



tcpa

PERFECT
Interreg Europe



European Union
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Development Fund

**PERFECT: Study Tour 1
learning report – Bicester,
hosted by Cherwell District
Council from the New
Communities Group**

Wednesday 8th February 2017

Attendance list

Country	Organisation	Individuals	
		Partners	Stakeholders
UK	TCPA	Hugh Ellis Jessie Fieth Henry Smith	
	Cornwall Council	Edwina Hannaford Rob Lacey	
	Natural England		Martin Moss Carol Reeder
Austria	STMK	Christine Schwabberger	Johannes Leitner
The Netherlands	City of Amsterdam	Rob Bakker Age Niels Holstein Imke van Moorselaar	Michaela Schönenberger Geertje Wijten
Slovenia	RDA Ljubljana	Matej Gojcic Gaja Trbizan	
	Urban Institute of Ljubljana		Sergej Hiti
Slovakia	Bratislava Karlova Ves	Zuzana Hudekova Lucia Lickova	Michal Sutriepka
Italy	Municipality of Ferrara	Antonio Barillari Silvia Mazzanti	Roberta Fusari
	Emilia-Romagna Region		Luisa Ravanello

Agenda

08.30 PERFECT partners arrive at the TCPA offices to travel to Cherwell District Council offices at Bodicote House, White Post Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA (map in delegate pack)

10.30 Welcome by Councillor Barry Wood. Leader, Cherwell District Council

Session Chaired by Henry Smith, Project Manager, TCPA

10.45 Brief Introduction by delegates

**11.00 The Bicester story and the role of high quality green infrastructure
Jenny Barker, Bicester Delivery Manager, Cherwell District Council**

Discussion

**11.40 Tools and methods for evaluating green infrastructure –
Bicester and beyond**
Alison Smith, University of Oxford

Discussion

**12.20 Lessons from pioneering work elsewhere: planning and investing in high quality
green infrastructure**
Carl Smethurst, Resource Development Officer, The Mersey Forest

13.00 Lunch

13.45 Coaches depart for Bicester

**14.15 Site visit to witness the impact of investment in green infrastructure
Bicester and areas targeted for improvement**

16.15 Study Tour ends
Coaches depart to London and back to Bodicote

18.00 Estimated time of arrival of PERFECT partners back in London

Presentations

The Bicester story and the role of high quality green infrastructure – Jenny Barker, Bicester Delivery Manager, Cherwell District Council

Jenny explained the fundamental role that GI plays in the planned growth for Bicester, which has over the years had the status of Eco Town, Garden Town and Healthy New Town. Cherwell District Council was one of the founding members of the TCPA New Communities Group (NCG)¹. The Cherwell Local Plan, adopted in July 2015², sets out measures to maintain and enhance the District's green infrastructure (GI) network, ensuring that GI network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. It also includes a policy which requires 40% of the North West Bicester eco-town



PERFECT partners in Cherwell District Council offices, Bodicote House

to be green space, with at least 20% of it accessible to the public. PERFECT partners learnt about how various stakeholders are being engaged and partnerships developed to maximise the social, economic and environmental potential of natural heritage in large scale new development.

Following Jenny's presentation, there was a discussion amongst PERFECT partners about the work of Cherwell District Council in planning and delivering growth with GI at the forefront, and the replicability for local municipalities across Europe to transfer the lessons to ensure that new developments are required to integrate multi-functional green space into the existing network.

As a member of the TCPA's NCG, Cherwell District Council is one of Cornwall Council's stakeholders for PERFECT and will work with Cornwall to disseminate the principles and deliverables of PERFECT across the NCG.

Tools and methods for evaluating green infrastructure: Bicester and beyond – Alison Smith, University of Oxford

Alison introduced the tool that the University of Oxford³ has been developing for evaluating GI. This is being supported by the Natural Environment Research Council⁴, and aims to:

- Map current GI and the ecosystem services it provides;
- Identify opportunities to enhance existing GI and create new areas that fill spatial and functional gaps and improve connectivity for wildlife and people;
- Evaluate the benefits of existing and planning GI, in monetary terms where appropriate, to compare different options and make the business case for investment;
- Produce a toolbox and guidance to allow the approach to be applied elsewhere.

Alison also explained how existing tools (including the iTree tool), methods and data sources have been incorporated within this work, and the next steps that need to be taken. It is looking to

1 <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/new-communities-group>

2 Cherwell District Local Plan, 2011-2031, adopted in July 2015, re-adopted on 19 December 2016
[http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/media/pdf/f/a/Final_adopted_Local_Plan_2011-2031_\(re-adopted_Policy_Bicester_13\)_Part_1_of_3.pdf](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/media/pdf/f/a/Final_adopted_Local_Plan_2011-2031_(re-adopted_Policy_Bicester_13)_Part_1_of_3.pdf)

3 <http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/2015/1211-greeninfrastructure.html>

4 <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/>

influence how development is being taken forward in Bicester, by providing methods for planners and other built environment professionals to understand the value and inter-relationship of different types of GI.

PERFECT partners asked questions about the work of the University and discussed how PERFECT can learn from how this new tool is being developed and the outputs. There was particular interest in the iTree tool and how this has been incorporated and built upon in the work. iTree is currently being translated in the Netherlands and so will be available across Europe soon. It is intended that the iTree development will feature in the PERFECT MAGIC Matrix.

Lessons from pioneering work elsewhere: planning and investing in high quality Green Infrastructure – Carl Smethurst, Resource Development Officer, The Mersey Forest

The Mersey Forest is a growing network of woodlands and green spaces across the North West of England. The organisation was a partner in the INTERREG IVC project GRaBS⁵, which was also led by the TCPA and was awarded a REGIOSTARS award for sustainable growth. The project integrated climate change adaptation into plans and the Mersey Forest's action plan transferred good practice from across Europe in creating resilient towns and cities to North West England.

Carl explained how the Mersey Forest has developed its work on planning for multi-functional GI. Carl explained the Mersey Forest plan, 'More from trees'⁶, which is the long-term and strategic guide to the work of the Mersey Forest team and partners and tackles some of the most difficult issues facing the towns and cities. He explained what they do and their achievements to date, and gave examples from Bold Forest Park and Wirral Waters.

Following the presentation, the PERFECT partners discussed how the pioneering work of the Mersey Forest in securing the success of areas through GI, can be learnt from and replicated across Europe. Both the presentations from Mersey Forest and Oxford University demonstrated to the Partners how effective mapping of GI can influence the investment and planning processes, and secure support from key decision-makers. Examples from the Mersey Forest will feature in the MAGIC Matrix.

Green infrastructure at Garth Park - Chris Johnson, Operations Manager, Bicester Town Council

Chris outlined the recent improvements that Bicester Town Council has made to its offices at Garth House and Park⁷. In 2014, the Town Council partnered with Bio Regional in the innovative refurbishment of Garth House using a sizeable government grant, including insulation and double glazing, as part of a wider scheme to improve natural heritage improvements.



PERFECT Partners in Bicester Town Council offices, Garth House, hearing from Chris Johnson

PERFECT partners benefited from understanding how the Town Council has secured funding to invest in GI and high quality place making.

⁵ <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/green-infrastructure-adaptation-in-europe>

⁶ http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/The_Mersey_Forest_Plan_web_version_single_new.pdf

⁷ <http://www.bicester.gov.uk/garth-house-garth-park/>

Site visits

Bure Park Nature Reserve – Gill Munday, Bicester Engagement & Liaison Officer

Bure Park was designated as a nature reserve in 2005. A 25-acre site, it has a range of habitats including grass meadow, young broad-leaved woodland, hedges and scrub. A small river (the Bure) runs through the site, feeding a pond which is home to great crested newts. A balancing pond at one end of the Reserve is fed by run-off from the area.



PERFECT partners in Bure Park Nature Reserve, hearing from Gill Munday

The scheme is part of the Bicester Healthy New Town proposal which integrates healthy living in to design of new areas. PERFECT partners learnt how making the argument for the health benefits of GI can be key to securing investment and the support of multiple stakeholders. There is also a green gym at the Bure Park site which shows the multi-functionality of green infrastructure⁸.

PERFECT partners can learn from this approach in the next stages of the project, through working with their stakeholder groups to ensure that policy and decision makers are influenced on the potential of GI, and in preparing their Action Plans to influence their policy instruments.

Langford Community Orchard⁹ – Pam Roberts, Volunteer

Community Action Group Grassroots Bicester set up the Langford Community Orchard Group in 2011 to take on the orchard project and was given permission in 2012 to manage the site. The 1-acre site was originally farmland and was planted with fruit trees and bushes when the Langford Village was originally built, but was then neglected for many years.



PERFECT partners in Langford Community Orchard, being shown around by volunteer Pam Roberts

⁸ <http://www.bicestergreengym.org/work-sites/bure-park/>

⁹ <http://www.ecobicester.org.uk/cms/content/langford-community-orchard-0#.WPjt-o-cHIU>

The benefit of learning from this work was to understand that local support and community action is critical to ensuring ownership of GI projects. Successful GI depends on not just the initial capital investment but long-term stewardship and maintenance, so engagement with communities, who are a key stakeholder, is important at all stages of delivery.