



GREENWAYS INFO

EGWA outlook for 2006

With the end-of-year festivities behind us, the time has come to take a look at the prospects for this new year 2006. We wish you a serene and promising year of involvement in support of greenways throughout Europe. In a few words, here are the new projects EGWA will be unveiling in upcoming issues of Greenways Info

A European greenways observatory.

We have been keen on this idea for a long time. In March, a restricted working group will study a development methodology for a greenways observatory based on similar national initiatives already under way in Spain and France. Several associations have already expressed an interest in financing the project.

Cross-border and transnational projects

One of EGWA's priorities is to materialize the REVER outline plan.

Pending further details on the European Union's financial programming for the period 2007-2013, EGWA is going to focus on possible study connections between the RAVeL network and greenways infrastructure in neighbouring countries so as to be able to put together an application file as soon as calls for projects are published. The search for partners will be one of the association's main tasks with that in mind.

Twinning

A prized concept for reasons as varied as tourism, economy,

gastronomy or heritage, there are some 30,000 examples of twinning in Europe. The European Greenways Association wishes to put in place a new greenways twinning policy and to encourage experience sharing between the local authorities and the players concerned.

General meeting and seminar in Girona

Following on from Liege, the town of Girona (Spain) will host the EGWA General Meeting and Seminar at the end of October 2006. ● ● ●

HM Queen Sofia of Spain presents the *Europa Nostra Award* to the Fundación de los Ferrocarriles Españoles for its *Programa Vías Verdes*

In June, the jury of the prestigious *Europa Nostra Award 2004* presented the Heritage Conservation medal to the FFE. Faithful to the yearly tradition, Her Majesty Queen Sofia presented the award to the Spanish winners at a ceremony held in November at the Zarzuela Palace, the residence of the Kings of Spain.

Europa Nostra is a federation of more than 200 associations active in cultural

and natural heritage conservation that works closely with the Council of Europe and UNESCO. In 2004, 38 high-quality projects in 21 European countries were selected as award winners.

With this distinction, the jury recognised the excellent work of the Foundation's *Programa Vías Verdes* in converting an extensive network of abandoned railway lines into itineraries

for cyclists and other non-motorised users. The network offers not only socio-economic benefits, but also contributes to heritage conservation and improvement of the quality of life. Since the *Programa Vías Verdes* was set up in 1993, nearly 1,500 km of railway lines have been converted into greenways in Spain, offering the public a variety of landscapes and leisure-time discoveries. ● ● ●

The main objectives of the European Greenways Association (EGWA), founded in 1998, are to make an inventory of, promote and encourage infrastructures referred to as greenways.

The European Greenways Award draws tourists to Vía Verde de la Sierra



Olvera Hotel-station
© Fundación Vía Verde de la Sierra

In October 2005, the Vía Verde de la Sierra (ES) won First Prize in the Activities and Promotion category of the European Greenways Award. This greenway has set itself apart with its magnificent 36 km route across the mountains in the north of the Province of Cadiz and the south of the province of Seville, and with the accommodation and restaurants it makes available to tourists and nature lovers.

The impact of receiving the Award was not long in coming. According to the Spanish daily El Diario de Cádiz, the three hotels bordering the greenway are already booked solid every weekend until the end of February. For the province of Cadiz alone, the former train stations of Olvera and Puerto Serrano, which have been converted into restaurants and hotels of 40 and 20 rooms respectively, enable 120 visitors to enjoy long weekend rides or walks to discover the viaducts, tunnels and many bird species that make the Vía Verde de la Sierra a destination of choice for a wide public.

And there is even more good news. More investments in the greenway are planned so that the hotel facilities frequented mainly during the winter

months (the hotels on the coast draw their clients during the summer) to attract a wider public throughout the year. The investments in the amount of 1.2 million euros concern the province of Cadiz and are being funded by the European Union and the provincial authorities.

Also according to El Diario de Cádiz, the municipality of Olvera plans to build a conference centre with capacity for 100 people, as well as a swimming pool. A number of rural houses will be renovated near Zaframagón and a bird-watching post will be built (the region is home to one of Europe's biggest colonies of griffon vultures). The office of the Fundación Vía Verde de la Sierra will be moving next to the Puerto Serrano train station and will open an information centre. Not far from there, in Toleta, the municipality of Puerto Serrano plans to build a rural complex of around 10 houses. And the Navalagrulla train station, which has a new accommodation unit, will soon be opening its doors for the first time. ● ● ●

The PICVerts is on the right track

Launched in March 2005 by Walloon Region Minister Philippe Courard, the PICVerts network (Plan d'Itinéraires Communaux Verts) of green itineraries is already showing sure signs of excellent results. The 13 pilot municipalities have set out their itineraries and are preparing the building phase, set to be completed by July 2006. The project aims to create a coherent local network of trails for non-motorised users (greenways, tracks and footpaths) and to promote its use and protection.



The projects are very varied in terms of both philosophy and facilities.

Some municipalities, whether urban or more rural, propose genuine solutions for safe alternative mobility. Others put the accent on showing to advantage an exceptional heritage, such as the town of Limburg, which has decided to restore and preserve the stiles that border its trails and greenways. The municipalities have also been exceptionally inventive in coming up with new revamping techniques adapted to the specific features of the road or trail. These innovations will be valuable for our members and can be discussed at the conference in Tournai on the PICVerts network, to be held on 15 and 16 September 2006.

Also as part of the project, the EGWA will be presenting its development and activities at the upcoming Salon des Mandataires (Marche, 17-18 February 2006).



Johanna.be, a member of our association since February 2005, shows how local actions by citizens can change mobility



Kluisbergen
© Johanna.be

During the summer of 2003, a car crashed into a group of scouts hiking along a small road that had no infrastructure for pedestrians. Johanna was killed by the collision. Her parents and close friends decided to fight for better pedestrian safety, setting up the association named johanna.be.

Johanna.be aims to stimulate and strengthen local actions to create infrastructures for pedestrians and cyclists. Many individuals and associations are trying to put pressure on local communities to improve conditions for non-motorised users. Unfortunately, they are often confronted with practical problems in terms of strategy or the visibility

of their actions. Johanna.be supports them by providing advice and offering a web site that collects, promotes and shares information on the positive actions being taken by these individuals and groups.

Every «file» on the site belongs to and is updated by the person leading the project. And since johanna.be is meant to stimulate dialogue, the local authorities also have a place in each file to react to the actions presented in the data base.

This democratic, discussion-based approach has already proved successful, leading to the reopening of closed footpaths.

An original initiative in Belgium, the web site and data base are open to actions and activities from Walloon, Flanders and Brussels, thus allowing a better exchange of experiences.

Many initiatives are described online, both those that have already produced results and those still under way. While most of the site is in Dutch, a small part has already been translated into French and English, offering a panorama of citizen involvement in promoting safe mobility for all. **INFO: www.johanna.be** ● ● ●

Chemins du Rail marks its 10th anniversary: successes to celebrate, combats to continue

The not-for-profit association «Chemins de Rail» was founded on 26 January 1996 with the aims of conserving abandoned railway lines in the Walloon Region for their conversion into greenways and safeguarding the related railway heritage.

Ten years on, these objectives have lost none of their relevance because, while the RAVeL network (Réseau Autonome des Voies Lentes) has become a reality, there are still many other abandoned lines and elements of the rail heritage to be protected and upgraded.

For its 10th anniversary, the association will review its achievements defending abandoned railway lines as part of RAVeL and

pre-RAVeL and will assess the challenges that still lie ahead.

Throughout the year, you can take part in the different events the association will organise, including walks, an international conference and a bicycle trip in Wallonia. These offer amateurs and confirmed enthusiasts alike the chance to (re)discover the region's many rail resources.

<http://www.cheminsdurail.be>



More awards

Sustrans won the First Choice Responsible Tourism Awards 2005 in the category «Best mode of transport or initiative». The Awards are a collaboration between on-line travel agent responsibletravel.com who organise the Awards; UK media partners The Times and Geographical Magazine; and The World Travel Market. The Awards are different from other tourism Awards in that nominees are proposed by tourists and then analysed by experts judges.

The Prague-Vienna Greenways won the Laurance S. Rockefeller Greenway Award 2005 for the best existing greenway in central and eastern Europe.



Agenda

Velo Mondial 2006 in Cape Town. Four days of conferences focus on «Towards Prosperity»



© South African
Tourism

In March 2006, Cape Town (South Africa) will be the meeting place for cyclists from all over the globe. Thirty-five developed and developing countries will meet for four days of conferences on the theme «Towards Prosperity». The programme will highlight the importance of sustainable transport, and especially of bicycles. Subjects such as improving air quality and public health, access to mobility, urban planning and more will be discussed throughout the week. The organisers of Velo Mondial decided to schedule the conference simultaneously with the world's biggest timed bicycle race, the Cape Argus Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour. That event, which had some 36,000 participants in 2004, is famous for the beautiful

scenery of its 110 km itinerary. For all those involved in the issue of sustainable transport, particularly cycling, and for all amateur or professional cyclists, Cape Town is the place to be in March. <http://www.velomondial2006.com>

«Nature Adventure» fair in Paris from 31 March to 2 April 2006

A springtime event for hikers and eco-tourists of all kinds, the «Nature Adventure» fair will open its doors from 31 March to 2 April next at Paris-Expo Porte de Versailles. Hiking, horseback riding, cycling for tourists seeking nature, gourmet halts or adventure, the fair has something to offer for all tastes, destinations and budgets. «Nature Adventure» is not just a commercial fair, however. It also includes a number of conferences on themes such as eco-citizenship, the benefits of hiking and cycling on health, sustainable development, and more. Last year, 52,000 visitors and over 300 journalists discovered the many varieties of nature tourism spotlighted by the fair. Obviously, the wide and varied range of European greenways

attracts a large number of visitors during the event. Registration for exhibitors is still open, but given its prohibitive cost, why not simply stroll through the different alleyways to meet the different eco-tourism speakers and actors? www.randonnee-nature.com



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European Greenways Association

rue Van Opré 93

B-5100 JAMBES

BELGIUM

tel:+32/81/22.42.56

fax:+32/81/22.90.02

www.greenwaysforeurope.org

info@aevv-egwa.org

Greenways: « communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient, and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities .The use of disused railway lines and canal towpaths will be critical». **Declaration of Lille, 12th September 2000**