

## Planning for Environment and Resource eEfficiency in European Cities and Towns

### Cornwall study tour – learning report

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022

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From the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022, the PERFECT partners were once again able to meet in person to share experiences and visit green infrastructure sites. Cornwall Council hosted the Town & Country Planning Association, Somogy County Government and Bratislava Karlova Ves Municipality and their stakeholders. This report summarises the lessons learnt by the group at each site visited and how the experiences and knowledge gained will help improve green infrastructure policy and practice across the partner regions.

#### Coosebean Valley (visited on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022)

*‘The story about fairy houses on Google Maps contributing to the popularity of this space was very inspiring (and cute :) when it comes to marketing a green space and making it more attractive to different age groups, and different people in general.’*

*‘Seeing how small, free changes can make such a difference, such as using fallen branches to clearly indicate pathways or ‘do not go’ zones for safety.’*

*‘A study trip to the Coosebean Valley showed that there is a special added value in caring for green areas with volunteers and groups of friends, so the locals feel they own the area and pay more attention to its cleanliness and preservation, because they know the value of these outdoor spaces for exercise and mental health. We consider the fairy door route a fascinating idea that we will implement to make our walking routes more attractive to children too.’*

Partners took part in a walking tour of the Coosebean Valley, led by Chris Waddle, the ranger who looks after the area. This green space in a residential area of Truro was poorly maintained and had



little use but, over the last three years, has been transformed into a much-loved walking route, with woodchip paths, access to the river and diverse environments.

In 2019, work began to regenerate this green space and encourage the local residents to use it. Led by Chris, volunteer groups helped to construct safer, clearer paths and to plant trees and maintain plants. This activity had to stop during the COVID-19 lockdowns, but more and more people started to use the area, particularly when a 'fairy door' trail was constructed in the area. This led to some parts of the green space suffering from overuse, with vegetation being trampled. Natural wattle fences were built using fallen branches to encourage people to stay on the paths and this was successful in allowing the vegetation to recover. Wildflowers have been planted in the grassland areas to increase biodiversity.

### **The St Austell Project and West Carclaze Garden Community (visited on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022)**

*'I loved the presentation about all the small "quick fixes" and art installations in St. Austell, as this kind of public space transformation is very close to my heart, and I would very much love to implement similar changes in our municipality wherever possible.'*

*'The West Carclaze Garden Community and the St Austell Project are a great example of how a well-planned project can enhance the landscape, transform spaces and stimulate sustainable economic growth by attracting new visitors, new residents and new investment, promoting pride in the local community. The development of residential parks consisting of passive houses is a forward-looking example that we must follow.'*

The group travelled to West Carclaze Garden Village where they learnt about how a new community of 1,500 homes is being built. 350 of the 500 acre site will be managed parkland, and there is a focus on making it a 'community of gardens', with varying green spaces throughout the development to encourage outdoor living. Jack Woodward from LHC, the architects who have designed West Carclaze Garden Community, explained how the scheme is being designed to be net zero by 2050 with a focus on opening up the brownfield landscape. Jack explained how the green infrastructure is being delivered alongside the housing, with the local spaces being constructed simultaneously and the larger country park following once a certain number of houses have been built.

The group saw the first houses being delivered on the site, which will be occupied in the next few months and walked across the green bridge that links the different parts of the development. Birgit Hontzsch, from Cornwall Council, described how they have used capacity funding from central government to map out the options for pedestrian and cycle routes to link the new development to existing communities, to produce a tree and woodland strategy for the area and to commission design for the new school which will maximise outdoor learning. Birgit also explained how a local





land trust will be set up to manage the green infrastructure over the long term, with funding from the developer as part of the S106 agreement.

The group heard from Michael Hawes from St Austell Bay Economic Forum and Rachel Galbraith from Cornwall Council about how green infrastructure, including a wildflower corridor, and public art are being used to regenerate St Austell town centre and encourage more people to visit in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was interesting to hear about the cumulative and immediate impact of small scale, relatively inexpensive interventions, and the impact of creating interest and things for people to stop and look at it, encouraging people back into the town centre. Rachel explained how the Cornwall Council offices in St Austell are moving into the town centre and the current office site will be re-developed. As Cornwall Council is the landowner they have been able to develop a site-specific planning statement which the future developers of the site will need to adhere to.

### **The Eden Project (visited on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022)**

*'This was just fascinating and it was a great reminder of how you can make big great things out of "nothing" and how you can incorporate different areas (music events, social work, green schools and learning...) into a project to make it more multifaceted and attract more people. The presentation on nature-based play and education was contagiously enthusiastic and very inspiring to our process of preparing learning programs in our Community Centre for Climate and Biodiversity.'*

*'The presentation of the Eden Project provided in the educational centre was very inspiring. We have learned more about how to optimise green infrastructure benefits even where there is only a small budget available. The information about the educational programme of nature-based play activities for under-5s and their families and the methods of learning in nature, with nature and for nature in green schools was very inspiring from the perspective of our plans for creation of learning programs in Community Centre for Climate and Biodiversity which we plan to open in autumn this year.'*

The Eden Project is a charity based in Cornwall which aims to get people engaged with the outside world. Dan James, the Development Director, outlined the projects they are doing with the local community. These include the Deep Roots' New Shoots programme for grandparents looking after young grandchildren; the Nature's Way programme of social prescribing where the Eden Project with



local GP surgeries to organise weekly walks for COPD and diabetes patients and a lunch club for isolated individuals; and a horticulture training programme for people suffering with anxiety and depression.

Gill Mulholland, the Eden Project's Education Specialist, then talked about their programmes with schools to encourage outdoor learning and nature-based play. Gill works with schools to help them reimagine what school grounds can be like and how they can be used. Gill spoke about how the benefits of different types of interactions with nature for children: learning outside (for example by providing reading spaces); learning from nature, learning about nature and learning for nature (for example creating things which increase biodiversity). Gill also explained how crucial the culture of a school is for allowing children to play and learn outside, and the importance of children to be involved in the design, building and maintenance of green spaces in the school grounds.

### **Green Schools at Blackwater and Bosvigo (visited on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022)**

*'I loved how the children were guiding us around and how engaged and proud they were of what they were doing, I think that's the ultimate proof that it's "working". I will be sharing the experience... with our colleagues in our education department and hopefully we will be able to transfer some of the ideas to our own kindergartens.'*

*'Good comparison of a more rural school with lots of space and innovative ideas that the students came up with vs a school in the city centre with limited space; green walls and trees for privacy helps implement this in even the smallest of spaces.'*

*'We could experience the difference between a "normal" school and a so-called green school. It is an option for primary schools that teaches children environment-friendly behaviour and social interactions in the green area.... The cultivation of small gardens was typical of rural schools in Hungary in the past, but this has been forgotten for some time. We will make use of the good experience we have learned in compiling school development concepts'*

*'We really appreciated the warm welcome and presentation of the activities of the green school by the children themselves. Their enthusiasm was a proof of the success of nature-based learning methods moreover during the difficult period around Covid 19 pandemic. It was very inspiring and we would like to take an example of green schoolyards across our municipality.'*

Cornwall Council has successfully implemented an Interreg Europe funded pilot project to take the idea of the City of Amsterdam's greening schoolyards programme and trial this in three schools. Firstly, the group visited Blackwater Primary School. This school has a large amount of outside space and an embedded culture of encouraging children to interact with their outside space. Through the PERFECT pilot project, a new poly tunnel had been built and the children told us how they have





been learning to plant and grow vegetables. PERFECT partners and stakeholders were shown round by the children who explained how they use the different areas of the playground and how they were involved in the design of the new areas and in the maintenance. Spaces like this have been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondly, we visited Bosvigo Primary School. This school has a much smaller outside space, which is heavily used. The PERFECT pilot project had funded the construction of a living wall which has a wide range of plants growing include herbs which the children can taste and smell. The children told us how they had come up with ideas of what they would like in their playground. The teacher told us how the green spaces have changed how many of the children behave in the playground and in the classroom.

