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Focus Group Study 2008

Young People's attitudes towards greenspace

Report

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Prepared for the **Central Scotland Forest Trust**

by

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Summary of study

This report describes the results of research into young people's attitudes towards greenspace in central Scotland. The study was undertaken for the Central Scotland Forest Trust by the OPENspace Research Centre based at the Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot Watt University. The study was carried out in the autumn 2008 using a qualitative research methodology: two focus groups in Falkirk and Shotts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the study

The purpose of this pilot study was to undertake research to gain insights into how young people feel about their local "greenspace" and how they imagine their "perfect greenspace" to be. The first aim of this study was to give voice to young people's experiences of, and views on, greenspace by engaging them in direct dialogue through two focus group sessions. The second aim of the study was to pilot a new approach for CSFT in researching sections of the Forest population using a qualitative research methodology (i.e. focus groups).

1.2 Presentation of findings and relevance

This report presents the findings of the two focus groups. It is designed to be useful to the Central Scotland Forest Trust's staff, particularly those engaged in consultation and developmental activities. It should also be of interest to other organisations involved with community, urban and social forestry both in Scotland and elsewhere.

1.3 Broader policy context

This study is situated within the broader policy context of the current debate on young people and the outdoors. Discussions on how to deal with teenage anti-social behaviour and the stigma of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) sit alongside initiatives to promote healthy and challenging recreational activities to engage young people in constructive ways of spending their time out of school. The focus on sustainable communities in our society also underlines the need for equity of access to goods and benefits, and these are increasingly seen as including access to green spaces, wildlife and nature, whether close to home or in more distant countryside. Yet, many young people in disadvantaged contexts are effectively excluded from such opportunities. Furthermore, the particular desires and age-specific needs of different segments in the teenage population also need attention, and may differ widely. If the above challenges are to be effectively addressed, a better understanding of how young people engage with outdoor green space is appropriate and necessary (see Ward Thompson et al., 2006).

1.4 The Brief

The brief asked for research to:

- work with Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) to develop a checklist to fully explore the views and feelings of young people regarding greenspace and social interaction in this environment;
- conduct two focus group discussions with young people in Central Scotland using this checklist;
- deliver a summary document detailing research findings, gaps and barriers in understanding, and suggestions for further research.

2. Methodology

The research was based on two focus group sessions with young people (aged 15-17) from two different locations in Central Scotland. The focus group discussion was based on a checklist of proposed questions drafted by the CSFT (see Appendix A). This was summarised into the following themes:

- young people's feelings towards their local environment;
- young people's imagined "perfect greenspace";
- potential for conflict resolution;
- suggestions for improving research;
- recommendations for further research.

The checklist was then adapted by the research team to provide a set of questions for use in the focus group discussion (see Appendix B). The main themes of the focus group questions were as follows:

- young people's definition of 'greenspace';
- young people's 'favourite greenspace';
- young people's local greenspace;
- young people's childhood memories of greenspace;
- young people's ideal greenspace

2.1 Locations

The locations chosen for the focus group sessions were selected by the CSFT's Monitoring & Evaluation Officer as representative for Central Scotland. In order to ensure that young people from different areas could contribute to this study, and offer their views and experience of local greenspace, two focus groups were held; one at the Social Work Office in Stenhousemuir, Falkirk and one at Calderhead High School in Shotts, North Lanarkshire. The latter focus group was chosen owing to the cancellation of a focus group at Forgewood, Motherwell. Inevitably the results give only a partial view of young people's views but they do offer an insight into the experience from the participants' perspective.

2.2 Recruitment of Participants

The participants for the focus group sessions were recruited by:

- the youth worker at the Social Work Office (Stenhousemuir), and
- the C5 teacher at the Calderhead High (Shotts)

Focus group discussions were carried out with the following groups of young people:

Location	Organisation	No. girls	No. boys	Age range
Stenhousemuir, Falkirk	Social Work Office	3	3	15-16
Shotts, North Lanarkshire	Calderhead High	7	5	15-17

The participants from Stenhousemuir were young people at risk (in social care) whereas those from Shotts were all still at school. The purpose of having these two different groups of young people was to have a more inclusive research approach and look at different groups of young people and their experience of greenspace.

Dates and venues for both focus group sessions were organised by CSFT's Monitoring & Evaluation Officer. A consent form was sent to all participants for completion by their parents or carers and returned to the researchers on the day of the focus group sessions. Participants were rewarded with cinema ticket vouchers.

2.3 The structure of the focus group discussions

The focus group discussion was facilitated by a team of two researchers: a facilitator and a note-taker. In the interest of comparability, each focus group was conducted following a schedule devised by the researchers in advance and in accordance with the checklist provided by CSFT. This structure was not rigid and groups were encouraged to discuss the topics most relevant to their experience. All participants were encouraged to join in the discussion and individual participants were steered away from any attempt to dominate the flow of the discussion. In the focus group session at Calderhead High School in Shotts, the researchers distributed street maps of Shotts and the nearby area to participants and asked them to point on the map locations mentioned in the discussion. With the agreement of the participants, both focus groups were audio-recorded, enabling further analysis. Notes were also taken during the focus groups to assist with the data analysis.

3. Results

This section describes the findings of the focus groups in thematic categories that emerged from analysis of the recorded discussions. Available resources did not permit full transcription of the recorded sessions. Instead, the researchers made notes from listening to the session recordings and compared these with notes taken during the focus group sessions.

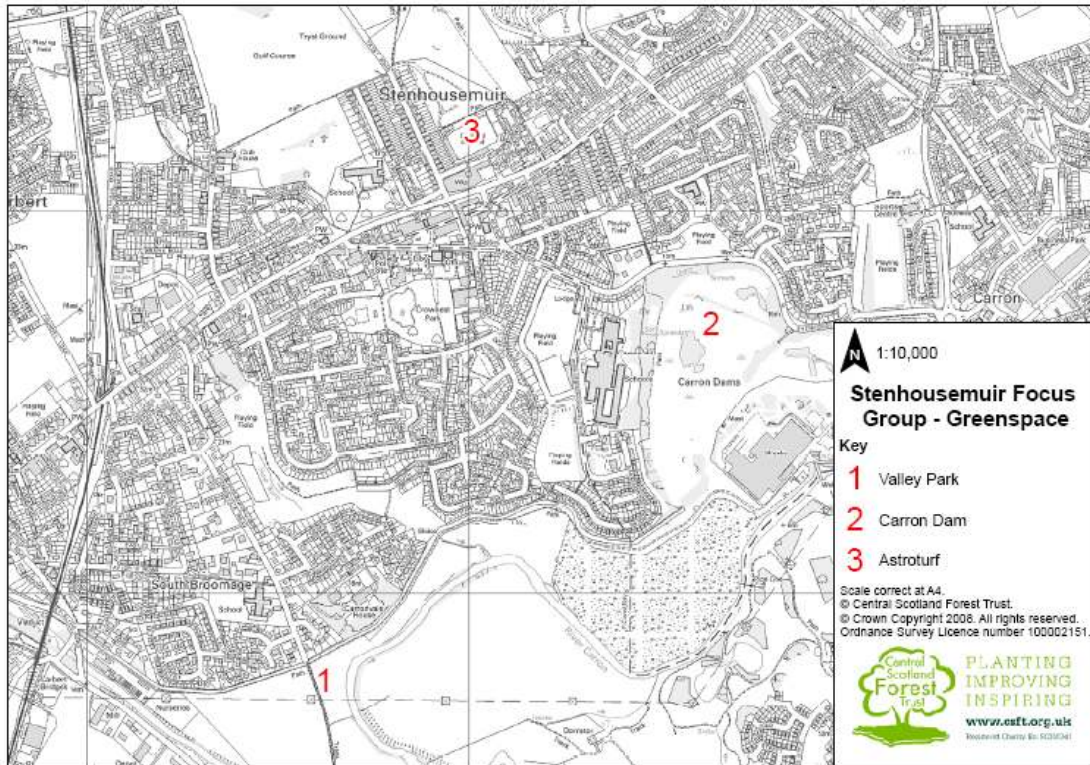
3.1 Defining 'greenspace'

Participants in each of the two locations appeared to have different understandings of the term 'greenspace'. In Stenhousemuir participants did not provide their own definitions of the term. Discussing definitions introduced by the researchers, they defined 'greenspace' as their nearby natural environment: trees, flowers, grass, forested areas and large empty spaces. Some mentioned the lack of green areas around their local community while others referred to a nearby park that was "burnt down" as an unsafe place.

Whilst the views of participants in Stenhousemuir regarding greenspace appear to be negatively skewed, participants in Shotts presented researchers with a more positive approach. For participants from Calderhead High, 'greenspace' is a straightforward term, which they interpreted as a "natural area not used for agriculture".

3.2 Local 'greenspace'

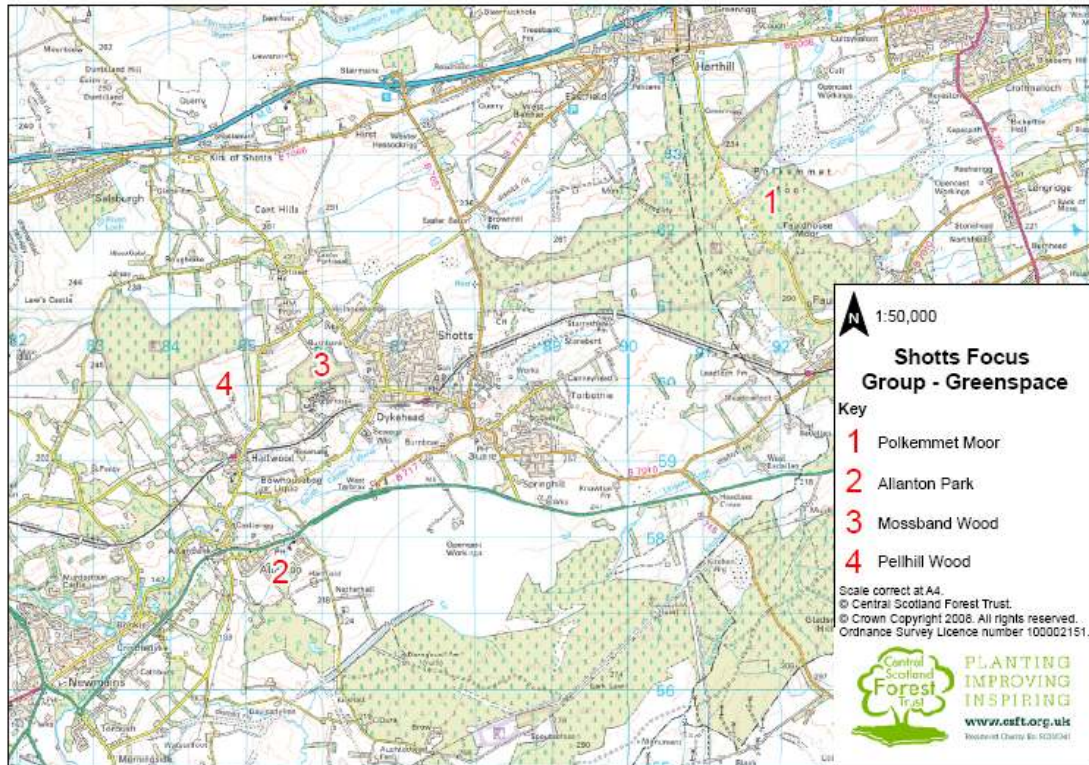
When asked if they knew of any greenspace near where they live and if they visit it often, participants in both focus groups gave similar responses. Participants from Stenhousemuir mentioned very few local green areas: Valley Park, Carron Dam, and the Astroturf (local football centre) (see Figure 1).



(Figure 1 Map of Stenhousemuir with participants' responses, Copyright Central Scotland Forest Trust)

They described green outdoor areas as unattractive, boring and unsafe. As described by one of the participating girls, in Valley Park “there’s nothing there to do, the park got burnt down [...] the swings were burnt”. Another participant also expressed his fear of going to the Valley Park stating that “if you go down the Valley, you get chased away”.

At the beginning of the focus group, participants from Shotts said that they knew few green places around their local area: Polkemmet Country Park and Allanton Park (see Figure 2).



(Figure 2 Map of Shotts with participants' responses, Copyright Central Scotland Forest Trust)

As the session progressed, they were able to pinpoint on the maps provided a more diverse number of outdoor green areas from well-known local parks and woods (i.e. Mossband Wood, Pell Hill,) to smaller-scale less-known places (i.e. the old railway embankment, the Pit, the Broons). At Shotts, participants described their local green areas in terms similar to those used by participants from Stenhousemuir:

*“Not exciting, just walk about it. It’s boring, the same [...].
It’s just green, bit better, with chutes, tree swings, things for young kids, there’re no sports facilities”* (15 year old boy, Calderhead High, Shotts).

Only one participant from Shotts described some of his local green areas as a favourite place, remarking that it is *“really easy to get to, [...], we know the paths”*.

In both focus groups, when asked to name their local greenspace, participants mentioned particular locations with unique names, personalising in this way those particular locations. For example, participants in the focus group in Stenhousemuir referred to the Carron Dam as the “Dam” and the green space around the Mill Lade area as the “Valley Park” while participants in Shotts referred to the area near Brucefield as the “Broons” and the one between Allanton and Hartfield as the “Pit”.

3.3 Activities in greenspace

The next series of questions focused on the activities that young people from both locations are involved in when visiting their local green places. In the focus group discussion in Stenhousemuir, instead of describing what they do in their local green spaces, the participants talked primarily about their concerns of being *“chased away”* by local youth gangs. Two of the girls, however, briefly mentioned that they like to go with

their friends to the nearby greenspace (the Laid) to “*sit and drink*, and also to the Valley Park to “*sit at the well*”.

Participants from Shotts talked about more diverse activities in greenspace. For example, one boy mentioned that he goes very often with his friends to the nearby Allanton Forest to camp, especially in the summer:

“Usually we just go with our group of friends, if we go camping [...]. We camp once a week in the summer. We’ve found a few sites, a wee site next to a burn, another wee burn, we just found them ourselves” (boy 16 years old, Calderhead High, Shotts).

One girl also mentioned that she likes to go to Allanton Forest to relax and talk with her friends whenever the weather is good.

3.4 Young people’s least favourite greenspace

As the previous set of questions make evident, the views of a number of participants from both focus groups regarding green spaces appeared to be negatively skewed. Focus group discussions included specific questions on green places considered by the participants as “least favourite”. Interestingly, descriptions of these “least favourite” local greenspace were found to be very different between the two focus groups.

Participants from Stenhousemuir identified their “least favourite” greenspace as a “dangerous” place. The Dam is considered to be one of these unsafe places, as “*drug dealers go there*”. When asked what specifically makes this place dangerous, this particular respondent replied that it is “*the people that’s in it*”. One other respondent added that “*you need to be out of your head to go down there [...] they are dangerous people there, skunkheads*”.

On the other hand, the participants from Shotts didn’t think of their local green spaces as dangerous sites. They did feel, however, that it was not very safe to walk alone near trees when it’s dark. One girl mentioned that she gets scared when she hears the wind blowing because she thinks of horror films. The rest of the group agreed that what makes a green place like a forest ‘scary’ is the lack of good lighting stating that it is “*really scary when you’re walking down in the dark, you don’t feel safe, it’s isolated, it needs to be better lit*” (boy 16 years old, Calderhead High, Shotts).

There were also focus group participants who preferred to be in the forests than in public parks as “*you feel safer in the forest with your pals – you can be with the people you want to be with*”.

3.5 Childhood memories of greenspace

A growing body of recent evidence suggests that childhood experiences of nature play a crucial role in an individual’s sense of connectedness with nature in later life (in adolescence and adulthood) (see Bixler et al. 2002; Ward Thompson et al. 2004; 2008). In a study in central Scotland, it was found that the “frequency of childhood visits to woodlands is the single most important predictor of how often people visit woodlands as adults” (Ward Thompson et al. 2004: iv). Taking the cue from these findings, the present study included questions on young people’s childhood memories of greenspace to test the hypothesis that the frequency of visits to green areas during childhood has shaped the participants’ present views and experiences of green areas.

As younger children, most of the participants in both focus groups used to visit diverse green areas close to their neighbourhood: running about in the local park; playing armies with their friends; climbing trees, playing on the swings; wandering and looking around in the fields. However, as the quotes below show, the participants in Shotts had more diverse and risk-taking childhood experiences of green spaces:

“Me and my cousin used to alternate between going to each other houses – across the fields – wandering, looking around and trying to make stuff, tree houses that failed, looked awful, hilarious. We kept injuring ourselves.” (boy 16 years old, Calderhead High, Shotts)

“Me and my friends always used the same forest – built tree houses, explored, climbed trees. We were getting dirty and having mud-ball fights” (boy 15 years old, Calderhead High, Shotts).

“I used the local fields [to play football], I started when I was about four – I played then with the local team” (boy 16 years old, Calderhead High, Shotts).

3.6 Young people’s ‘perfect greenspace’

One of the key aims of the CSFT study is to “provide a clear understanding of what the “perfect greenspace” for young people looks like and how such a space would be used by young people”. The following section focuses on the participants’ responses to this theme.

The responses to this set of questions varied again between the two focus groups. Participants from Stenhousemuir found it hard to answer questions relating to this theme and asked interviewers to clarify the term “perfect greenspace”. After clarification, their responses on their ‘ideal greenspace’ were as follows:

- a pub for under 18s
- a big hut to grow skunk – that’s a greenhouse to smoke joints with pals
- a tree house with a DVD player
- a place with an outdoor telly and loud speakers to listen to music

Participants from Shotts proposed a long list of changes for their local green places to become their “perfect greenspace”, including:

- a shelter to sit in and keep out of rain
- an openspace – grassy space where you can sit
- a massive picnic area
- tree swings
- flowers
- a river, beach or any other water natural resource
- animals
- nature walk through trees
- a shop near the trees to sit and relax

- a football park
- a big den
- toilet facilities

One of the respondents also mentioned that he imagined his “perfect greenspace” as:

“hundreds of tree houses all interconnected, big ramps where everyone could have their own tree house. As a kid I was always making tree houses at Harthill. They took everything away, there is nothing there now, they even took the swings away.”

In the question regarding their activities in their imagined greenspace, the respondents replied that they would:

- relax
- act as a child
- camp
- kick a ball about
- have fun
- get lost
- play “hide and seek”

This would be a place only for young people where there would be *“just you and your friends”, “no-one else; it’s attractive because it’s empty, not busy with other people.”*

The place would also be taken care of by young people and volunteers that will *“watch it at night so it doesn’t get vandalised”*. The young people will be there to remove any litter and be responsible for its maintenance and management.

3.7 Young people’s favourite place

Although the scope of the CSFT study was restricted in investigating young people’s views towards greenspace, the researchers realised that, in order to understand the value of greenspace in young people’s lives, it would be useful to look at young people’s everyday activities, what are their favourite places and whether ‘greenspace’ is included as one of the latter.

For respondents from Stenhousemuir, their most common activity was either to be *“on the streets”* to *“stand and talk”* and drink with their friends, or to stay at home to *“watch telly”*. Two of the girls also mentioned that their favourite place was their house – and particularly their room – because they had their *“stuff in it [...] music, it’s quiet”*. They also liked going to their friends’ houses to *“sit in and talk”*. Nonetheless, they all agreed that they liked to go *“out and about – having fun with [their] pals.”* Their lists of favourite places did not include any of their local green areas.

Participants from Shotts used a variety of different places in their free time. Some preferred to stay at home to read and use the internet to chat with friends from school, while others liked to go out with their friends, visit Glasgow – and particularly the shops at Buchanan Street – go to the cinema and the under-18s local club. Two of the boys

also included camping and walking in the woods as two of their favourite activities, but only in summertime, as the weather would not permit these in other times of the year. Their camping and walking are activities organised by them and their friends: they take with them loudspeakers, food and drink and stay overnight in the woods.

4. Emerging Themes

The following are the main themes emerging from this short research project:

- The term “greenspace” is hard to define for many young people.
- Perceptions of greenspace are influenced by respondents’ life experiences and childhood memories.
- A greenspace is a place to retreat and relax, a “breather” or escape from frequently stressful everyday life.
- A greenspace could also be a place to socialise and be with friends.
- Activities in greenspace could be diverse and risk-taking, ranging from the building of dens and tree houses to more anti-social and illegal activities such as underage alcohol drinking, smoking and drug taking.
- Easy access is a key issue for visiting local green spaces.
- Local green areas are often unattractive to young people due to lack of provision of facilities (e.g. sports facilities, tree swings) and their association with danger.
- Some green spaces are considered unsafe and dangerous due to presence of other groups (e.g. drug users, adults, young people not included in the group of friends).
- Local green spaces lack appropriate management and maintenance (e.g. littered and vandalised local green areas, poorly maintained paths).
- Weather conditions restrict outdoor activities in green spaces.
- Young people’s “perfect greenspace” is diverse in character and combines a variety of different activities. However, not all of these activities are what many people consider to be legitimate greenspace activities as some are illegal, such as underage drinking and smoking of illegal drugs.
- Young people want to have a place of their own, away from adult supervision, to hang out with their friends.
- Young people say they would be willing to undertake the responsibility for maintaining and managing their “perfect greenspace” with the help of some adult supervision.
- Young people personalise local greenspace by giving it a unique name, and in this way greenspace takes on a different local identity.

5. Discussion

The study proceeded well in terms of data collection and analysis, although it was not without its problems which are discussed in more detail in Section 6. A key finding is the diversity of attitudes towards greenspace amongst young people. There is a tendency in research, and particularly that of policy context, to view young people as a

homogeneous group and generalise their views and experiences by their age. However, recent studies, including the present one, suggest that young people's experiences and perceptions of their local environment differ according to gender, socio-economic, educational and ethnic background, physical and mental ability as well as (sub-) cultural orientation (Travlou, 2007). In this study, it became evident that socio-economic and educational background play an important role on the way young people view greenspace. It is also important to mention the particular character of the place(s) where the young people from the two focus groups live. Stenhousemuir is an urban neighbourhood while Shotts could be defined more as a rural area surrounded by different woods, parks and farmland. This may partly explain the difference in the attitudes towards and uses of local green spaces in the two locations by the two focus groups' participants.

The young people from Shotts appeared to be more resourceful, using the local train station to get around, e.g. to Glasgow. They mentioned that they like to go with their friends to the city centre of Glasgow on weekends to stroll around Buchanan Street and shop.

The main social values of greenspace for young people can be categorised as, firstly, being connected with relaxation, de-stressing and being close to a natural setting, and secondly, with socialisation. Referring to the latter social value, young people view a place as "favourite" if it offers them the opportunity to be with friends and other people of same age. In most cases the social attributes are more important than the physical characteristics of a place (including greenspace) to make it attractive to young people.

It is also evident from the data that some of the young people's activities in greenspace and their favourite places may be considered anti-social. Critical reflection on this observation may see some types of "anti-social behaviour" as a necessary or inevitable part of (some) young people's socialisation and rites of passage to adulthood (see Bell et al., 2003).

Many of the participants felt a strong bond with green areas and this seems to be stronger when they were frequent visitors as children. If they did visit as children, this also seems to give them more confidence, for example, in camping or walking alone. This finding shows that childhood experiences (and memories) of greenspace is an important predictor of how often people visit similar green places in later years (see Ward Thompson 2006).

Referring to the description of the "perfect greenspace", the participants' responses differed again between the two focus groups. On the one hand, the respondents from Stenhousemuir didn't like to go away from their local neighbourhood and visit local parks and woods but preferred instead to "hang about on the streets" or stay at home and either watch TV or be in their room and listen to music. So, when they were asked to describe their "perfect greenspace", their responses were limited to the types of places they were used to in their everyday life. On the other hand, the respondents from Shotts gave a more elaborate and sophisticated description of their "perfect greenspace", including facilities that would offer them the opportunity to explore further those places. Their responses may be also attributed to the fact that they use a variety of different green areas in Shotts, some a distance away from their local neighbourhoods, and get involved in different activities.

In brief, the study reveals that young people value the importance of:

- Peer gathering places

- Safety
- Spatial autonomy
- Accessibility
- Management and maintenance
- Diversity of amenities

6. Obstacles encountered in research

A number of issues were encountered during the course of the CSFT study regarding the arrangement, organisation and facilitation of the focus group sessions. Firstly, and as is often the case with this type of research, organisation of focus group meetings depended on key informants or contacts who were responsible for inviting participants and arranging venues. As a consequence, researchers were less in control of who was invited to take part in the study and some participants' profiles may not have fitted the original intended scope of the study. In the case of the present study, there were a number of problems directly related to the organisation of the focus group sessions:

- In one of the two initial focus groups sessions, none of the ten invited participants arrived for the meeting. In this case, the session had to be rescheduled in a different location and date.
- Although it was originally decided that the focus groups would be between 10 and 12 people of similar age (16 year olds), in Falkirk there were only 6 participants between 15 and 16 years old and in Shotts there were 12 participants between 15 to 17 years old.
- Although consent forms were distributed to all focus group participants prior to the meeting, few of them were completed and returned to the researchers. However, the under 16 year old participants did return the consent forms, so in this case there were no research ethics complications.

Secondly, there were issues related to the facilitation of the focus group sessions:

- Due to particular group dynamics, some of the participants may not have felt able to express their views with complete freedom in a group setting.
- Some of the participants also tried to dominate the session by expressing views intended to have a mild 'shocking' effect describing their illegal activities in outdoor spaces.
- In a formal setting like the school and the social work office, organised and controlled by adults, young people feel less in control over decision-making or expressing views in an interview arranged for them by teachers, social workers and researchers. In this context, the inequalities in status and power between young people and adults and the place where data is collected must be accounted for as a potential influence on the data gathering process.

Any future research on young people's attitudes towards greenspace would benefit from including a variety of research methods alongside focus group discussions. For instance, participants could also be interviewed individually to get a more in-depth insight on their views on the topic and give the opportunity to those who do not like to talk in large groups to express their views.

7. Gaps and suggestions from further research

7.1 Gaps in current knowledge

- Unstructured use of greenspace (e.g. derelict or gap sites and fringe woodland) local to where young people live is very poorly understood. Reference to usage of this type of space is anecdotal in the main. Further research is needed to explore how these spaces are appropriated by young people and the benefits derived, and also what providers of such green spaces think of the latter.
- A further information need concerns greenspace uses among excluded groups of young people such as ethnic minority groups and young people with physical and mental disabilities.
- There is also a lack of 'inter-generational' projects – projects that build bridges between young people, their families and older generations.
- There is a shortage of projects where young people are in control of the design, setting up and organisation of greenspace.

7.2 Further research on young people and greenspace

As mentioned, it would be difficult to draw general conclusions on young people's attitudes towards greenspace from the responses of participants in the two focus group sessions carried out for this pilot study, since this was a small sample that may not be representative and thus only touches upon the surface of the subject. Further research needs to include: different types of greenspace and locations in the Central Scotland region, young people from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, as well as young people with physical and mental disabilities. It would be also beneficial to include in future research young people from ethnic minority groups and look at their perception of greenspace, even if census results reveal that the Forest has very low ethnic representations.

Integrative mixed methodologies should be explored, including a variety of qualitative methods such as:

1. Individual interviews and focus group discussions.
2. Place maps to inscribe spatial experiences, creating a web of inter-linked paths and routes according to favourite and least favoured places, spaces of inclusion and exclusion, hang-out spots and contested spaces.
3. Participatory walks with young people in their favourite places and greenspace. This qualitative method can harness place as an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production.
4. Self-directed photography, video diaries and weblogs to allow opportunities to learn new skills, familiarise with new technologies and generate materials around which the experience of greenspace can be discussed by empowering young people to take part in the research process and giving them a voice.

The focus of this pilot study is young people's views and experiences of local greenspace. However, it is evident that greenspace is popular with other people too. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to undertake further research focusing upon other local user groups (e.g. young mothers with toddlers, younger children, elderly people, dog walkers etc). There is also potential to look at other marginalised sections of the local

community (e.g. young unemployed people, people with poor mental health and/or physical impairment, etc.). It is worth mentioning that the research methodology used will need to be influenced and shaped by different groups of greenspace users.

As other relevant research, for example Wild Adventure Space (Ward Thompson et al., 2006), has shown, it would be useful to:

- establish a baseline survey of current levels of use and non-use of different types of greenspace by young people. This study would help to identify which groups of young people are not using various green areas and why, so that outreach can be targeted.
- support research to develop the theoretical basis for understanding the mechanisms behind engagement with greenspace, including how younger children's experience feeds into later life.

A possible future research exercise could include a series of observations on those favourite places for young people, such as the street and local park, to identify their attributes and characteristics that make them so valued to teenagers. This would make it easier to compare between green and non-green places as well as contribute to recommendations for improving greenspace and making it more attractive to this particular age group. A series of focus groups and individual interviews would also contribute to the validation through triangulation of the findings from the site-specific observations. In addition, research could look at the different characteristics between young people who use local green places and those who do not. Finally, as this pilot study showed, there is a need for research beyond the school room and youth centre to engage young people in participatory discussion and make them feel empowered and at ease with the process of the research. Methods such as those listed above (e.g. participatory walks, self-directed photography and video diaries) would assist research to look in-depth at what makes a perfect greenspace for young people and encourage participation in the future design for their ideal place.

8. Recommendations for further actions¹

This research has identified that the further actions would increase the opportunities for young people in central Scotland to experience greenspace and to gain the benefits which it offers. The recommendations for further action that follow are also drawn from previous research carried out for the Central Scotland Forest Trust. The conclusions and recommendations of these studies are also relevant to the present study (Greenlink, 2007; Central Scotland Forest Trust, 2008).

8.1 Safety, risk and social inclusion

- Develop advice on risk management for greenspace, including help on how to overcome barriers, how to outreach and negotiate with young people.
- Undertake research to improve the primary information base on how young people with disabilities and young people from deprived communities perceive

¹ Some of the "recommendations for further action" have been adapted from the Wild Adventure Space Report (Ward Thompson, Travlou and Roe, 2006) drafted by OPENspace on behalf of Natural England. The focus of the study was the investigation of the potential benefits to young people of "wild adventure space" which brought to light very similar findings to those of the CSFT study.

and use greenspace.

- Explore what works to attract young people from areas and contexts of deprivation to experience greenspace through innovative approaches.
- Make provision for greater diversity of greenspace experience drawing on different cultural experiences (e.g. entertainment, food, music).
- Develop the primary information base on young people's unstructured use of their local greenspace.

8.2 Young people's participation in decision-making

- Develop training materials and tools for young people to act as leaders or mentors for greenspace activities. For example, it would be beneficial to develop a programme that will engage and inspire young people through participation in stimulating and fun regular outdoor activities. During this programme, young people will be responsible to make decisions about the direction they want to go as a group as the project progresses.
- Include young people in the decision-making process and design of youth-friendly facilities in greenspace. For this action, the development of a toolkit of participatory research is necessary which will establish the groundwork to create youth-friendly green places in local communities across central Scotland. The toolkit will help young people to gain a better understanding of their local greenspace; influence community decision-making processes and gain awareness of the processes of participation in the context of their local communities.

8.3 Summary of actions

The Central Scotland Forest Trust pilot study feeds into a wider body of research on young people's use and experience of greenspace that reveals many benefits to young people.

In particular, the findings of the CSFT study could feed into the following areas of wider research:

- Addressing issue of safety, risk and liability
- Addressing social inclusion and exclusion
- Understanding unstructured use of local greenspace
- Involving young people in decision-making and design of youth-friendly greenspace
- Training young people as leaders and mentors
- Developing further research on the benefits of greenspace on young people's lives.

9. References

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Appendix A

Initial focus group check list drafted by CSFT

Themes to be investigated by facilitator

Mostly positive searching questions – explore experience and emotions

a) Feelings towards local environment

1. Do you know of any Greenspaces² near where you live?
2. Do you use this area right now or in the past?
3. Are there any barriers that stop you using these places?
4. What do you do in these places?
5. What do you get out of using and being in this space?
6. What's the quality of local Greenspace like?

b) The Perfect Greenspace

1. Imagine a perfect outdoors place – What does it look like?
2. Is it possible to create this space here / locally – How?
3. Does this space need to be cared for? How? Would you help maintain it?

c) Potential Conflict Resolution

1. Are there any other people in this perfect place?
2. Who are they and what are they doing?
3. When they see you using the perfect space, how do they feel and respond to you?

d) Summary

1. Summaries comments and get consensus on findings
2. How do people feel the session went generally?
3. What could be done to improve it?

² Greenspace is any vegetated land or water within or adjoining an urban area. It includes:

- 'Natural' greenspaces - natural and semi-natural habitats
- Green corridors - paths, disused railway lines, rivers and canals
- Amenity grassland, parks and gardens
- Outdoors sports facilities, playing fields and children's play areas
- Other functional greenspaces e.g. cemeteries and allotments
- Countryside immediately adjoining a town which people can access from their homes

Appendix B

Focus Group Study – Questions used with Focus Groups

A. Introduction – defining ‘greenspace’

What does ‘greenspace’ mean to you?

Do you know of any greenspace near where you live?

Have you been to a place like the one you just described?

When was the last time you visited a greenspace?

How often do you visit a greenspace?

With whom do you go to a greenspace?

What do you do there with your friends?

Do you go to your local greenspace alone?

What do you do there if you are alone?

B. Favourite greenspace

Do you have any favourite greenspace?

What do you like about your favourite (outdoor) place/greenspace?

How would you describe the quality of your local greenspace?

C. Local greenspace

What do you dislike about your local greenspace?

Are there any barriers that prevent you from using your local greenspace?

Are there any local greenspaces where you do not go?

Are there any dangerous local greenspaces?

Have you ever felt threatened in any outdoor place (greenspace)?

D. Childhood memories

Did you use to visit greenspace (outdoor places) as a child?

Where did you go, what did you like to do?

What was your favourite place?

E. Ideal greenspace

Can you imagine an ideal greenspace? What would it be like?

What would you do there?

Who else would be there? Who are they? What are they doing?

When they see you using this ideal greenspace how do they feel and respond to you?

Who would take care of this place?

What do you imagine your own role might be in helping to make this happen?