

Vision

Inspiring people to live, work and learn in a more sustainable way



ANNUAL REPORT

**April 2010 –
March 2011**

CONTENTS

Forth Environment Link - Who We Are	3
Message from Chair of the Board - Kate Sankey	4
Programmes and Activities 2010-2011	5
• <i>Callandar House Walled Garden</i>	5
• <i>Environmental Education in Schools</i>	6
• <i>Forth Valley Food Links</i>	7
• <i>Forth Valley Orchards Project</i>	8
• <i>Forth Valley Master Composter/Zero Waste Volunteer Programme</i>	9
• <i>Forth Valley Real Nappy Network</i>	10
• <i>Oak Garden Project — Low Carbon Raploch</i>	11
• <i>Study - Feasibility of Community Growing in Forth Valley Regeneration Communities</i>	11
Funding and Finances	12
Board Members, Staff and Volunteers	13
Contacts and Funders	14

FORTH ENVIRONMENT LINK – WHO WE ARE

Forth Environment Link began as the Kippen Nature Club in 1989 with the aim of teaching children about biodiversity and nature. In response to community need and interest, the organisation grew in both mandate and geography, expanding to include adult education and demonstration projects. In 2005 the organisation reconstituted as Forth Environment Link, serving three local authority areas – Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk. In 2008 Forth Valley Food Links merged with Forth Environment Link, bringing an additional focus on sustainable local food production and consumption.

Core Themes

- Reducing environmental impact
- Informing and learning
- Making the links
- Building capacity

Aims

- To deliver successful programmes with the aim of informing and encouraging environmental awareness and more sustainable lifestyles
- To raise awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural world
- To explain sustainability and biodiversity through direct demonstration, education and action
- To engender informed attitudes about sustainability and biodiversity



Rena Moore, Zero Waste Volunteer, at Forth Valley College Health Awareness Fair

MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR - KATE SANKEY

LOOKING BACK

The past year has been, as always, a busy one for Forth Environment Link. We have been active across the Forth Valley on a range of fronts. We continued our awareness raising of composting, real nappies, and recycling in its many forms through our volunteer based programmes (Master Composter, the Zero Waste Volunteer Programme, and the Real Nappy Network). We continued our environmental education work with Stirling teachers and children in the school system, and participated in the innovative Natural Identity project. The Callendar House Walled Garden is nearing completion, and will soon be an exemplar space for environmental and biodiversity education.

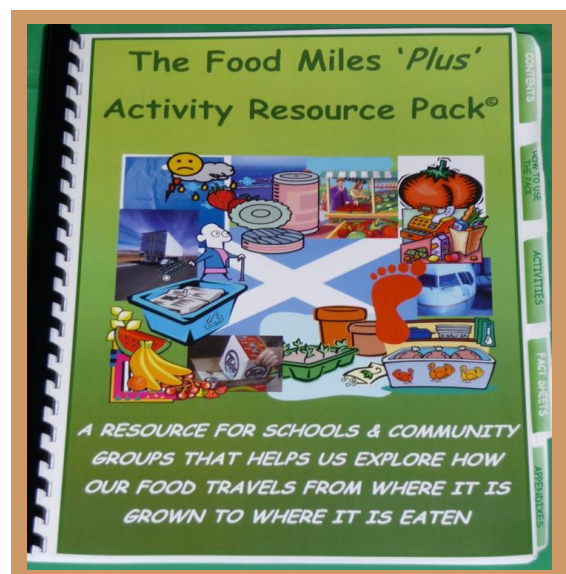
Through our Forth Valley Food Links projects we broke ground with many communities demonstrating square foot gardening techniques; we also promoted and trained community leaders in the use of the Food Miles *Plus* Resource Pack[®]. We were active in orchard promotion, education and regeneration through our Forth Valley Orchard Initiative, and completed a feasibility study on community growing in the regeneration communities of the Forth Valley (which indicates great interest and potential). An active year indeed – and a most encouraging one in terms of community action towards sustainable living.

As always, sincere thanks to a terrific staff team who approach their work with passion, commitment and professionalism. We bid a fond farewell to two of our long-standing staff – Eve Keepax and Di Blackmore - as well as Ellen McCance, and welcome Donna Rodgers and Jane Cullingworth. Our work would not be possible without the commitment and contribution of our many volunteers – thank you for your dedication. Finally, we acknowledge the partnership and support of our many funders. Together we work towards creating a sustainable environment.



LOOKING FORWARD

In the 2011-2012 year we will continue our work on a number of fronts – the Forth Valley Orchards, the Zero Waste Volunteer Scheme, the Callendar House Walled Garden, and our education work with schools on behalf of Stirling Council. We will be moving premises in order to more effectively use our resources. A strategic planning process will be undertaken which will review our vision and aims, as well as exploring our potential to launch a social enterprise. A rebranding exercise is planned as well as a revamping of our website. As is the case for many small charities, Forth Environment Link survives almost wholly on project funding—consequently a large focus of our work will be on securing enough funds to cover our core operations.



PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Callendar House Walled Garden

The aim of this work is to transform an under-used historic walled garden in the grounds of Callendar House into a 21st Century space for education about the environment. The approach to the design and development of the garden has been to create a garden rich in biodiversity that integrates knowledge and practices from previous generations. Over the course of the year, we oversaw the practical work in the garden to improve the planting and biodiversity of the pond, and participated in the selection of the artist for the garden sculpture. Educational workshops drawing on the history of the area were developed, and training provided to the education team at Callendar House.

The project is funded through Falkirk Environment Trust and Falkirk Council.

Facts and figures

- *Eight comprehensive resource boxes and activities for workshops were developed during the year which draw on the garden's historic roots*
- *Workshops include a focus on the Romans, World War II, the Victorians, Mary Queen of Scots, Biodiversity and Ponds, Minibeasts, Planting and Growing, and the History of Food/Food Miles*



View from the High Flats



The gardening team weeding the borders



Workshop on Plants With Purpose

Environmental Education in Schools

The aim of our environmental education work is to transform schools and other educational grounds into stimulating learning spaces to support all areas of the formal and informal curriculum. Forth Environment Link offers support and advice to Stirling Council schools and offers Continuing Professional Development training and twilight sessions. Education is provided primarily to teachers as well as directly to children. Our approach to environmental education has a biodiversity focus, and supports the Curriculum for Excellence and outdoor learning. In the year we participated in the Natural Identity project, and the Exploring the Outdoors project. Forth Environment Link is now registered with Education Scotland as a provider of Continuing Professional Development.

The programme is funded through a Service Level Agreement with Stirling Council.

Facts and figures

- *12 Continuing Professional Development 'Twilight' sessions were offered and two full-day staff development conferences*
- *Seven visits made to schools to provide customised educational advice*
- *Participation in the Literacy and Numeracy conference providing workshops and hosting a market stand*
- *Sessions provided to Riverside Primary School's Eco-week and Bannockburn Primary School's World of Work Week*
- *Over 500 teachers and children reached through our educational activities*



Weaving a willow sculpture in a CPD 'Twilight' session, Bannockburn Primary School



Pupils enjoying the wildflowers in Fallin Primary School

FORTH VALLEY FOOD LINKS (FVFL)

Forth Valley Food Links links producers, communities and individuals to increase access to fresh, local produce. A number of initiatives came under the Forth Valley Food Links banner during the year:

Food Initiatives

Working in partnership with NHS Forth Valley, Forth Environment Link promoted the Food Miles *Plus* Resource Pack© and delivered training to the community in how to use the Pack. The Pack is a powerful educational tool that explores how our food travels from where it is grown to where it is eaten.

Throughout the year we encouraged local communities to grow their own vegetables using the Square Foot Gardening model; and provided information to the public via the website, the Foodie ebulletin and the online 'Find it, Eat it' Directory of Local Food in Forth Valley.

The project is funded through NHS Forth Valley.

Facts and figures

- *8 Food Miles Plus Resource Packs© produced*
- *5 sessions provided to local organisations and institutions in using the Pack*
- *57 local food producers and suppliers listed in the online local food directory*
- *14 Square Foot Garden workshops / demonstrations held*



Fruit Harvesting Workshop



Square Foot Gardening at the Braes Family Centre, Maddiston, Falkirk

The Forth Valley Orchard Project

The aims of the project are to promote orchard regeneration across the Forth Valley and to increase the knowledge of orchard care within local communities. Through the project £10,000 of grant money was distributed to local communities to plant orchards across the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). Workshops were provided to local communities, events were held, and the Forth Valley Orchard Group was established.

The project is funded by the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage through the Central Scotland Green Network.

Facts and figures

- *56 individuals made 104 bookings for 16 orchard training workshops*
- *£10,000 of CSGN Orchard Grant Scheme funding awarded to 36 projects*
- *An estimated 8 hectares of new orchards were established with a total of 408 trees planted through the CSGN Orchard Grant Scheme*



Pupils from the Sacred Heart Primary School, Grangemouth planting their new orchard funded by the McCarrison Society for Scotland (with Dr Cedric de Voil)

Orchard Biodiversity workshop in Blairlogie



Forth Valley Orchard Day 2010

Forth Valley Master Composter/Zero Waste Volunteer Programme

The aims of the composter and zero waste programmes are to engage local volunteers in educating communities about ways to reduce waste. The Master Composter programme trained a team of volunteers who educated and informed local communities across Forth Valley about how to compost their domestic waste. The programme reduced the amount of waste going to landfill and the associated transport, and also helped provide a valuable resource to be used in domestic gardens. During the year the focus of this programme expanded to include a range of public awareness campaigns created by Zero Waste Scotland including Love Food Hate Waste and Stop the Drop.

The programme is funded by the Scottish Government's Waste & Resources Action Programme.

Facts and figures

- *Our programme had 57 active volunteers through the year*
- *Volunteers contributed 1,288 hours and 244 training hours – equivalent to almost one full-time position*
- *Volunteers attended 110 community events, 62 training events and spoke to 2,650 people*



Donna Rodgers (Coordinator), Sandra Burt (volunteer), and Ylva Haglund (Zero Waste Scotland) at Garden Scotland event with Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change

Forth Valley Real Nappy Network

The aim of the Real Nappy Network is to encourage parents across the Forth Valley to use real nappies and thereby reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. A real nappy project officer promoted the environmental and economic benefits of using real nappies rather than disposable ones. The project focused on promotion to lower income families as there is generally a lower uptake of real nappy use amongst this group, in part resulting from having less access to relevant information. A small team of volunteers was integral to the success of the project.

The programme is funded by the Scottish Government's Waste & Resources Action Programme.

Facts and figures

- *Staff and volunteers attended 76 events*
- *101 nappy demonstrations were performed*
- *26 nappy loan packs were given out*
- *185 individual enquiries were answered*
- *A total of 230 tonnes of disposable nappy waste was diverted from landfill, surpassing our original estimate of 180 tonnes*



Kelly Vincent (Network Coordinator) at Clacks event



Abby McLaughlin having fun during the Aberfoyle Eco Fair

Oak Garden Project — Low Carbon Raploch

Forth Environment Link was contracted by Low Carbon Raploch to engage the local community with the goal of residents taking ownership over community growing in the Oak Garden. FEL provided workshops on food growing to increase residents' skills and to increase confidence. Local residents and two local primary schools committed to growing food in the garden.

Facts and figures

- *Workshops were provided to the community on vegetable growing and composting*
- *Residents, a young parents groups, and two local primary schools committed to growing in the Oak Garden*



Filling the raised beds



Community tree planting

Study — Feasibility of Community Growing in Forth Valley Regeneration Communities

The aim of this feasibility study was to identify communities across the Forth Valley, specifically those identified in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, where there are unused areas of land which could be turned into community growing/biodiversity areas. Further the study sought to identify if there was local interest in community growing and what the needs are in this regard. The study concluded that there are areas that could be developed into community growing spaces and that there are a number of communities that are keen to undertake such projects with FEL's support.

The feasibility study was funded by Investing in Ideas through the Big Lottery Fund.

Facts and figures

- *There are 118 people waiting for allotments in Stirlingshire and 48 in Clackmannanshire*
- *Groups and initiatives in 14 local communities were interviewed as part of the feasibility study*



Potential community growing area, Falkirk

FUNDING AND FINANCES

Forth Environment Link is heavily reliant on grant funding to finance our projects, and we are extremely grateful to all of our funding partners for their ongoing support. We continue to work on developing new revenue streams in order to build our capacity to serve our communities.

The breakdown of grant funding for this year is as follows:



Trip to Levenseat Organics Ltd, a family run waste management plant near Forth in West Lothian.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the Year Ended 31 March, 2011

	2011 £	2010 £
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Voluntary income	1,450	3,000
Investment income	-	10
Grants	144,583	176,718
Miscellaneous income	-	604
Earned income	7,373	-
Total Incoming Resources	153,406	180,332
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Costs of charitable activities	179,536	169,587
Governance costs	2,330	2,048
Total Resources Expended	181,866	171,635
NET INCOMING/OUTGOING RESOURCES	(28,460)	8,697
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS		
Total funds brought forward	52,529	43,832
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	24,069	52,529

PEOPLE

Company Board and Charity

Trustees

Kate Sankey (Chair)
Rod Lawson (Treasurer)
Bernard Barker*
Janey Brown
Helen Morrison
Gary Walker
Sheila Walker*
Sheila Winstone

*resigned during the year



Forth Environment Link Board



Staff at retreat

Staff

Di Alderdice, FVFL and Orchards Officer
Di Blackmore*, Environmental Education Officer
Toni Clark, Environmental Education Officer
Jane Cullingworth, Executive Director
Alison Hyslop, Administrator
Eve Keepax*, Master Composter Coordinator
Ellen McCance*, Executive Director
Donna Rodgers, Zero Waste Coordinator
Jane Veitch*, Orchards Administrator
Kelly Vincent, Real Nappy Network Coordinator
Caroline Kemp, Feasibility Study Coordinator

Volunteers

We are very grateful to our many volunteers who support Forth Environment Link in a wide variety of ways. Our volunteers have done composting demonstrations, staffed information booths, promoted the use of real nappies, provided input into our Forth Valley Orchards project, acted as Trustees to the organisation — just to mention a few areas of volunteer activity.

Our work would not be possible without the significant contribution made by our volunteers— THANK YOU!



Volunteers at appreciation event

**Forth
Environment
Link**



Education and Action towards Sustainable Living

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**Forth Environment Link is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee
Charity No: SCO 019276
Company No: SC 286723**

FORTH ENVIRONMENT LINK IS SUPPORTED BY:

The Caram Charitable Trust



Falkirk Council

