

East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative

New Cumnock Habitat Network Project
*Collaboration brings £176,000 to local landscape
and enhances connected environments*



The East Ayrshire Coalfield Environment Initiative has been successful with its plans to fund a **New Cumnock Habitat Network** by assisting landowners to apply for Scottish Rural Development Programme funding. The project will deliver **£176,000** of investment in environmental management, which will help create an interlacing network of good wildlife habitat surrounding, and connecting with, this East Ayrshire town.

The landscape scale of this project matches the most up to date thinking on successful habitat conservation in Scotland. Species such as lapwing, curlew, water vole, black grouse and skylark are amongst the long list of wildlife that will be better able to adapt and move freely across the landscape in response to climate change or other pressures.



Wildlife corridors will be of particular value also to mammals, especially bats, and invertebrates that forage or disperse between habitats such as hedgerows and wetlands.



Despite the impacts of industry, New Cumnock's greatest asset is its wonderful rural landscape. On its doorstep are some of East Ayrshire's most scenic areas, including Glen Afton, the surrounding hills and the River Nith. Ecologically, the New Cumnock area has a high concentration of important wildlife areas, its wide range of habitats support numerous species within the Scottish Biodiversity Action Plan.

Working with landowners during 2009 led to submission of six applications for SRDP funding, all of which were successful in January 2010. Through the project we have also developed links with a range of landowners who are supportive of the network and have managed to survey a large area of local habitat.

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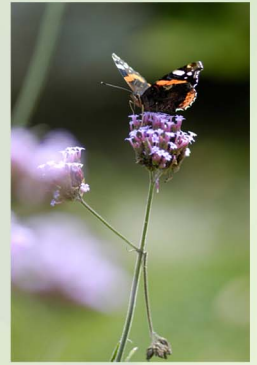
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As a result of the project, 19 ha of species rich grasslands and 84 ha of wet grassland will be enhanced through management.

This diverse range of plants will host a wide range of invertebrates including butterflies, bees, beetles and moths.



The funding will also see 2.8 km of hedgerows improved and 4.7 km of water margins looked after. 20 ha of wetland management and close to 500 ha of Moorland Management is also planned over the next five years.

The CEI hopes to secure additional funding to extend the network as well as monitoring benefits to biodiversity through bird, bat and plant surveys. Further habitat creation is also planned during local surface mine restorations and there will be continued opportunities to link with the Scottish Wildlife Trust Knockshinnoch Lagoons Nature Reserve.

This project has been funded by:



Residents and visitors to New Cumnock will increasingly be able to experience the outstanding natural beauty of the area and will benefit from the improved quality of life that comes with a healthy local environment.

With many thanks to the Scottish Wildlife Trust for their help coordinating the project and for providing ongoing biodiversity monitoring.

SRDP applications prepared by specialists from Scottish Agricultural College (SAC).

Farm habitat images by S. Stewart (SAC), Farm visit by N. Fleming (CEI), butterfly by G. Madge (rspb-images.com) and lapping by J. Randall (rspb-images.com).

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