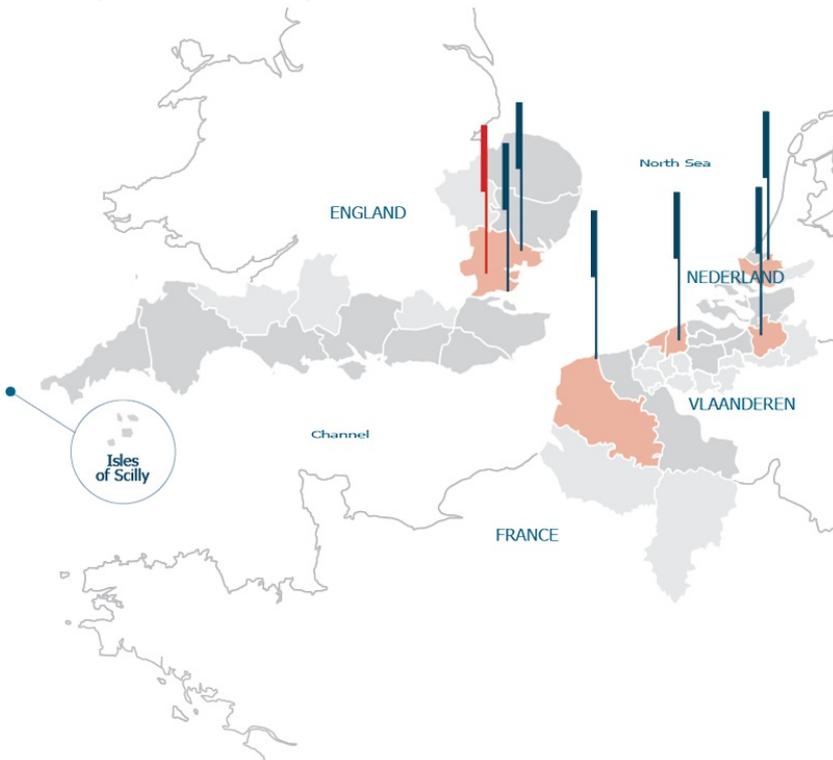


# MaxiGreen

## Maximising Green Heritage

### ■ Project summary



Throughout the 2 Seas programme zone many densely populated, urbanised areas are located in or near disused industrial infrastructure such as old railway lines, canals and flooded mining pits. Bringing these areas back into beneficial use would allow cities to enhance their attractiveness in a sustainable and environmentally non-impactful way, but also provide new recreation areas for their inhabitants. MaxiGreen will address this issue and take up the challenge to convert these sites into "Heritage Green Sites" by :

- transforming the image of the disused spaces that currently have a negative perception among residents and potential visitors.
- turning these

sites in to multi-functional areas providing economic prospects, recreational activities and housing.

- preserving their natural and industrial heritage and promoting biodiversity.

To ensure the success of these approaches, particular attention will be paid to raising awareness, among the local population and tourists, with regards to the economic importance of these sites. Also, Access Strategies and Mobility Plans will be developed in partnership with local transport companies. The Maxigreen project will focus on seven sites and will develop a transferable methodology in order to share best-practise with relevant actors both inside and outside the 2 Seas area.

### ■ Activities

#### What was the project trying to achieve?

MaxiGreen was successful at achieving its overall aim to develop the promotion and enhancement of infrastructures and the attractiveness of former brown fields and under-used urban green space to improve the availability and quality of green spaces and enhance the awareness about green spaces and engagement by the public through cross-border cooperation. It achieved its objectives in the following way: 1. to jointly collect and analyse the partners experiences with and instruments for creating and managing green spaces; By

meetings of the Expert Pool and sharing and discussing issues 2. to implement measures to improve the quality of green spaces on different locations in the 2 Seas programme area, building on the expertise of the cross border partnership, and working with local stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, community groups); Each partner was successful in delivering high quality Green space projects. 3. To jointly develop public communication tools relating to the availability, accessibility possibilities and responsible use of green spaces in their area; delivered by the successful communication of E newsletters, Website, Facebook and Twitter 4. to implement the jointly developed communication tools targeting the various relevant target groups in each of the participating areas; in addition to the above partners developed WP2 projects to open up the sites to the targets group providing new brands, signage and access to the new MaxiGreen sites 5. To disseminate the tools and experiences collected in the project area to other actors responsible for MaxiGreen in the 2 Seas area and wider Europe. Achieved through the website and the comprehensive Work package report. The strength of the Maxigreen project is that it was developed by seven partners with varying situations and experience but who have a common passion for green infrastructure development.

### **What were the activities implemented?**

Activity 1 aims to create clear visions and master-plans to develop strong coherent landscapes and efficiently functioning green spaces. In five case studies, we developed visioning documents in various forms, depending on the local context and objectives. Building upon shared knowledge, those masterplans, visioning documents or spatial plans, gave a framework for turning underused, negative landscapes into new driving forces to contribute to a sustainable development of these regions, by creating a context for new economic development and improved quality of life. Activity 2 focused on increasing public awareness of green heritage. This included different methods of reaching audiences from communication strategies to running media workshops, delivering educational activities and inspiring people through events and activities. The MaxiGreen project focused on a variety of methods to raise public awareness. Many of these techniques have been applied commonly by all partners; others were only employed by one or two partners. Each partner has tried different techniques and through the life of the project has determined which techniques are successful and which are less successful. The aim is to collate this information and provide details of best practice. The Activity 3 case studies are: La Ferme des Aigrettes focused on certain accessibility issues, such as the connection to the existing bike routes. Improving the access for pedestrians and cyclist and the design of the road to the new Belfairs Woodland Centre The Raversijde Park is about connecting the surrounding area and improving cycle and pedestrian access, especially from and to the nearby tram stop. The Rupel area planned to improve the sustainable accessibility through the improvement of cycle routes and public transport.

## **■ Results**

### **What were the key results of the project?**

Results for Activity 1 were: 1. The creation of clear visions and plans which developed a strong coherence of the Green Heritage landscape, stressing its importance and striking a balance between heritage, natural development and the multifunctional use. 2. The production of five case studies and a toolkit 'Planning Multifunctional Green Heritage', which includes exploring

the multifunctional use, such as green and industrial heritage, recreation, education, nature, tourism and economic values. 3. A successful cross-border conference on “Planning our Green Heritage” held on 27 March 2012 in De Schorre – Boom, Belgium. 4. Six expert pool visits and workshops to the project sites were organised, exchanging partner’s experiences and knowledge to integrate and broadly supported visions and plans. These expert advice and recommendations have led to successful outputs and achievements. The Vision for the Water square, Benthemplein required a strong brand to reflect the uniqueness of the project. The Masterplan for Raversyde had to deliver a concept for the whole domain, where the multi-functionality was a main condition as the area has a combination of several parts and values (i.e. nature and museums). La Ferme des Aigrettes developed a masterplan to refurbish a former farm and through the expert visits it was recognised that the management of the whole wider area of the farm should be taken into consideration and included in the vision, such as paths, development, agriculture and nature. ECC created 3 visions for the South Essex Marshes which went to public consultation. Essex WT and Southend created a vision for the Belfairs Centre and area for the local community. Antwerp created a Vision centred around de Scorre Park and the Rupel river ccle networks creating multi-functional space.

### **Did all partners and territories benefit from the results?**

Group 1: Local people from nearby urban areas. All 6 sites experienced increased numbers. Marck’s Farm had no visitors and expected 40,000 in Year 1. The Thames Estuary Path estimate 50,000 extra visitor pa. Group 2. Recreation tourists, schools etc will benefit from the green open spaces. The partners measured 3717 people benefitting from education and training and 69318 benefitted from events and recreation (see outputs) Group 3: professionals and project managers. 7 conferences took place of professionals and Rotterdam have had regular international media interest for the Water Sq Group 4: local/regional policy makers. All developments have given policy makers impetus. Rotterdam continue to develop rain storage initiatives eg their Interreg Sponge project and Essex have developed a policy for a complete Coastal Path The results of the study will have positive effects in the regions. In Essex local people and tourist have benefitted from the new Thames Path and the Hadleigh Mountain biking access; both massive attractors of tourists too. Professionals in the Thames Gateway see the economic benefit of over 100,000 visitors. ECC have extended the 30 mile Thames Estuary around the 300 mile Essex coast. Antwerp created a vision which realized the development of a regional narrative, the creation of a cycle/footpaths through the clay pits, a tourist/educational tower and a film. W Flanders have improved Raverside, improving the image and increasing local and tourist nos. Similarly the Flemish Heart project has clearly improved life of the community. Marck’s farm is the pride of the Town. Large nos of locals have volunteered and the new Mayor is now involved with the Centre’s future. The Water Sq has attracted international attention and helps Rotterdam leads the way of Flood water storage, as well as being a space for the locals. Belfairs has breathed new life into the park and introduced new communities from far and near and particularly school children.

### **What were the effects / outcomes for the territories involved?**

Maxigreen has produced a step change in outcomes across the 6 territories. Throughout the territories local residents will benefit from increased visitor centre access such as the Belfairs Centre in Southend, the Water Tower in the Rupel, the new centre in the Flemish Heartand and the new Farm in Marck. Residents can enjoy new access to the open space via the 50km

Thames Estuary path and the new Hadleigh access tracks, the new cycle ways in the Rupel, the new access improvements in the Raverside Pk in W Flanders and the urban Water Sq in Rotterdam. Visitors can find the site as they have new signage systems at the Rupel, Raverside and Thames Estuary Path and a number have Mobile Phone Apps such as the Thames Path App. As a result hundreds of thousands of new visitors will benefit from a healthier lifestyle in the Two Seas region. A total of 3,717 people participated in activities of which 3,632 participated in educational activities and further 85 in training at the various MaxiGreen project sites. Whilst 69,388 people have benefited from the MaxiGreen projects. Since the opening of la Ferme des Aigrettes in March 2013 the number of visitors has reached to 30,000 by June 2014 and 10,567 visited the Belfairs Woodland Centre since its opening on 7 September 2013. From the number of visitors visiting each of the projects clearly demonstrates the positive response by local communities, organisations and visitors which will ensure the projects long-term viability. The accomplishment of MaxiGreen highlights best practice which paves the way for the success of future green heritage revitalization projects and their values.

### ■ Distinctiveness

#### **What was the real added-value of doing this cross-border project?**

The Maxigreen project benefitted enormously from the cross border element of the programme. From a UK perspective it was very instructive to see how green space in Belgium and the Netherlands often include very good food activities which is not a feature of UK Parks. The De Schorre Park maximized event, having 200,000 visitors for Tomorrow land an international music event. The UK has valuable links to the community which enables local people to volunteer. This was considered impossible in France when suggested by the Expert Pool visit. However local people have warmed to the Farm so much they have volunteered to look after animals and the Farm has benefitted.

#### **Have any synergies been developed with other projects or networks?**

The partners of Maxigreen, Bike Friendly Cities, Sea Media and C21P decided to gather to share their knowledge and entered an application for a Cluster, capitalizing on the results of the different projects, to assist cities in the need to adapt to offer a sustained future quality of life. The 8 partners and 7 associated partners planned to produce a plan for how soft mobility (walking and cycling) can help rethink cities (in terms of infrastructure, people's behaviour, activities, communication in/for the town). Unfortunately the bid was not successful. However Essex and Southend are both partners to improved cycling links throughout South Essex.

#### **What are the key messages , key lessons learned you would like to share?**

The main lesson learnt from MaxiGreen is to choose your partners carefully at the application stage. Attempt to weed out the "passenger partners" who seek a project where they can input little and take out as many resources as possible. In our case we proactively focused on partners dedicated to improving public and greenspace. We had partners who had cycle ways and bridge proposals that did not fit with our specific green heritage objective and we therefore did not include them in the project. As a result we had a dedicated team of 7 partners who were absolutely behind MaxiGreen. Thus our Expert Pool was of the highest quality. When we went to partner sites we engaged in very stimulating and professional discussion which were



## Developing your crossborder ambitions!

beneficial to MaxiGreen, the National partner and the individual as the site experience were learning of the highest order.

## ■ Project Information

<b>Title</b>	Maximising Green Heritage
<b>Total project budget</b>	€ 5 661 431
<b>ERDF</b>	€ 2 830 715
<b>Priority &amp; objective</b>	Priority 3 e. Develop active leisure activities, including the promotion and enhancement of infrastructures and social tourism
<b>Timeframe</b>	2009-08-01 - 2014-09-30
<b>Lead partner</b>	Essex County Council
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	Meehan John(john.meehan@essex.gov.uk)

