

LET'S GROW BACK ON SITE !!!



After government easing of lockdown restrictions, Skills Exchange opened up again mid-April, dusted down our tools and 'Let's Grow' got going again ! We welcomed Elliot Paterson, our new Gardening Assistant, on board to help support the groups at Blantyre. As before, our young people have been making a huge difference to their local communities in Lanark and Blantyre.

At the David Livingstone Birthplace much had changed in the four months since the group were last on site and both 'Let's Grow' participants and David Livingstone Trust volunteers were finally allowed 'museum-side' as the site neared the end of its £9.1 million renovation.

With re-opening of the entire site scheduled for summer 2021, the focus had to be on making good the areas around the museum, fountain, pavilions and playpark.

A couple of months on and a huge amount of work has been completed : six tonnes of compost have been shifted; thousands of weeds have been cleared from beds around the pavilions and elsewhere on site; rubble has been cleared ready for grass areas to be cut; shrubs have been pruned to frame a new picnic area; tonnes of wood chippings have been laid as a decorative mulch and the boundaries have been tidied up to properly showcase the site. 'Let's Grow' participants have worked tirelessly alongside the David Livingstone Trust volunteers to make this happen.

The David Livingstone Trust recently received a large donation of beautiful plants from Asda which 'Let's Grow' young people and Elliot, helped to plant in containers and borders to provide a colourful backdrop outside the new café (named 'Livingstone's').

As the site reaches the final stages ready for opening the ' Let's Grow' groups have made a great contribution and are looking forward to continuing their work to make the David Livingstone Birthplace a welcoming and exciting venue for the local community.



Lennox, Aaron, Thomas and Dylan sporting their new Let's Grow Hoodies



Dylan and Thomas prepare their pots



Meanwhile in Lanark a new group started at the beginning of June and have got stuck into various tasks at Castlebank Park. Stuart Ritchie, the Educational Gardener and new father to a lovely baby girl – congratulations from us all at Skills Exchange – has been working with them now for the last five weeks and they've been busy with a range of different activities.

The first session was spent fertilising flowerbeds with compost that had been freshly delivered to the park. The group worked hard to transport the compost from piles to the flowerbeds using shovels and wheelbarrows, where Stuart spread it around the bed. During session two the group trimmed back overgrown invasive species of plants that had begun to encroach on public walkways, a difficult task in warm weather, but the group were keen to use the loppers and put in a great shift. They also recovered a large section of tree trunk for Stuart to use for educational purposes.

The next two sessions were spent sanding down the tree trunk from last week, then digging out a trench for Stuart to lay a water pipe to water the polytunnels and trimming the hedges in the rose garden and disposing of the waste, before finally trimming the flowers and tidying up the flowerbeds around the horticultural centre.

The most recent session was spent working alongside Cindy, the new People and Plants Assistant at Castlebank, to clear weeds from a path through the bog garden, then topping up tree cuttings with compost and watering them.



Stuart Ritchie Educational Gardener working in Rose Garden at Castlebank with students

The group has performed admirably in some very warm weather, with all participants getting involved in tasks. Evidence of their efforts can be seen and enjoyed by members of the public visiting the rose gardens or the fairy dell.

As always we are very grateful to all our funders who are helping to make this all happen.

Onwards and upwards for 'Let's Grow' in 2021 !