

# Granton Goes Greener continues to grow

Edinburgh church eco group goes from strength to strength

**Granton Goes Greener, an environmental group part-funded by the Kirk's Go For It Fund, has gone from strength to strength since its formation three years ago.**

This group is run by Granton Parish Church and it works with the local community to care for the environment by holding upcycling workshops, family fun days, school uniform swap shops and guided cycling tours.

The church is part of the Eco Congregation Scotland network, a worldwide movement to help churches make the link between environmental issues, the Christian faith and better demonstrating a commitment to better stewardship of the earth's resources.

Rev Norman Smith, the minister at Granton Parish Church, said: "We set up the group because we believe God wants people to use their gifts and we believe God wants us to be salt and light in our community. We believe faith is relevant to where people are at.

"In our community this means being good stewards of creation. To achieve that we are helping people discover ways they can support one another in using what God has given them well.

"If you have more materially, or if you have less, it does not matter to us. What matters is that you are a child of God and we have responsibilities towards each other.

"That responsibility extends to the environment and how we

relate to God's creation."



In 2018, the group were awarded funding by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund in order to help set the project up, and have been able to run events such as community open days and exhibiting at local events.

Norman said :“Over the next three years, we want to see people make lifestyle changes so that caring for God's creation becomes a higher priority.

“We hope to gather a community of people around the project who are users, supporters, volunteers and activists – a group who will be meeting and worshipping together in a fresh expression of church centred on our stewardship of God's wonderful world.

“And, on a more basic level, we want to save tonnes of clothes and bread from going to landfill.”

Through their eco activities, Granton Parish Church has also been able to develop deeper ties within the community.

“We have opened up a whole different avenue of community engagement, including developing formal and informal partnerships with local groups such as Granton Gardeners, Granton Primary School, Spartans Community Football Academy, the Pilton Community Health Project and of course Bayne’s Bakery to whom we are hugely grateful.

“Those are just some of the places. The list of partners is now quite long.”



One notable event introduced by the group over 15 months ago is the weekly clothing Swap Shop, which has expanded over time and is run in the Granton Parish Church hall.

Between April and the start of July this year, over 977kg of clothes have been reused out of 1,320kg donated.

Three rails of clothing – one for women’s clothing, one for men’s and one for children’s, with baby clothes on a table – are on offer to locals.

Anna Baran, the Community Engagement Officer at Granton Goes Greener, said : “The main objectives of the Swap Shop are to

encourage local residents to be more mindful of the environment and to do more recycling, as well as addressing general poverty in the area.

“From the beginning we were only accepting books, clothes and shoes but taking into account some feedback, we have expanded and started dealing with children’s items such as buggies, scooters, bric-a-brac, household items, etc.

“We also share items out to different projects, like giving most of our household items to Fresh Start or wooden furniture to the local Community Shed for renovation or up-cycling.

“After 7-8 months of running the project, we introduced a free food shelf stocked up on weekly basis by the Pilton Community Health Project and FareShare.

“We also get a range of free sanitary products from FareShare, which are currently being accessed and used by over 80 different women.

“The Swap Shop has definitely made a huge difference in the area, especially to families in need. We now have regular customers and usually at least 80 people visiting us on a weekly basis.

“Our range of clients is very diverse and includes homeless people, families on benefits, single-parent families, asylum seekers or simply people interested in helping the environment.

“We are currently working with 7-8 volunteers, who support us on a weekly basis.

“Through volunteering, we try to help them gain relevant work experience, confidence in English as a second language and to tackle social isolation.”

Locals are invited to bring along good quality clothing which is no longer needed and take away something new.

Donations can also be made on a Sunday morning during the Church service by using the donation box.

Norman added : “In addition, we have partnered with Edinburgh College where we take a rack of clothes in once a fortnight and so far the students have really embraced it.”

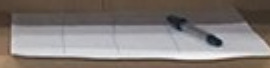
Regular cycle rides, guided by trained leaders, are helping locals to get to know the local area better and improve their cycling skills. With the funding secured so far from sources such as the Kirk’s Go For It Fund, the project is due to continue until at least June 2020.

Norman concluded : “Without Go For It we would not be running. The financial support is greatly appreciated but so is the recognition that this is a legitimate activity for the Church of Scotland to undertake.

“It is transforming our congregational life which, without the Go For It support, would not have happened.”



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