



## Glasgow wasteland to woodland

*In the coming months and years, two new community woodlands will take shape in east Glasgow – one at Bothwell Park, a derelict dumping ground near Bellshill, and the other on the massive Greenoakhill landfill site near Mount Vernon. Ida Maspero reports.*

Autumn is a good time for planting trees, and at Bothwell Park, a 49-hectare wasteland wedged between two railway lines and a dual carriageway, the planting will get underway this season in a bid to create a useful new greenspace. Owned mostly by North Lanarkshire Council, Bothwell Park is the largest single site on the county's vacant and derelict land register and it is blighted by remnants of its industrial past – at various times it was host to a clay pit and brickworks, smithy, railway works, and municipal landfill. More recently, its abandoned state has invited fly-tipping.

Led by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) Scottish Lowlands Forest District, the decontamination, tree planting and path-building work in the coming months will transform this unsafe waste ground into a community woodland for local people to enjoy. "We'd like to bring it into use because we know from research that vacant and derelict land breeds yet more vacant and derelict land," says Douglas Knox, FCS Land Regeneration Programme Manager. "So, this is an attempt to stem the flow, if you will, to bring about a change in this area and stop the spread of dereliction."

comprising mainly native broadleaved species. There will be some open parkland and wetland too. But first, there is plenty of cleaning up to do. "Our surveys have revealed the land to be contaminated with the usual nasties," says Knox, "Heavy metals, mining materials, asbestos, you name it. There are dumped remains from mining and railway works, and large objects from fly-tipping. We will remove and treat all this as best we can, and stabilise the ground to make the area safe... quite a complex and costly operation."

While decontamination, stabilisation and tree planting are obvious steps in creating the new woodland, Knox stresses that providing good pedestrian access for the local

The forest design plan for Bothwell Park, approved in September, is for about 10 hectares of mixed woodland

Above: An active landfill site. Photo: Flickr user United Nations Photo. Used under a Creative Commons Attribution License.

community is equally key. “Public access is at the forefront of our thinking from the off. This is not just a straight reclamation effort – we’re combining it with path-building at the outset. The footpaths will be integrated with the drainage, so will be part of our initial work.” FCS will continue to manage the new woodland on a long term basis; it is not simply “parachuting in and pulling out again”. The plan is to open the newly created greenspace for public access from spring 2012.

### **Greenoakhill: landfill to greenspace**

Bothwell Park is one of a number of sites in the greater Glasgow that FCS Scottish Lowlands Forest District has targeted for similar woodland restoration. “There is a lot of vacant and derelict land in North and South Lanarkshire and greater Glasgow, so we’ll look to be more active here in future,” says Knox.

Probably the most exciting plan in the pipeline is the reclamation of the massive Greenoakhill landfill site near Mount Vernon. This project is still in the planning stages, so little detail is available, but the plan is to gradually turn what is known as one of Europe’s largest landfill sites into woodland over the next 20 years.

This will be a phased project, explains Knox, with sections of the former quarry being reclaimed to woodland once they have been back-filled with waste. As a managed and regulated landfill site, Greenoakhill is less likely to harbour the nasty contamination uncovered at Bothwell Park, but the scale of the restoration to woodland cover is unprecedented.

Though small pilot plantings have been established, Knox emphasises that “we are still very much in the early stages of this project. We’re working with the landowner and

stakeholders to scope out the work required.” Over the winter the team will set up a public consultation for the forest design plan, which will hopefully be delivered next year.

**Learning curve**  
Bothwell Park and Greenoakhill are examples of a new direction for Forestry Commission Scotland. “Creating amenity woodland on derelict ground and landfill sites has certainly not been a core, traditional area of work for FCS the past,” says Knox, “but it is one which we’ll be pursuing more of in future.”

With this new area of work come new challenges and safety considerations. The FCS Central Scotland team is coming to grips with the technicalities of afforesting contaminated land with the help of counterparts in England. “We are learning as much as we can from our colleagues who work on the massive Newlands land regeneration scheme in northwest England. Experts from this ten-year project are helping us understand these sites, how to make them safe and reclaim them as cost-effectively as we can. We have quite a skills capacity to build among our own staff and our earthworks contractors.”

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Above: Aerial view of Bothwell Park. Photo: Forestry Commission Scotland.

All this learning will no doubt be put to good use as plans for more new woodlands in neglected corners of the crowded Central Belt take off. “There is plenty of political goodwill and community support for this kind of woodland creation, which ensures the land can be removed from the vacant and derelict land register,” concludes Knox. “It can make a real difference in socially deprived areas, giving people accessible greenspaces to enjoy and hopefully help improve their health and well-being, while also helping to meet Scotland’s climate change mitigation targets through new woodland creation.”

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