

D1.1. Blair Castle Heritage Skills

Project Overview:	<p>Blair Castle is a Category A Listed building just outside Culross, Fife. Since 1927 it has been owned and used as a Convalescence Home by Scottish Coal Board. Whilst still retaining many original features, sadly the beautiful estate grounds are under used and have been falling into disrepair. Through this project, the LINK Group saw an opportunity to use the grounds to provide training opportunities in practical estate management skills for local unemployed people and volunteers whilst also helping to care for the historic gardens around the house.</p> <p>3 estate management training workshops were held, providing valuable skills to local unemployed people, housing association residents as well as interested members of the public. 6 fun heritage taster events encouraged the use of local natural materials, including willow weaving and spring wreath making and engaged new audiences.</p> <p>3 community outreach events involved miners and their families staying in the house, two local primary schools and residents of Culross. These events helped to promote the project and build links with the local community.</p> <p>The project closed after 14 months of activity.</p>
Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:	Link Group Ltd (lead partner) Ore Valley Housing Association, Scottish Mineworkers Convalescent Trust, Community Growing Solutions, The Ecology Centre
Project Location:	Scottish Mineworkers Convalescent Trust, Blair Castle, Culross, Fife, KY12 8JW
Project dates	August 2014 – September 2015

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
<i>People trained in land management skills</i>	30	30	Mix of referrals, volunteers and local residents at the Estate
<i>Heritage skills training events</i>	6	3	Tool refurbishment, strimmer use, tree & plant ID, 6 taster events
<i>Number people attending events</i>	60	97	Attendance at outreach events
<i>Edible Border sites established</i>	3	2	No longer maintained

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of the Inner Forth?

It was originally anticipated that through the process of delivering training and engaging local people in the management of the grounds of the Grade A listed Blair Castle estate, that the woodlands, pathways and walled gardens would be better maintained.

Upon further investigation, however, it was unfortunately discovered that activities to protect some of the more fragile and unique aspects of the estate (such as restoring bee boles and lime mortaring in the walled garden) could not take place due to health and safety concerns due to the extent of structural deterioration. When the edible borders were destroyed by rabbits, it became apparent that there was a lack of capacity to provide sufficient ongoing management and maintenance of garden features.

What difference has this project made to people?

The strimmer training successfully attracted attendees, particularly those seeking to enter employment, and provided them with a valuable and useful training certificate.

Hosting of and attendance at community events helped to strengthen the links between the estate and the neighbouring village of Culross, and provided opportunities for networking

Useful Links

<http://www.blaircastle.net/history.htm>

Future Plans

The LINK Group has no further plans to continue to provide training opportunities at the Estate.

Lessons Learned

The long lead in time between the project idea being formed and project start up in August 2014 affected the project in several ways. The physical condition of the estate deteriorated during this time affecting what was possible at the site. The relationships and expectations of the various organisations also changed.

Unfortunately participation on the formal and informal training opportunities on offer at the Estate was lower than expected. In future, more detailed scoping of the interests of the target audience group (particularly social housing tenants and people on employability programmes in

Fife), would help ensure training opportunities are appropriate to their interests and abilities.

The Scottish Mineworkers Convalescent Trust has limited resources to maintain the grounds of the house, so any activities undertaken through the project were inadequately maintained.

Photographic Evidence

Community launch event, August 2014



Tree maintenance and care training, Feb 2015



Spring wreath making, March 2015



Funding Partners



Year 1 of the project was part funded through the Scottish Government's People and Communities Fund