

# Falkirk Council

## Carrying out an Audit of Open Space

### Introduction

Falkirk Council has recently completed an audit of open space within the Local Authority area.

The audit provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the open space provision within Falkirk and will help the Council to prepare a strategy for managing and developing open space over the coming years.

Falkirk Council Development Services requested that Forth Valley GIS assist the Council with the preparation and management of this audit.

### Requirements

The audit was required as a first stage towards the preparation of an Open Space Strategy for Falkirk Council.

Working to guidance provided by SNH, the requirement was to apply a pre-defined Land Use classification (that included Open Space types as defined in Planning Advice Note 65) to Ordnance Survey Mastermap® (OSMM) topographic data.

### Solution

The selected approach adopts three basic principles:

- Complete OSMM polygons should be used for the assignment of Land Use codes. These polygons must not be sub-divided or altered in any way.
- TOID (OSMM unique Ids) associations must be preserved.

- All polygons must be given a primary land use code. A secondary code is optional.



A two-stage approach was adopted:

- Stage 1 - semi-automated classification based on OSMM descriptive codes (the codes that describe a feature's composition, for example, whether it is manmade or natural, etc)
- Stage 2 – manual interpretation of aerial photography. Interpretation was carried out with reference to several other sources of available data (see Data section) and with reference to available guidance. Close contact was maintained with Falkirk Council staff throughout. By discussing classification 'scenarios', it was possible to adopt a consistent approach to classification.

Weekly procedures were established to help Falkirk Council staff to quality assure the data, and to ensure that the project was on target. These procedures included:

- Publishing the data on GeoLink, the Council's Intranet GIS

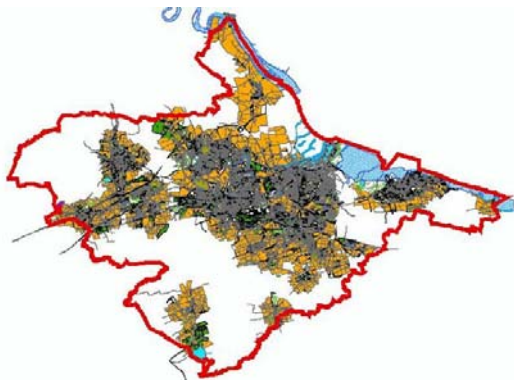
- Establishing a query log with direct links to 'problem' polygons in GeoLink.
- Production of a progress report summarising the number of polygons in each land use class and the rate of classification.

*“FVGIS have done a great job quantifying the open space in the Council’s urban areas. It is important to note the corporate implications of this piece of work. For the first time Falkirk Council has a full picture of both the type and quantity of open space. This data set is already being used as the base line for a qualitative open space strategy to help Falkirk Council make informed decisions about the planning, management and maintenance of open space.”*

*- Richard Broadley, Environment Coordinator,  
Falkirk Council*

## Data

The audit dataset is a reclassification of Ordnance Survey Mastermap data. The data was maintained within an ESRI® Personal Geodatabase. The geographic area included all towns and villages as



identified in Falkirk’s Local Plans (plus a buffer of 500 metres).

Interpretation was based on aerial photography from 2001 (Getmapping). Where necessary, the interpretation drew on local knowledge and made use of several other sources of available data. These included:

- Point X – Points of interest data (Landmark® Information Group, 2006)
- WIAT - Woodlands In and Around Towns (Falkirk Council, 2006)
- Land Use data (Sological, 2001)
- Other Falkirk Council datasets (e.g. school, parks and gardens) as available in GeoStore, the Council's spatial data warehouse.

## Results

The audit provides detailed and accurate geographic data on open space distribution across Falkirk. Key classification figures were as follows:

LAND USE CODE	NUMBER OF POLYGONS	AREA (ha)
1. Roads	23,814	1,737
2. Water	1,257	2,331
3. Rail	210	90
4. Paths	5,231	91
5. Buildings	87,459	713
6.1 Public Parks and Gardens	1,754	775
6.2 Private Gardens or Grounds	70,808	1,718
6.3 Amenity Greenspace	11,707	834
6.4 Playspace for children and teenagers	36	1
6.5 Sports Areas	352	342
6.6 Green Corridors	221	28
6.7 Natural / semi-natural greenspace	2,212	1,671
6.8 Other functional greenspace	734	63
6.9 Civic space	14	2
7. Other Open Land	3,816	7,063

- A total of 183,713 polygons were pre-classified in stage 1.
- The remaining 25,983 polygons were classified in stage 2
- Roughly 5,000 'pre-classified' polygons were re-classified during the manual interpretation stage.
- 1,900 polygons were given secondary codes.

## Benefits

The contribution that open spaces make to our overall quality of life is widely recognised. Open space provides a sense of freedom and relief from the built environment in which we live and work, somewhere to relax, somewhere to meet with friends and family, to exercise and to learn about our natural environment.

The audit itself provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of open space provision in Falkirk. It will provide a valuable baseline against which to assess the success of future policies and management decisions relating to for example, any investment in, or development / sale of sites.

*“Greenspaces bring the countryside into our towns and cities, making it accessible from our backdoor.”*

- **Greenspace Scotland**

<b>Project type:</b>	Data Capture and Data Management
<b>Software:</b>	ArcGIS®, Oracle® 9i
<b>Customers:</b>	Falkirk Council Development Services

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For further information, visit our web site where you can fill in an on-line request for further information:

[www.forthvalleygis.co.uk](http://www.forthvalleygis.co.uk)

or contact us:

**Forth Valley GIS  
Drummond House  
Wellgreen Place  
Stirling  
FK8 2DY**

Telephone: **01786 443939**  
Fax: **01786 443987**

Email: **fvinfo@forthvalleygis.co.uk**

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