. This is traversed west/east by electricity pylons and below ground by a high-pressure gas main. At the north-west corner of the estate is the farmhouse and buildings of Shawhead Farm, the only remaining buildings. A burn runs east to west towards the North Calder Water through the western half of this area. There are some areas of standing water including the marshy area known as the Crow Flat pond at the north-west corner near the farm. This area is bisected by the M8 and a new cycle path,

Further south is the remains of the planned landscape which formed part of the policies of the now demolished Rosehall House (Douglas Support). This area comprises some areas of former grazing land enclosed by mature woodlands, tree lined paths and limited remains of the house and its estate buildings. Land along the river bank is prone to flooding in periods of high rainfall. The former access to the house is still recognisable as a tree lined track, in part used by the cycle track, which runs west/east across the south-east of the site towards the A725.

Finally, alongside the southern boundary is the steep wooded valley of the North Calder Water. This incised river valley is typical of those in Lanarkshire, carved during the ice age, but threatened by modern living.

The main points of entry to the site are, firstly, a vehicular access directly off the A8 which connects with Shawhead Farm, and over a bridge across the M8 into the estate. Secondly, the cycle track/footpath, part of the National Cycle Network, which connects the A752 in the west with Strathclyde Business Park in the east, also linking the Showcase Cinema complex. Lastly, a footpath which links the Viewpark estate and eastern section of Strathclyde Business Park. Core paths 190, 191, 192, 229 and 231 either cross the estate or lead to it.



The northern half of the site can be seen quite clearly from the A8 corridor and the A725 at Shawhead, whilst clear views of the southern half of the site can be had from Viewpark, Strathclyde Business Park and the adjoining stretch of A725. The M8 lies mostly in a cutting with no clear views into the estate.

The estate was farmed from Shawhead Farm (until recently tenanted) and comprises mostly grazing with some arable production. The majority of this land (85%) is quantified as being Grade 3.2 (good quality) with the remainder being of a lesser quality. The farm is currently vacant.



There is much evidence of neglect and vandalism throughout the site (including burnt out cars, at least 30 at one point) fire damaged trees, fly tipping and evidence of anti-social behaviour including large numbers of empty beer cans. Whilst this fell during the period of the motorway construction, due to restricted access, there is concern that this might re-occur without close monitoring, which an absentee landlord is unable to do.

A desk-based study and reconnaissance field survey were undertaken in February and March 2001 towards the preparation of a cultural heritage chapter for an Environmental Statement for a proposed business park within the Douglas Support Estate. A copy is available on the Viewpark Conservation Group's website, [www.viewpark.org.uk](http://www.viewpark.org.uk).

Eight sites were noted. Two known sites were a prehistoric burial site (NS76SW 1) and a battle-axe findspot which may relate to the same site (NS76SW 20). No field remains of the burial site were observed, and its former location has been partly disturbed by gas pipeline development.

Two former coal mines (Rosehall Colliery Pits 3 and 12: NS 727 626 and 720 627) have largely been landscaped and reclaimed, and fragments of the former mineral railway network survive in the surrounding landscape. Two annular enclosures (NS 726 624) and a curvilinear parchmark (NS 722 629) were detected on vertical aerial photographs, but no surface traces of these sites were identified through field survey.



Part of the former Douglas Support Estate grounds lie within the study area. A field survey confirmed that most of the former estate buildings, including the country house at NS 722 621, have been demolished, although the ruins of the estate offices (NS 723 623) and a mausoleum (NS 720 623) survive, and the 19th-century terraced gardens overlooking the North Calder Water remain as substantial earthworks. The former garden features of the estate have largely been removed, although surrounding parkland

features survive in good, if neglected, condition. The estate gate pillars were rescued from the motorway construction and now lie at Shawhead Farm awaiting reinstatement. Another pair, removed during the construction of Strathclyde Business Park, could also be reinstated.

Although the estate is still privately owned, it is mainly used on a daily basis by walkers, both from the local community and from the business parks. The river is used by fishermen, and youngsters build 'dens' in the bushes. Animal lovers and bird watchers enjoy the wildlife.

Viewpark has its history in mining and the production of iron and steel, but since the decline of these local industries, it has looked to other areas of the economy to provide employment.

Sitting between the main M74 and M8 motorways, and with good access to both via the main A725 Bellshill Bypass, several industrial and business parks offering good transport links with the rest of Scotland and beyond have been established in the area. Other transport links include the nearby Eurocentral freight terminal, which is a key Scottish hub for the



distribution of commercial and domestic goods. One of the main industries that support Bellshill is therefore the provision of logistics and warehouse services linked to rail and road transportation. However, the reduction in health issues related to old industries has been replaced by those of the new.

When compared with North Lanarkshire, Viewpark has the highest COPD/asthma rates, with Hattonrigg, the highest diabetes rate and also high rates of arthritis. A main aim of Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire's Strategic Commissioning Plan<sup>2</sup> is to enable people to live healthier lives. We believe that maintaining the Douglas Support Estate as a 'Green Lung' is key to achieving that objective.

Please see Appendix 1 - A synopsis of health issues in Viewpark.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bellshill Health and Social Care Locality Profile, September 2016

## Aim and Future Use

Our aim is to have open space accessible initially by the local community, for recreational use. In time, a wider audience would access the estate from the M8/A8 and from the recently created cycle track that passes through the estate and links to the National Cycle Network.

The charity, Viewpark Conservation Group has a vision to provide many opportunities within the local glen, and other venues as appropriate. Activities such as educational workshops with children from local nurseries and primary schools have taken place in the past, with for example 'Beastie Walks', and fishing competitions.

As part of the feasibility study, we will review the management team's role and objectives for the estate. What follows is, therefore, for consideration

The ultimate aim of this plan is for the community to actively manage the woodland in a manner that maintains, enhances, and perpetuates the existing diverse environment and to develop its value to the community as an educational and recreational resource.

### Management Objectives

- To generate income streams from leisure activities and essential timber harvesting in a manner that is sustainable and sympathetic to the management aim.
- To maintain the integrity of the landscape feature that the glen and woodland provides.
- To maintain and enhance the recreational values of the Douglas Support Estate for the community and wider public.
- To improve biodiversity within the woodland with particular consideration being given to ensuring the well-being of the resident animal and bird population.
- Provide an educational and learning resource for all ages, but particularly young people, through improved interpretation and habitat and species monitoring.
- Develop woodland management awareness and skills among local people so volunteers can be involved in management tasks and work days where appropriate.

Currently, workshops and events take place in the local community hall and in other venues (such as the burn) depending on the nature of the content. We would like to use the vacant farmhouse as a reception and administrative base, and as funding becomes available, develop an interpretation/education room. An outdoor classroom would also be constructed within the woodlands.



Over many years we have collated many historical maps, resources and artefacts which help to explain more about the local area using a very 'hands on', visual approach. We have held events where these are on display, but would like the opportunity of placing some on permanent display. This raises awareness of the historical importance of the local area and our on-going

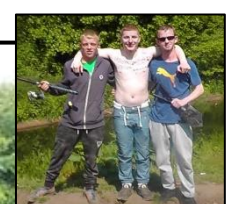


programme of community consultation will ensure that our future activities will be planned in accordance with the needs of the local community. The vision of the group is to create a space where people can enjoy outdoor spaces within walking distance of every home in the local area.



A group member is trained as a walk leader as part of the 'Get Walking Lanarkshire' programme, and we also plan to develop 'Forest School' skills in order to be able to share an increased knowledge and understanding of the environment within the community.

In October the VCG currently hold an annual 'Ghost Walk', which attracts between 500-700 people per year, throughout the year the group also hold several fishing competitions. Due to the positive response and strong attendance by the local community these events are planned to continue.



**Sharon Brandon** Well done to all involved. Joined the adult walk & it was great fun.... screamed my way round!! 🎃👻👻

**Lesley Jack-Breen** Absolutely fantastic. Well done. Was obvious the amount of effort that went into the night xx

**Anne-Marie Crummie** Brilliant night. We all enjoyed it. Thanks to all the organisers and supporters. It was a great experience. Looking forward to next year. X

**Angela Nailen** Yes it's was fantastic done adult walk screamed & laughed all way round would definitely do it again plus recommend people to come do it x

**Catherine McCusker** Tulips Fantastic event and so well organised. Well done everyone.

**Sonia Cld** Brilliant night Viewpark Conservation Group! Well done to you and all who helped. Getting better every year! So much work you do to put on this fantastic night for your community.



## Land Use

The current land use across The Historic Douglas Support Estate has been divided for the purposes of this report into three broad zones. North of the M8, the site is dominated by farmland characterised by improved grassland fields, several of which are grazed by cattle and horses. The southern part of the site is characterised by elements of a designed landscape associated with the Douglas Support Estate, including woodland and open ground, the latter former parkland and gardens, until a few years ago used in part for grazing cattle. Within the central part of the site are the landscaped remains of two coal mines.

The farmhouse, barn and outbuildings situated in the northern section will be used as a reception area, with associated interpretation facilities, and for storage and administration. Footpaths will be signposted through the area, making use of existing routes. The main access road runs through this area.

The southern part (around 170 acres) will be restored as parkland by clearing areas that have become overgrown, revealing the former gardens and policies, and returning paths to a useable condition. A variety of uses for the open areas is being considered, including a touring caravan site, a mountain bike trail, a picnic/barbeque area and a fishing pond, but the overwhelming view expressed in our survey was that the estate be used for recreation and wellbeing, connected to nature and for inter-generational use. The enclosed fields are being considered for use as grazing lets to generate income.



We will require a site office and secure storage for tools and equipment if the farmhouse proves unsuitable.

We wish to develop an interpretation experience of the history, culture and natural environment of the area, encouraging exploration and understanding.

## **Preparation and Planning**

The Viewpark Conservation Group wish to acquire the Douglas Support estate as a community asset. To prepare for this, we wish to conduct a feasibility study to examine the economic, social and environmental benefits that would result from community ownership and the potential for future development of the Estate. It will look at the development and ownership options identified with an analysis of how each option can best deliver positive outcomes for the community.

We wish:

- To review the Estate's current income and expenditure pattern and overall financial viability, detailing the existing landowner obligations.
- To consult the community, collating and assessing their needs and ideas for development opportunities that could arise if the estate was in community ownership
- To analyse options for raising funds to meet capital and revenue costs. This would include income from trading activities as well as grant and donations for the various ownership scenarios described.
- To prepare indicative annual income and expenditure projections over 5, 10 and 20 years, taking account of the most realistic and viable development opportunities. This will inform on the financial sustainability of the various options
- To review existing nature, archaeological, environmental and health statements reports and, if necessary, conduct further studies.
- To assess different ownership and development scenarios and which of these would deliver positive outcomes that meet community needs.
- To identify the best options for the management and maintenance of the estate, and for heritage Interpretation.
- To value the estate.

From the above, we would prepare a business development plan

## Risks and Liabilities

The Group is aware that there are risks inherent in owning and managing land. We are also conscious that there are areas of concern about the management of a 'country park'.

In general, we recognise our responsibilities for:

- collecting rents from the farmer/grazing tenant
- maintaining agricultural fields to acceptable standards (fencing, water supplies, etc)
- collecting wayleaves from power companies (none)
- ensuring there is adequate insurance cover in place for estate property, including vehicles, and particularly for public liability insurance
- paying Council Tax (if not exempt)
- paying utility charges
- preparing and presenting the annual accounts for the estate.
- maintaining a risk register
- maintaining a safe working environment for staff and volunteers
- maintaining a safe environment for visitors and estate users

As part of the feasibility study, we will play close attention to the areas associated with former mining activities and devise a plan to manage any risks identified. We already have an existing informal relationship with The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) over pollution of the North Calder Water.

The network of paths associated with the former policies has deteriorated (with the exception of the route of the new cycle track). Surfaces have eroded, bridges collapsed, trees have fallen causing obstructions, and encroaching shrubs have narrowed or obliterated sections. The 'Roman Bridge' requires upgrading and the 'Queen Anne' bridge requires replacement. A recognised priority for the group is to ensure the path network is safe and accessible.

Whilst there are many benefits from a volunteer workforce, we are aware of the need to have clear guidelines to ensure that they are used in roles and ways which meet both their needs and ours, and are safe and legal.

We have visited and studied country parks such as Mugdock, Muirshiel, Beecraigs, Chatelherault, Drumpellier, and many more. These are supported by public funds in addition to locally generated income, and require a heavy footfall of visitors prepared to pay for services. The Douglas Support Estate will not be in a position, certainly in the early years, to maintain a 'country park' with similar facilities. The group has medium to long term aspirations for a fishing pond, mountain bike trail, garden centre, caravan hook-ups, and a visitor centre/reception/administration facility. We are clear that investment in such facilities can only be made when there is a clear business case for a profitable venture, and as opportunities arise.



## Management - Skills and Expertise

The Viewpark Conservation Group is managed by five Trustees with an additional four people making up the management team. 155 community members are eligible to vote in board nominations etc.

The Group has a diverse background bringing skills and expertise from different experiences and employment. The group has recently been strengthened by the active participation of The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN).

The management team includes members who:

- have been business owners
- organise the annual Viewpark Gala Day
- manage the Viewpark allotments and community gardens
- established a playpark in the community
- owned and managed a farm and woodland
- raised £1m+ pa for charity
- organise community events for 700+ locally
- campaign for conservation
- line managed team of workers
- is a community development and capacity builder

All bring appropriate management and organisational skills to the Viewpark Conservation Group, but drawing on the expertise of other appropriate organisations.



The Board of Viewpark Conservation Group and Friends

At a practical level, the group can draw on a pool of skilled trades' people, several of whom already volunteer their services.

As an organisation we meet regularly. Informal meetings take place as and when required with more formal business meetings taking place every two weeks.

The Board and some group members meet with Archaeology Scotland



## Finance, Fundraising and Income Generation

There are two principal aspects to our funding requirements:

- 1) The cost of acquisition and start-up costs
- 2) Annual running costs

The Group is seeking advice from the consultant who is providing the feasibility study and business plan on methods of income generation and sources of income. However, a draft fundraising strategy is in preparation, should it be needed.

The Viewpark Conservation Group has a track record of successful fundraising, most notably raising £95,000 for a play park in 2010.

Costs will be determined as part of the feasibility study, but the following is representative of what might be expected:

### Preparation and Planning Costs

All consultancy work incl. admin and printing	██████████
Agricultural consultant	██████████
VAT at 20%	██████████
Land Valuation inc. maps plus VAT at 20%	██████████
Community Engagement	██████████
<b>Total development costs</b>	██████████

### Acquisition Costs

Purchase price	██████████
Legal and administrative costs	██████████
<b>Total acquisition costs</b>	██████████

### On-going Costs, Years 1 - 3

Estate manager <sup>3</sup> (part-time)	██████████
Insurance	██████████
Secretarial	██████████
Management	██████████
Training	██████████

### Total Annual Costs

██████████
------------

### Project costs

On a project by project basis as funds allow

In addition, we expect there to be project costs, which will proceed as and when funds allow. Examples are path making and restoration, a base/office, store, bridge repairs and building, signage and interpretation – and more. The development of commercial enterprises will, likewise, proceed as needs arise and funds allow.

<sup>3</sup> Estate manager/woodland manager job description to be devised

## **Partners and Supporting Organisations**

The Viewpark Conservation Group has built relationships and worked with many agencies and groups over the many years we have been working in the local area.

Many have indicated that they are able to lend support to the project, whether through lending expertise or encouragement or by helping us meet our costs. These include local schools, nurseries, local businesses and national agencies such as Forestry Commission and Transport Scotland as well as elected members and departments within our local authority such as Regeneration, Park Ranger Service and Community Learning and Development. We also have support from other local Projects in our area, for example Focus Youth Project and have been involved in our Community Forum. As our project grows, we would hope to make contact with relevant partners where possible.

For examples of these, please see Appendix 3.

## **Summation**

With the support of the appointed consultant, who will aid us in bringing together a feasibly study and drawing up a business plan, we believe that we are in a good position to proceed with the acquisition of the Douglas Support Estate



**Appendices**

### Health and Wellbeing

- Residents of Viewpark North are amongst the worst 5% of those most deprived in Scotland, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), having 21.22% of income deprived people. 41% of households in North Lanarkshire are 'Fuel Poor' and 6% are 'Extreme Fuel Poor'. 22.37% of children are living in poverty (Scotland: 15.28).
- Life expectancy in Viewpark is lower than the national averages: Female: 78.3/79. Male: 73/76.6
- An estimated 23.9% of the Viewpark population were prescribed drugs for anxiety /depression /psychosis in 2014/15. 3.85 per 1000 patients with a psychiatric required hospitalisation. (Scotland 17.4, 2.86)
- Viewpark has the highest rate of asthma in North Lanarkshire (208.21). (Scotland: 109.6) Rates per 100,000
- Viewpark has the highest number of instances of Coronary Heart Disease in North Lanarkshire (638.10). (Scotland: 638.10) Rates per 100,000
- Viewpark has the highest number of cases of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in North Lanarkshire (1441.60). (Scotland: 659.8) Rates per 100,000
- Compared with North Lanarkshire, Viewpark has the highest COPD/asthma rates (18.8 versus 13.9), with Hattonrigg, the highest diabetes rate (5.8, 5.7 versus 5.1) and also high rates of arthritis rate (3.7).

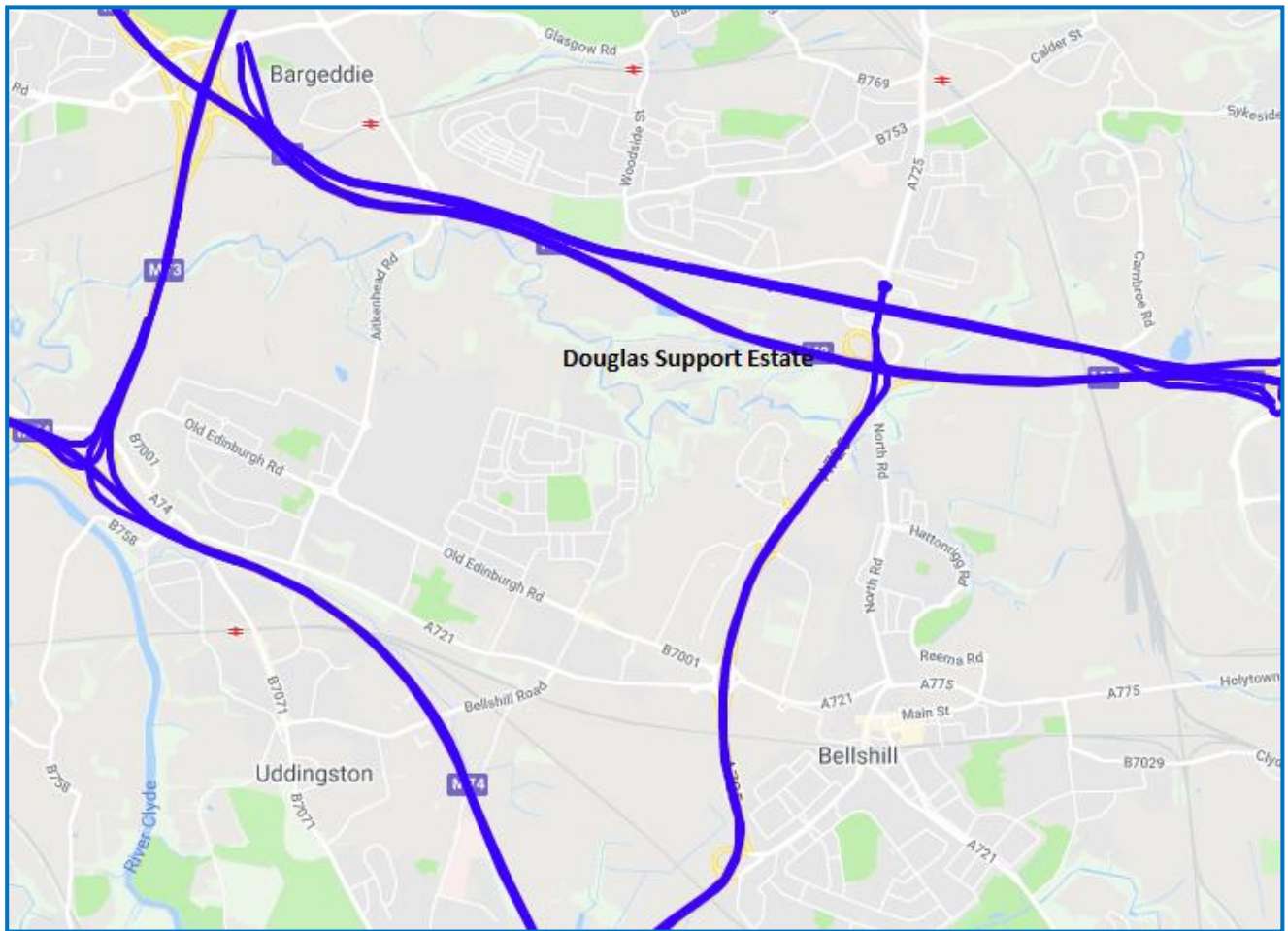
## Health and Wellbeing (Continued)

### The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) Profile for Viewpark

The ScotPHO Profiles present a range of indicators to give an overview of health and its wider determinants at a local level.

<b>Profile</b>	<b>ScotPHO profiles for Viewpark measure is significantly worse than both the National + North Lanarkshire</b>	<b>ScotPHO profile for Viewpark measure is significantly worse than the National</b>
<b>Life Expectancy &amp; Mortality</b>		Male and Female Life Expectancy Male Life expectancy
<b>Behaviours</b>		Alcohol related hospital stays
<b>Ill Health &amp; Injury</b>	Hospitalised with COPD	
	Asthma	
	Emergency hospitalisations Hospitalised with COPD	
<b>Mental Health</b>	Prescribed drugs for anxiety/ depression/ psychosis	
<b>Social Care &amp; Housing</b>	Adults claiming IB/DLA/PIP/ESA	
<b>Education</b>		Primary school attendance
<b>Economy</b>	Income deprived	
	Employment deprived	
	Claiming out of work benefits	
	Children living in poverty	
	Claiming pension credits (60+) Income deprived	
<b>Women &amp; Child Health</b>	Smoking in pregnancy	Exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks
<b>Immunisation &amp; Screening</b>	Bowel screening uptake	Breast Screening Uptake

## The Roads Network





### Contacts and Partnerships

During the course of this project, we have come in contact with a large number of organisations which have either already declared an interest in helping, or are organisations whose aims match the Viewpark Conservation Trust's aims and objectives.

Action Earth	North Lanarkshire Council
Adopt a Monument	Paths for All
Aspiring Communities Fund	Robertson Trust
Big Lottery Fund	Scottish Natural Heritage
Central Scotland Green Network	Scottish Rural Development Programme
Climate Challenge Fund	Talent Scotland
Community Land Scotland	Tesco
Community Links Fund	The Army in Scotland
Community Ownership Support Scotland	The Gardens Trust
Community Resources Network	The Weir Charitable Trust
Community Woodland Association	Transport Scotland
Development Trusts Association Scotland	William Grant & Sons
Forest Education Initiative	William Grant Foundation
Forestry Commission	Woodland Trust
Foundation Scotland	WREN
Gardens History Society	
Garfield Weston	
Get Walking Lanarkshire	
Greenspace Scotland	
Growing Together	
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	
Historic Environment Scotland	
Landfill Community Fund	

# It's a mistake to lose green spaces when we're in the red



REBECCA  
MCQUILLAN

If the choice right now were between a weekend in Falkirk or France, I'd take Falkirk.

That's not a sentence I ever thought I'd write, but it's sincerely meant. Given how we've lucked out with this glorious, gold-standard summer weather, hauling yourself off to a tourist-choked resort on the Med seems pointless when you could buy yourself a baguette and sit on the grass in Helix Park.

Helix Park, the former industrial wasteland between Falkirk and Grangemouth, has been a little paradise lately. It's a shining example of how, with confidence, vision and commitment, an unprepossessing landscape can be transformed into something a bit magical.

It is famous for the magnificent Kelpies, Andy Scott's monumental

sculptures of working horses (which are achingly beautiful and rightly revered), but the site has much more besides. A thoroughly modern reimagining of the Victorian public park, it is a huge space with a feeling of boundlessness, a wildlife haven with its own wetland, a riot of wildflowers, a network of paths and cycle routes that connect 16 communities, and a destination for families with an adventure playground worthy of the name. The restored Forth and Clyde Canal shimmers through it. It has a lagoon, for heaven's sake. No wonder the outdoor tables of its stylish cafes have been so much in demand. A piece of land so unloved that cars were once dumped in the disused canal, it is now a place where people come to laugh, to run, to lunch, to play. A place like this does the very thing its creators hoped it would do: it brings joy to people's lives.

But who would build a Helix Park now? Its transformation began before the financial crash, made possible by a Big Lottery grant awarded in 2007, with a host of far-sighted funders, including Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals, also committing to the project. The park opened in 2013. Many councils and public bodies would no doubt love to embark on such large-scale visionary projects nowadays, but how many

would have the confidence to take on even a portion of the set-up and maintenance costs, their ambition tamed and their hearts filled with angst by years of austerity?

Councils in particular are operating in a financial straitjacket. This, and rising demand for services like social care, have taken their toll, with the result that leisure, cultural and environmental services have taken a sustained hit. Councils could soon be spending four-fifths of their budgets on education and social work alone, according to the Accounts Commission. Fly-tipping, graffiti, weed-choked pathways and poor road maintenance are all on the rise again in many communities. No one would argue that building a new park should take precedence over caring properly for the elderly or supporting overstretched schools but when councils are forced to make such invidious choices year after year, there is serious detriment in the end. The danger is that austerity could usher in the return of overgrown wastelands.

What a sadness that would be. It doesn't take an expert to see how life-enhancing a well cared-for public green space can be (though a tower of PhD theses have been written on the topic). It's hard to quantify how many tormented souls have found peace walking in quiet parkland, how many heart attacks have been averted by exercise regimes that have had their faltering beginnings there, how many of the sick have boosted their recovery times by immersing themselves in green spaces, but anyone can see how important such sites are to a largely urban-dwelling population. We humans need green space like we need a healthy diet.

There is no quick solution to the squeeze on public finances, but perhaps we don't need to reinvent the (Falkirk) wheel to create, or improve, green spaces in Scotland. Perhaps we just need to think more creatively. How many reservoirs, for instance, are underdeveloped for public use? Could Scottish Water widen more paths, or collaborate with local artists to install

sculptures? Could landowners and estate managers work more proactively with local communities to extend Scotland's wheelchair, buggy and cycle-friendly by-ways?

One fact is clear: projects succeed when they are propelled forwards by the enthusiasm of local people (the restoration of the Forth and Clyde Canal being a prime example). We are in an age of stubborn inequality when the rich keep getting richer and the poor ever more dispossessed. Now is the time for a new generation of Victorian-style philanthropists to emerge, redistributing their wealth through public works, guided by and in partnership with local people. How fabulous it would be if the sadly abandoned Charles Jencks land art project transforming an old opencast mine in Kelty, Fife, could be finished and turned into the world-class park it was meant to be.

Apparently, for urban people, living near a park has a longer-lasting effect on happiness levels than marrying or getting a promotion. The moment that birdsong and the rustle of leaves becomes louder than the receding hum of traffic, can feel like coming up for air. Having dear green spaces in our lives is a deep-seated, primal need. What a mistake it is to economise on something so fundamental.

“Anyone can see how important such sites are to a largely urban-dwelling population. We need green space like we need a healthy diet

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/16346247.rebecca-mcquillan-its-a-mistake-to-lose-green-spaces-when-were-in-the-red/>