

HEART, MIND AND SOUL SILVERBURN

A Community Renewal Fund Supported Project

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
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Viewforth Consulting Ltd

Final Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction and Background

This is the evaluation report for the *Heart, Mind and Soul* pilot volunteer project, which was supported by the Community Renewal Fund and ran in Spring/Summer 2022. The project was delivered through a partnership between the Fife Employment Action Trust (FEAT Charity) and the FEAT subsidiary company, FEAT Trading CIC.

The *Heart, Mind and Soul* Project was piloting a new, structured approach to volunteering within Silverburn Park, in Leven, Fife. Silverburn Park is an extensive (27 acre) greenspace community asset which is managed by FEAT (Fife Employment Access Trust) Trading Company CIC on behalf of the local community. The FEAT Trading Company CIC took over the management of the Park from Fife Council in 2013 and has developed a longer term vision and plan for the Park. This includes establishing new facilities and a plan (supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund) to regenerate the historic Flax Mill building located at the heart of the Park (currently due to open as a heritage centre in 2026).

Following an application to the Community Renewal Fund in Spring 2021, the pilot project was approved for funding in December 2021. The full funds received amounted to £156k.

2. The purpose and structure of this evaluation report

This evaluation report is intended to take an overview of the pilot project, its initial aims and goals, its practical implementation, achievement of its target outputs and outcomes, and lessons learned. It will make some preliminary comment, as far as possible, on value for money and cost-effectiveness indicators. It will also draw on the lessons learned to make recommendations for any future rollout of the pilot programme.

The evaluation activity consisted of:

- Initial consultation with the project managers (FEAT and FEAT Trading CIC) to develop an overall Theory of Change model (Inputs-Activities-Outputs-Outcomes). This identified how resources would be used to support the planned activities, how these activities would lead to the target outputs, and ultimately how these outputs would contribute to the overall desired outcomes (with particular attention to CRF-desired outcomes.)
- Consultation with FEAT personnel on design of registration form for programme participants to ensure the CRF-required personal characteristic data of programme participants was collected.
- Discussions with the project manager as the programme evolved on its progress and the range of practical adaptations to the initial programme design that had to be made, and why.
- Meeting with key members of the project team to learn initial views on how the programme was working together with meeting a number of volunteers and seeing some of the work they had undertaken in the park (e.g. building a stumpery)
- Running a focused workshop for key members of the project team to aid discussion and reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot, what worked well and what could have been better.
- Running an end-of-project survey of volunteers to elicit volunteer feedback on the programme's value.
- Drawing together and analysing the data collected on outputs and outcomes
- Final report preparation.

The evaluation report is structured broadly in line with the suggested format in the UK Community Renewal Fund Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance. It will address:

- Project socio-economic context and rationale for the project
- Delivery and Management
- Progress against targets
- Outputs, outcomes and impact
- Value for Money
- Lessons learned
- Recommendations for future development of the pilot into a full scale programme

The UKCRF-required indicators were collated and are included as Appendices 1 and 2.

It should be noted that this evaluation was originally designed and intended to cover the HMS programme running to June 2022. A Calendar time extension to October 2022 was granted which enabled an additional, scaled back, version of the programme to continue to October 2022, where an additional 7 volunteers were registered. The analysis in this report therefore predominantly relates to the main volunteer programme running to June 2022. However reference is made, where appropriate, to the additional 7 scaled-back programme participants and data relating to the additional 7 participants is also included in the overall outputs and outcomes summary reports.

3. Project socio-economic context and project rationale

Silverburn Park and the Levenmouth area

The 27-acre Silverburn Park is located in Levenmouth in Fife. Levenmouth stretches along the South East Fife Coast in Scotland and comprises the towns of Leven, Buckhaven and Methil as well as a number of smaller villages. Formerly rich in industry (its industrial heritage includes weaving, coal mining and industrial docks), it has suffered since the 1960s from the decline of heavy industries. It had also formerly been a traditional seaside holiday destination for visitors from the Scottish cities, but that role also declined with the growth of international holiday travel. Levenmouth is now among the poorest areas of Fife, with limited employment opportunities and low-income levels. With an overall population of around 37,000 people, Levenmouth has the worst levels of multiple deprivation in Fife and some of the worst in Scotland.

According to the Scottish Government's official Index of multiple deprivation, Levenmouth has the highest indicators of income deprivation in Fife. (18.9% of the resident population are classed as income deprived compared to the Fife average of 11.9%) It also has the highest levels of employment deprivation (15.4% of the working age population are classed as employment deprived compared to the Fife average of 9.4%). The overall indicator of deprivation¹ show the situation of Levenmouth as having declined further between 2016 and 2020, with the number of areas² classed as among the 20% most deprived in Scotland increasing from 23 to 26 (out of 51 total.)

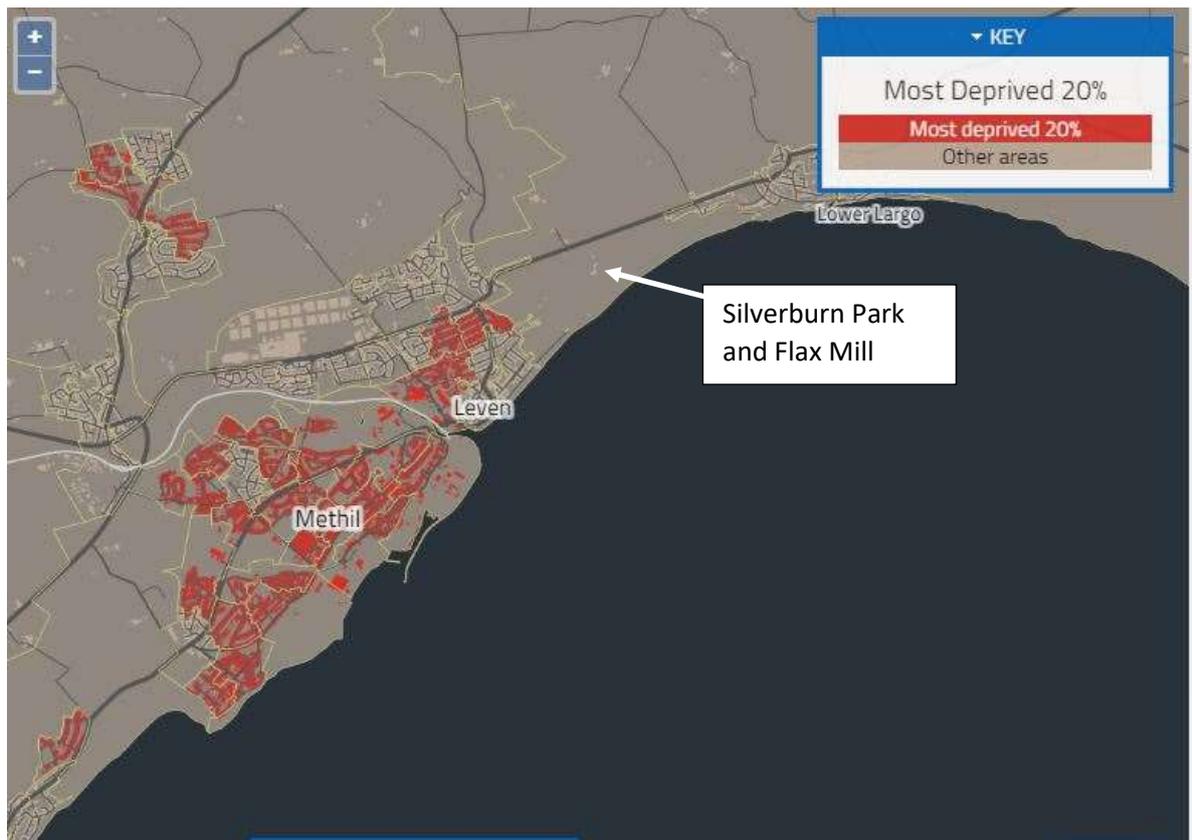
In other words, over half of Levenmouth's population are classed as among the 20% most deprived in all of Scotland. Of those a significant proportion are an even more precarious position. 20 areas

¹ This is a composite of 6 indicators on income, employment, health, housing, access (travel infrastructure). The only indicator on which Levenmouth is relatively well positioned is on housing (only 3 areas regarded as having overcrowded housing.)

² Know Fife: Focus on Levenmouth <https://know.fife.scot/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2020/01/SIMD-2020v2-Focus-on-Levenmouth.pdf> and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020. Areas are defined as "Datazones" with around 700 residents in each datazone.

(39% of the population) are in the bottom 15%, 11 areas (22%) are in the bottom 10% and 9 areas (18% of the Levenmouth population) are classed as among the 5% most deprived areas in all of Scotland.

Silverburn Park and Flax Mill in Levenmouth



Source: Scottish Government SIMD 2020 Mapping Tool

Silverburn Park as a community asset

Silverburn Park and its buildings are an extensive community asset, having been gifted to the town of Leven in the 1970s by the Russell Family, with the intention that the Park:

“ should remain forever as a quiet area used for the benefit of the public in general and the people of Leven in particular for nature trails, quite parkland and organised camping. “

The Park and buildings were managed by the local Council for many years, and at the height of the Park’s popularity attracted an estimated 25,000 visitors per year. However, it fell into decline and represented an extensive maintenance burden that the Council could no longer support. In 2013, the Council agreed to pass the management of the Park under lease to Fife Employment Access Trust (FEAT), a local charity that supports clients with mental health issues, providing training and support to help them return to work. FEAT created the FEAT Trading Community Interest Company to assume the management and regeneration of the park.

The park regeneration plans include conservation management and greenspace woodland development, reinstating the grounds to their former glory. A core part of the park regeneration plans is the renovation of the historic Flax Mill Building to create a heritage visitor centre and community hub for the park and for the wider district, incorporating a visitor centre showcasing the history of the Mill and the Park, a café, meeting and exhibition space as well as a hostel providing visitor accommodation. The latter is intended to cater for tourists and walkers traversing the Fife Coastal Path – which passes very close by to the Mill.

Rationale for the CRF funded Heart Mind and Soul Project.

The rationale for the Heart, Mind and Soul project is rooted in the core aims of both FEAT Charity and the FEAT Trading Company CIC.

Since FEAT Trading Company CIC took over the management of the park and began the process of its regeneration, visitor numbers to the park have grown. Its success in attracting funding for the Flax Mill regeneration and the myriad of outdoor activities and events that FEAT has encouraged (Yoga and exercise classes in the park, a summer music festival, outdoor camping, arts and craft events, to name but a few) has built local interest and excitement in the Park. The Park is heavily used by local people - as became increasingly clear during the Covid Pandemic - when it was seen as a vital community open space that could be used during lockdown.³The Park is a free-to-access community asset, open to anyone.⁴ Park management has been supported by volunteers, often operating on an ad hoc basis. As the demands on the park have grown so has the need for more organised and managed input into park maintenance and development.

Therefore the pilot project was intended to bring together many complementary strands of activity in the Park (woodland management, café and campsite management, ad hoc volunteering) by piloting a more joined-up approach to volunteer engagement. This was envisaged as contributing to improve life skills and employment opportunities for local residents through a more structured volunteer programme. This would supporting volunteers to gain new employment, personal development and life skills, while simultaneously benefiting the day-to-day conservation and management of a valuable community asset. The key potential beneficiaries of the project were seen as:

1. The Park FEAT Trading CIC as an organisation: helping FEAT Trading CIC in its task of maintaining the Park by being able to best direct volunteering support to identified areas of need.
2. FEAT Charity as an organisation: by operating to some extent as a ‘proof of concept’ in how to actively use the Park as a resource to help FEAT clients.
2. The wider community, both socially and economically: a well managed and improved asset provides the local community (among the most deprived in Scotland) with opportunities for engaging with outdoor activities; builds wider community well being, resilience and pride in place as well as attracting visitors (and their spending power) to the area.

³ There were over 200,000 visits to the Park recorded between October 2019 and October 2020, with peaks of activity observed during the strictest lockdown periods (when people were not allowed to travel more than 5 miles from their home.) Post-lockdown visitor numbers have not only held up, but increased, with over 255,000 visits recorded in the following year (to October 2021.)

⁴ As such, there are clear economic public good attributes to the Park with its non-rivalrous and non-excludable nature.

3. Individual Participants: a structured programme of volunteering could potentially maximise benefits to many different kinds of participants, including helping them to progress to other positive destinations after 'graduating' from the programme.

4. Potentially other organisations, by involving other organisations with Park activities. Ultimately local businesses could also benefit from a vibrant local park attracting visitors and giving opportunities to 'showcase' their own products and services, thereby supporting the local economy.

Development of an initial ToC model

The design of the Heart Mind and Soul Programme was clearly intended to pull together and draw on the existing strengths of the partnership between the FEAT charity and the FEAT Trading Organisation to develop an innovative and imaginative approach to a volunteering programme that would lever maximum value for the community at large.

The Theory of Change model was developed to reflect how the planned pilot fitted with both the Community Renewal Fund Investment priorities and Silverburn Park's own aims in the design and implementation of the Heart, Mind and Soul programme. It shows how the resources would be used to support activities with clear deliverables, that in turn would contribute towards the achievement of measurable outcomes and broader desired goals.

Matching Investment priorities

The Theory of Change model outlines how the project was intended to address four investment priorities of the Community Renewal Fund:

- Investment in communities and place
- Investment in skills
- Supporting people into employment.
- Investment for local businesses

Challenges being addressed

In turn the key challenges being addressed were three-fold:

(1) developing a way to help ensure the sustainable regeneration of a public green space of high local amenity value

(2) Providing opportunities for local people to actively engage and support the community asset (with potential benefits to their own health and well-being)

(3) provide a structured volunteering programme for unemployed or economically inactive people to develop skills and confidence with support to moving to employment or other placement activity after 'graduating' from the programme.

Local businesses could potentially then also benefit from the improved amenity value of the Park with opportunities for partnership development, as well as benefiting from the increased visitor spend in the local area.

Planned activities under the Community Renewal Fund to address those challenges

The key planned activities to be supported by the Community Renewal Fund included:

- Finalising the Master Plan for the Park's ongoing regeneration and maintenance (which includes a refreshed Conservation Management Plan and Urban Woodland Management

Plan) and reinforces the Park's position within the broader Levenmouth Sustainable Growth Strategy.

- Delivering activities to help implement these Plans, supported by individual and group volunteers, peer supporters, local community members and partnership organisations
- Developing a more structured programme of volunteering around these activities, including skills-building and training, including developing a portfolio of qualifications focussed around activities involved in Park maintenance and development
- For the programme to support volunteer progression and creating a positive pathway for volunteers (including into employment or other volunteering opportunities)
- Undertaking overall evaluation of the project to develop recommendations on its feasibility for future roll-out as an on-going programme to benefit both FEAT clients , FEAT Trading CIC and the local community more broadly.

Resources required as inputs

The Community Renewal Fund resources would be used to support predominantly staff and contracted service inputs, including Master Plan and Evaluation Consultants, Project Manager, Estate Project Officer, Volunteer Progression Officer, Peer Support coordinator and Worker and a Qualifications Development Officer.

Outputs and Outcomes

The ToC model identified a number of measurable outputs (deliverables) from the project (such as Master plan delivery, numbers of people engaged, numbers of programme 'graduates' , etc , which in turn could reflect a contribution to outcomes compatible with the CRF Outcome indicators (eg volunteer programme graduates moving into employment at Silverburn or elsewhere .)

Broader Outcome Goals in line with Investment Priorities

In turn these measurable outcomes contribute to the broader outcome goals which are in line with the original investment priorities and part of the fundamental rationale for the project.

HEART, MIND & SOUL – INITIAL WORKING LOGIC MODEL FOR CRF PILOT PROJECT

Investment Theme	Challenge being addressed	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes Examples of Measurable Outcome Indicators (Compatible with Annex A of the Technical Guidance)	Broader Outcome Goals in line with investment priority themes
<p>Investment in Communities and Place</p> <p>Investment in skills</p> <p>Supporting People into employment</p>	<p>Sustainable Regeneration & maintenance of public green space of high local amenity value in one of the most deprived parts of Scotland</p> <p>Providing opportunities for active community engagement in support of a community asset</p> <p>Unemployed or economically inactive people lacking confidence and aspirations, mental health impacted</p>	<p>CRF support for: Overall Project Manager Estate Project Officer and Master Planning Consultant Evaluation Consultant</p> <p>CRF support for: Volunteer Progression Officer</p> <p>Peer Support coordinators and workers</p> <p>Qualifications Development Officer</p>	<p>Park Master Planning, Conservation Management and Woodland Management Plan developments E.g. Improvement of woodland trails, path network, wildlife hides etc.</p> <p>Delivering targeted programmes of active engagement in heritage, outdoor, craft and wellbeing activities with opportunities to gain accredited skills and employability support Developing employability pathway</p> <p>Active placement into roles supporting the park maintenance and development and other operations</p>	<p>Fully developed conservation, environment and woodland management plans with opportunities identified for volunteer participation</p> <p>Numbers of People engaged</p> <p>Numbers of volunteer programme 'graduates'</p> <p>Development of new and creative recreational park usage initiatives and services</p>	<p>Completed Masterplan</p> <p>People engaged in Education/training</p> <p>People gaining a qualification</p> <p>People engaged in active job search</p> <p>People engaged in life skills support</p> <p>Numbers of volunteer programme 'graduates' moving into placements and roles across Silverburn operations</p> <p>Numbers of volunteer programme graduates moving into placements</p>	<p>Improved environmental management of high amenity value public green space</p> <p>Improved community engagement and participation with improved community resilience</p> <p>People will have greater well-being; improved physical and mental health</p> <p>Local community skills base improved with reduction in barriers into employment</p> <p>Local economy boosted through Silverburn becoming an established community hub and target destination for outdoor recreation - increased visitor (day visitor and overnight stays) numbers and spend (Camping , Glamping and Touring Pitches)</p>

<p>Investment for local business</p>	<p>Unemployed or economically inactive people lacking skills or requiring refreshing of skills</p>		<p>Active network building and collaboration with other local organisations to identify placement opportunities and job swap/experience opportunities</p>		<p>with other local organisations and businesses.</p> <p>Number and types of local organisations and engaged with Silverburn in knowledge transfer of experience and practice in employability and well-being support</p> <p>Increased Visitor numbers and facilities usage</p> <p>Increased Visitor spend in Silverburn and spill out into local area</p>	<p>Local economy boosted through providing outlets for local craft and artisanal products in association with events programme</p>
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4. Delivery and Management

The project was run as a partnership between Fife Employment Access Trust (the FEAT charity) and FEAT Trading Community Interest Company (which is responsible for the management of the Park.) The FEAT Charity was the formal contracting organisation and drew on their pre-existing structures and expertise to handle the HR , finance, payroll etc elements.

The project formally began on 29 November 2021. It was originally stipulated that all project work had to be completed by 30 June (In April 2022 a subsequent calendar time extension to 31 October 2022 was offered, though this was mainly to ensure final ‘tidying up of loose ends’ and allow a gradual reduction in programme activity rather than to keep the project running in full. ⁵) The formal volunteer programme began on 22 February with new volunteers joining as it built up into March.

Volunteer recruitment and management

Volunteers were recruited through a variety of routes, including through notices placed with Fife Voluntary Action, the Job Centre, through Park social media, Volunteer Scotland as well as referrals through the FEAT Charity and staff at Silverburn Park.

The initial participant registration form was designed in order to capture the personal characteristics of the volunteers in line with the CRF required data. The core FEAT charity held all personal data securely and in line with data protection, GDPR requirements etc.

Volunteers were briefed with induction sessions and their roles explained in a Volunteer Pack that had been prepared at the initial planning stage.

The core Volunteer session timetable was initially set as 2 x 2 hour sessions per day Tuesday to Friday. Originally intended as 10am -12 noon and 2pm -4pm , the timetable was adapted in response to volunteer requests. A number of volunteers wished to participate in both sessions on a single day so wished to have less of a break between morning and afternoon sessions. The timing was then changed to run 10.30 am -12.30 and 1.30 to 3.30. There were additional peer support café sessions and the opportunity to meet 1-to-1 on peer support and with the qualifications officer. Overall the support ratio was approximately 1:8.

The project appeared to have well thought through protocols for health and safety, including that there should normally be two staff members per core volunteer group working sessions(usually 8 volunteers per session) as well as appropriate clothing used(protective gloves, hi-vis jackets etc).

Challenges in delivery

- **Staff recruitment**

Strong efforts were made by FEAT to recruit the full complement of planned staff roles for the project. However given the very tight deadlines to getting the project up and running, coupled with the fact that roles required were relatively specialist but on a very short-term basis (typically no more than a four/five month contract could be offered, given the timescale), this proved very difficult.

⁵ In fact the extension enabled the recruitment of a further 7 volunteers to a scaled back version of the programme running over the summer. These volunteers are included in the final summary of outputs and outcomes (Appendices 1 and 2) in this evaluation report.

The partnership took a pragmatic approach, given the importance of the project as a test pilot for a new way of organising volunteering. The numbers of planned roles were reduced and 4 of the core roles were supported by 'parachuting in' one pre-existing FEAT Trading CIC employee on a secondment basis (to be overall Project Manager) together with 3 of pre-existing FEAT Charity employees on secondment (volunteer Progression Officer, Peer Support Coordinator and Qualifications Development Officer.) The role of Estate Project Officer was substituted for contracted input from a local Estate and Woodland Management company. The Masterplan finalisation and Evaluation was also to be undertaken by contracted consultants.

An additional difficulty, which is likely to be common to many projects operating while emerging from the pandemic, was that a range of activities were affected by periodic staff absence due to Covid, which limited the totality or frequency of activities that could be conducted.

- **Heterogeneity of volunteer group**

The speed with which the pilot programme needed to be up and running meant that the participant group (40 who signed up to the HMS programme) were relatively heterogeneous, comprising those who had heard about the programme from various sources rather than from being explicitly targeted groups. Of the 40 originally signed up, 17 were unemployed, 16 were economically inactive and 7 were in employment. Of the additional 7 summer volunteers, 2 were unemployed with 5 in employment.

It was quickly realised that, particularly given that planned staff roles had been reduced and the need to recruit volunteers at speed, the 'target numbers' originally envisaged in the application were unrealistic. The heterogeneity of the group meant that volunteers had a diverse set of motives for participation and somewhat diverse support needs. Some participants were seeking to participate in order to improve skills and employment prospects, some needed more 1-1 and peer support than others, others (typically those who were already employed or economically inactive – largely on account of retirement) were simply joining the programme out of general interest in the park and wishing to 'give back' to the community. The assessment of volunteer needs and potential for progression through the programme, with options for training and qualifications needed to be more personally tailored than originally envisaged.

This meant staff support in the programme needed to be allocated slightly differently, and the actual task allocations were more complex to best address volunteer interests and needs.

6 of the volunteers who had come from general interest chose to focus on working mainly with the Horticultural Project Leader in the Walled Garden and Cottage Garden. Activities for other group sessions (usually 8 people per session, upon occasion slightly more) were chosen based on development and maintenance priorities in the Urban Woodland and Conservation Plans and agreed between the Project Manager, the Estate management Project Contractor (Tree & Woodland expert) and the Volunteer Progression Officer. They included routine park maintenance tasks such as Invasive species removal, clearing leaves from paths, pruning and planting. 2 volunteers chose to work within the Cottage Window Café and others assisting with the Campsite. The additional summer volunteers focussed on a range of ground maintenance activities, including digging, weeding and pruning.

Development of longer term external partnerships

Part of the aim of the project had been to cultivate longer-term partnerships with external organisations at either end of the HMS volunteer programme ‘pipeline’. This was intended to both help ensure that:

- local people are made aware of and referred to the programme by appropriate agencies
- that a portfolio of future placement , volunteering and employment opportunities external to Silverburn could be developed for programme ‘graduates’.

Again due to the tight timescales and reduced staff complement, there was less opportunity to actively pursue partnerships than had been hoped, particularly for cultivating longer-term placement or alternative volunteering/training opportunities for programme ‘graduates’. Nonetheless , largely due to FEAT pre-existing relationships, the programme was able to call on help from a number of organisations to promote the programme and also to seek input to the programme. This included referrals to the programme being made by the Leven job Centre and Fife Voluntary Action. Input to the programme was also attracted from Fife Council (including from the Gaelic Officer, which has led to at least one programme participant deciding to take up learning Gaelic) and a number of businesses and individuals to support skills development and give an indication of potential future opportunities. These included local joinery firms (practical skills training) , Kingdom off road MotorCycle Club (who offer wellbeing courses) and Robertson Construction (potential work placements.)

5. Progress against targets

- **Finalisation of Park Masterplan**

This was completed as planned

- **Target Participant Numbers**

THE original target numbers for the programme had to be revised downwards due to the short timescale available to get the programme up and running and reduced staff complement. Applications to register on the programme were limited to 40 people, down from the original target of 66.

	Original Application	Proportion Of target registration	Actual numbers (Numbers in brackets include the additional summer participants)	Proportion of Total registered (Percentage in brackets include the additional summer participants)
Economically inactive	20	30%	16 (16)	40% (34%)
Unemployed	40	61%	17 (19)	43% (40%)
Employed	6	9%	7 (12)	17% (26%)
Totals	66		40 (47)	

Overall in terms of volunteer numbers, 24 people could be said to have ‘graduated’ from the full programme in terms of following it all the way through.

13 of this number formed a 'core group' of regular group session participants, undertaking the 'roving' tasks around the park and who engaged most heavily with peer support and qualification opportunities.

The remaining 16 people were a mix of 'one-off' engagements, ad hoc engagement or early leavers from the programme. A number of these 'dropped out' due to illness or leaving early to take up employment.

While registration for the HMS programme was capped at 40, as the programme progressed it attracted interest from a further 21 volunteers who appeared to have been inspired by seeing the ongoing activities in the Park and who have made up additional work teams in the Park (particularly in the Cottage Garden) outside of the programme.

- **Numbers of other organisations engaged**

	Original Application	Actual
Public	4 (Fife Council; NHS Fife; Fife Health & Social Care Partnership; DWP)	2 Fife Council, DWP, Fife Council Supported Employment Services
Private	0	4 (Local joinery businesses, Robertson Construction, Swiis Foster Care, Wild Fife Babies & Bairns)
Voluntary Sector	Approx. 12	c. 5 (Fife Voluntary Action, Furniture+ Dysart, Lower Largo Friendship group, Friends of Silverburn Park, Grow Your Mind

6. Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

The programme made demonstrable progress in delivering the majority of its planned outputs and projected outcomes as envisaged in the Theory of Change model, thereby contributing to the Broader Outcome goals of both the Community Renewal Fund and the Heart, Mind and Soul partnership itself (FEAT charity and FEAT Trading CIC). Below is a 'headline summary' drawing on key elements of the Heart, Mind and Soul Theory of Change model. The summary of UKCRF- defined outputs are included as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. NOTE: These outputs/outcomes predominantly relate to the main programme which ran to end June 2022. However the reported numbers also incorporate (in brackets) the additional 7 summer volunteers, recruited to the scaled back version of the programme which was enabled by the extension period granted to the project.

SUMMARY drawing key points from the Heart, Mind and Soul Theory of Change Model

Investment Theme	Outputs	Outcomes	Additional outcomes	Broader Outcomes/impact
Investment in communities and Place	Park Management Plan Developed	Park Management Plan developed		Improved environmental management of high amenity value public green space
	40 (47) people engaged	40 (47) people engaged in life skills activities	21 additional informal volunteers attracted	Increased community participation
Investment in Skills	Park amenities and environment improved	8 People gaining a qualification (Forecast)		Improved community well-being and resilience
	24 (27) Volunteer programme 'graduates'	5 Volunteer programme 'graduates' moving into paid roles across Silverburn 4 programme 'graduates' moving to placements/other training	7 summer volunteers actively interested in pursuing other placements/training	Local community skills base improved
Supporting People into Employment				
Investment for local business	Connections made with number of local businesses	Partnerships initiated	Increased amenity value of better maintained park more attractive to visitors	Local Economy boosted

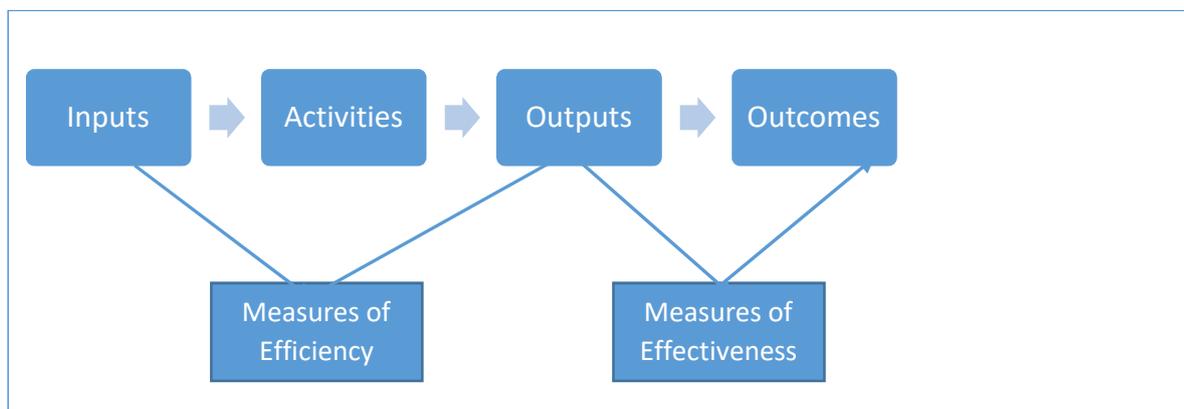
7. Value for money

The overall funds provided to support the Heart , Mind and Soul programme came to £156k. This included support for programme staff salaries, consulting and other contract expenses, administration support, consumables, participant expenses (travel and other related expenses.). Financial management of the programme was provided by FEAT.

Data on outputs and outcomes as defined within UKCRF Guidance have been collected and are presented in broad summary in the preceding section and in more detail in Appendices 1 and 2.

A clear programme logic map or Theory-of Change model was devised for the programme to aid in both programme monitoring and in tracing the progress of the programme towards overall UKCRF objectives.

In theory this should enable the potential development of a range of relevant performance indicators, including cost efficiency, effectiveness and cost-benefit ratios. *Measures of Efficiency* relate to both *Technical Efficiency* (producing the maximum volume of output from the specified volume of input) and *Cost-Efficiency* (producing a given volume of output from the least cost combination of inputs.) *Measures of Effectiveness* relate more to the extent to which outputs contribute to outcomes. The main purpose of such indicators is to help assess overall *Allocative Efficiency* – in other words, achieving the ‘best value’ from available resources.



It is assumed that at a national programme level the UKCRF will have predetermined the relevant weightings to be given to different outputs and outcomes so as to enable assessment at a national level of allocative efficiency. To formally undertake a separate such analysis in isolation for an individual programme such as Heart, Mind and Soul would be a relatively extensive task, and is beyond the current evaluation report resources.

To the extent of a simple cost per output indicator is required , the programme produced 132 separately identifiable outputs (as per UKCRF definitions) for an overall cost of £156K, suggesting a cost per output of £1.18k. However for this to be a useful indicator there would need to be a ranking and weighting of different outputs (the finalisation of the Estate Masterplan, for example, is counted as a single output alongside a # person supported to engage in lifeskills. These are clearly different types of output and therefore would need to be weighted, quality adjusted or shadow priced if they are to be compared.)

If considering UKCRF defined outcomes (to which the outputs are contributing) there are 47 different UKCRF defined outcomes identified, which suggests an outcome effectiveness indicator (Outcome volume/total cost of generating outcome) of £3.3k per outcome. However, again, this is not the whole story as there should ideally be weighting of desired outcomes, which could also take into account e.g. the pilot nature of the programme as compared to an already established programme, etc.,

To the extent that general comment can be made as to whether the programme achieved its aims and the purposes for which the funding was provided, the evidence gathered in this evaluation demonstrates a real degree of positive progress. This is highlighted in section 6 and in the following section 8.

8. Lessons Learned, feedback from project team, participants and beneficiaries

Project Team

A focussed workshop took place towards the end of the programme to enable the core project team⁶ to reflect on the programme, what it had achieved, its strengths and weaknesses.

There were three key areas that the team felt a sense of achievement:

- The physical improvement in the park environment and landscape, as a result of all of the different work groups volunteering in the park on a regular and organised basis
- The personal development made by volunteers (particularly the core group of volunteers who needed more team support initially than others) as the programme evolved.
- Increased feedback and positive comment from park users, increased numbers of groups (e.g. schools and community groups) using the park

Physical Improvement of Park

Without exception the project team felt that there had been a substantial and observable improvement achieved in the physical condition of the park. This included:

- Horticultural improvements (e.g. flower beds managed and tidy)
- Creation and active management of the Cottage garden (which supplies produce for the Park café)
- Increased management of various habitats (the pond/woodland/walled cottage garden) leading to increased biodiversity - more birds in the pond, eels, badgers, foxes, bees, with active management and protection from invasive species such as rabbits.
- Condition of trees and woodland improved (with training of volunteers in woodland management practices such as tree felling)
- Increased recycling/sustainable practices – being able to use wood from felled trees to build park features (e.g. stumperies) and use woodchips for mulching of flower beds etc.

Personal development of Volunteers

- The team felt that the volunteers had welcomed the ‘concept’ of structured volunteering, and the opportunities for formal development (certification, training, qualifications as well as help to progress) had been positively received. The structured programme, including the elements of peer support, had contributed to both observable personal and skills

⁶ (Project Manager, volunteer Progression Officer, Qualifications Officer, Peer Support Coordinator and Peer Support worker)

development for many of the group. 13 volunteers enjoyed working towards the [John Muir Discovery Award](#) and 4 worked specifically on the SQA Steps towards Work Award. 5 of the previously unemployed volunteers had developed their abilities sufficiently to be able to apply for (and were successful in attaining) paid roles in the park post the programme, with at least 4 others going on to other placements.⁷ A number of others who were not seeking employment intended to continue volunteering with the Park - indeed a further 21 people had come forward from the community wishing to become involved, having seen the work of the programme volunteers.

- The organisation of Peer support had worked particularly well, with this appearing to be appreciated by volunteers. The Peer Support activity had followed an organic approach with a Peer support worker joining in all the volunteering activities side by side with the other volunteers, with 'Peer Support Café' conversations allowing more open and natural discussions about mental health and its challenges. Volunteers could also book a 1: 1 meeting with the Peer Support coordinator where they felt it would be helpful. The Peer Support Worker role (participating in activities alongside fellow volunteers) had seemed to be particularly effective in supporting some of the less confident volunteers.

Challenges and lessons learned from the pilot

This programme was a pilot, intended to see if a structured programme could be made to work positively for both the goals of FEAT and FEAT CIC as well as the wider community.

In terms of lessons learned the team expressed views that:

- The short time between the award being made and the need to get the programme started had been a real challenge ; the partner organisations are close to each other, but they still have different core missions (FEAT being focussed on helping people with mental health challenges to access employment, and FEAT Trading CIC being focussed on the management of the Park) and ways of working . A longer run-in time between the notice of award and getting the programme up and running would have allowed better liaison and more discussion to ensure each appreciated the other's goals and how these were complementary.
- The need for the 4 pre-existing employees (FEAT CIC for the Project Manager, FEAT Charity for the Peer Support Coordinator and Qualifications Officer) to be 'parachuted in' had been recognised as necessary and all had been committed to testing the pilot concept. However it had to be acknowledged that this had caused some difficulties for their other projects which had to be put 'on hold' during the programme. For the programme to operate sustainably in the longer term there needed to be longer term posts established (at least 2 year contracts) that would attract qualified applicants.
- A longer run-in time would also have enabled better planning and targeting of the volunteer recruitment .The heterogeneity of the volunteer group had presented difficulties at times – it was felt that more targeted assessment of applicants to enable the possibility of setting up different types of groups for different people could make the groups work more effectively. Some volunteers needed very structured support more than others did. It was also flagged that this type of volunteering is physically demanding and requires at least a

⁷ Of the posts at Silverburn itself, four of these are 6 month posts supported by the Scottish Council for Voluntary organisations and one through the Fife Council Job Contract scheme.

basic physical fitness. Not all of the original 40 volunteers registered had fully appreciated this, which may explain why some had to withdraw due to illness. It was suggested that actually meeting each applicant face to face at recruitment stage would help assess their likelihood of being able to benefit from the programme. At the same time, it was pointed out that having a 'mix' of ability levels and support requirements in a group was more reflective of real life and had led to positive outcomes as well (not least leading to intra-group sharing experience and support with each other.)

- There was potential to link up with a range of other programmes and schemes, to build the progression pathways. This includes linking in, for example, to the Fife Council-Led volunteer schemes.

Experiences of the HMS programme Participants

A post-programme survey was conducted, with survey being sent to all 40 participants registered on the full HMS programme. There were 13 responses, which represented slightly more than half of all the full programme 'graduates.' It is assumed that the 16 'one-off' or 'ad hoc'/drop-out participants may not have felt it relevant to them. A full copy of survey responses is included as Appendix 3.

12 of the respondents indicated they had participated regularly in the programme, more than once per week. One respondent appeared to be more 'ad hoc' and seeing themselves as assisting others rather than directly being assisted. (This respondent's motivations were predominantly to 'give back' to the community.)

The respondents had heard about the programme from a variety of different sources, 3 from Fife Voluntary Action, 6 from staff at Silverburn Park and one had been referred by Staff in FEAT.

This group of respondents had a range of different motivations for becoming involved with the programme. Almost all saw their involvement as partly a way to strengthen their community links and give back to the community. Over 3/4 of the respondents identified the wish to improve their mental health and increase their social interactions. Around half said they enjoyed outdoor work and wanted to improve their physical health. Only 3 had joined the programme with a view to gaining new skills or seeking employment.

There was a positive response to all aspects of the programme, with working outside in nature and working as part of a team being important to nearly all respondents. The learning and skills aspects of the programme (horticulture, woodworking, woodland management) was also rated by at least half.

The majority (8) of these respondents had found the peer support activities helpful, with the peer support conversation café the most highly rated (7 out of the 8 users said these were helpful with 6 also having found the informal discussion elements helpful. Half (4) of the 8 had appreciated the 1 to 1 meetings.

Interestingly, given that only 3 of these respondents had started the programme thinking it would help them gain new skills, 6 of the survey respondents found they had developed new work-related skills and 10 of the 11 respondents to that question confirmed they had increased personal life skills (improved confidence, interaction with others, etc.).

When asked for what they would suggest for improvements to the programme to improve the volunteer experience, around half (6) indicated that more opportunities to gain skills or

qualifications would be good. 7 people recommended some more one-to-one peer support, one third (4) suggested more one-to-one support with other life skills (such as form-filling) and also a wider range of activities would be welcome. A better overview of the Park, its goals and where their work fitted within the park was recommended by 3 people . Given that the project team had highlighted the heterogeneity of the volunteer groups being a challenge, it is worth noting that 5 of the 13 respondents also thought a different mix of volunteer groups would improve the volunteer experience.

However, these were all suggested improvements, rather than criticisms. 3 additional comments were that:

- *“I can’t think of any improvements at the minute.”*
- *“Nothing to add.”*
- *“The programme is already very good.”*

In terms of how volunteers felt they had contributed to the maintenance and development of the Park, all of the group felt that:

- *“Our volunteer group was making a positive difference to the park maintenance and development” and “felt our work was valued by staff and by visitors”.*

A specific additional comment stated:

“I felt like I was part of the Silverburn Park community which motivated me to turn up to volunteer. “

In terms of their overall experience, 10 respondents ranked their experience, with 8 of the 10 respondents giving it the highest ranking: *“ The programme was excellent and a really positive experience”.*

2 respondents gave a lower ranking but still positive *“The programme was fine I had a reasonably good experience. “*

All 13 respondents indicated they would be likely to recommend Silverburn Park to others as a place to volunteer, with 1 person saying ‘*somewhat likely*’ , 3 saying ‘*very likely*’ and 9 saying ‘*extremely likely*’.

While there were only 13 responses to the survey, out of a potential 40, those responding appeared to be among those who had engaged most with the programme (with 12 saying they had attended more than once per week.) The views expressed therefore, coupled with the data on progression (see *Outputs and Outcomes*) are strongly suggestive that the programme was a positive experience for many of the participants.

General Community Impressions

A survey was undertaken of general Park visitors during Summer 2022. While not focussed on views of the HMS programme specifically, this survey does allow some insight into general community reaction to the volunteer development work ongoing in the park. It also gives some confirmation to the views of both the project team and the participant volunteers that their work on the programme was appreciated by the broader community.

- *“The large grassed area through the gates and border have looked a bit sad for a long time. We have a memory rowan tree and plaque which is always surrounded by weeds and*

struggled over the years to survive. I appreciate very much all the hard work done by volunteers. There's been so much improvement thank you...."

- *"This is a fantastic place and we loved seeing all the squirrels, birds and bunnies can't wait to visit again."*
- *"Keep doing what you're doing "*
- *"The park is a wonderful space, the people working there are lovely and it's a very inviting place to visit. We are looking forward to a bigger cafe space and play area in the future."*
- *"The park is a lovely place to be. We walk there a few times a week with either our dog or toddler or both and adore sharing the walled garden with visitors for picnics. Keep going with what you are doing. We are so excited about the direction the park is going in and that we get to raise our family near by."*
- *"Keep doing the amazing work to make Silverburn a fab place to visit"*
- *"The park is beautiful. You are all doing well."*
- *"Thanks for all you do to make the park such a wonderful place to visit. We are lucky to have somewhere so peaceful and beautiful. The difference since I first visited three years ago is quite remarkable. Well done!"*
- *"Keep up the great work that you all do. Thank you."*
- *"Lovely walk, in improved grounds. "*

9. Recommendations for future development of the pilot into a full-scale programme

Overall the evidence gathered has demonstrated that the pilot project supported by the Community Renewal Fund has been successful as a concept. The project partnership were successful in getting the project up and running within a very short timescale and have been able to evidence a range of positive outputs, outcomes and wider impact. If established as an ongoing venture it has the potential to generate considerable benefits for the wider community as well as for direct beneficiaries (the volunteer participants , FEAT Trading Company CIC in the management of the park and the FEAT charity in fulfilling their goals of helping those with mental health challenges back into work.)

Drawing on the challenges faced and lessons learned and on the feedback from participants, the following are key messages and recommendations for any future roll-out of this type of programme:

- For a programme to be sustainable and attract qualified applicants for the staffing required, there needs to be more stable funding. Team members expressed the view that contracts of at least 2 years are required to attract people of the experience needed.
- There should be a longer run-in time between knowledge of funding award and the project formally beginning – realistically the recruitment process for qualified staff can take at least 3 months.
- There needs to be more planning and preparation lead time built in to the programme at the start of each cycle , to prepare materials and plan activities for the volunteer groups as well as to ensure the goals of both partner organisations continue to be addressed.
- Thought should be given to targeting different groups of volunteers and flexibly adjusting the programme content and levels of personal/group support to suit their characteristics and needs more closely.
- The programme could build on the exploratory qualification portfolio work carried out by the Qualifications Officer with a view to establishing a broad portfolio of potential qualifications that can be attained through volunteering and working in the park.

- A more stable and ongoing programme should include resource to focus on building external partnership links. These are important for both the design of programme content (bringing expert input on different skills training) and to strengthen the programme 'pipeline' of both appropriate referrals and potential post-programme placements with other businesses and organisations.
- An ongoing programme also needs dedicated administrative resource, for maintaining records, contacts and follow up on post-programme progression.

Appendix 1: UKCRF-defined outputs

These figures include both the main programme and scaled-back summer extension programme participants.

Output (UKCRF OUTPUTS)	Unit of measurement	Definition	Additional UKCRF requested data	Evidence	comments (other outputs)
# of people supported to participate in education	Number of people - 47	People who have received support to engage in lifelong learning and in-the-job training	47 people registered of whom 19 unemployed, 16 economically inactive and 12 employed at start of programme. 29 Male, 18 Female. AGE groups: 16-24 (5),25-29(5),30-34 (6), 35-39(5), 40-44(3), 45-49(1), 50-54 (4), 55-59(9) 60-64 (3) 65+ (3) Not stated (3). Ethnicity: White (42) Asian (2) Not stated (3). 1 participant stating disability. Support type: Face to Face (100%) Support ratio Average 1:8	HMS programme registration forms	DURING the programme
# of people supported to gain a qualification	8	People who sought Qualifications Officer support		Qualification Officer records	4 people actively working on SQA award, 2 gained First Aid Certificate, 1 gained Food Hygiene certificate
# of people supported to engage in job searching	10	unemployed and economically inactive people supported in job search		Volunteer Progression Officer records	
# of people supported to gain employment	5	unemployed/economically inactive offered employment		Volunteer Progression and Project Manager records	5 offered paid jobs at Silverburn (SCVO jobs)
# of people supported to engage in lifeskills	47	all participants engaging in programme (designed for life skills)		HMS programme registration forms	12 gained John Muir Discovery Level certificates, at least 1 undertook mindfulness course

OTHER OUTPUTS					
Masterplan finalisation	Plan	Completion of Masterplan for Park		Plan	
Development of Feasibility of Qualifications Portfolio offer for future programmes	Progress report	Report showing potential portfolio and arrangements		Report on progress	Developed in consultation with participants (on likely interest) and staff (on experience and qualifications for delivery)
Programme Evaluation Report	Report	Evaluation Report Delivered		Report Delivered	
Numbers of other local organisations/business engaged in programme	Numbers - 12	organisations/businesses inputting to programme/linking to programme		programme diary/Progression officer records	DWP, Fife Council, Fife Voluntary Action, Local Joiners, Robertson Construction, Kingdom off Road Motorcycle club, Furniture Plus Dysart, Lower Largo friendship Group, Grow your Mind, Swiis foster Care, Wild fife Babies and bairns, Supported Employment Services
Park maintenance and development activities delivered	Estimated volunteer hours spent - 2040	Hours spent working in park		Volunteer hour logs	All core group volunteer hours logged. (The 'roving' teams – 1317 hours) Ancillary group (e.g. Cottage Garden, café etc., hours estimated . Additional summer hours estimated

Appendix 2: UKCRF-defined Outcomes

These figures include full programme and scaled back extension programme participants.

NEED TO BE ESTIMATE/FORECAST due to reporting timescale				
UKCRF OUTCOMES	Unit of Measurement	Definition	Basis of forecast	Comment
People in education/training following support	Number of people - 11	people in other training/placements	those actively interested in other placements/training	
People gaining a qualification following support	Number of people - 8	people gaining a qualification following support	numbers consulting qualifications officer on options	
People engaged in job searching following support	Number of people - 3	economically inactive people engaged in job searching following support		
people in employment following support	Number of people - 5	people in employment following programme support	those known to have jobs following support	
people engaged in lifeskills activities following support	number of people - 20	people engaged in lifeskills following support	all those in continuing volunteering (20)	
Other Outcomes				
Worked up portfolio of qualification offer attainable through future programmes	portfolio plan	establishment of portfolio of qualifications attainable through future programmes	report from Qualifications Officer	may include SQA Personal development; SQA Mental Health and Well being; SQA Wellbeing Awards; SQA steps to Work ; Horticulture ; John Muir Engagement awards; Duke of Edinburgh awards, Youth Achievement bronze Level (Youth Scotland) John Muir Engagement and Discovery Awards

Appendix 3 (Separate PDF attachment): Volunteer Survey responses

Appendix 4: (Separate photographic file, available from FEAT) Photographic record of a range of volunteer engagement activities.