

## UNITED KINGDOM

# LEADER

### Location

LAG South Lanarkshire.  
Lanark.

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local  
development

### Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 210 307  
EAFRD 124 912  
Private 85 395

### Project duration

2017 – 2018

### Project promoter

Lanark Community  
Development Trust

### Contact

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### Website

[www.lanarktrust.co.uk](http://www.lanarktrust.co.uk)

Turning an abandoned park area and its gardens into a community hub to create opportunities for social interaction, training and employment.

## Summary

Castlebank Park is located in the South West of Lanark in Scotland and is a former hunting ground of Lanark Castle. Despite its convenient location and potential for development, it was a derelict and unusable patch of land for many years. The 'Castlebank Regeneration' project commenced in 2012, developing a community growing area in the park, funded by the UK Government's Climate Challenge Fund and LEADER.

In a second phase and also funded by LEADER, the project supported the renovation of a derelict sawmill building within the Horticultural Centre compound; transforming it into a dedicated community learning and meeting space. The project promoter is the Lanark Community Development Trust (LCDT).



## Results

Over 600 people participated in courses and workshops held at the Castlebank Horticultural Centre.

Around 2,390 volunteer hours were recorded during the first year of operation (2018).

The project engaged with vulnerable adults, some of whom are now regular and enthusiastic volunteers. These include local people with mental health issues and learning disabilities, a local parent and toddlers group and a small group of pupils from Lanark Grammar School's severe learning disabilities unit.

The centre has developed a mini orchard, engaged in composting schemes and delivered workshops on locally produced food.

All food produce grown in the polytunnels and raised beds are donated to the local food bank.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Castlebank Park is a leading example of how the LEADER/CLLD approach can make a marked difference in a rural community. The park has brought together many different rural community groups and inspires rural development by setting a precedent for other local projects
- ❑ A large cohort of volunteers have made this project possible and continue to contribute to it's success, which demonstrates how much can be achieved through people power and inspiring others in your local community to take action.

## Context

South Lanarkshire is one of the most deprived rural areas in Scotland. There are high unemployment rates among Lanark's young people, a growing and isolated older population and lack of services and community facilities to cope with the increasing needs of the population.

The Lanark Community Development Trust identified the need to regenerate Castlebank Park, a council owned area which had been slowly falling into disrepair from the 1960s. After an extensive period of community consultation and project development it was decided to create the Castlebank Horticultural Centre. This started with the commissioning of the LEADER funded 'Lanark Town Centre Study', at which time the local community took a stand and over a quarter of Lanark's population signed a petition to signal their desire for Castlebank Park to be brought back into public use.

## Objectives

The vision for Castlebank Horticultural and Environmental Training Centre is to create a vibrant community hub, which will promote social interaction, community cohesion and provide opportunities for learning and development. The core aims of the project are creating employability, volunteering opportunities and delivering meaningful training. Opportunities will be available in the fields of horticulture, environment, hospitality, event planning, marketing and administration.

## Activities

The 'Castlebank Regeneration' project commenced with Phase one in 2012, developing a community growing area – a space for the local community to grow flowers and plants – on derelict land in the park, funded by the Climate Challenge Fund and LEADER. Phase two of the project, completed in autumn 2018 and also funded by LEADER, concerned the renovation of a derelict sawmill building within the Horticultural Centre compound into a dedicated community learning and meeting space.

The third, on-going phase of the project, is about operating a community learning and education space in the refurbished sawmill buildings. Activities within the Centre will create training and volunteering opportunities in the fields of horticulture, environment, hospitality, event planning, marketing and administration. Future events will provide employment opportunities for local musicians, storytellers, caterers and other local suppliers.

The learning space will also create employment opportunities for teachers and instructors with workshops and courses on gardening and food production, healthy eating, waste and renewable energy, biodiversity, woodturning, photography, jewellery, music and singing, floral displays, basket weaving, history, health and wellbeing etc.

The reception/sales area space will host horticultural producers, artists and makers and will provide links to the wider Clyde Valley. Finally, employment opportunities are also foreseen for landscapers, tour guides and environmentalists. The facility will also be the base for LCDT's accredited, vocational training programmes.



## Main Results

### Direct benefits:

- Over 600 people participated in courses and workshops held at the Castlebank Horticultural Project and around 2390 volunteer hours were recorded during the first year of operation, in 2018.
- The project engaged with some very vulnerable adults who are now regular and enthusiastic volunteers. These include local people with mental health issues and learning disabilities, a local toddlers group and a small group of pupils from Lanark Grammar School's severe learning disabilities unit, etc.
- Strong links have been established with primary schools, to whom the project has delivered the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society course 'Plant and Grow'. The centre has developed a mini orchard, engaged in composting schemes and delivered workshops on locally produced food.

- There is now a steady core of 20 volunteers and a larger number of volunteers available on an *ad hoc* basis.



- Courses offered to date have included composting, plant propagation, growing vegetables, common garden pests, toddler and parent plant & grow sessions and Christmas wreath making. A six-week, fee based 'Introduction to Gardening' course was also delivered for six healthcare patients. All food produce grown in the polytunnels and raised beds are donated to the local food bank.
- The 'Friends of Castlebank' local community group has grown to 98 members.
- The project featured in both the 'Town Centre study' and the subsequent 'Lanark Vision: Where Heritage Blooms' economic opportunities study and directly contributes to the community's vision of a thriving, resilient and prosperous town.
- After the project end, the Training and Horticultural Centre will be open to the whole community (Lanark and outlying villages) as well as visitors from further afield, but will particularly target people who are disadvantaged through isolation, poor health and disability, and lack of skills and jobs.

### Networking value:

The Castlebank Project does not sit in isolation but has been developed as part of a wider vision for Lanark as a vibrant economic centre. The project works in close collaboration with a range of local community groups and statutory agencies at each stage to ensure wide community buy in. These have included Lanark in Bloom, the local schools, Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership, NHS Lanarkshire, SLC Social Work, and the Clyde Valley Orchard Groups.

By developing this asset, the Horticultural and Environmental Training Centre will bring local people

together to create a better connected and cohesive small town community.

### Transferability:

Castlebank Park is a best practice example of how a bottom-up approach to development can make a real difference in a rural community, the park has brought together many different rural community groups and inspires rural development by setting a precedent for other local projects. This template for rural development is easily replicable in other rural communities and is evidenced by other LEADER projects across Europe.

### Synergies with other EU policies:

The main focus of the Castlebank Project is on upskilling the local community, but it also contributes to a number of other EU priorities for rural development such as;

- Employment and Social Affairs
- Environment
- Food safety
- Youth
- Public Health



*"This project is a great example of how the LEADER approach works in practice. The community-led Lanark Town Centre Study provided a sound basis for the establishment of the project and ongoing LEADER support through the design, development and implementation phases has seen this community vision come to full fruition. The journey was not always straightforward, with funding packages having to be revisited on a number of occasions, however the project's core strength was that it was embedded in and supported by the local community and Lanarkshire LEADER is delighted to now see a fully functioning community hub as a successful end result."*

Chris Parkin, Lanarkshire LEADER Programme Manager

\*This project has been categorised under 'LEADER' by the nominating National Rural Network