

CASE STUDY



Central Scotland Forest Trust

“Investors in People gives us a set of practices which position us as an employer of choice for the talent that we need to develop for the organisation.”

Simon Rennie, Chief Executive, Central Scotland Forest Trust



BACKGROUND

Size:	33 employees
Sector:	Charity
Location:	Central Scotland
Status:	First achieved Investors in People accreditation in 1997

THE ORGANISATION

Established in 1991, the Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT) is responsible for the creation of the Central Scotland Forest. Its activities are focused on developing the forest for the benefit of the future generations that will live, work and play in the area. The specific functions of the organisation are to: promote the forest to public sector partners and the general public; deliver projects on the ground such as community woodland creation; facilitate innovation and funding; and act as an intermediary body between the community and public sector bodies. Responsible for developing Central Scotland's first Forest Strategy in 1995, CSFT is funded by the Forestry Commission Scotland, the public sector, charitable bodies and private land owners. Its medium term goal is to regenerate the degraded area of land between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

- **Not uncommon to secure projects worth £1 million pounds**
- **Developed people who are seen as specialists in their fields**
- **Excellent reputation in the industry for delivering results**
- **Most recently participated as a partner organisation in the HELIX project which has a value of £45 million**

THE CHALLENGE

Since 2001 the organisation has undergone two important restructures and has looked increasingly towards Investors in People to improve its people practices and address the changes required. Its most recent restructure in 2006 involved some redundancies and led the senior team to re-evaluate CSFT's corporate culture. As part of this process of change, the structure of the organisation was examined against specific functions and new people were brought in to grow them. With a strong accent on the need to change, the organisation had to decide on the best way to foster it. The approach could have been prescriptive in nature, however, with guidance from Investors in People, it was felt by the senior team that this might have a negative impact and fuel uncertainty. Instead it was decided that the very people that needed to implement change should drive the process.

THE STRATEGY

CSFT is a small organisation that likes to think big. "We do have limited resources as opposed to larger organisations, so some might find it surprising that we have so many individuals who can share best practice," Simon comments. "However, we are keen to show just what can be achieved with a positive attitude and creative thinking. Despite our size, we have developed people who are recognised as true specialists in their field. The gravitas that they command wins us a great position with partner bodies and customers, which in turn helps to drive momentum for new projects. Our people also learn from other organisations to ensure that we keep up with best practice and this helps to maximise learning opportunities, thereby making our training and development budget stretch further." All employees are involved in continuous improvement plans through CSFT's appraisal and review process. They are asked to consider how they can improve and because they are involved in business planning, they can also input into corporate improvement. "This inclusive approach has helped to link our people's development closer to the aims of our business," Simon adds CSFT's work in external knowledge sharing is also complemented by the strength of its internal communications. Employee briefings take place and there are also board meetings every two months. These are followed up with regular management team meetings which communicate the latest news from the senior team. Awareness of Investors in People is also maintained through a dedicated section on the organisation's intranet. Finally, CSFT's annual all employee event provides everyone with an opportunity to reflect on the successes of the year.

THE RESULTS

The most dramatic illustration of the success that CSFT has experienced is the increase in complexity and value of the projects that it has undertaken since accreditation. "In 1997 our average project was worth between £50,000-£70,000 with some as small as £20,000. These days it is not uncommon for us to secure projects worth £1 million pounds," says Simon. "One case in point is Scotland's largest landscaping project to date, Falkirk Stadium, which was delivered in 2006. With a value of

£1 million, this project represented a step change in our ability to deliver a complex, large scale and high value project. It is to our people's credit that we have come so far. Needless to say without Investors in People and our focus on people development we would have struggled to get here." CSFT's ability to deliver projects such as that at Falkirk Stadium has also played a key role in attracting the calibre of applicant that the organisation needs. By developing these individuals still further, CSFT has been able to engage in even more complex projects. "Most recently we've participated as a partner organisation in the HELIX project together with Falkirk Council and British Waterways and this has a value of £45 million. Our ability to contribute to such high value projects is further evidence still of the positive impact that our approach to change has had," comments Simon. Summarising CSFT's journey with Investors in People, Simon adds, "Our work has been recognised by other partner organisations and we have become a trusted deliverer known for our innovative approach. This has put real distance between us and other regeneration organisations. In 2004 we adopted Profile to help us focus on the process of change and keep reinforcing the need for change in the future. As an organisation committed to continuous improvement, we will also continue to work with the Investors in People. We have seen the results it can deliver and without a doubt it's an invaluable tool for our business," he concludes.