

OUR PLAN 2025-2026

POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This is our plan for the financial year 2025/26. This document is intended to record and communicate the headline focus, priorities and activities that the Trust will undertake during the year. The key points summarised below provide an overview of our plans and ambitions for the year and the context in which we are operating.

DRIVERS

- The need for what we do has never been greater, both in terms of global and local environmental pressures and the importance of addressing inequalities and improving health
- Policies are in place that provide the framework and incentives to improve Scotland's environment, including 30x30, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill. NPF4
- After funding uncertainty in 2024, Scottish Government commitments, including our CSGN grant, signal that the will is there to enable positive change and we can play a big role in its delivery

LONG-TERM AMBITIONS

- Deliver more projects on the ground that have a positive social and environmental impact
- Put in place mechanisms to substantially increase the impact of the Trust and our partners, primarily via the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN), over the next few years
- Position the Trust as the leading delivery partner for Scotland's environmental regeneration, through our exemplary work, increased communications, and investment in – and support for – our team

THIS YEAR'S PRIORITIES

- Develop and deliver our pipeline of projects and programmes, including research and development of new opportunities for blue-green infrastructure, landscape-scale interventions and new partners, sectors and funding sources
- $\ensuremath{\diamondsuit}$ Build and re-engage partnerships to make the CSGN more effective and impactful
- Deliver a sustainable and resilient organisation that people want to partner with and to work for

CHALLENGES

- Changing political landscape/priorities and the uncertainty this produces we will have contingency plans for scenarios that could impact our work and funding base
- Managing capacity to deliver committed projects, particularly the ambitious scale of the Leven Programme, alongside developing and delivering the CSGN, our pipeline and new proposals
- Delivering the year's activities on budget, maintaining our financial sustainability



ABOUT THE GREEN ACTION TRUST

Our vision is of a Scotland where people, nature and the environment thrive, side by side.

With nearly four decades of delivering environmental regeneration projects across Scotland, we provide bespoke solutions to turn policy into action on climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental inequality.

Working closely with a range of public, private and non-profit partners across Scotland, we develop and deliver projects and programmes that improve the health and wellbeing of people and nature where they are needed most.

Our major programmes include coordinating and delivering the Central Scotland Green Network, one of the most ambitious green infrastructure initiatives in Europe.

Alongside our large-scale partnership work, we provide project development and management services to deliver transformational change that benefits nature and communities at a local level.

We provide environmental solutions in the following areas:



Urban greenspace



Surface water management



Woodland & forestry



Green active travel



Vacant & derelict land



Habitat & biodiversity



Supporting Global and National Outcomes

Our work contributes to Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF), which sets out a vision for the country's collective wellbeing. The framework aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provides a set of outcomes and indicators that we contribute to at a national level.

We achieve this through aligning our work with policies and strategies such as 30x30, National Planning Framework 4, and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Our work also delivers on the four priorities outlined in the current Programme for Government.

The key NPF outcomes that our workstreams deliver are:











STRATEGIC DIRECTION

This business plan is written in the context of our 5-year strategic vision to increase our positive impact by 2030.

The priorities set out for the financial year 2025-26 reflect both a short-term need to build on the CSGN's impact with current partnerships, and a longer-term ambition to broaden our reach and funding base.

The steps we take this year will therefore cement our value proposition within the public sector, while paving the way for future growth. As such, we will establish a baseline this year from which to define our performance and measures of success over the five-year period.

Increasing our positive impact

How we build our vision and values into our actions:

- We build everything from our purpose and values to create benefit for those communities we live in and serve
- We build on what we are good at: trust, integrity, collaboration
- We empower and bring people with us our team, our partners and our communities
- We build on and grow our skills and successes in project delivery for nature and people
- We continue to deliver impact through exemplar placebased projects, more collaborative partnerships and more investable natural capital projects
- We will always grow our people, capacity and our offer in line with our purpose



OUR ROLE IN THE CENTRAL SCOTLAND GREEN NETWORK

Covering 10,000 square kilometres and with a 40-year timeframe, the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) is one of the largest and most ambitious green infrastructure programmes in Europe. It includes 19 of Scotland's 32 local authorities, takes in 87% of the country's most deprived areas and offers the potential to improve the lives of 3.5 million people, or 65% of the population.

Through the support of the Scottish Government and over 80 partners, its focus is to address climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental inequality by connecting people to greenspace where it is needed most.

The Green Action Trust has been tasked with coordinating CSGN delivery since its inception. The Trust achieves this through a combination of direct project development/delivery and facilitating action through a wide range of CSGN partners across public, private and voluntary sectors.

Included as a National Development in NPF4, the CSGN is also a major contributor to Scottish Government's targets to address the twin crises of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss, as well as moving towards net zero emissions. It also has a significant role to play in Scotland's National Performance Framework.

The Trust's role in the CSGN includes the following:

- Raising awareness & understanding of the role of the CSGN in delivering multiple benefits
- Co-ordination of CSGN partner activities to maximise the effectiveness and multi-functionality of delivery
- Maintaining a supportive environment for CSGN delivery
- Delivery of DP30 (Delivery Plan 2030) workstream activities





"The CSGN forms the context for all our work at the Trust. We are excited about the plans we have made for the programme this year to deliver even greater impact across the region, together with our partners."

Tom Campbell, CEO

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

The Wider Environmental Context

At a global level, we are operating in a time of deep instability and economic headwinds. International policy and climate sceptics are attacking the equalities, biodiversity and net zero agendas.

Many organisations are rolling back on their commitments to get to Net Zero and the drive to drill and extract our rare earth minerals is the front and foremost agenda of some of the biggest global economies.

Countries are rolling back on UN agreements and commitments to sustainability and reducing support for those countries that need it most in the face of climate change and conflict.

Despite this, there is a strong commitment within our national and regional sphere to make things better. We will stand with partners and commit unwaveringly to advocating support where it is needed – for people and nature.

Our drivers have not changed despite the geo-political crises; our vision is to create a Scotland where people and nature thrive.

Now is the time to grow our voice, our impact and our influence.

At a more local level, there are multiple policies and strategic drivers that we are committed to supporting and which drive our delivery.

Local Policy Drivers

At a national level, the policy context in Scotland provides us with some powerful drivers to take our work – and that of the CSGN – forward. Examples include:

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan, which sets out the following outcomes relevant to the CSGN:

- · Accelerate restoration and regeneration
- Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas
- · Embed nature-positive farming, fishing and forestry
- Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats
- Invest in nature
- · Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss

National Planning Framework 4 sets the spatial land use framework for Scotland. The following are relevant to GAT and CSGN:

- The CSGN is named as a National Development
- The focus is on delivering sustainable, liveable, and productive places. Biodiversity and nature are identified as foundational in achieving these.

Scotland's Natural Capital Market Framework – this framework is unequivocal on the policy intent to attract more high-integrity private investment in Scotland's natural capital as being essential.

The current **Programme for Government** contains four priorities, towards which the CSGN and all our work contribute.

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PRIORITIES FOR 2025-26

This year's priorities reflect both the challenges and the opportunities before us, particularly in the context of delivering greater impact across the Central Scotland Green Network.

Delivering on these priorities takes us a step towards achieving our 5-year strategic goals, not least to establish a baseline in terms of impact measurement and business performance, from which to grow.

Our priorities for 2025-26 are:

1. Increase the effectiveness and impact of the CSGN

2. Develop and deliver CSGN projects on the ground

3. Maintain a sustainable and thriving organisation



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DELIVERING SUCCESS

This is how we will address these priorities and establish our measures of success.

1. Increase the effectiveness and impact of the CSGN

We will address this priority by focusing on the following three outcomes:

- Increase awareness, engagement and buy-in, through:
 - A focus on partnership working
 - Regular communication and sharing of resources, outcomes and opportunities
 - Measuring and demonstrating the CSGN's benefits, value and impact
 - Implementing our engagement plan, including a major event
- Broaden CSGN's reach, impact and the partner/funding base, through:
 - Development of new project opportunities across LA areas
 - Seeking new partners public and private funders/sectors who share common goals
 - Preparation of a BNG proposition
- Policy and tackling barriers
 - Simplifying procurement
 - Addressing access to land
 - Concordats
 - Response to policy development

2. Develop and deliver CSGN projects on the ground

We will address this priority by focusing on the following three outcomes:

- Landscape-scale partnerships
 - Major delivery phase at Leven
 - Continued support and delivery of Clyde Climate Forest
 - Scoping of a third potential partnership around the Forth
- Project development and delivery
 - Deliver our pipeline of projects
 - Ensure a mix of outcomes that align with CSGN and Scottish Government priorities
 - Develop proposals and offerings around VDL. GIS and habitat services
- Pilots and exemplars
 - Seeking collaborations to showcase Raingardens and other nature-based solutions
 - Development of WEF surface water management and riparian restoration projects with wider social and health benefits
 - Delivery of a Nature Networks pilot

3. Maintain a sustainable and thriving organisation

We will address this priority by focusing on the following three outcomes:

- Financial sustainability
 - Setting and monitoring targets around costs and income
 - Development of proposals to diversify our income base
 - Ensuring a mix of projects and services that deliver maximum impact alongside ongoing investment
- Developing our team and internal processes
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Training and development
 - Benefits and staff support
 - Encouraging a positive work culture
 - Continuous improvement of our processes, including project management, data management, monitoring and risk management
- Improving our environmental performance
 - Review our environmental and sustainability policy
 - Obtain ISO 14001 accreditation
 - Establish a net zero pathway and circular economy principles

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LANDSCAPE-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership working lies at the heart of the Central Scotland Green Network and all our work. We are in a unique position to enable the delivery of positive social and environmental outcomes by bringing partners together who share strategic objectives. By working collaboratively to create meaningful partnerships, we can deliver more and at scale.

In 2025-26 we will:

- Focus on increasing the impact and effectiveness of the CSGN as a whole, alongside delivering projects on the ground, as expressed in the priorities set out in this plan
- Continue to support the partnerships and directly deliver projects via existing landscape-scale partnerships (see the following pages for detail):
 - o Leven Programme
 - Clyde Climate Forest
- Building on the success of the Leven Programme, scope out the potential to bring partners and initiatives across the Forth catchment together to form a new collaborative development programme

Central Scotland Green Network



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THE LEVEN PROGRAMME

Overview

The Leven Programme is a partnership initiative formed in 2018 to bring together public bodies, businesses and community representatives who want to make a positive difference to the River Leven and its surrounding areas. Located within the CSGN area and delivering on multiple CSGN outcomes, it aims to breathe life back into the river's catchment area through delivery of multiple large-scale projects.

As an active partner, Green Action Trust will continue to support the development of the programme as whole and follow through on our delivery role on key projects. Following several years of development work, this year sees a significant set of milestones. Having secured over £5m of funding for project delivery over the next four years, we are expanding the Leven team to bring these projects to fruition. This represents a major part of the Trust's work over the coming year and is hugely positive for the Trust, the Leven Programme and the CSGN.

Key plans for 2025-26

- ❖ Begin the River Park Programme's delivery. We will lead project delivery and coordinate the River Park Programme Partnership
- Identify new opportunities for the Trust through the Leven Programme's developing work areas, including climate adaptation and expanding the Nature Network.
- Embed the Trust's learnings from the Leven Programme within our Programme Management Team
- Completion of main construction projects Nature Network Phase 1 and the Accessibility & Mill Lade Heritage Trail
- Successful establishment of a range of activity-based training opportunities, Community Engagement events within a range of projects
- Successfully complete NRF and LRP project scope to draw down our awarded grants

The Leven Programme contributes to multiple NPF outcome categories:



Environment









Poverty Communities

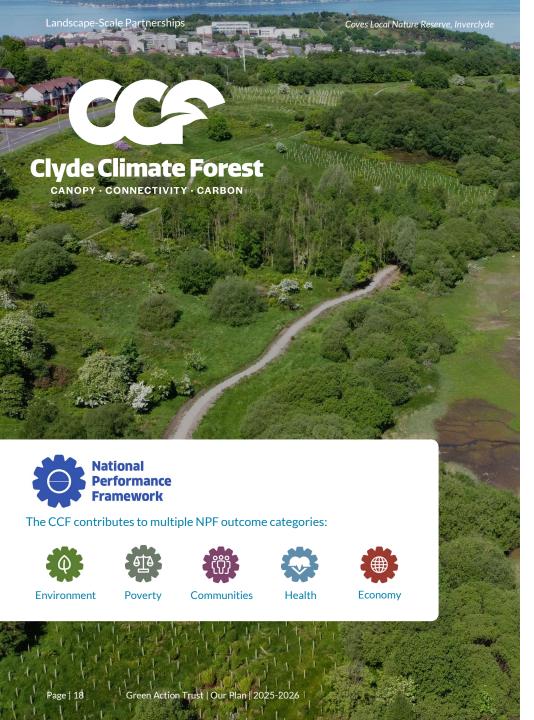
Health

Economy



£5.3M

Reconnected Programme, NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland, Fife Council and Diageo



CLYDE CLIMATE FOREST

Overview

The Clyde Climate Forest (CCF) is a partnership initiative with a target of planting 18 million trees over the next decade across the Glasgow City Region. The Green Action Trust is a lead delivery partner in the initiative, hosting both the Director and Development Manager roles. We work closely with our delivery partners and the 8 Local Authorities to deliver tree planting and community engagement.

Trees, woodlands, and forests provide a nature-based solution to the twin challenges of a changing climate and ecological collapse. The CCF has specific objectives based on the three 'C's': Canopy, Connectivity, and Carbon. The CCF also contributes to the CSGN.

We successfully delivered against our key plans from last year, including adding a new member to the CCF Executive team who is introducing the Tree Warden scheme to the region. We will soon have all 8 assessments for the local authorities and so we will use our existing resources to build on these achievements.

- Continue to introduce and expand the Tree Warden scheme across the region, offering training opportunities to volunteers in order to increase community engagement and provide valuable skills to local people.
- Use the local authority assessments and nature network mapping to identify opportunities to expand our connectivity sites.
- Continue engaging with local authorities to identify tree planting opportunities and create 'shovel ready' sites for the coming years.
- Build on the work done in our 16 Target Neighbourhoods to increase tree canopy cover and review our progress and consider new target neighbourhoods using the Tree Equity tool.
- Investigate further partnership opportunities and funding mechanisms

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

Alongside our large-scale programmes, we provide project development and management services to help our partners and clients across the country deliver on their social and environmental commitments. This section outlines how we will develop new projects, fill our project pipeline, and follow through on the delivery of work already under way.

Project/Programme Development

- 1. Deliver projects on the ground across the CSGN
- Manage and deliver our pipeline of ~30 projects
- 2. Support local authorities
- Identify local authorities and other stakeholders who would benefit from increased CSGN delivery
- Address procurement challenges in local authorities and put in place processes to make it simpler to commission our services
- Build partnerships at executive and operational levels within local authorities
- 3. Service and Sector Development
- Develop offerings around VDL, GIS, management plans and BNG offsetting
- Pursue new funding streams and mechanisms such as FIRNS
- Investigate other sources of funding, including natural capital investment
- 4. Support Scottish Government priorities and ambitions
- Identify and discuss further opportunities to deliver exemplar or pilot projects with additional funding, e.g. Nature Networks

The following pages summarise our plans to develop and deliver projects across our six interconnected themes.

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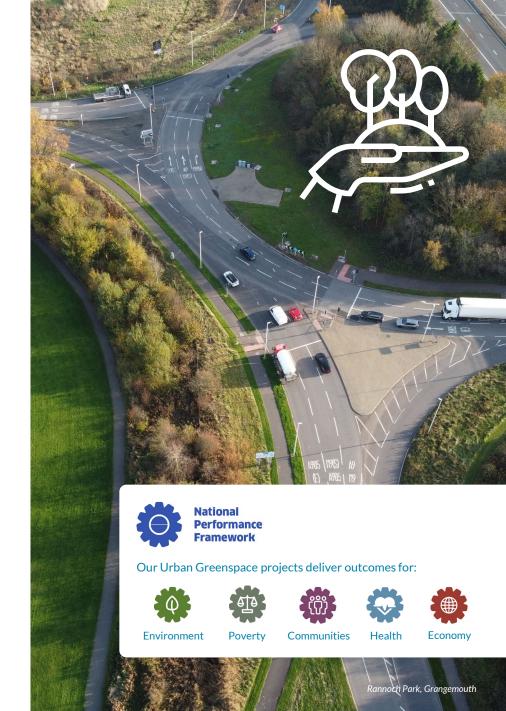
URBAN GREENSPACE

Overview

Enhancing green, nature-rich spaces in our urban areas has been proven to be a crucial element to healthier urban living. In well-designed spaces, this human benefit can be achieved through the integration of elements such as biodiversity, surface water management, active travel links and general amenity.

In line with the CSGN's objectives, we aim to deliver high quality, multi-functional, climate resilient spaces across all scales of landscape. This year we will build on our expertise across the environmental spectrum to work effectively with stakeholders including local authorities, community groups, and housing associations.

- Support delivery of the CSGN action plan objectives for green infrastructure, including at least two exemplar partner projects.
- Promote the Nature Restoration Fund with local authorities as a potential funding source for the creation and delivery of more multi- functional spaces across the urban environment.
- Deliver multiple outcomes on environmental projects within the urban environment with parties such as SEPA
- Work with local authorities to link their Nature Networks to other environmental and funding opportunities by providing a spatial and habitat mapping service to enhance their offering.
- Seek further opportunities with other environmental stakeholders to develop meaningful places, e.g. as part of 30x30, Community Wealth Building, Growing Spaces, and 20-minute Neighbourhoods.



WOODLAND & FORESTRY

Overview

Woodlands and forests play a vital role in fighting both the climate and biodiversity emergencies. They are also key components of multipurpose greenspaces that provide benefits to local people, such as shade and pleasant places to walk and rest. As we look to deliver on CSGN commitments to carbon sequestration and biodiversity, providing new woodlands – and improving and managing existing ones – are key drivers for our work.

Our Forestry team has undergone some changes during the last year with the addition of two new foresters. Although the team is still fairly new, we are enthusiastic and committed to improving and expanding woodlands and working with the wider GAT team to deliver the multiple benefits of trees and woodlands to partners and communities.

- ❖ Work with local authorities and the Clyde Climate Forest team to identify and help deliver woodland and tree planting across the Glasgow City Region.
- Work with landowners and local authorities to expand woodlands and forests across the Central Scotland Green Network.
- Continue to deliver maintenance of existing forest and woodland sites.
- Engage with new organisations and build on existing relationships to find opportunities to increase woodland cover on public and private land.
- Embrace opportunities to promote the Trust's woodland and forestry work.
- Embed our new Forestry Team within the Trust and support them with the resources needed to deliver on our commitments.



VACANT AND DERELICT LAND

Overview

Greening vacant and derelict land (VDL) continues to be both a challenge and an opportunity. Sites are disproportionately associated with disadvantaged areas of post-industrial Scotland and are often challenging to remediate and enable future use. As a CSGN priority, the Trust continues to identify opportunities where projects can bring benefits to communities and local biodiversity.

This year will see some major development work come to fruition, notably the Cadder Woods project in north Glasgow, where work on the ground commenced in March 2025. A pause on VDLIP funding in 2024/25 affected project development and delivery, but the funding pot is open again for 2025/26.

- Ensure VDL projects deliver the policy outcome of NPF4 in their contribution to nature recovery
- ❖ Complete an in-house review of VDL site information across the CSGN; use this to re-engage with partners and enable project development.
- Work with local authority partners to identify priority VDL sites for future remediation through a range of funding streams and/or a re-launched Scottish Government fund
- Deliver a high impact £900k project at Cadder Woods, supporting active travel, biodiversity and wider community benefit with the ambition that the site secures Local Nature Reserve status
- Continue to support the ongoing Ravenscraig regeneration programme with the development of green infrastructure opportunities within the wider regeneration of the site, including active travel links.



SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

Overview

The need to adapt to our changing climate is becoming much more important, with warmer and wetter winters, as well as more frequent periods of heavy rainfall, which can overwhelm our historically combined drainage systems. We are responding to this need at a variety of scales, as well as delivering on the CSGN aims of developing natural climate solutions and making liveable places.

We are bringing together partners and stakeholders to work in collaboration on options for river restoration in priority catchment areas, slowing the flow of water to ease downstream flooding issues and improving river corridor biodiversity. This work, in partnership with SEPA, local authorities and other stakeholders is key to progressing improving watercourse condition in priority areas.

To promote the use of nature-based solutions for surface water management at an urban scale, we continue to lead the 10,000 Raingardens for Scotland initiative, which champions and encourages the use of raingardens as a sustainable drainage solution.

- Following publication of our 10,000 Raingardens for Scotland research study last year, continue to build the business case for raingardens and sustainable drainage, aimed at land owners and managers.
- Continue to develop and lead Water Environment Fund (WEF) projects with partners, delivering on CSGN objectives and repairing urban rivers.
- ❖ As part of the CSGN action plan, develop further exemplar raingarden projects under the 10,000 Raingardens programme.
- Highlight the contribution blue-green spaces can make to placemaking, biodiversity and health and wellbeing, as part of knowledge sharing and promoting best practice to CSGN partners



HABITAT & BIODIVERSITY

Overview

The importance of functioning ecosystems in an adapting climate, where our native species need a well-connected environment to survive has never been clearer. Biodiverse places contribute to climate adaptation, carbon storage, water management and people's health and wellbeing.

The recently published Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan set out actions to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity, with the vision: "By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas."

Our project development will maximise the regeneration of biodiversity where appropriate, supporting nature networks and nature-based solutions that bring people closer to nature.

Our project plans will create and improve important habitats including woodlands, hedgerows, wetlands and grasslands, contributing to CSGN aims to develop natural climate solutions and make liveable places.

- Deliver projects for partners that prioritise native species and habitats and contribute to wider ecosystem benefits across the landscape.
- Deliver programme and projects that address Scottish Biodiversity Strategy objectives and targets.
- Respond to NatureScot's guidance and consultations on biodiversity and nature related policy
- Develop our plans to integrate positive biodiversity gain and demonstrable ecosystem service benefits from project delivery
- Work with our partners to deliver Nature Restoration Funded projects where biodiversity improvement is the focus.
- Develop woodland and biodiversity management planning and recommendations with our partners to ensure that all environmental projects integrate benefits for nature.



GREEN ACTIVE TRAVEL

Overview

Active travel is a critical link in our transportation network, giving communities the choice to travel more sustainably. Active travel helps to create places that are more inclusive, promoting more active lifestyles.

We help local authorities and other developers deliver green active travel routes that provide opportunities for access to greenspace, biodiversity enhancements and community connections. Greening these routes also provides the opportunity to make valuable habitat connections across the CSGN.

The funding landscape for active travel has recently changed with the new Active Travel Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) - Tier 1 taking over from previous Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes (CWSR) funding. This fund goes directly to local authorities through their General Capital Grant. The ATIF Tier 2 Design and Construction Funds also takes over from Sustrans' Places for Everyone Funding.

There is an ongoing need for all Scottish local authorities to develop Active Travel Strategies and use the central funding given to them for active travel projects. In the year ahead, the Trust will continue to provide expertise and capacity to deploy these funds and deliver these projects.

- Engage with Roads and Development teams within local authorities to offer our services to these teams and help develop their plans and projects.
- At a higher level, engage these teams through umbrella organisations such as SCOTS (The Scottish Collaboration of Transportation Specialists).
- Promote the work of the CSGN to potential stakeholders such as housebuilders in the context of green active travel infrastructure.
- Promote opportunities to deliver safe, accessible and well-connected neighbourhoods as part of the 20-minute neighbourhood approach to placemaking.



DEVELOPING OUR TEAM

In our ongoing efforts to ensure we fully support and develop our people, we recognise the importance of investing in skills and encouraging the personal growth of individuals. Last year saw a significant restructure and bedding in of new teams.

This year, as we continue to grow our team, we will support staff as new roles and objectives are established.

The key areas of focus in 2025/26 will be:



Recruitment and retention

We will continue to focus on attracting top talent, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, and implementing robust onboarding processes.

We aim to enhance our recruitment strategies by utilising technology and data-driven insights to identify and attract candidates who align with our organisational values and culture.



Training and development

We will invest in ongoing training and development initiatives to upskill and empower our team members, ensuring they are equipped to excel in their roles and contribute to the organization's objectives. Our KRA process will identify learning opportunities and areas for cross-sharing of information and skills.



Benefits and support

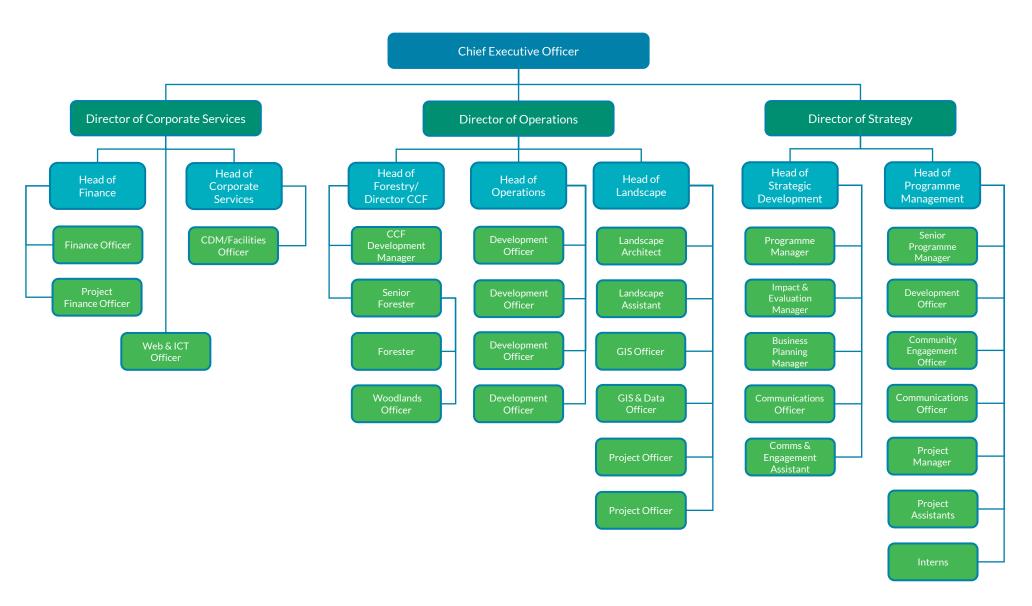
To support our employees' growth and wellbeing, we are committed to enhancing our benefits and support program by offering a range of financial and non-financial benefits such as flexible work arrangements, mental health resources, healthcare and competitive remuneration for a charity. Our Trustee-led pay and rewards committee will continue to monitor the wellbeing of staff and the employee offering, pay gaps and employee engagement.



Members of the Green Action Trust team with CSGN Ambassador Mark Beaumont

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APPENDIX I: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



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APPENDIX II: RISK MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Green Action Trust is committed to implementing a robust risk management framework that ensures regulatory compliance, and operational resilience. The Trust recognises the importance of proactively identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks that could impact its objectives.

Behind the identified risks lies a comprehensive risk management and mitigation plan that is subject to quarterly review by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Refreshing our Risk Management Structure

We are committed to continuous improvement in our risk management processes, fostering a resilient and adaptive organisational culture. To this end, a comprehensive review and refresh of our Risk Management Structure is under way, for roll-out during this financial year.

Building on our existing risk management procedures, we will develop a framework that aligns with industry best practices, including ISO 31000:2018 (Risk Management Principles and Guidelines) and ISO 14001:2015 (Environmental Management Systems).

This structured risk assessment framework will ensure that resources are allocated efficiently, focusing on high-priority risks that require immediate intervention.

By embedding more robust risk management into our decision-making and operations, the Trust will enhance its ability to manage uncertainties and create opportunities for sustainable growth.

The risk register will outline a number of key risk areas, including:

- Management of programmes and projects
- Finance
- Health and safety
- Management of resources

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