A group of volunteers from West Dunbartonshire have reached the finals of the 2014 Clean Britain Awards after being nominated by Linda Adam, Community Greenspace Officer who co-ordinates the Community Involvement in Neighbourhoods Project.

Local residents living in the vicinity of Lusset Glen in Old Kilpatrick, West Dunbartonshire have been ensuring that their area remains an attractive greenspace for themselves and others.

This local activity began with one or two residents taking it upon themselves to pick up litter when they were out walking in the Glen. As time has gone on, more residents have become involved and now a regular, more structured, monthly clean up takes place with up to five people taking part. The monthly sessions can sometimes involve a more targeted, deeper clean up following a scoping sweep of the Glen for particularly bad areas of litter and fly tipping. To complement this, other local residents, who don’t participate in the monthly clean ups, do so individually on a regular basis. The volunteers brave all weathers enjoying the fresh green of spring, the shaded coolness in summer, the refreshing rain in the autumn and the bitter cold in the winter.

The volunteers have not received any funding to support the activity but receive assistance from the Community Greenspace Officer in the form of equipment, such as high visibility vests, gloves, litter pickers, black refuse bags and handihoops. Furthermore, an arrangement is in place for local Greenspace staff to uplift the haul of litter which is collected. The volunteers keep a database which collates information including date of litter pick, number and names of volunteers who participated, whether photographic evidence was taken on the day, a note of the number of bags of rubbish collected and any other items found e.g. bicycles. The database also identifies any trends of improvement or surges of worsening issues. Both the database and photographs are forwarded to the Community Greenspace Officer after each monthly clean up. The volunteers also report any larger items that they cannot deal with to the Community Greenspace Officer. They also report any evidence of vandalism or untoward activity. The clean ups are also registered with Keep Scotland Beautiful Clean Up Scotland campaign.

By participating in these clean ups, the residents are building community pride and taking responsibility for the quality of their environment, whilst tackling careless and illegal behaviour of individuals who damage the quality of life for others. There are benefits to the wildlife as every drinks can or bottle removed is one less for a small mammal to get stuck in; every polythene bag removed is one less for a bird to get ensnared in. The volunteers quietly set an example, promoting goodwill, encouraging neighbourhood involvement while fostering civic engagement.
pride and active citizenship. Friendships are developed that extend beyond the activity itself.

This regular activity is into its second year and the volunteers notice a some improvement in the litter situation. Other local residents often stop and chat and thank the group for their efforts into the foreseeable future with the ongoing permissions and support of Greenspace.