CASE STUDY

CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE PARK

South East Edinburgh

LOCATION

Situated in the south east of Edinburgh, between the communities of Craigmillar, Niddrie, The Inch and Moredun.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Made up of parkland, open space and woodland, the 62 hectare site is owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) is Forestry Commission Scotland’s programme to improve the quality of life for people living and working in urban Scotland.
OVERVIEW
From a neglected dumping ground to award
winning park in seven years thanks to local
enthusiasm and partnership working.
The park and woodlands have been
transformed into a safer and more
welcoming place for local people to enjoy
the peace and quiet of their local woods,
take exercise, meet friends and learn about
the wildlife in the area.
This is a project involving Forestry
Commission Scotland and the City of
Edinburgh Council.

UP 'TIL NOW
The park and castle have a long history dating back
to the 1300s. Throughout the 1900s the area was
neglected, and in the 1940s, large scale municipal
housing schemes were built in Craigmillar to help
address post war housing shortages. However these
were developed with few local amenities and little
regard to the park.

The park was used as a dumping ground, with
burnt out and abandoned vehicles common.
Fires were frequent, with one fire resulting in the loss
of thousands of trees. The park was also used as an
illegal scramble route for motorbikes, which damaged
paths and led to local people becoming worried
about their safety.

WHAT WIAT DID
Encouraging the local community to use the
woodlands and foster a sense of ownership was key.

An adventure playground was developed in 2009,
providing young people with a well-designed feature
to enjoy.

Since 2006, local school children have been involved
in a programme of outdoor learning, including
Forest School, which through different practical tasks set
in the forest environment, helps young people to develop
self-esteem, confidence and team working skills.

Funding from our Community Fund helped to run
several events including those on the page opposite:

TIMELINE
2003
Craigmillar was reported to
be the fourth worst place in
Scotland for unemployment,
economic deprivation and
social exclusion.

2004
£400,000 of
WIAT grant
funding was
received.

2005
A Community Officer
was appointed to
provide local people
with a point of contact.

2006
£50,000 investment helped to
develop the path network through
a training programme using local
volunteers. Work also began to
engage with local schools.
BEYOND THE VEIL

Run by the Association of Scottish Muslims, this project facilitated day trips for the local community to various woodland locations in order to build confidence and understanding about where and how to safely access greenspace. Craigmillar was one of the woodlands visited. The project benefits included:

- increased confidence;
- family bonding time in greenspace and through outdoor games;
- learning new skills;
- improved physical and mental wellbeing; and
- making these activities affordable for people living in deprived areas.

WAY OF THE WOODS

This innovative outdoor creative arts/environmental project was specifically designed to help develop life skills and build confidence and responsibility in young people, aged 17- early 20s, with complex and severe communication needs on the TEENS+ project.

Twelve sessions were held - six at Craigmillar - with ten young people with disabilities. Although very close to the centre, this was the first time the woods had been used by the group.

The project contributed to their understanding of the importance of trees and local greenspace and encouraged a sense of ownership.

At the same time there was an emphasis on staff training and supporting the TEENS+ project workers to help a hard-to-reach group to engage with nature and the outdoors in a creative way.

ROWANBANK MAGICAL WOODLAND WALKS

Rowanbank specialise in providing innovative out-door events that introduce children to the magic of nature.

They held a series of woodland based workshops for children in primary schools and early learning/family centres near Craigmillar Woods. The workshops involved the children in a community event in the woodlands, with the children building simple structures and making forest artwork that formed part of the show.

The wider local community took part in a ‘magical woodland walk’, where the audience was taken on a journey through the forest, led by a story-teller.

WINTER WOODLANDS GREENABILITY PROJECT

This project was run by The Conservation Volunteers, who aim to bring together people and communities to transform their health and work prospects by improving the woods.


Each workshop also provided opportunities for learning for support staff to increase confidence and skills around working in the outdoors with their clients in the future.

2007

The Craigmillar Woodland Action Group was set up to help with work on site and influence development.

2009

Branching Out sessions began.

2010

Craigmillar received the Green Flag Award.

2015

Over £16,000 was secured from the FCS Community Fund for events including: Rowanbank Magical Woodland Walks, Junction Positive Pathway Programme and for 24 nature-based sensory activities for people with disabilities.
LOOKING AHEAD

To help sustain the momentum created by all the activities mentioned above we held a promotional presentation about the new WIAT grant scheme and will lead a guided walk around Craigmillar woodlands to highlight the types of capital and maintenance operations which the new Forestry Grant Scheme would support. The City of Edinburgh Council are considering applying for grants to fund the ongoing silvicultural and access improvements the woodlands require.

Forestry Commission Scotland serves as part of the Scottish Government’s Environment and Forestry Directorate and is responsible to Scottish Ministers.

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