

# Reusing Vacant and Derelict Land: Case Studies

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A report to Scottish Land Commission  
April 2020





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# 1.

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## Introduction

This document presents a series of case studies on the reuse of vacant and derelict land, describing the challenges that they faced, the successes they achieved and the outcomes and indicators they each support.

### 1.1 Background

There are over 11,000 hectares of vacant and derelict land in Scotland<sup>1</sup> and much of it is concentrated in deprived communities which harms well-being and limits opportunities. Investing in these sites and bringing them back into productive use could help play a role in tackling climate change, reducing inequalities, improving well-being and delivering inclusive growth.

Much of Scotland's vacant and derelict land is in areas with limited commercial development potential. Many face significant challenges, such as remediating former industrial uses and addressing connectivity, and can often form part of a wider need for regional regeneration.

This document highlights a series of seven case studies from across Scotland that have been completed in recent years and draws attention to the successes they have achieved. It is accompanied by two further short reports that set out:

- the need for changing the thinking about the types of benefits that can be achieved from reusing vacant and derelict land; and
- guidance on how this can be measured.

The outcomes and indicators from the National Performance Framework that are supported by each case study are highlighted where relevant.

The case studies highlight the outcomes and indicators from the National Performance Framework that are supported by each development.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey 2017 (June 2018)



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## 2.

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# Case Studies

The case studies presented here are just a small selection of many reuses of vacant and derelict land sites across Scotland. They are:

- Shawfield, Clyde Gateway;
- Athletes' Village, Clyde Gateway;
- Council Offices, West Dunbartonshire Council;
- Wishawhill Woods Pump Track, Cragneuk;
- Shettleston Growing Project, Glasgow;
- South Central Kilmarnock; and
- Raining's Stairs, Inverness.

Two of these projects, the Athletes' Village and the Shawfield development, fall within the wider Clyde Gateway regeneration area and the overarching investment in infrastructure that has been made through the Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company is highly relevant. Its work is described below for context for these two projects.

### 2.1 Clyde Gateway

Formed in 2007, the Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company is a partnership that was created to regenerate 2,000 acres of land to the southeast of Glasgow including Bridgeton, Dalmarnock, Parkhead, Rutherglen and Shawfield. With a planned lifespan of 20 years, it represents the biggest and most ambitious regeneration programme in Scotland. Its high-level goals are:

- sustainable place transformation;
- increasing economic activity; and
- increasing community capacity.

When established, the area contained around 300 hectares of vacant and derelict land. Many of the sites had been derelict for decades, land ownership was fragmented and many sites were inaccessible to the transport network. However, the opportunities created by hosting the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 brought about investment in infrastructure and facilities on a scale that has reshaped the future for the entire Clyde Gateway area.

Early interventions to prepare the area involved investment in rail, bus and motorway transport links as well as creating walking and cycling routes. Significant investments in the connectivity of the area include:

- the extension of the M74 network and installation of junctions which greatly improved the accessibility of the site;
- investment in the main rail stations and services which has meant that double the number of passengers were using Bridgeton, Dalmarnock and Rutherglen stations 2017/18 compared with 10 years earlier when the Clyde Gateway was set up; and
- installing a smart bridge linking the Shawfield and Dalmarnock areas and improving accessibility and connectivity within the area for pedestrians and cyclists as well as improving the reach and quality of telecoms and power.

From the outset, the Clyde Gateway has taken a blended approach to regeneration that includes community engagement, in its widest sense, as well as physical redevelopment with the aim of delivering changes that are meaningful, sustainable, wanted and owned by the local community.



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An early example of this is the funding it provided to school-leavers from Bridgeton, Dalmarnock and Rutherglen to take 4-year apprenticeships in joinery and electrical work with a Glasgow-based construction firm. This ensured that local people were able to benefit over the longer-term from the investment which was happening around them. The Gateway's sustained effort in engaging with the community features strongly in feedback relating to its projects and over time this has built community trust in the organisation.

The community benefit approach has been built into all projects that take place within the Clyde Gateway. The company takes active steps to maximise the benefit to the local community from any construction project it approves by building in clauses to ensure that as many jobs and training places as possible are provided for local people. In addition, they always look for the successful contractor to carry out additional building work that also benefits the wider community. Examples of this include landscaping improvements that have been delivered for local schools as part of wider planning approval for nearby development.

In addition to these projects involving physical buildings, there have been a range of projects identified from within the community to support the health and fitness of young people, such as the Jump2it basketball-based programme.

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*“Clyde Gateway’s approach to regeneration understands the people and the community it serves. It communicates, it engages, it empowers and it knows that the experts are the folk who live there. Aileen Campbell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities, June 2019*

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There are several distinct elements to the Clyde Gateway that each present case studies for the reuse of vacant and derelict land and buildings in their own right, These are:

- Bridgeton Olympia Building and public realm work;
  - Rutherglen and Dalmarnock Station upgrades;
  - Red Tree Business Suites in Rutherglen and Bridgeton;
  - Eastgate office block, Bridgeton Cross;
  - Clyde Gateway East;
  - The Emirates Arena, Legacy Hub and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome;
  - Athletes’ Village, Dalmarnock;
  - Cuningar Loop Woodlands Park; and
  - Shawfield.
- Two of these projects, the Athletes’ Village and the Shawfield development are described here.

Key performance indicators were set for the wider Clyde Gateway area at its outset in 2007. After 11 years in operation (March 2019), its performance against these targets was as follows:

- 248 ha of derelict & contaminated land remediated (71% of 20-year target);
- 105,000 sq m of business floor space completed (26% of 20-year target);
- 3,000 residential units built (30% of 20-year target);
- 5,900 new jobs brought to the area (28% of 20-year target);
- 2,800 businesses assisted;
- 3,400 people participating in Clyde Gateway employability programme;



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- 7,800 participants in Clyde Gateway community engagement events;
  - 173,500 participants in additional learning, health, sports and capacity building events;
  - £531 million leverage.

The success of the Shawfield development and the Athletes' Village which form the first two of the case studies has to a large extent been scaled and driven by the wider investment in connectivity and regeneration across the Clyde Gateway area.





# Shawfield, Clyde Gateway

Grade A Offices created and occupied in an area that was formerly one of the most complex remediation sites in Europe

The Shawfield site contained high levels of chromium from its former use as a chemical works and the complexity of its remediation issue was on a scale that was too great to be addressed by the private sector. This provided one of the key justifications for establishing the Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company in 2007.

Within the Clyde Gateway, Shawfield covers a 64-hectare supersite that has been earmarked for creating a nationally significant business district. Phase 1 of the development relates to the Magenta Business Park which occupies 11 hectares of the site. The potential economic impact of Shawfield was assessed before building began and this highlighted its major contribution to the wider Clyde Gateway project. The market failure and equity rationales were clearly justified in terms of addressing the fundamental place, economic and community challenges of the area. The project's outcomes were intended to contribute to the high-level goals that were set for Clyde Gateway:

## Benefits:

- Economy
- International
- Fair work and business

## Indicators:

- Productivity
- Economic growth
- Exporting (potentially)
- Carbon footprint
- Superfast broadband
- Income inequality
- Entrepreneurial activity
- Scotland's reputation
- Employees on the living wage
- Contractually secure work
- Employee voice

- remediating 5% of derelict and contaminated land within the Gateway;
- delivering 28% of business floor space in the Gateway area; and
- hosting 36% of the new jobs in the Gateway area.

As well as its physical aspects, the project also has substantial social outputs:

- contributing to sustainable place transformation;
- increasing economic activity by drawing in new employers;
- developing community capacity and networking with local schools; and
- increasing opportunities for walking and cycling.

Following investment in decontamination, the first major building on the site was completed in 2018. Built at a cost of £9m, the award-winning Red Tree Magenta building offers 40,000 sq ft of office space across four floors with highly flexible and collaborative work spaces, event spaces, a corporate-grade fibre connection, free parking, cycle facilities and a roof garden. At full capacity the building can support 340 jobs and it was 100% occupied within six months of completion. The Magenta Business Park as a whole has the ability to bring 12,000 jobs to the area and offers Grade A business space that costs around 37% less than city centre office space. The second phase of development at Shawfield is currently underway, beginning with remediation, infrastructure, enabling and earthworks subject to planning permission.



#### Benefits:

- Communities
- Poverty
- Education
- Health
- International

#### Indicators:

- Perceptions of local area
- Social Capital
- Places to interact
- Perceptions of local crime rate
- Access to green space
- Relative poverty after housing costs
- Cost of living
- Satisfaction with housing
- Confidence of children & young people
- Extra-curricular activity
- Physical activity
- Scotland's reputation
- Positive experience for people coming to Scotland

## Athletes' Village, Dalmarnock

Built to house the participants in the Commonwealth Games in 2014, this major housing development has created a new urban area in Glasgow

Covering a 39-hectare site in Dalmarnock in the East End of Glasgow, the former Athletes' Village features 300 private homes, 400 homes for social rent and a 120-bed care home. It was built by City Legacy, a consortium of Glasgow-based companies in partnership with Glasgow City Council. By using modern methods of construction, the 700 homes were delivered in 700 days and provided opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience posts.

The contract value for the development was £150 million and the scheme won over 20 industry awards for its design and the energy efficiency of the new homes it created.

The project presented challenges in terms of site contamination, the depressed condition of the housing market, and the delay in potential sales due to the timing of the games and the need to retro-fit the houses after the Games. However, the location was greatly enhanced by the significant amount of infrastructure investment in the wider area that has upgraded public transport and road infrastructure, by investment that has opened up nearby green spaces and by the sports and recreation facilities left behind by the Games.

When the Games were over, the 300 private homes were sold within a period of 18 months. The speed of the sales was attributed to the high quality of the housing design, the value for money they gave, their low running costs due to the energy efficient construction materials and the areas' proximity to excellent transport connections and sports facilities. The development attracted many first-time buyers and families which has given the Village a community feel with a strong sense of community engagement.

After the games the area received funding to create new nursery and primary schools within the Athletes' Village to encourage young families into the area and to relieve capacity pressures on existing schools. As a result, Silverdale Nursery opened in 2017 and Riverbank Primary opened in 2019.

An evaluation of the legacy of the Commonwealth Games that was carried out in 2018 concluded that, overall, the development of the former Athletes' Village has created a mixed community with high quality housing for local people in a sustainable environment.





## New Council Offices, Dumbarton

The need for new council offices and the opportunity to reinvent a disused heritage site has triggered the regeneration of the town centre

Designed in 1946, the out-of-town former West Dunbartonshire Council offices had reached the end of their useful life. Meanwhile in Dumbarton town centre, the former Dumbarton Academy, at one time an A-listed building, had fallen into disrepair and the life of the town centre was suffering from a loss of footfall in common with many other towns across the country.

### Benefits:

- Communities
- Environmental
- Human rights

### Indicators:

- Perceptions of local area
- Perceptions of local crime rate
- Places to interact
- Social Capital
- Public services that treat people with dignity and respect
- Quality of public services
- Influence over local decisions

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*“A modern facility born from a local landmark.”*

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The need to relocate the council and the availability of the Dumbarton Academy site created an opportunity to regenerate the town centre, bringing 500 jobs back into the area around the high street. The £15.4 million investment has succeeded in creating a modern, energy efficient and fit for purpose office while retaining and preserving an important landmark in the town.

The older compartmentalised offices have been replaced by an open, modern space with a variety of meeting and civic spaces that have introduced a new dynamism into how the council’s departments work together and interact in a much more attractive and comfortable space. As well as winning building awards for its design, the energy efficiency qualities of the building have resulted in cost savings for the council of around £400,000 per year.

In addition, the new offices have made a tangible difference to the quality of service provided by the council and to the way people feel when they come to the council for services and support. By offering facilities that allow people to meet council officers in quiet, comfortable, private surroundings, they are more likely to engage with the services in a positive way.

The development has also stimulated further regeneration nearby in the town centre. While the offices were being built, building work began on long-term derelict sites nearby on the waterfront to create 160 new social houses and also a new supermarket, which is encouraging even more footfall back into the town centre.



#### Benefits:

- Communities
- International
- Children and Young People
- Health

#### Indicators:

- Perceptions of local area
- Perceptions of crime
- Community ownership
- Loneliness
- Places to interact
- Access to greenspace
- Social Capital
- Positive experience for visitors to Scotland
- Scotland's reputation
- Child social and physical development
- Child well-being and happiness
- Children's voices
- Children have positive relationships
- Physical activity

## Wishawhill Wood Pump Track, Craigneuk

A new community facility for cycling and skateboarding that was created on a former derelict site has resulted in fewer local reports of anti-social behaviour

The Wishawhill Wood Pump Track is aimed at changing perceptions, outlooks and lives by providing a place where young people are welcome and are free to learn new biking skills. The longer-term goal was to provide an outlet for positive engagement with young people and discourage anti-social activity in the area.

Based in an area of multiple disadvantage, the site was identified by Central Scotland Green Network and developed in partnership with the Wishaw MTB Club through Socialtrack. The track itself was designed by Velosolutions and the result is a facility that is widely accepted to be among the best of its kind in the UK. This was endorsed by its hosting of the UK qualifying event for the Red Bull Pump Track World Championships in 2019. The track is lit to allow for use in the evenings and CCTV has been installed to improve site security. Since the track opened in April 2018, it has been successful in changing the area by:

- removing an area of derelict land;
- building partnerships between local people and local organisations;
- supporting important local initiatives such as Club 365;
- reducing fire and police call-outs for the area;
- encouraging community-led regeneration; and
- helping the start-up of a new social enterprise to support activity at the track.

There are very positive indications that the project has been a success:

- Police Scotland has reported a dramatic reduction in anti-social activity associated with the site;
- Scottish Fire and Rescue calls have been minimised, saving around £2,000 per incident;
- the nearby golf club has reported a drop-off in vandalism; and
- the community council is very positive about its benefit for young people.

To improve access to the track, a cycle path was recently completed on both sides that connects the woods to the nearby streetscape. Socialtrack is now working with community groups all over North Lanarkshire to help build more sustainable communities through action sports.



#### Benefits:

- Communities
- Environment
- Education
- Poverty
- Children and Young People
- Culture

#### Indicators:

- Perceptions of local area
- Loneliness
- Perceptions of local crime rate
- Community ownership
- Crime victimisation
- Places to interact
- Access to green space
- Social Capital
- Visits to the outdoors
- Biodiversity
- Food insecurity
- Child social and physical development
- Children have positive relationships
- Extra-curricular activity
- Attendance at cultural events

# Shettleston Growing Project, Glasgow

## Created by a local community who wanted to grow their own food

The project was created by Shettleston Community Growing Project (SCGP), a group of local people who wanted to grow food for themselves and their families. Working with the local Housing Association and Glasgow City Council, a suitable site was identified and funding was secured from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund to turn a local vacant site into an attractive and productive community allotment. It has become a well-used site that has developed year on year and now incorporates a Community Garden and Wild area with a pond which attracts wildlife and encourages biodiversity.

The facility uses raised beds to get around the ground contamination issue. There are 50 raised beds on site, a soft fruit area, herb tunnel, polytunnel, composting toilet and a kitchen container with electricity and running water. It is maintained by volunteers who work at the site from March to September.

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*"For many children it is the only fruit and vegetables they ever eat."*

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Some of the raised beds are rented by the local community and they also have training beds to teach growing skills. There is a club for young people that is run by qualified youth workers to teach them how to grow and cook their own food as well as organising other activities such as arts and crafts, practical conservation work, games, bush-craft skills and trips. It is also used by the local primary school and the local scouts for activities and events. A Fun Day is held July each year for the whole community.

Demand for the beds is high and SCGP provides all the seeds, gardening courses, tools, on site help/expertise and a place for tea and coffee. Plots are priced at £10 per year (or free in some cases) and this includes access to greenhouse space. The facility is regarded as a community hub and is used by over 1,000 people each year. It is staffed by 2 employees, 2 sessional youth workers and there are between 3 and 20 volunteers working at any one time. This includes volunteers from East End Carers, NHS and re-start. The SCGN have identified the following benefits arising from the project:

- removal of a derelict site;
- the creation of a sociable outdoor space for the local community that facilitates improvements in physical and mental well-being;
- helping local people and local children to grow and cook their own food; and
- environmental benefits (organic produce, no pesticides) and a contribution to local bio-diversity.



#### Benefits (potential):

- Environmental
- Communities

#### Indicators (potential):

- Condition of protected nature sites
- Biodiversity
- Perceptions of local area
- Perceptions of local crime rate
- Places to interact
- Community ownership
- Access to green and blue space
- Social capital

## South Central Kilmarnock

By investing in environmental projects further upstream, East Ayrshire Council is looking for solutions that will unlock the flood risk area in the town

Lying 15 minutes from the town centre between the River Irvine and Kilmarnock Water is a largely vacant, 44-hectare site of which, around 3 hectares are on the vacant and derelict land register. The area is in long term decline after its heyday as a thriving Victorian industrial centre. It is seen as run down by Kilmarnock residents, there is low demand for the area's housing and many business and retail units are vacant. A major barrier to bringing the site into more productive use is its tendency to flood. With a view to re-inventing the area, East Ayrshire Council has scoped the opportunity for sustainable development of the site, with a masterplan that includes remediating vacant and derelict land alongside significant land management investment further upstream to ameliorate the flood risk in the town. The identified benefits are:

- providing homes and businesses which are within walking distance of the town centre;
- removing pressure for rural development, reducing the loss of natural environment and avoiding the increased car use that it would create; and
- creating a walkable, healthy place.

East Ayrshire Council is working to reduce the flood risk by creating benefits across a very wide area in the hope that this underused part of Kilmarnock can be re-imagined in future. As policy makers and spatial planners, council experts are exploring new ways to think about, manage and tackle flood risk within their authority area by looking at the whole river catchment to implement:

- catchment scale runoff reduction through peatland restoration, afforestation, and farmland enhancements;
- catchment scale capacity increase through deliberate flooding of sites upstream, increased capacity of floodable fields and low value land, wetland creation, and re-meandering;
- on-site action including a retreat from southern low-intensity use area, defending a smaller developable area for 1 in 200-year events, and defending an area for 1 in 100-year events; and
- development of flood resilient properties.

Although this approach is in its early stages, if implemented it will bring a range of benefits from developing new housing, creating business space, and an advanced manufacturing facility, as well as much wider environmental benefits from habitat creation, improving flood management in Kilmarnock and its rural and agricultural hinterland.



## Raining's Stairs, Inverness

Once a thriving part of the medieval core of Inverness, this had become a complex derelict site in the heart of the city. Now it provides affordable housing and an attractive entrance to Castle Street.

Raining's Stairs link the low (Castle Street) and high (Ardconnel Street) parts of Inverness over a significant 27m change in level. This makes it a particularly challenging site to build on, and over the years several proposals had failed to take shape. Ultimately, the redevelopment was funded as part of the city region deal.

The redevelopment of the site has created 16 new one and two bedroom flats along with a retail unit. Completed in 2018, six of the new homes are available at an affordable rent, with the remainder leased under mid-market rent from the Highland Housing Alliance.

### Benefits:

- Communities
- Poverty

### Indicators:

- Perceptions of local area
- Perceptions of local crime rate
- Places to interact
- Social Capital
- Relative poverty after housing costs
- Satisfaction with housing
- Cost of living

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*"It brings a freshness and vibrancy to this part of the city that is long overdue."*

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The project provided a terraced design solution that provides high quality, affordable housing and creates an attractive entrance to the city in an area that had become a focus for anti-social behaviour. As part of the project:

- the shortage of affordable homes in the centre of Inverness is being addressed;
- improved lighting and passive surveillance from the building has led to a safer environment;
- people from the local business community say the entrance to Castle Street is much more attractive, with a positive impact on business; and
- a listed building left derelict after a fire has been refurbished and occupied by a local business, providing both heritage and business benefits.



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