

Sustainable
URBAN FRINGES
SURF

Annual Report

2010 - 2011



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 second year of the project, 1 September 2010 – 31 August 2011.

The SURF project is split into 4 workpackages -

WP 1 ▶ Project Management

WP 2 ▶ Publicity and Communications

WP 3 ▶ Review and Analysis

WP 4 ▶ Testing and Implementation

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



Project Management

Workpackage 1

The Sustainable Urban Fringes project (SURF) is led by Aberdeen, who have worked to ensure the project is on track and focused on the journey towards producing the deliverables.

The project aims to produce an urban fringe toolkit, policy recommendations and a final report in 2012. Regular communication between project workpackages and partners has been the key to making sure this work makes good progress.

Supporting the project objectives, a project position paper has been drafted and sent out to workpackage leaders for consultation. This aims to highlight the value of the urban fringe at EU level.

In November 2010, project partners travelled to Belgium for a project conference hosted by our Flemish partners East and West Flanders. The event included a presentation from urban fringe expert Dr Hans Leinfelder who is Head of the Department of Spatial Planning at the Flemish Government.



Partners also had the opportunity to gain direct insight into the urban fringe issues and challenges of our West Flanders partner when they took part in a practical session called an 'Implementation Lab'.

As part of the process, West Flanders provided a problem statement and background information to the area. Partners had the opportunity to gain greater understanding of the issues at hand through study

visits and briefings from key stakeholders. Following this the SURF partners worked in different groups to provide analysis of the problem. This resulted in detailed recommendations which were followed up via a report.

To assist with project planning, Workpackage and Theme Leaders met in Hull in March 2011. This gathering enabled work to take place in planning the framework for the next partner meeting.

The Mid Term Conference took place in Bradford from 29 June – 1 July 2011. Project partners had the opportunity to learn from the experience of other projects from guest speakers: Reinhard Henke of the PURPLE network and Joe Ravetz who talked about his work on the PLUREL, and the city region concept.



Partners had the opportunity to visit the Worth Valley, meet key stakeholders within the region and gain understanding of the project area.

Monthly teleconference calls were held with workpackage leaders to assist with project planning and maintain project momentum between these face to face meetings.

Over the summer months a bid review was carried out with workpackage leaders to ensure that SURF is on track and meeting the requirements of the original bid.

To follow Interreg reporting procedures, 2 project claims and activity reports were submitted to the Secretariat during this period.



Publicity & Communications

Workpackage 2

As the project develops SURF communication activities have continued to grow, allowing the project to reach a wider audience.

The Sustainable Urban Fringes website continues to act as a communications hub for the project. This site contains information on partnerS, projects, news, events, has a partner login area for project development and a discussion forum.

In the second year of the project there were 34,269 page visits. Statistics show that the website is being viewed by a range of countries across the EU and beyond. New pages have been added to the website in response to public demand for information. Communication is enhanced through a Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) LinkedIn Discussion Group, which has regular discussion threads and a growing membership.

Project partners are kept up to date through a monthly SURF Bulletin which provides an update on project activities and deadlines. Partners are contributing to the bulletin on a regular basis allowing project developments, good news stories and achievements to be shared with other partners.

To engage with stakeholders, 2 editions of the SURF Newsletter were published. Newsletter 2 was distributed in December 2010 and Newsletter 3 in July 2011. These documents show the



range of SURF project progress and activity and highlight two partner projects in each edition. A further 3 newsletters are planned for the final year of the project.

The project continues to be promoted at a range of events and conferences aimed at a broad spectrum of stakeholder groups including academic institutes, entrepreneurs and the general public.

In addition, project partners have developed a range of awareness raising measures for their local urban fringe projects including virtual walkthrough tools to help project visualisation and awareness days. Communication measures carried out in this period include workshops, publications, presentations, symposiums, colloquiums and site visits.

Several project partners, notably Norfolk and Hengelo are now using social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter to engage their local stakeholders and raise their project profiles.

Work has also commenced with planning for the remaining Workpackage 2 outputs and on preparation for the stakeholder distribution lists for the final outputs. This work was developed during a stakeholder workshop at the project annual conference in June 2011. At the event partners were also briefed on SURF Champions and partners have been tasked with finding a local SURF Champion to help raise awareness of the urban fringe agenda.



Review and Analysis

Workpackage 3

Our academic partners, Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK and Saxion University in the Netherlands, have been taking forward research and analysis into the project themes. Partners have been busy with submitting information for the “scoping” and “comparing” phase of theme work.

SURF Project themes

Governance

Role and Value of Greenspaces

Spatial Planning & Stakeholder Engagement

Economy, Enterprise, Competitiveness

The “scoping” phase established a common baseline for the project and urban fringes and provided position statements for the definitions, drivers, issues, barriers and priorities.

Analysis by Workpackage 3 followed this scoping phase and a streamlined approach to the comparing phase was developed.



Partners have contributed information to establish common evidence about what agencies, strategies and policies exist in all the SURF partner regions.

This has enabled evidence to be built up about what works for the urban fringe in different circumstances and will help in demonstrating understanding of the wider urban fringe picture.

The information gathered was supplemented with visits to partner project areas.

Theme group working has allowed transnational information within the project. Partners have shared information, contributed to theme groups and interacted with their theme leaders to exchange on their project activities and in some



circumstances seek guidance on project activities from the scientific partners.

Being involved in this level of transnational exchange has enhanced projects and even meant that some partner’s projects have changed scope.

Work has commenced collating approaches to urban fringes for a database of previous and current Interreg projects. This is to ensure that previous work can be capitalised on and not unnecessarily replicated. It will help inform SURF and provide a context to reflect upon the SURF project work and findings.





Testing & Implementation

Workpackage 4

Workpackage 4 led by Enschede, in the Netherlands, has progressed the project practical elements. This work has included leading the project peer review process and defining and planning the SWOT process.

A high level of coordination and information exchange has been required with Workpackage 3 to maximise the benefits of partner contribution and to ensure details gathered are fed back into the research and analysis process.



A high level of discussion and exchange took place between the Workpackage and Team Leaders on the best approach for these practical elements, based on how this information would feed back into Workpackage 3.

The aim is to ensure that these processes assist partners in their project progression.



Partners were “paired” for peer review based on their submissions from the theme work phases and were tasked with exchanging advice and guidance between July and November 2011.

The peer review will also develop in alignment with the Workpackage Leaders focus on the outputs of the project and peer reviews will take place looking at the tools & techniques partners use within their projects; this information will be used as a basis for the tool kit output for SURF.

Peer review approaches encouraged include -

- **Implementation Lab** – West Flanders and Hamburg have already participated in this approach with support from Saxion. This method allows the exchange of experience to work towards a solution for the host.
- **Hot seat** – a "speed dating" approach, to take place during a regular meeting with 5 minutes explanation of the situation, 10 minutes asking questions and discussion and 5 minutes writing down important notions.
- **Bilateral visit** – information is exchanged pre visit and tools and experience exchanged during the visit. This approach can include an excursion to sites to gain a greater understanding of projects.
- **Virtual exchange** – more appropriate if funding/time is not available for other forms of exchange visit. Skype, phone, email etc can be used to exchange information and discuss situations.

Workpackage 4 now sees a new focus towards preparing the policy recommendations for SURF, to be included in the final outputs.

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...

- Held regular meetings of the Aberdeen project Steering Group.
- Carried out a series of outreach activities including 3 community network events, 18 outreach sessions and 2 expert workshops for key stakeholders in the area.
- Developed a Spatial Plan for the project area.
- Consultation, development and launch of a city open space strategy.
- Hosted an information exchange visit by students at Saxion University in March 2011.



- Hosted a spatial planning theme group meeting with partners from East Flanders, Hengelo, Norfolk and Saxion University in May 2011.

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.

Almelo has also been exploring accessibility and entrepreneurship.

Progress...

- Almelo hosted a regional urban fringe workshop in January, 2011. The event was attended by Dutch SURF partners, Enschede and Saxion University. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the future development potential of the urban fringe of the City of Almelo and included a tour of the urban fringe project area.



- Involvement of an external organisation Landscap Overijssel looking at combining natural areas with business areas in the city.
- Almelo is exploring the potential of an art route as an engagement tool to encourage people to use this urban fringe route to connect with the city centre.
- Worked on preparing the vision for the connection of the Almelo Northern Park, with the green lungs in the eastern part of the city.
- Almelo worked with SURF partners Hengelo and Enschede to produce a regional vision and approach to the management of urban fringes in the Twente region.

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 held 2 workshops on slow roads in November 2010.



- With other Flemish partners took information about SURF to the International Agriculture and Horticulture Fair: AGRIFLANDERS in Ghent, from 13-16 January, 2011
- In March 2011, informed participants of 3 green infrastructure networking events about the SURF project and plans for the fish stair.
- Established a Steering Group for the fish stair project and for the larger project area and held regular meetings.
- Prepared a questionnaire for the public on how they experience the urban fringe around Laarse Beek.
- Held a brainstorming session with external consultant and project partners Aberdeen and Norfolk on the development of a communication tool to help with project engagement.



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...



- Produced a report on work involved in the SURF theme development phase.
- Hosted a successful Leeds City Region Conference in

April 2011.

- Hosted the SURF Mid Term Conference in Bradford.
- Recruited an organisation to carry out research work into the success of the Parish Plan.
- Hosted a Business network Workshop to begin to get local businesses engaged in developing an economic strategy to sit alongside the Parish Plan.
- Set up a sub group to look at specific sectors including tourism, retail, home working and farming.
- Hosted a meeting with a group of students from Saxion University as part of their fact finding tour of the UK.



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 6 Provincial Quality meetings.
- With other Flemish partners took information about SURF to the International Agriculture and Horticulture Fair: AGRIFLANDERS in Ghent, from 13-16 January, 2011.
- Interviewed a range of stakeholders as part of “Stepstones for Spatial Quality”.
- Produced articles on the urban fringe for provincial publications.
- SURF poster presented at the “Day of Agriculture” September 2011.
- Gathering information from experts to refine their 3D visualisation project.
- Consultation with vegetable growers on future development plan took place in August 2011.



- Participation process for the greenhouse area Beveren (located in East Flanders and peri-urban fringe Antwerp).

City of Enschede

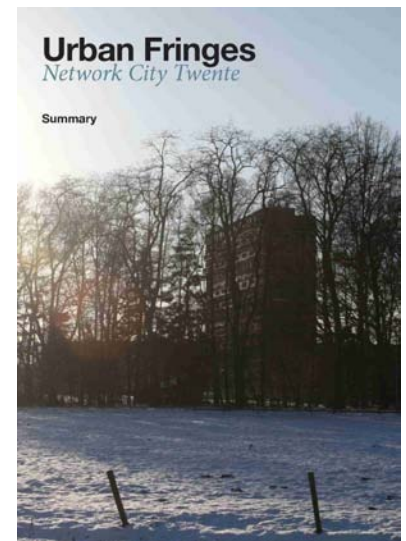
Primary theme focus –
Competitiveness, Economy, Enterprise

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...

- Enschede worked with SURF partners Hengelo and Almelo to produce a regional vision and approach to the management of urban fringes in the Twente region.



- Students from Saxion University and WUR (Wageningen University and research were involved in a series of study projects related to the local urban fringe in Enschede.
- SURF partner, Rolf Oldejans, gave a presentation on a regional approach to urban fringes which outlined work of the SURF project at a national project parade on suburban areas. The event was organised by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment in November 2011.

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...

- Hamburg held a series of colloquium events in November and December 2010. The "Approaches to Suburbia" events built a common understanding with key stakeholders of the challenges, potential and perspective of the suburban fringe. In 2011 work began preparing for the second series of colloquium events.
- Hamburg, organised an Implementation Lab 16 – 18 March. Partners from Enschede, Saxion and Aberdeen attended the event which focused on assisting Hamburg find solutions to issues within their project area. This process involved the contribution of local agencies, stakeholders and the Hamburg Harbour University. A report was produced on the event.



- A public lecture by Kevin Thomas was held in Hamburg at the end of May 2011 with an invitation circulated to the public.
- Preparation of a website about about SURF-activities in the region and additional regional issues.

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...

- Information meetings with over 100 landowners along the walking trail area.



- Harryda have increased cooperation with their Gothenburg planning colleagues.
- 6 delegates from Harryda attended the Bradford Conference to learn more about the project and ...
- Work in preparation and planning as hosts of the Sustainable Urban fringes Winter Conference in november 2011.
- Produced a report, "Green Corridors in the Gothenburg Region".



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...

- A special activities day for the Weusthag Park, called "Weusthag Day" was held in July 2011 to encourage local people to get to know the park a little better.
 - To enhance visibility, official welcome signs for the park were installed at 8 different access points and gates installed .
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- The first Dredging operations in the Houtmaatvijver pond in the park, started in March 2011.
 - The small natural islands in the Houtmaatvijver pond which feature trees and shrubs are being redeveloped.
 - Preparation for the public viewing of the preliminary designs for the Het Weusthag Infrastructure .
 - Local residents involved in the park have set up a foundation called 'The Friends of Het Weusthag'.

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...

- Created a new logo for the Gaywood Valley designed through a logo competition in schools in the area.
- Established a twitter site [twitter@Gaywood Valley](#) to communicate with local communities in the area.
- Held a public launch day in May 2011 with activities and talks throughout the day.
- Created an events booklet for the area in 2011.
- Held a masterclass for elected members on the issues of climate change, flooding, sustainability and green infrastructure.
- Put in place 4 information boards with circular walks to encourage local people to use the urban fringe.
- Involved in the EMBED project led by Nottingham University looking at Ecosystem Services.
- Developing a Virtual Flythrough Tool to encourage greater understanding of the project area.
- Working with the Council access team to deliver a series of new walks in the project area.



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.

With the founding of an interlocal cooperation, called "Stad-Land-Schap", the Province and 9 municipalities are dealing with the urban fringe through work including vision forming, raising awareness and preparing new initiatives.

Progress...

- After a trial period the provincial and municipal councils approved the continuation of the fruitful cooperation of the urban fringe. So the transition of Stad-Land-Schap is guaranteed.
- Hosted an Implementation Lab on the challenges and opportunities for the project area during the Flanders Conference in November 2010.



- Information material on the challenges, ambitions and initiatives of the Stad-Land-Schap 't West-Vlaamse hart through updates to the website [www.westvlaamsehart.be](#). The distribution of several newsletters and the magazine of 't West-Vlaamse hart (approx. 70.000 copies).
- Held meetings with stakeholders on the reconversion of the disused railway track, the Storroutte, in May 2011. In July 2011 the excavators started work.
- Organised workshops on green management.

SURF Progress...

- SURF partner Rolf Oldejans gave a presentation to the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic sea (VASAB) Workshop on urban fringes including information on the SURF project in September 2010.
- A presentation about the SURF project was made to a delegation of the Euregio Commission in September 2010.
- SURF partner, Kevin Thomas presented a paper at the "Developing Open Space in Peri-Urban Areas" Conference in Bruges in October 2010. The event aimed to open dialogue between scientists, policy-makers, administrators and stakeholders on the challenges of developing green investments and their value in peri-urban regions.
- An informal debating session took place at Netherlands, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, in February 2011.
- More than 70 students from Saxion University attended a symposium on urban fringes which included a presentation on the Enschede urban fringe and information on the Sustainable Urban Fringes project in February 2011.
- A project display and information material was taken to the 14th European Forum on Urban Forestry in June 2011.
- Project information material was on display and distributed at the ICLEI Resilient Cities Conference in June 2011.
- An introductory meeting took place with the RELU (Rural Economy and Land Use programme) in August 2011.
- The SURF project is continuing to build links with other Interreg projects including presentations to the Periurban Parks Conference in 2011.

Find out more about the project on our website -
www.sustainablefringes.eu