

URBAN LINKS 2 LANDSCAPE | Interreg Europe

SURREY ACTION PLAN

2020 – 2022



August 2020

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

Surrey Rural Statement

(Other regional development policy instrument)

1. Introduction

The Urban Links 2 Landscape project is an Interreg Europe Programme examining how green space around urban areas can provide valuable functions for people, place and nature. The project is sharing good practice and learning, developing Action Plans and using this to influence policies. The project started in June 2018 and finishes in May 2022.

In total seven partners are involved in the project:

- Rhineland Regional Council (Germany, Lead Partner);
- Surrey County Council (England);
- Silesia Park (Poland);
- Umbria Regional Authority (Italy);
- Kristianstad Municipality (Sweden);
- Kuldīga District Municipality (Latvia);
- Schloss Dyck Foundation (Germany).

The project is funded with a volume of EUR 1,004,903 via the Interreg Europe programme of the European Union. The total volume of the project is EUR 1,193,175.00.

This Action Plan for the Urban Links 2 Landscape Interreg Europe project is for the partner Surrey. The issues identified in this Action Plan have been developed by the Surrey Stakeholder Group. This group and its members have been invaluable in drawing together expertise to analyse the issues, identify priorities and propose actions that now form part of this action plan. Members of the Surrey Stakeholder Group have taken part in the project workshops with other partner regions to learn and share good practice.

1.1 The Surrey Stakeholder Group

The Surrey Stakeholder Group includes representatives from across a range of environmental, economic and social issues. We were keen that the stakeholder group brought a range of expertise together, many of whom had not worked together previously. This was to help to bring new perspectives, understanding and solutions to help analyse the issues, shape priorities and learn from experiences.



The stakeholder group includes:

- Superintendent (the Commons), City of London
- Chief Executive, Surrey Wildlife Trust
- Urban Design and Development Lead, London Borough of Kingston
- Grazing Officer, Downlands Partnership
- Partnerships Manager, Crowdfunder
- Recreation and Business Manager, Surrey Heath Borough Council
- Public Health Development, Surrey County Council
- Countryside/rural development , Surrey County Council
- Partnerships and Expertise Manager, Forestry Commission
- Community Engagement Manager, Gatwick Airport

1.2 Stakeholder Group Expertise

The Stakeholder Group bring a range of expertise that is listed below. The Group were formed to enable more sharing of ideas, approaches and innovation across traditional working sectors. This has been helpful in providing different perspectives for the issues, experiences and potential solutions. We're believe the future iterations of our policy document should have this approach to enhance its impact and relevance.

- Community Engagement
- Land and greenspace management
- Planning
- Business
- Urban design
- Funding
- Biodiversity
- Recreation
- Partnerships
- Public Health
- Rural Development

1.3 Greenspace Challenges and Opportunities

Our stakeholder group and the workshops as part of Urban Links 2 Landscape have highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities for the connections between urban areas and landscape.

- How is the local community best engaged?
- How can countryside management be funded in future?
- How are businesses best engaged?
- How can the health benefits of green space be maximised?
- How can 'natural capital' lead to investment in greenspace?
- What should future governance models look like?

1.4 The Policy Instrument – The Surrey Rural Statement

The Surrey Rural Statement provides a series of policy visions to ensure that rural Surrey has a dynamic economy, vibrant communities and a healthy natural environment. The Statement outlines challenges and opportunities, and provides a framework for stakeholders to collaborate on actions to deliver future improvements.

The landscape and habitats of Surrey provide critical benefits and 'ecosystem services' which underpin the economic success of Surrey and the wellbeing of its residents. There is currently a lack of understanding, appreciation and quantification of these 'natural capital' assets and this should be improved and more fully integrated into the Rural Statement to ensure that Surrey achieves the smart economic growth that provides a sustainable future.

The Rural Statement will need to be agile enough to take account of rapidly evolving areas such as natural capital. Policy Instruments of this nature are by definition evolutionary. They will need to be capable of adapting to change both positive and negative. Building in increased robustness, whilst at the same time retaining flexibility, will both be necessary if maximum value and benefit is to be gained.

1.4.1 How we envisage the improvement of this policy instrument

To fully benefit from 'natural capital' and 'ecosystem services' there is a need for improved understanding, appreciation and quantification of their role in multi functional greenspace. Policy instruments such as the Rural Statement are opportunities to capture this understanding and harness their benefit when policy is updated and refined to take account of emerging learning.

Through the UL2L partnership, study visits, exchanges, learning and action plan we are able to inform, influence and develop policies, processes, guidance and approaches to inform an enhanced version of the policy instrument.

1.4.2 Context for this policy instrument.

Surrey is located south of London and has considerable urban fringe challenges and opportunities. Areas of greenspace, agriculture, forestry and open space are close to areas of population. There can be significant pressure on greenspace and a lack of understanding about the multi functional nature and benefits of greenspace.

It is essential that a natural capital and ecosystems services approach is developed to ensure that urban landscapes maximise their future potential. This will help address environmental, economic and social challenges and opportunities.

ACTION 1:

Name of the action: **Development of Old Lodge Farm as Hub for Land Management**

Old Lodge Farm is owned by Surrey County Council and is a small agricultural landholding situated in Little Woodcote on the Sutton/Surrey border. For the last 10 years it has been used by the Downlands Partnership as the base to manage their grazing operation including a flock of 155 sheep and 11 cows that are then used to graze on 23 key sites across the North Downs.

The Downlands Partnership is a partnership of local authorities and private landowners across north Surrey and south London delivering land management, volunteer tasks and grazing across chalk grassland sites. Two grazing officers are located at Old Lodge Farm and manage the rotation of the livestock from the farm. It is also an important base for the project, volunteers who help livestock checking and is a hub for grazing partnership activity.

In recent years the grazing team have started to develop links to the local community through events including Open Farm Sunday. A number of corporate groups, scout groups and other community groups have also visited the farm.

Although the farm has welcomed a number of community groups etc it does not currently have the infrastructure or facilities to do this on a regular basis. The project will therefore aim to develop the farm as a hub for the grazing operation community engagement and learning about the management of the landscape and social benefits including health.



Relevance to the project

The ideas for developing the farm have developed following a number of visits on the UL2L workshops. These visits have informed ideas for how the farm could be improved and the links to learning and the local community.

In Italy we learnt from the Ciuffelli Agricultural School in Todi. Here young people are being engaged to understand and appreciate the landscape so that they will be conserve, enhance and manage it in the future. We also heard about St. Peter in Perugia where the University and the local community were actively involved in urban gardening. In Spello we visited the project La Semente to see a co-operative that had developed a social farming to help restore the landscape but also provide physical and mental health benefits to the local population.

In Sweden we were inspired by a number of health gardens. In Kristianstad we saw the health garden which has a friends ground to help maintain it. We visited the Agricultural University Alnarp therapy garden which helps people with stress connect to the environment. In Brunnshög we visited an area of community urban farming where we saw how the space was managed by different people for the overall good. We also heard about the work at Kristianstad innovation garden where the connection with food, environment and health is a source of inspiration.

We've used the learning from seeing these projects to shape our plans for Action 1.

Nature of the action

In developing this action we'd like the farm to:

- Be an improved operational hub for the Downlands Partnership grazing team.
- Be a place for people to connect with their environment to gain health benefits, especially given its urban fringe location (eg on public open days)
- Be a place for learning about nature, farming, food production (eg on organised school visits)
- Be a place for developing skills for the farming profession, skills in small holding, grazing and land management (eg in partnership with agricultural colleges)
- Be a place where small craft or rural produce workshops could be developed (eg possibly let out to local craftspeople)
- Have a sound infrastructure to enable us to deliver and develop these activities, expand our income streams and to help contribute to land management in future. This include requirements for buildings, layout, car parking, water, sewerage, toilets, showers, IT, security etc on the site.

Stakeholders involved	Surrey County Council Downlands Partnership Crowdfunder Surrey Wildlife Trust
Timeframe	2021-23
Indicative costs	We estimate the costs will be around £500,000
Indicative funding sources	The project will be funded through bids to Surrey County Council and others

Potential Policy Learning and Improvements	<p>The activity will influence policy learning and improvements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the dimensions and importance of land management • Highlighting how the multifunctional aspect of green space is appreciated and recognised for people, landscape and wildlife. • Highlighting the importance of local communities and volunteers engaged in managing sites and the surrounding environment • Highlighting the value of green space around urban areas for social, health and environmental benefits • Highlighting the importance of skill development for the land management sector
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ACTION 2:

Name of the action: **Development of a Green Grid Approach**

Surrey is located on the southern edge of London so has a variety of urban fringe landscape challenges and opportunities. This Interreg Europe project is helping to explore how the links between urban areas and the surrounding rural areas can be enhanced. Some of the challenges include:

- heathland, grassland, woodland, hedgerows, and road verges with existing or potential biodiversity value. Large numbers of commons, some of considerable size and importance for recreation
- areas of fragmented, degraded and derelict land and reclaimed land
- farming in decline with increasing areas of horse pasture and other forms of diversification for income
- development pressures and the London urban edge
- large areas of reservoirs, old mineral workings and gravel pits having potential for recreational use and for wildlife habitat
- an extensive network of public rights of way but with key routes which are fragmented and severed by major roads
- important recreational land in public ownership (including the National Trust) providing links from the London conurbation into the open countryside, including along river valleys such as the Thames, Hogsmill and Wandle, but other areas lacking in recreational land
- flooding and climate change pressures

Relevance to the project

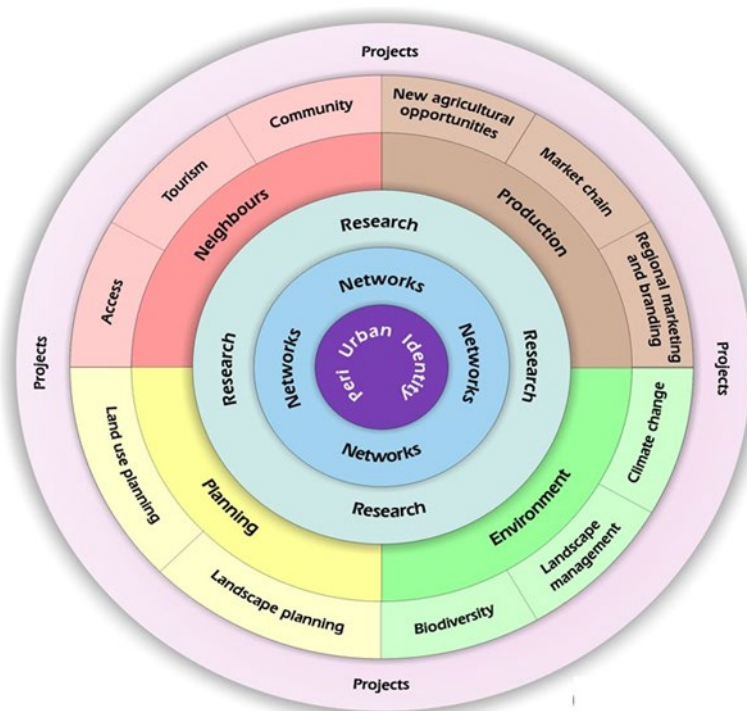
We've used the learning from seeing these projects to shape our plans for Action 2. In Sweden we learnt more about a green infrastructure approach to connecting urban areas and greenspace for multiple benefits. We heard from the Stockholm Resilience Centre about the multiple benefits of a

green infrastructure approach across economic, social and environmental aspects. We heard about the work in Kristianstad to connect greenspace, bluespace and the city.

Nature of the action

This action is about developing an integrated approach to how urban fringe issues are managed, connections are made across policy and delivery areas and the benefits maximised. The action includes a review of 'Green Grid' type approaches and potentially the development of more integrated frameworks for green infrastructure and land management.

A draft peri-urban 'planet' has been developed to capture the range of interrelated issues related to the greenspace around towns. These include climate change, land management, biodiversity, planning issues, access, tourism and agricultural aspects. The diagram highlights the multifunctional and interdependencies of greenspace and range of environmental, economic and social issues.



Stakeholders involved	Surrey County Council Surrey Nature Partnership Surrey Districts and Boroughs Partner Organisations
Timeframe	2021-23
Indicative costs	£50,000 to be confirmed
Indicative funding sources	Potential for partnership funding or grant bids

Potential Policy Learning and Improvements	The activity will influence policy learning and improvements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the multifunctional nature of green space for people, landscape and wildlife. • Highlighting the connections and interdependencies • Highlighting the importance and value of a spatial and landscape scale approach • Highlighting the value of green space around urban areas for social, health and environmental benefits
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ACTION 3:

Name of the action: **Partnerships Managing the Landscape**

Across Surrey we have a number of countryside management partnership who manage the urban fringe landscape and deliver a range of environmental, habitat and access improvements. They engage local communities to enable the works to be done using volunteers. Some also have a role in engaging schools and local people to learn more about their local environment.

Many of the projects started in the 1980's and are delivering good results. However there can be a lack of funding and a lack of awareness of the work of the partnerships. There is also potential to link the partnerships to work on a wider scale across a range of landscapes, catchments and ecosystem services.



A workshop in 2019 with staff, partners and stakeholders highlight a range of strengths, opportunities and challenges. This 'Word Cloud' highlights some of the main themes that were mentioned in the workshop.



Relevance to the project

We've used the learning from seeing these projects to shape our plans for Action 3.

In Sweden we visited and heard about a number of projects that successfully deliver links between greenspace, water and urban development in the urban fringe. In Kristianstad the relationship between the landscape and town is well developed with good awareness of the social and ecological value that natural areas provide. The Alnarp landscape laboratory demonstrated how forest and meadow habitats and recreational uses can be developed on former cultivated land. In the project we heard about the Quays to the Green project in Stockholm where nature, greenspace and water space was managed effectively.

Nature of the action

The activities of the countryside partnerships will be developed to highlight their role in providing positive site outcomes but also wider benefits including contributing to environmental, economic and social outcomes. These include:

- Developing a landscape approach including developing the relationship of the partnerships to the broader landscape they work within
- Maximising the ecosystem services benefits for the environment, health and the economy
- Delivering improvements including in biodiversity opportunity areas

- Contribute to addressing landscape scale issues such as catchment approaches and flood alleviation
- Provide environmental, economic and people services through volunteering, grazing and community outreach activities

Stakeholders involved	Surrey County Council Downlands Partnership Lower Mole Partnership Heathland Partnership Surrey Wildlife Trust Surrey Nature Partnership
Timeframe	2021-22
Indicative costs	£50,000
Indicative funding sources	Partners within the countryside partnerships
Potential Policy Learning and Improvements	The activity will influence policy learning and improvements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the importance of a landscape scale approach • Highlighting that countryside management and environmental works provides multiple benefits for people, landscape and wildlife • Highlighting that local communities and volunteers are engaged in managing sites and the surrounding environment • Highlighting the value of green space around urban areas for social, health and environmental benefits

ACTION 4:

Name of the action: **Restoration of former Mineral Sites**

Across Surrey there are number of former mineral sites where there's potential to further develop approaches for the restoration of mineral sites after extraction, to provide benefits for biodiversity, habitats and local people.

North West Surrey is an area which has been extensively worked for sand and gravel extraction. The heavily built up area running along the River Thames has a long legacy of mineral extraction that has contributed to a landscape of filled and unfilled sites. Many of these sites have become important habitats for a diverse range of biodiversity and are recognised as being important for nature conservation. The North West Surrey strategy seeks to deliver benefits for wildlife and people and will also serve to demonstrate best practice in what can be achieved through visionary minerals planning over a large-scale area.

In the south west of the County, we have a number of sandpits around Farnham, together with the Hogs Back. Again, an area approach will be taken in the context of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring we integrate the restoration of these sites on the fringes of Farnham into the wider

future land use matrix. This includes the concept of SANGs (Suitable Alternative Nature Greenspace) in relation to future housing development. On the Hogs Back, we are changing the restoration of several sites from struggling agricultural restorations to woodland delivering both landscape and biodiversity enhancements.

On the east side of Surrey, we have a string of sandpits running from Redhill East to the County boundary with Kent. This is known as the Vale of Holmesdale. There will be new future mineral extraction sites in the area which will present further opportunities. A growing, but hitherto neglected subject, is the archaeology and heritage of the area and the significant finds being made, which could justify a local heritage centre and display museum.

Relevance to the project

We've used the learning from seeing these projects to shape our plans for Action 4.

In Germany we visited the Emscher Landscape Park (ELP) where the old industrial landscape has been transformed into a place that people can enjoy and explore. We also visited Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord where the whole site is open to the public and green space and leisure and recreation uses are helping to restore the landscape. In Kristianstad the relationship between the landscape and town is well developed with good awareness of the social and ecological value that natural areas provide.

A small, but important example of how UL2L is influencing work here is sharing the site interpretation approach of the brown coal sites in Germany. One of the companies in the Holmesdale is working to place a set of explanatory interpretation panels on a viewpoint on the National Cycleway to explain exactly what is happening on site and what it will look like when it is restored.

Nature of the action

We are taking a landscape scale approach and developing multi-site restoration strategies and actions for the North West Surrey, Farnham and Holmesdale study areas. These set out the long-term vision and strategic aspirations for the area. This includes:

- Supporting nature conservation designations in the project area
- Ensuring compatibility and safety for good habitat design which minimises the risk of collision between birds and aircraft (bird strike)
- Identifying opportunities to contribute to plans to reduce flood risk in the area
- Promoting appropriate access and recreation provision
- Enhancing the visual landscape

Stakeholders involved	Surrey County Council Colne Valley Partnership Surrey Wildlife Trust Surrey Nature Partnership Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership Mineral companies
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Timeframe	2021-23
Indicative costs	The costs for each area are currently being identified.
Indicative funding sources	The funding sources are likely to include local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and mineral companies.
Potential Policy Learning and Improvements	<p>The activity will influence policy learning and improvements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting that site restoration provides multiple benefits for people, landscape and wildlife • Highlighting understanding of the sites and links to the surrounding environment • Highlighting the importance of engaging local people and stakeholders in delivering projects • Highlighting the value of green space around urban areas for social, health and environmental benefits