**Every Tree Tells a Story**
**POLICY INNOVATION INSIGHT 2**



# Proposals for
# Embedded Urban Forestry Innovation

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# Executive Summary

This short policy innovation insight builds on earlier research work by Every Tree Tells a Story (ETTAS) which used a citizen social science post card project to analyze the value which the city's stakeholders place in their trees, and to draw some initial policy conclusions. Following on from that analysis, and building on its evidence, I present four innovative concepts for derelict urban wild spaces, focusing on woodland. Wild Allotments is a citizen-focused concept, inviting stewardship of small wild spaces, including woodland, for a peppercorn rent. A collaborative Forest Innovation and Enterprise Lab will act as a shared nature-based learning and launching hub for Glasgow's FE and HE sector. Woodland Studios bring the cultural significance of wild spaces and beings together with creativity and wellbeing, in a shared outdoor (but sheltered!) studio, exhibition, and performance site. An Eco-Education Reserve offers a shared living lab for ecologists, zoologists, foresters, biologists and other related teachers and researchers.

These proposals argue for four new ways to add value to currently derelict land resources, extending related concepts like forest nurseries, food gyms and food forests. Sustainability, inclusivity, innovation and accessibility are at the heart of the four concepts. The over-arching aim is to add value for resident citizens, in how, when and where they are able to access the goodness of trees, and more. All concepts also experiment with co-creating the transformation of derelict spaces, in sustainable and innovative ways, involving citizens, artistic, scientific and educational institutions in the re-making of place. They thus offer agency and self-efficacy gains.

# Overview of Proposal Benefits

- Reclamation of derelict and waste land resources

- Shared long-term sustainability and stewardship of reclaimed resources

- Enhanced STEM educational provision across all levels through living lab

- Sites for nature-based community integration and development engagement, through art, music, education, science, enterprise and innovation

- Place-based sites for cross-institution, transdisciplinary collaboration in education, science, arts, innovation and enterprise.

- Local sites for nature, art, and foresting green prescribing

- Wellbeing benefits of reclaimed green spaces to depleted communities

- Access to FE and HE opportunities and experiences embedded in shared natural space

- Multiple potential models for capital and working funding.

- Caring stewardship of a city's trees.

# Proposal 1 - Wild Allotments

In an identical model to traditional allotments, wild allotments would see a peppercorn rent charged to individuals, families, schools, nurseries, and local wildlife, wellbeing and natural sustainability bodies. Allotment holders would become stewards of their small wild space, which in return would deliver to them all the wellbeing benefits of belonging and tending to nature. Perhaps best suited to derelict woodland, waterland, heathlands and meadows currently in the public domain, allotment holders would contract to:

- maintain their allotments free of litter – currently reaching epidemic proportions across the city's open spaces –
- manage the flora responsibly for wild life sustainability

Allotment holders could also be invited to participate in collective eco-surveys of their small wild spaces, mapping species, and species change, through time. Carbon offset from such well-documented sites, particularly around arborial and water resources, might be retained by the council, or offered as part of the wider package to allotment holders, as an incentive towards sustainability practices.

Evidence from ETTAS' earlier policy innovation brief strongly suggests a deep desire within the citizenship to come close to trees, to invite specific trees and treescapes into their family, to express their care for trees in being alongside them, and to breath deep of their wellbeing gifts. All of these benefits would naturally accrue to the wild allotment proposal. Accessibility to those of no financial means is already ensured for traditional allotments, and similar approaches should apply. Green prescribing might also be a resourcing and accessibility opportunity.

# Proposal 2 - **Forest Innovation and Enterprise Lab**

Glasgow is blessed with a large number of FE and HE institutions delivering very high quality, progressive education and training in entrepreneurship, and innovation. All institutions have long emphasized the potential of sustainable enterprise, focused on non-economic goals but financially self-sufficient, in tackling today's grand challenges. Nature Based Enterprise hubs and accelerators have been piloted within the city, by GCU and the Melting Pot, to much success. A shared Forest Innovation and Enterprise Lab would provide a collective home for this cluster to further develop, in an appropriately natural setting.

Resourcing a site might once again draw on derelict land in the public domain (GCC, Scotrail, etc). Here, though, it might be also feasible for local FE and HE leaders, together with GCC, to approach developers of derelict woodland to negotiate long-term partnerships to mutual benefit. Reciprocity could be driven by named association with the lab, and the donation of the land, (or long term lease). We see here an opportunity for Glasgow's design and architecture scholars / students to engage in the co-creation of appropriate sites, combining woodland with shared working, meeting, and learning spaces.

Alternatively, closer partnership in the development of a radical new innovation and enterprise lab may well have more direct benefits for land developers in terms of knowledge gains, pilots, experimentation, and future uses for derelict urban space.

To ensure full citizen accessibility to the enterprise and innovation value being added on this site concept, close collaboration with institutional inclusion and diversity officers is recommended, with a view to the Labs also offering an access point to entry level FE / HE (nature-based) enterprise education.

# Proposal 3 - Woodland Studios

ETTAS prior research has provided evidence of the strong connection with art, play, learning and culture which trees evoke in an urban context, much in need of these common goods. In line with the Lab concept, here I see forest spaces becoming co-created and co-curated as living venues of interaction and engagement. Rather than communities (and practices) of nature-based enterprise and innovation, here the emphasis is on the deep connection our evidence uncovered between art, music, culture and the treescape.

Perhaps led by our colleagues from GSA, and the Conservatoire, this concept envisages studio, exhibition, and performance spaces, embedded within a wild and woody site. Art, music and nature connect us to our cultures in all their diversity, and to the creativity which is so essential to wellbeing (and, of course, to innovation, productivity, etc).

The ETTAS study found that engaging with trees in the here and now provided a connection to homes in other times and places, of special resonance for migrants (regional and global), refugees, international students, and across generations. Art and music therapy, in a reclaimed natural setting, also suggest themselves for green prescribing.

The studio concept is appealing enough to attract developer / sponsor interest, perhaps matching public education funding, or to be an excellent value-adding re-purposing of derelict and dangerous land currently in the public domain.

# Proposal 4 - Eco-Ed Reserves

Finally, is perhaps the most obvious new use of derelict wild spaces, as eco-education reserves, where school, FE and HE learners can together steward, monitor, analyze and learn from specially designated woodland, waterland, and scrubland.

A natural wild living lab offers clear value-added across a range of crucial urban KPIs, from connecting with nature, reclaiming wild spaces, embedding learning in context, outdoor pedagogy, supporting sustainable STEM, understanding and protecting our local natural environment, and cross-institutional, cross-discipline collaboration.

Connecting local schools with FE and HE learners / researchers has widespread engagement potential, raising the opportunity horizon of learners from families without prior FE / HE experience. Scientific research funding could also contribute to mid-term financial self-sustainability.

## About Every Tree Tells a Story

We are a collective project, founded in Glasgow, gathering and sharing stories about trees in word, song, image, video and more. A partnership between Strathclyde University, Glasgow City Council, and other friends, "Every Tree" supports story telling in partnership with schools, communities, artists, activists, walkers, scientists and policy makers. The city is the leading steward of our trees, but all of us have a story to tell and a role to play in helping trees to help Glasgow.

## Project Partners

Project partners include Strathclyde Business School, and the Department of Education, University of Strathclyde; the GALLANT Project, University of Glasgow, NovelEco, at Trinity College Dublin, Glasgow School of Art, actor and musician Tam Dean Burn and a range of planning, development and education departments at Glasgow City Council.

Fellow story-gatherers, curators, planners, engagers and analysts from these project partners include: Ingeborg Birnie, James Bonner; Duncan Booker, Tam Dean Burn, Clair Cooper Etive Currie, Mike Danson, Gillian Dick, Sarah Dodd, Ria Dunkley, Mark Johnson, Emma Morton, Andrea Reid, Jaime Toney, and Juliette Wilson

Visit our website www.everytree.uk

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