



Improving the quality of life in Large Urban Distressed Areas

Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, UK

E-Compendium: Good Practice Case Studies



Introduction

The purpose of the e-compendium case studies is to provide information about the experiences of large urban distressed areas in Europe. All of the case studies are linked to the LUDA project, either as partner cities or as reference cities. This case study focuses on Wester Hailes in Edinburgh. Edinburgh is one of the six partner cities in the LUDA project, and Wester Hailes is a large area which has undergone regeneration in recent years.

This case study gives a brief outline of the area's history; the challenges it faces and the potential it has for redevelopment. The case study then discusses the current approach to regeneration in Wester Hailes, and gives a detailed account of one part of the process. In this case, this focuses on an ex post evaluation of the area's regeneration programme.

The e-compendium is designed to be used online. The text includes interactive links which allow you to move around the document, to link to other handbooks, or to open websites. Links are shown as **coloured text**. You can also find the links by looking for icons in the page margins, as shown here.



If you prefer to read this handbook like a normal book, then you can print it out. Please note that all of the handbooks are designed for double-sided printing.

Acknowledgements

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Tenement flats in Wester Hailes: Photo: Mark Deakin, Napier University

1. Overview

Wester Hailes is a residential area located on the western edge of the city of Edinburgh. It is approximately 7 kilometres from the city centre. Wester Hailes covers approximately 360 hectares and is home to around 9750 people (2001 figures). The area is pre-dominantly residential, and has a large proportion of social housing stock (58%). The area also includes business, warehousing, distribution, retail and leisure uses. The retail and leisure uses include a district shopping centre, multiplex cinema, sports centre and library. Wester Hailes is notable for having lots of public open space with parks, play areas and inter-connecting pathways.

2. History & Background

Wester Hailes is a post-war housing estate constructed in the 1970s. Quality of life in the neighbourhood is affected by a number of issues including housing construction, overall layout and the design of dwellings. These problems are typical for high-rise public housing constructed in the 1970s.

The area has also suffered from a major image problem and is identified with high levels of crime, alcohol and drug dependency. The residents of Wester Hailes tend to be

young, and are often unable to take advantage of local employment opportunities due to their lack of skills and access to childcare.

Together these issues have resulted in an image problem that has affected the social and economic structure of Wester Hailes. Out-migration from the area has contributed to a high proportion of households dependent on support from social services.

3. Challenges

In the 1990s it became clear that Wester Hailes suffered from a range of problems. These included social problems linked to high levels of crime, drug and alcohol abuse and low educational achievement. Economically, the area suffered from high unemployment and low income levels. In 1991 unemployment was 22%, compared to only 8% for Edinburgh as a whole. A 1993 study of the area showed that 60% of all of households were living on less than £5,000 per annum. This put Wester Hailes within the bottom 20% of the UK for household earnings (Edinburgh District Council, 1994).



Local shopping facilities in Wester Hailes. Photo: Mark Deakin, Napier University

The major environmental challenge was how to improve rapidly deteriorating housing stock. In addition, although the area included shops, businesses and other services these were inherited from the 1970s, and required upgrading and reorganisation if they were to compete with newer developments nearby. Finally, it was also clear that the

area was not well-served in terms of transport, with residents reliant on local bus services.

4. Potential

The characteristics of Wester Hailes as a mono-bloc peripheral housing estate meant that it had low population densities and high levels of open space. The amount of open space available created an opportunity for the construction of new housing for sale. Such development helped to increase levels of owner-occupation in the area.

The location of Wester Hailes offers considerably potential for economic growth, given its proximity to new out-of-town shopping centres and other developments in Edinburgh's western corridor. The city council thought that these new developments could help to stabilise the local economy by providing employment opportunities and jobs. The creation of new job opportunities also had the potential to increase the diversity of the local population, attracting a greater variety of people into the area.



Open space between residential areas in Wester Hailes. Photo: Mark Deakin, Napier University

5. Approach

Wester Hailes was one of 4 peripheral housing estates chosen to take part in the New Life for Urban Scotland Initiative in 1988. The initiative and the partnerships that they generated, were expected to provide valuable lessons on how to tackle the social, economic and environmental problems of large urban distressed areas.

The Wester Hailes Partnership was one of the first to move towards community involvement and inter-agency working as a means of rehabilitating an area. The Wester Hailes Partnership organised residents into 25 neighbourhoods to represent the community in the regeneration programme. Representatives from these neighbourhoods sit on the partnership board, along with representatives from local authorities, quangos, voluntary groups and the business sector. All members of the board have an equal say. The specific roles and responsibilities of the board are as follows:

- Residents – neighbourhood renewal
- Housing department – diversification of housing provision, demolition of high-rise tower blocks and replacement with low density mix of social and private residences (with the assistance of housing associations in the social sector and house-builders in the private sector).
- Land-use planning department - integration of Wester Hailes urban regeneration with the physical planning of North West Edinburgh, linking the programme with the industrial estates, business, retail parks and leisure centres developing at the edge of Edinburgh's Western Corridor.
- Local economic development department – employment, training and re-skilling of residents and connection of such activities with the opportunities offered by the developments at the edge of the Western corridor
- Social services – provision of day care provisions, education facilities (arts, science and telecommunications) libraries and cultural venues, via leisure and recreation. These services are provided through base-line funding secured by the local authority and the contributions of local voluntary groups.

These roles and responsibilities were agreed by the partnership board to be the main priorities of the rehabilitation programme.

6. Tools & methods

In 1998 the Scottish Office commissioned a formal evaluation of the New Life for Urban Scotland Initiative. This evaluation included scrutiny of the Wester Hailes Partnership as one of four partnerships established by the programme 10 years earlier. The evaluation was carried out by Cambridge Policy Consultants (a private company) and

was reported under the title: 'An evaluation of the New Life for Urban Scotland Initiative'.

The evaluation of the Wester Hailes Partnership attempted to establish the impact of the programme during the first 10 years of work. The key stakeholders in the evaluation included the Scottish Office, Cambridge Policy consultants and the Wester Hailes partnership board.

The evaluation compared the situation in Wester Hailes before the programme began with the situation at the time (in 1998). A factor analysis was undertaken using a series of socio and economic data on education, crime, health, employment, income and poverty. The results of this exercise showed changes to the local social and economic conditions since the partnership was established in 1988. Much of the analysis was undertaken using official statistics from government sources. Where necessary these were supplemented with the results of questionnaire surveys and other data collection exercises. For example, a survey was used to gather residents' views on the changes to their area, and the image of Wester Hailes as a place to live and work.

The evaluation was resource intensive, requiring the use of data from various official sources. The evaluation was carried out by a private consultancy with assistance from the Scottish Office and the Wester Hailes partnership board. There are no figures on how much the evaluation cost to administer, although it took around 19 months to complete, from February 1998 to September 1999.

The results of the evaluation were as follows:

- New and rehabilitated housing. This consumed the largest slice of public sector funding and involved the construction, demolition and improvement of homes in Wester Hailes.
- Changes to housing tenure: over the first 10 years of the programme, the proportion of social housing stock in Wester Hailes was reduced from around 96% to 56%. This was achieved through the construction of new homes for sale and the demolition of sub-standard social housing.
- Increased training and employment opportunities: job placements, training, careers advice and guidance were offered to local people. Despite this, the proportion of residents with jobs fell from 57% in 1988 to 47%

in 1998. This was largely due to out-migration of residents seeking employment in other areas.

- Improved image: resident satisfaction with Wester Hailes increased by 27% between 1988 and 1998, and image also improved among businesses and people outside Wester Hailes.
- Declining rates of out-migration: despite the changes Wester Hailes is still a very dynamic community, with lots of change as residents move in and out of the area. This can be shown to make regeneration and improvement in the area more difficult, although there has been a slowing in these trends over the last few years.



Improved landscaping, parking and traffic management. Photo: Mark Deakin, Napier University

7. Innovation/unusual features

Wester Hailes was one of the first urban rehabilitation programmes to develop cyber-cafés as part of its strategy. These cafes have a number of functions, most important of which is as a location for ICT training. The cyber cafes were also intended to help overcome the digital divide by providing accessible ICT to people on a low income.

Culture and accessibility were strong themes in the regeneration programme. Amongst other cultural activities, a new public library was constructed in the new district centre. Accessibility of banking services was also tackled in the regeneration, in partnership with the Royal Bank of Scotland. This partnership has made credit and banking services

accessible to low income families, and helped the bank to meet its own social and corporate responsibility objectives.

The Wester Hailes Partnership also embarked on a waterways initiative to improve the green spaces available to the community.



Accessible and attractive open spaces in Wester Hailes. Photo: Mark Deakin, Napier University

Finally, the partnership also promoted healthy living through various dietary initiatives and no smoking/clean air actions.

8. Results

The rehabilitation programme resulted in the following:

- the provision of new and rehabilitated housing;
- a more diversified stock of housing;
- better training and employment opportunities;
- an improved image; and,
- declining rates of out-migration.

Clear lessons have emerged about the importance of a comprehensive approach to tackling rehabilitation. The evaluation has also demonstrated that some results take time to emerge. So far the 10 year initiative has made significant progress in improving the area's image and changing the tenure of the local housing stock. However, other

disadvantages associated with peripheral housing estates still remain. These disadvantages include continued out-migration, high levels of unemployment and low skill levels in the resident population. Despite attempts to attract new residents through private-sector housing developments in Wester Hailes, these problems of unemployment and skill levels remain.

On balance, the Wester Hailes partnership approach to rehabilitation can be seen to be successful. Early on in the process, the emphasis was on engaging stakeholders in the partnership. More recently attention has moved to leadership, trust and respect as a way of moving forward and achieving even greater benefits.

9. Further Information & Links

If you would like more information about the Wester Hailes story, then the following references will help you.

Cambridge Policy Consultants (1999) 'An Evaluation of the New Life for Urban Scotland Initiative', Scottish Office, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh District Council (1994) 'Local Economic Development Strategy', Edinburgh District Council, Edinburgh.

MacDonald, K. (1993) 'Partnerships in Regeneration: The Wester Hailes Partnership (Edinburgh)', *Town and Country Planning*, June, p. 144-145.

Macgregor, A et al, (1995) 'Interim evaluation of the Wester Hailes partnership.'

The Scottish Office: Edinburgh. Available on-line: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/resfinds/drf14-00.htm>

MC Economics Ltd. (1993): *The Wester Hailes Partnership: Baseline Report*, MC Economics, Edinburgh.

Wester Hailes Partnership (1993): *Wester Hailes Census Profile*, Wester Hailes Representative Partnership, Edinburgh.

Social Inclusion Partnership (2002): *Wester Hailes Census Profile*, South West Edinburgh SIP, Edinburgh.

web link



web link



If you are interested in finding out more about Wester Hailes, you can contact the City of Edinburgh Council (www.edinburgh.gov.uk).

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visit the project web-site: www.luda-project.net**

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