



**“Urban Fringes are areas of landscape which link rural & urban environments. They are under pressure from increasing urban growth and expansion and inconsistent spatial planning policy.”**



Welcome to the first newsletter for the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) project.

SURF was approved by the Interreg IVB Programme in September 2009. The project, co-ordinated by lead partner Aberdeen brings together partners from 5 countries across the North Sea Region.

Recognising the value of urban fringes to local communities, the project aims to protect and unlocking their potential and enhance their quality for future generations.

Urban fringes are used for a multitude of purposes but due to complex issues of ownership and administration are often neglected, suffering -

- ▶ declining biodiversity
- ▶ deteriorating water quality
- ▶ low green space value
- ▶ poor accessibility & wide social inequalities
- ▶ lack of identity
- ▶ under pressure from changing demographics

The SURF project aims to put the urban fringe higher on the political agenda and encourage greater integration between policies and programmes at local, regional and national level.

Partners met for the SURF project start meeting in Aberdeen in December 2009 and more recently



in at the annual SURF conference in Enschede in June 2010. These events enabled project partners to develop ideas and share experiences on urban fringes.

The SURF project is split into 4 workpackages dealing with-

**1** Project Management

**2** Publicity & Communications

**3** Review & Analysis

**4** Testing & Implementation

## SURF Website

To find out more about the Sustainable Urban Fringes SURF project log onto the the new website.

[www.sustainablefringes.eu](http://www.sustainablefringes.eu)

# What is SURF aiming to do?

- 1 Provide a common platform for EU experts & institutions to exchange their experiences, strategies, and policies in dealing with urban fringes. It will provide recommendations to test some of the innovative approaches to harness the potential of the urban fringes and influence policy.
- 2 Analyse the challenges facing urban fringes and these areas make to city region development.
- 3 Create a web based long term network of experts, practitioners, businesses, institutions, community development organisations.
- 4 Review existing approaches, test and implement innovative instruments and processes in urban fringe development.
- 5 Add value to the urban fringes and increase the importance of these areas, promote the environmental quality and highlight benefits to the community.
- 6 Improve community skills in urban fringes and empower communities to develop rural services, enabling them to take part in planning and decision making.



# Understanding the role of urban fringes.



## Review & Analysis

Working to understanding the characteristics of urban fringes, the role they play in our urban environment and gathering evidence to how these can be sustainably managed are SURF scientific experts.

The team of partners is led by Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management (CUDEM) at Leeds Metropolitan University as part of SURF Workpage 3, Review and Analysis.

Throughout the project the team will work closely with SURF partners Saxion University. They will also link to the work undertaken by Enschede in Work package 4.

### Key objectives:

- Undertake a problem analysis of urban fringe regions.
- Undertake a review of existing approaches in the urban fringes.
- Enable transnational working on these issues and approaches.
- Find ways to integrate policies and programmes for urban fringes.

### Key themes for SURF

- Economy, competitiveness and enterprise
- The role and value of green spaces
- Planning and stakeholder engagement
- Governance of urban fringes

This work has already made key progress including establishing themes to focus the SURF project and developing a SURF analytical framework to guide the overall project delivery and timeframes. This framework will take into account the range of different projects and interests of SURF partner projects and demonstrate project links to the core SURF themes.

**“ Understanding the value of urban fringes will ensure they are protected and preserved for future generations.”**



# Spotlight on SURF partners

In each edition of the SURF newsletter we will catch up with the work of some of our partners. In this edition the spotlight falls on Bradford and Aberdeen.

## Bradford



**The project aims to engage communities in the urban/rural fringe of Airedale, in particular the Worth Valley so that they understand and develop their contribution to the competitiveness of the Leeds City Region and the Yorkshire Region through local action.**

The Bradford element of the SURF project is now in its development phase and gaining momentum. A local steering group has been established with representatives from the local Parish Council, the Haworth Village Association, a local business network, the City Region team, Keighley Area Office and the project team and plans to include representatives from Bradford's local Strategic Partnership.

The group has held several meetings which have set the scene for the SURF project and tackled Bradford's response to the SWOT analysis. This provided an opportunity engage local stakeholders about the issues of the local urban fringe. The group have also looked at proposals for the next 6 months including key actions to engage a wider audience of businesses, residents and other organisations.

Following discussions the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and The Humber have expressed interest in supporting the project.

Bradford has hosted a meeting with students from Saxion University and

offered the opportunity for student on an international MSC programme at the university to assist with local research for the project in June.

## Aberdeen



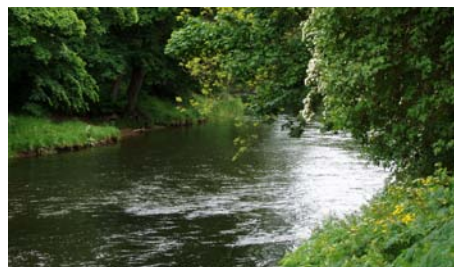
**The project aims to empower communities, landowners and stakeholder groups to be able to make environmental decisions using the Council's Open Space Audit data to improve access, the river and creating economic opportunities on Aberdeen's northern urban fringe using best practice and trans-national learning.**

The Aberdeen SURF partner project is working to improve the environment along the River Don corridor which runs through the north of the city and out to sea. While the river is an important area to the city, access for city residents is poor.

The project aims to improve access and encourage involvement from communities adjacent to this urban fringe.

Aberdeen has been busy establishing links with key stakeholders and working with local partners. Proposals are underway for a local conference to engage stakeholders in this urban environment.

Greenspace areas along the River Don have been documented in an Open Space Audit and recorded on a GIS tool.



## SURF Conference June 2010



*SURF project partners - Enschede*

A Partnership Declaration was formally signed by partner politicians and representatives on the first day of the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Annual Conference on 24 and 25 June 2010.

Hans van Agteren, Alderman for Enschede and Aberdeen Councillor Kate Dean, Convener for the city's Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee, led partner representatives in signing the document. This was to demonstrate high level commitment to the SURF project and underline political support to planning for the future of urban fringes.

Delegates from the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Sweden attended the two day event in the City of Enschede.

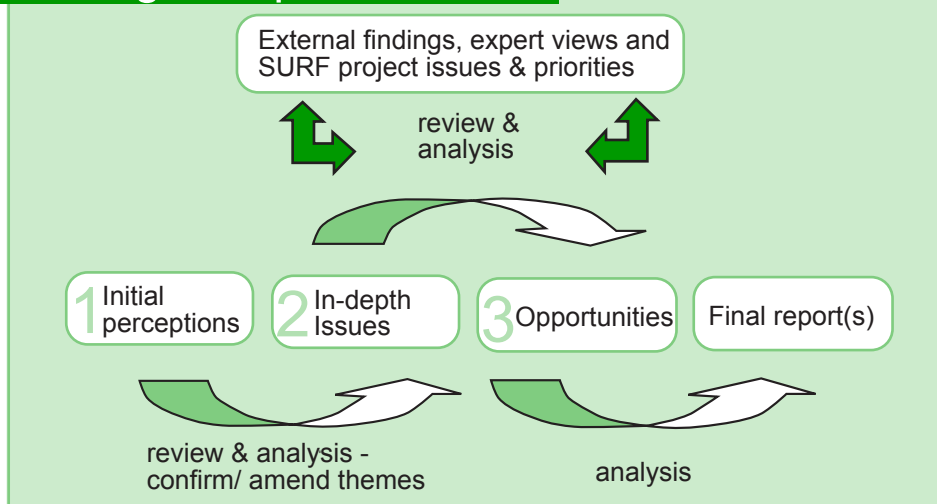
Partners attending the conference signed up to one of the 4 specialist key themes they will focus on during the course of the project.



# What are the challenges and opportunities for urban fringes?



## Testing & Implementation SURF SWOT process



Leading workpackage 4 of the SURF project is Rolf Oldejans from Enschede.

Work is currently underway on a first report on the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for urban fringes in the North Sea Region. This follows an initial SWOT analysis on urban fringes led by Enschede and SURF scientific partners with input from all project partners.

The SWOT technique will be an important element of the SURF analytical process. Instead of being a one-off activity SURF will use the process to gather collective opinions and responses from all the SURF partners at important stages throughout project.

**SWOT 1** has gathered initial perceptions from the partners. This will build a picture of the key issues and priorities of the SURF partners and identify where future analytical work should be focused.

**SWOT 2** due in 2011 will be a more in-depth analysis by the partners.

**SWOT 3** to be carried out in 2012 when it is expected that partners will have established strong links with stakeholders in their region. They will have spent time considering the key SURF themes and SURF research and analysis reports.

## What will SURF deliver?

- A governance model for the urban fringes of city regions.
- Recommendations to support and strengthen SMEs/enterprise.
- A set of integrated policy guidelines and approaches for urban fringes.
- A toolkit for greenspace management and developing accessible linkages.
- Comparison of urban fringe policies and recommendations for future policy.
- A SURF accessible learning legacy.
- An academic foundation and framework.

## Contact

For further information

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[www.sustainablefringes.eu](http://www.sustainablefringes.eu)



## Project Partners are:

- Aberdeen City Council - (Lead Partner)
- School of the Built Environment at Leeds Metropolitan University
- City of Bradford
- Norfolk County Council
- City of Enschede
- Saxion University
- City of Almelo
- City of Hengelo
- Province of East Flanders
- Province of West Flanders
- City of Hamburg
- Municipality of Harryda

The Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Project is part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme and is partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

