

# Annual Report 2009 - 2010



**Sustainable**  
URBAN FRINGES  
SURF

The Interreg IVB  
North Sea Region  
Programme



*Investing in the future by working together  
for a sustainable and competitive region*

European Union



European Regional Development Fund

## Executive Summary

The Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) project was approved by the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme in September 2009.

The project recognises the value of urban fringes and aims to–

- Rationalise the complex and conflicting policy framework for managing spatial planning and for promoting sustainable economic development in urban fringes.
- Unlock the potential of urban fringes and in doing so, enhance the quality of life for EU citizens.
- Work transnationally to develop a common approach for managing the urban fringe.

This report outlines progress on activity during the first year of the project, 1 September 2009 – 31 August 2010.

The SURF project is split into 4 workpackages -



## Who are the partners?



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





## Workpackage 2

## Publicity & Communications

The SURF Communication Plan sets out a wide range of communication measures to disseminate details on the project and provide a source of information on urban fringes.

Partners have established their own communication plans and there has been a focus on engaging internal and external stakeholders with a range of activities including events, project meetings, briefings, presentations and workshops.

## Website

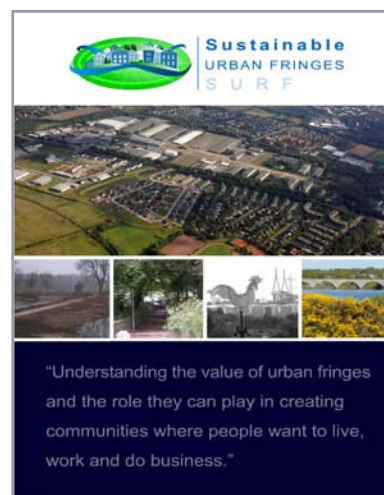
The launch of the SURF project website, in June 2010, has taken the SURF project to a wider audience. This site acts as a communication hub and is updated regularly, information includes –

- Details on partners and their projects.
- SURF news and resources.
- Information on urban fringes including a glossary on urban fringe terminology.
- A discussion forum on the website, which allows partners to share information and progress work.

The site has continued to show a steady increase in traffic as the project develops.

SURF publications produced this period, include a project leaflet, information sheet and stakeholders newsletter to highlight the work of the project.

The launch of a Sustainable Urban Fringes Discussion Group, in networking site LinkedIn, has opened up dialogue on urban fringes and increased the reach of the project in 2010.



A SURF message “Connecting Urban and Rural” was developed following a communications workshop at the SURF Annual Conference in June.

Partners are informed about SURF progress through a monthly

SURF partner bulletin. This updates on activities carried out over the month and outlines activities and deadlines for the month ahead. Partners are encouraged to provide regular updates for the bulletin to share progress and information with other partners.

2011 will see SURF communications develop their stakeholder contacts, capitalise on previous project findings and continue with the range of communication activities that have proved to successfully promote the SURF aspirations.

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# What have SURF Partners Achieved

## Aberdeen City Council

**Primary theme focus –**  
Spatial Planning & Stakeholder  
Engagement

### Project aims to:

Develop and promote new methods for assessing and managing open spaces along the Aberdeen's River Don "corridor".



### Progress...

- Established a multi-stakeholder Strategic Steering Group, which has met regularly to share information and expertise and direct the project.
- Conducted additional stakeholder meetings and presentations, including to the board of a key local stakeholder; Aberdeen Greenspace Trust – 18 June.
- Supported an Open Space Audit which has documented baseline information on open spaces in the area. This information has been recorded in a Geographical Information System (GIS).
- Supported community consultations on an Open Space Strategy that includes the project area.
- Contributed to the development of local open space planning policy guidance.

## City of Bradford

**Primary theme focus –**  
Governance



### 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.

### Progress...

- Agreed a local plan of action to engage local organisations, businesses, funders, policy makers and residents through a series of workshops/conferences.
- 40 people attended, "Whoyano", a rural business networking event in June 2010. The event was designed to bring change and growth to the Worth Valley.
- Hosted an International MSC Student from the University of Saxion for two weeks in June 2010. The student assisted with local research for the project.
- Met with local neighbourhood forum to address gaps between local knowledge and perception in planning.
- Commenced planning for a local conference in February 2011.

## Province of East Flanders

**Theme focus –**  
Spatial Planning & Stakeholder  
Engagement

### Project aims to:

Develop an integrated view for an area of the urban fringe. This will involve testing and implementing transnational approaches on planning and public policy making in spatial quality.

### Progress...

- Held regular meetings with the Provincial Quality Chamber in 2010.
- Carried out study work and meetings with stakeholders.
- Planning for the SURF Theme Workshop in East Flanders, November 2010.

## Norfolk County Council

**Primary theme focus –**  
Role & Value of Green Spaces

### Project aims to:

Unlock the potential of the River Gaywood valley to the east of King's Lynn in Norfolk as a natural environmental amenity.



### Progress...

- Held two stakeholders events, one in November 2009 and the other in July 2010. Firstly to introduce them to the area and the latter to celebrate the start of the project. Stakeholders were taken on local tours to talk about the issues of sustainable



urban fringes in a local context.

- A press release about the project was submitted along with a Radio Norfolk interview with the Gaywood Valley Project Officer.
- Ran presentations on the project at a Heritage Conference in Norwich Castle Museum as well as to King's Lynn Borough Council elected members and the Internal Drainage Board. Letters were also sent out to all the Parish Councils in the project area to inform them about the project.
- Worked on production of an Engagement Plan and formulated a basis for a Vision and Delivery Plan which will be developed by project consultants and project team.
- Procured a consultancy to trial the use of alternative energy pump.
- Developed a strong local Advisory Group and wider partnership that involves relevant stakeholders. Held 2 stakeholder Advisory (Officer) Group meetings and 2 Joint Advisory Panel meetings.
- Procured a consultancy to engage with decision makers and local government officers through a set of Masterclasses, to be held in Summer 2011.
- Employed a full time (temporary) Project Officer to co-ordinate the project at a local level. Contract runs until August 2012.

## Province of West Flanders

**Primary theme focus – Governance**

### Project aims to:

Increase the overall spatial quality of the landscape in the urban area of the city Roeselare, in connection with the surrounding municipalities. This should lead to a better interaction and link between urban areas and countryside, enhancing the

attractiveness, recreational potential and landscape of the region.

West Flanders is also preparing new initiatives for the urban fringe, such as the reconversion of an old railway track into a cycle track.



### Progress...

- Communicating project ambitions to political stakeholders in their region.
- Founded Stad-Land-Schap, an interlocal cooperation of 9 municipalities and the province of West Flanders, which has started lobbying for structural support from the Flemish Government.
- Hosted a delegation of EU commissioners to the province of West-Flanders in April 2010. The delegation was introduced to the SURF-project and the partner project, Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse hart.
- Distributed 72,000 copies of the West Flanders project magazine 't West-Vlaamse hart'
- Created a West Flanders project website with information about the Stad-Lap-schaap urban fringe development. [www.westvlaamsehart.be](http://www.westvlaamsehart.be)
- Created e-zines to 500 subscribers about the project and progress made.

## City of Enschede

**Primary theme focus – Competitiveness, Economy, Enterprise**

### Project aims to:

Create a distinct and sustainable urban fringe around the city of Enschede.

The activities focus on the south, north and west of the city where nature development and water are important elements in the reconstruction of this zone.



### Progress...

- Working to influence Dutch policy on urban fringes. A delegation from the landscape team of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment toured the Enschede urban fringe area in September 2010. This was to gain inspiration for a new national policy on urban fringes.
- Launched a project to create a regional vision, strategy and programme, on urban fringes in the Region Twente, in the Netherlands.
- Presentation to the cross border commission of the Euregio, in September 2010. Mayors, City Councillors and Aldermen of municipalities in the Dutch German border region attended to learn more about the SURF project and challenges and opportunities for urban fringes.
- Completed a pilot project to take over some authority from the province for the management of the rural area around the city.



## City of Hengelo

**Primary theme focus –**  
Competitiveness, Economy,  
Enterprise

### Project aims to:

Develop and enhance 'Weusthag' a greenspace area in the heart of the city. This is to protect and improve its qualities and unlock the potential of the area for sport and recreation.



### Progress...

- Organised a public discussion in the council committee about the action plan for the project in spring 2010.
- Organised a bike tour of the Westaug urban fringe for SURF partners to allow transnational information sharing. This assisted Hengelo to develop their project plan for the area and allowed SURF Dutch partners, Enschede, Almelo and Hengelo to further strengthen their partnership and develop a regional approach to urban fringes.
- Developed an action plan and new development plan for the area.
- Produced a new communication strategy for the project area 'Het Weusthag', which is now known as 'The Public Park of Connection'.
- A delegation from the landscape team of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment toured the Hengelo urban fringe area in September 2010.

## City of Almelo

**Primary theme focus –**  
Role & Value of Green Spaces

### Project aims to:

Use the urban fringes to create connecting routes to greenspace areas. This is to provide valuable recreational and tourist potential for the city.

### Progress...

- Drafted and sent out a tender for the project work.
- Looked at ways to apply art to public spaces to enhance the attractiveness of an area.

## Harryda

**Primary theme focus –**  
Role & Value of Green Spaces

### Project aims to:

Investigate conditions for restoring walking trails to make them more convenient and attractive for people.



### Progress...

- Studied the 25km of trail that runs through the municipality.
- Compiled a list of landowners and properties along the trail.
- Invited local landowners to an information meeting regarding restoring the trail.
- Established contact with a consultant to negotiate with landowners.

## Hamburg

**Primary theme focus –**  
Governance

### Project aims to:

Raise awareness of the challenges facing the urban fringe. Support activities targeting elements of a joint strategy which identify the potential, the demands and areas of intervention required.

Enable stakeholders to react, stabilise and improve the quality of life in suburbia to develop suburbia's contribution to regional competitiveness.

### Progress...

- Held regular communication with representatives from regional and local government stakeholders, representatives and agencies and voluntary private bodies in the region in relation to SURF.
- Building on this network in planning for a series of colloquium events due to take place in November and December 2010. The "Approaches to Suburbia" events aim to build up a common understanding of challenges, potential and perspective of the suburban fringe and allow an exchange of experiences on suburban matters.

## Leeds Metropolitan university

**Theme Leader –**  
Role & Value of Green Spaces

**Theme Leader – Governance**

### Project aims to:

Provide a body of knowledge on the present state of academic and practical knowledge concerning the planning and development of urban fringes. This will be used to construct a conceptual framework to steer the project and show the relevant

themes, issues, processes and their relationship. Provide leadership of 2 SURF themes.

#### Progress...

- Held regular communication with representatives from regional and local government level stakeholders, representatives and agencies and voluntary and private bodies in the region in relation to SURF. They are building on this network with SURF partner Bradford in preparation for a regional event 2011.
- Delivered a presentation on behalf of SURF to a conference organised by The Flemish Land Agency (VLM) in Bruges, designed to open dialogue between scientists, policy makers, administrators and stakeholders on the challenges of developing green investments and their value in peri-urban regions.

SURF partners Kevin Thomas and Steve Littlewood had an academic journal article published on 'green belts and green infrastructure'.

#### Saxion University

**Theme Leader –**  
Spatial planning & Stakeholder Engagement

**Theme Leader –** Economy, Competitiveness & Enterprise

#### Project aims to:

Provide a body of academic knowledge concerning spatial planning and sustainable development. The Centre for Urban and Environmental Development at the University is mainly involved in SURF Workpackage 3 and is providing leadership of 2 SURF themes.

#### Progress...

- Signed a "Knowledge Agreement" on urban fringes with the Dutch Ministry of the Housing, Environmental Planning & Environment. This

will allow Saxion to harvest new knowledge from projects that the Ministry is facilitating in urban fringes throughout the country. In return Saxion will make the knowledge from SURF available to those projects.

- Supervised a project of one of the University MSc students in Nature Conservation. The student investigated
- opportunities to improve multifunctionality and ecological quality in urban fringes. Research work was carried out in Twente and in the Leeds Bradford region in the UK.

Held workshops in Twente and Flanders regions to facilitate knowledge transfer between different regions.

Planning for the SURF Theme Conference November 2010.

#### Province of Antwerp

**Primary theme focus -** Role & Value of Green Spaces

#### Project aims to:

improve the quality of the urban fringe in the north east of the city of Antwerp to create accessible green spaces.

#### Progress...

- Antwerp attended SURF meetings in Aberdeen and Enschede in 2009 and 2010. Approval from the secretariat endorsing Antwerp as an official partner is expected in December 2010 when the Province will be able to start their project work.
- Planning commenced for 2 workshops on slow roads scheduled for November 2010.
- The workshops, aimed at civil servants, combined theoretical insights with practical visits, with an aim to increase accessibility in the urban fringes. At the same time a website was launched enabling municipalities to find

technical information on slow roads, how to find financial support, inspirational examples from other municipalities and much more.

For more details log onto [www.provant.be/tragewegen](http://www.provant.be/tragewegen)

- An external consultant who will help to design a playable fish stair for the river Laarse Beek was officially chosen on the 19 August 2010. The first step is a measurement of groundwater levels in the area.
- A management plan is being developed for the valley of the Koude Beek, located in the urban fringe in the southeast of the city of Antwerp. This management plan incorporates the vision of the different stakeholders that are currently managing the valley (municipality, province of Antwerp, the landscape association Kempen Landschap)

