

Newbattle Abbey College Celebrates Opening of New Woodlands Bridge by Rhona Brankin MSP



Cutting of the ribbon

On Thursday 26 November, Newbattle Abbey College celebrated the grand opening of their new 'Grotto Bridge', which links the College to the spectacular Lord Ancrum's Wood, crossing the South Esk River.

Representatives from Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN), who awarded the College £44,445 from the Landfill Communities Fund towards the building of the bridge, were in attendance alongside representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), who also part-funded the project. Cutting the red ribbon, Rhona Brankin MSP declared the bridge officially open, praising the bridge as a 'wonderful resource' for the area and referring to the College and Lord Ancrum's wood as a 'Jewel in Midlothian's Crown'.

In 2008 the College applied to the Landfill Communities Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage to support the removal of the existing Grotto Bridge, which was initially installed by the Army in the 1940's when they occupied the Newbattle estate and site, to purchase and install a new state-of-the-art stress laminated timber bridge. In March 2009 their applications were deemed successful and the Forestry Commission Engineering Team started work on the bridge shortly after.

Principal of Newbattle Abbey College, Ann Southwood, said: "I am delighted that our funding applications were successful and delighted with the speedy and smooth progress the Forestry Commission Engineering Team made on the bridge. Our partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland is invaluable and together we will work hard to bring the benefits of Lord Ancrum's Wood to the local community. This new bridge will provide us with the opportunity to widen access to Lord Ancrum's wood, giving more people than ever before the chance to enjoy these spectacular ancient woodlands. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the project, including Rhona Brankin MSP for declaring our new bridge officially opened."

Jim McKay, Chair of the WREN Edinburgh and Midlothian Advisory Panel, said: "WREN is totally committed to providing funding for local community projects and the provision of this replacement bridge is one of the best examples of project funding. The Panel had no hesitation in providing a grant for this project and we are thrilled with the result."

Malcolm Fraser, SNH south area officer, added: "Scottish Natural Heritage is always keen to support projects which make it easier for people to get out and enjoy nature. We are particularly pleased to be able to help fund the new Grotto Bridge, as it allows the local community to access a unique and irreplaceable ancient woodland."

Having signed a Concordat agreement in 2006, Newbattle Abbey College and Forestry Commission Scotland work together to promote the health and wellbeing benefits the woodland brings to the local

community and learners. Together they run a number of events using Lord Ancrum's Wood as a venue including Woodland Workshops for parents and their children, outdoor education events for children from local primary schools and activities for the College's residential students.



A great day enjoyed by everyone