



**Project: Adopt-a-Highway Scheme
Nitshill Road Pilot Project Glasgow**

Organisation: BTCV Scotland

Background

In July 2003, BTCV Scotland initiated a 6-month pilot project to explore how the US concept of an Adopt-a-Highway scheme might be delivered in the context of the United Kingdom. The aim of the scheme was to help re-establish links among the communities that had been divided by roads. Local Volunteers were encouraged to come together and improve

the environment surrounding the road through litter clearance and other practical improvement work.

Funding

The pilot project was supported by the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, which usually supports projects in the Developing World. The Trustees of the Foundation saw the scheme's potential success and provided substantial financial support, despite its UK focus.

Summary

There has been much debate focusing on the negative impact of roads on our surroundings but this scheme has shown how a road can be used to create environmental change by linking disadvantaged communities along a transportation route known as the Nitshill Corridor on the south-western outskirts of Glasgow.

The BTCV Adopt a Highway schemes are used to re-establish links in areas where trunk roads have divided communities unnaturally. BTCV encourages local volunteers to come together to improve the environment surrounding the roads through litter clearance and other improvement work

Critically, the Adopt-a-Highway pilot project had much wider implications than biodiversity regeneration and litter clearance. The initial funding was used to lever additional monies to pay for much needed regeneration work in the run-down areas along the Nitshill Corridor.

After the resounding success of the pilot scheme in Nitshill, Glasgow, the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation agreed to fund two further projects in Ayr, Scotland and Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The Project

In July 2003, BTCV Scotland tested how the Adopt-a-Highway concept might be delivered in practice, with the specific objectives of identifying:

- suitable target areas
- communities and partners to involve
- key recommendations for developing a UK delivery framework.

BTCV targeted three very different communities located along the 13km corridor of the A726 Nitshill road south-west of Glasgow. This is the main route connecting the towns of Paisley and East Kilbride at either end of the corridor with Glasgow's south-western suburbs in the middle. Below is a brief summary of the work carried out at specific sites.

John Struthers Nature Area

The John Struthers Nature Area is a remarkable community park of semi-natural habitat, situated right in the middle of a built-up housing estate bordering the Nitshill corridor in Blackbraes, East Kilbride. This rare area of green space is highly valued by the local community, providing a much-needed place for outdoor games and recreation in a community where bad diet and poor health are real problems. The footpath running through the area is also the key route for local residents to reach bus stops and access the facilities of the town centre. By enhancing its biodiversity the site has achieved recognition as the "John Struthers Nature Area", named after a local poet.

Today, it is hard to imagine that it was once very run down and muddy, inviting vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. BTCV Scotland, the Blackbraes Protection Committee and local volunteers transformed the park into a safer, cleaner and more accessible space for the whole community. Essentially, the work began with clearing footpaths and laying new surfaces to allow year-round access and drainage of the surrounding park. Volunteers then planted trees, hedges and meadow flowers, making the area more attractive, as well as enhancing biodiversity. The area is now regarded as one of the most flower rich and abundant grasslands within East Kilbride.

Stirling Maxwell Forest Park

BTCV Scotland engaged young residents in the Pollok and Nitshill suburbs of Glasgow to help improve the image, access and biodiversity of the Stirling Maxwell Community Forest. Through a programme of educational activities such as litter picks and nature walks to identify native species, young volunteers started to appreciate the forest. As a result the problem of graffiti and litter dumping has decreased. New hawthorn hedges have also been planted to attract wildlife, and access improved to benefit wheelchair users.

Pinmore Street, Nitshill Estate

Nitshill Estate is in the top 50 worst deprived areas in Scotland * This severely disadvantaged area south-west of Glasgow city has seen much new housing development in recent years. Residents of Pinmore Street, Nitshill transformed an area badly affected by fly-tipping into a clean and safer space, by taking positive action. The land where fly-tipping took place was cleared, replanted with trees and now includes a network of footpaths which give local residents access to the woodland. A multi-sports court was created to allow the community to engage with the young people who have been responsible for much of the vandalism in and around Pinmore Street. This project has tackled wider social issues by creating a sense of community pride. Residents have now turned to garden regeneration, woodland access, play areas and compost education.

Achievements

Numerous activities have taken place in the Nitshill Corridor as a direct result of the 'Adopt-a-Highway' project and the opportunities it helped to create in the area. Many have continued beyond the life of the pilot, to be developed into long-term relationships with the communities. The financial capital investment that is flowing into these activities has been provided as an indicator of the potential financial and community benefit leverage potential an 'Adopt-a-Highway' could achieve if its remit is expanded as in this pilot.

a) The Nitshill Estate is a particularly disadvantaged community in urgent need of regeneration. A local issue of fly tipping on land bordering Pinmore Street was developed into a positive action project, with the community tackling wider issues such as garden regeneration, woodland access, play areas and compost education. The land, now cleared of fly tipping, is the location of future on-going volunteer activity to support the biodiversity regeneration of the area.

This project had wider implications in that the funding helped to lever additional money to construct a multi-sports court in order for the community to engage with the youth who have been responsible for much of the vandalism in and around the street. *(Approx value of work £140,000)*

b) At the John Struthers Nature Area in East Kilbride BTCV Scotland helped local volunteers create a semi-natural habitat through a programme of habitat improvements, drainage and path access work. Indeed, the area is now regarded as one of the most flower rich and abundant grasslands within East Kilbride, and is a benchmark for others to strive towards. The Nitshill Corridor will continue to play an important role in linking such communities, enabling them to share experiences through the common focus of the Adopt-a-Highway Scheme. *(Approx value £40,000)*

c) Regular litter picking and tree planting along the Nitshill Corridor during the pilot project amounted to 50 volunteer work days. As well as helping to improve the tidiness of the verge along this route, these litter picking events also provided opportunities to encourage wider participation of the community, stimulate the

educational component of environmental improvements within the Darnley area and work closely with Glasgow City Council on improving biodiversity awareness.

(Approx value of work £4,000)

d) Biodiversity improvement work by BTCV Scotland in the Stirling Maxwell Forest Park in partnership with Glasgow City Council and local groups. *(Approx value of work £15,000)*

e) Long term community development and construction work related to the proposed Darnley Mill Country Park involving BTCV Scotland and volunteers from local communities. *(Approx value of work over two years £60,000; Approx value of initial construction work £600,000)*

f) Education project involving ethnic minority schoolchildren at St Paul's High School, Pollok. A level 'learning playing field' was created within the Darnley and Nitshill area for those pupils struggling to learn at the same rate as their friends to use as an 'environmental classroom'. *(Approx value £10,000)*

Partners

During the project, existing connections with key agencies such as the Scottish Executive, Glasgow City Council Land Services, the local Social Inclusion Project, local Housing Associations and Scottish Green Space organisations were enhanced, and potential for partnerships explored. From this consultation work, BTCV Scotland was able to formulate a profile of community initiatives in the area and the potential for development and regeneration opportunities that would involve communities bordering the Nitshill corridor.

The Future - New projects in 2005

The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation announced funding for two further Adopt a Highway projects in 2005

In Ayr, Scotland, Deputy Director BTCV Scotland Russell Hampton, has adapted the project to a local context, renaming it "Street 2 Street".

"We are improving tenants' gardens on behalf of the council, introducing biodiversity. We are building a relationship with the community and people now come out with us dealing with litter and fly tipping."

In Belfast, Northern Ireland, the Adopt-a-Highway project is building bridges between the deprived traveller population and the settled community. CVNI Operations Manager Ian Humphreys explains: *"it is still at a sensitive stage, it will take time as there is suspicion, and trust has to be built up on both sides"*.

"As a funder that predominantly supports projects in the Developing World, this level of support for UK based work is highly unusual. However, Trustees of the Foundation were so taken by the scheme's potential that they agreed to seed fund this project, despite its UK focus. It is hoped that other Trusts, whose focus is within the UK will now take up the baton." Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation

For further information on BTCV Adopt a Highway Scheme Contact Emily Cluer, BTCV Fundraising Officer, e.cluer@btcv.org.uk Tel: 0207 843 4297

* Source: Scottish Indices of Deprivation 2003, published by the Scottish Executive.