

# Eco group celebrating record £500,000 buyout of historic site

Scotland · North Lanarkshire · North Lanarkshire · Roseanna Cunningham · Community Land Scotland  
4 Aug 2020 By Deborah Anderson



**After a 16-year battle, Viewpark Conservation Group celebrates after securing ownership of 'Our Glen' in Lanarkshire**

IT started out as a petition against expanding a business park and now, 16 years later, a group of conservationists have just secured the largest urban land buyout in Scotland.

Our Glen, land at the Historic Douglas Support Estate, was bought by Viewpark Conservation Group in Lanarkshire and its 2,200 members. The 171 acres was acquired with funds of £512,600 from the Scottish Land Fund.

Dating back to the 17th century, the land was once home to Rosehall House. The mansion was demolished in 1939 and the area had been used for recreation for many years. In 2004 there were plans to expand Strathclyde Business Park in the

area, but campaigners began a fight to protect the site.

Roseanna Cunningham, Land Reform Secretary, said: "Communities across the country, whilst impacted in so many ways by the Covid-19 lockdown, are playing a vital role in maintaining our resilience, our spirit and local support networks.

"They will also play a critical role in our recovery from the pandemic, which is why I am delighted that the Viewpark Conservation Group

– one of 46 projects to have received a share of £8.1 million of Scottish Land Fund in 2019/20 – has finalised its community buyout. As well as creating jobs, the Our

Glen project will give the people of Lanarkshire a place to treasure, enjoy and improve their own well-being whilst protecting a wonderful part of our country."

Grace Mcneill, chairwoman of Viewpark Conservation Group, said: "My feet haven't touched the ground. The historic Douglas Estate now belongs to the people. After many delays, issues and hurdles, we now own the historic Douglas Estate. Thanks to all the board members, volunteers and fantastic community support – our glen is finally legally transferred into public ownership and we are most grateful to the Scottish Land Fund for their financial support.

“We have been top of all the lists for all the wrong reasons here, recording the highest levels of asthma and coronary heart disease in North Lanarkshire. This is an important step towards preserving and protecting Viewpark Glen and giving back something of natural beauty.”

Mrs Mcneill said they hoped future generations could be persuaded away from a sedentary lifestyle constantly on computers and iPad, and go out into the great outdoors for healthier exercise and fresh air.

She added: “There are woods with mature trees, fish in the North Calder, and habitat for deer, badgers and otters. It is a real asset to the area and the county.”

John Watt, Scottish Land Fund Committee chairman, said: “It is so gratifying to see the hard work of Viewpark Conservation Group coming to fruition. This is a perfect example of how the Scottish Land Fund can help motivated communities make a real difference to the lives of people in their local areas.”

The estate is bounded by the busy road network of the M8, M74 and the A725. The community group will

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Preserve and regenerate the land and have ambitious plans to manage the woodlands – tidying up and re-

planting, and to build a healthier more active community. Three jobs will also be created.

Mrs Mcneill added: “During lockdown we have seen a dramatic increase in people spending time in the great outdoors. There are wonderful walks here and we intend to improve those and create new river walks. We know that our facility helps to address mental health issues of lockdown, and we anticipate that spending time in green space will become prescriptive to address symptoms of anxiety.”

The funds will help to restore the farmhouse to create a reception area for people visiting the glen, with information and education facilities, a café and exhibition area to showcase the estate’s history.

Community Land Scotland, the membership organisation which supports rural and urban land buy-outs, is delighted Viewpark Conservation Group are the new owners.

Kristina Nitsolova, Urban Development Officer at Community Land

Scotland, which has supported the group, said: “This is the largest urban buy out in scale of land size since urban communities have been able to access funding to purchase land and assets to further the sustainable development of their local area in 2016.”