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Pioneering Scottish partnership could be the model for global green recovery says global authority on innovation and sustainability

- Volans, a global think tank and strategic advisory firm founded by John Elkington, the originator of the ‘triple-bottom-line’ of profit, people and planet, and advisor to major companies across the globe, has called out a pioneering Scottish partnership as a potential model for global economic recovery.
- The River Leven Programme, a regional regeneration partnership pioneered by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, aims to transform an area once at the centre of Scotland’s industrial revolution, locking in sustainable, inclusive growth.
- The Programme is the first living case study in Volans’ ‘Green Swans Observatory’, propelling the project to the global ‘one to watch’ list for innovative approaches.
- “The alignment of environment and economic agencies with private partners to accelerate regeneration in Leven can be a model for Scotland’s green recovery,” says Elkington.
- This comes as the Scottish Government’s Economic Advisory Group on Economic Recovery calls for “a strong green spine to... recovery.”
- The announcement comes as five new partners - Network Rail, The Coal Authority, Zero Waste Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, and Fife Coast & Countryside Trust - join another ten private and public partners on the one-year anniversary of the partnership.

Volans, a global think tank and strategic advisory firm founded by John Elkington, the originator of the ‘triple-bottom-line’ of profit, people and planet, and advisor to major companies across the globe, has called out a pioneering Scottish partnership as a potential model for global economic recovery. The River Leven Programme, a regional regeneration partnership, pioneered by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, aims to transform an area once at the centre of Scotland’s industrial revolution, locking in sustainable, inclusive growth.

The programme, the subject of a ‘Sustainable Growth Agreement’ in 2019 between eleven public and private sector partners including SEPA, Scottish Enterprise, Fife Council and global spirits manufacturer Diageo, focuses on six aims to realise a 2030 vision for a “living, breathing example of inclusive growth.”

The programme is the first living case study in Volans’ ‘Green Swans Observatory’ initiative, propelling the project to the global ‘one to watch’ list for innovative approaches. Volans has so far given Green Swan Awards to ‘Earth Day’ and the multi-award-winning Eden Project in Cornwall.

Volans’ Green Swans Observatory spotlights and analyses examples that encapsulate activities needed for a regenerative future, sharing these ‘Green Swan’ innovations that can drive forward positively exponential change with the wider world. Its aim is to accelerate the move from a ‘responsibility’ agenda to one of resilience and ultimately regeneration for businesses and other organisations.

Louise Kjellerup Roper, Chief Executive of Volans, said:

“The ongoing global pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need for structural change in our society and economies. Scotland’s leadership on low-carbon innovation is well known and we’ve been watching the transformation of its environment protection agency for some time. The alignment of environment and economic agencies with private partners to accelerate regeneration in Leven can be a model for Scotland’s green recovery.”

The announcement comes on the day following Scottish Government’s Economic Advisory Group on Economic Recovery called for “a strong green spine to... recovery” and as five new partners commit to the programme: Network Rail, The Coal Authority, Zero Waste Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, and Fife Coast & Countryside Trust.

Ross Martin, Chair of the River Leven Partnership, said:

“This is an exceptionally bold place-based intervention being led by our national environmental regulator into one of Scotland’s regional economies. The partnership recognises that the environment and economy are not competing interests, but two sides of the same coin - the currency of sustainable, inclusive growth.

“The Covid19 crisis has demonstrated beyond all doubt the importance of reconnecting people and place, and I predict that all other EPAs will follow the Leven lead.”

Terry A’Hearn, Chief Executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said:

“Now more than ever, the future health, wellbeing and prosperity of our people relies on transformational change in our economy. As Scotland’s environment protection agency, we’re determined to step up. The old way that all EPAs around the world have worked is no longer good enough for the challenges our societies face. We’re not waiting for the change; we are going to create it here in Scotland. Our One Planet Prosperity strategy gives us a new powerful partnership with our enterprise agency, private and public partners to drive actions, not words.

“The River Leven Programme is a powerful example of what can be achieved when environment and economy align. This region of Scotland was a cradle of the first industrial revolution. Under this partnership, it can now become a pioneer in the new global low-carbon industrial revolution. We’re excited for the local community and our partners and delighted that it is being looked at as an example of what future sustainable, inclusive growth and partnerships will look like in this next revolution. The international recognition as a Green Swan project is a welcome boost for the people of this region.”

Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise, added:

“The River Leven initiative is the epitome of strategic partnership working which is creating exciting new opportunities to unlock purposeful economic outcomes for regions and communities across Scotland. Working in this way with SEPA and other partners is critical



to how we will do business in support of a green recovery and being acknowledged by Volans in this way speaks volumes about the power of purposeful partnerships.”

Roseanna Cunningham, Environment and Climate Change Secretary, said:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented global crisis which has fundamentally changed every aspect of our lives. However, as we cautiously emerge from lockdown, we have a chance to re-imagine the Scotland around us, and to begin building a greener, fairer and more equal society and economy.

“The River Leven Programme is a truly collaborative project which is putting these principles at its heart and I congratulate SEPA and all the partners involved in receiving this deserved recognition.”

Notes for Editors

1. Volans is a think tank and advisory firm operating at the intersection of innovation and sustainability, making the emergent future practical and actionable to drive positive systems change.

The [Green Swans Observatory](#) builds on Volans’ ongoing [Green Swans](#) campaign, part of our [Tomorrow’s Capitalism Inquiry](#). Now entering its second phase, the Inquiry is focussing on how we can help create the right market conditions for finance to be an accelerant of regenerative ‘Green Swan’ trajectories in the real world. Further information can be found at <https://volans.com>.

For more information, please contact Hannah Hughes:
hannah@gongcommunications.com.

2. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is Scotland's principal environmental regulator, protecting and improving Scotland's environment. A keystone of its mission is to accelerate progress towards ‘One Planet Prosperity’.

The ten original partners in the Leven Programme Partnership who backed the Sustainable Growth Agreement with SEPA announced in July 2019 are Fife Council, Sustrans, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water, Scottish Enterprise, Fife College, Forth Rivers Trust, Diageo, Central Scotland Green Network Trust and Keep Scotland Beautiful.

