



EUROPEAN GREENWAYS INFO

Greenways for sustainable tourism

For the first time, greenways have been included in the grant programme of the European Commission's General Directorate of Tourism (2011), indicating that they are an area regarded to have great potential and value for the development of sustainable tourism within Europe. In turn, this represents an important step forward in acknowledging that these infrastructures can contribute to the development and diversification of regional and local economies.

Recently approved by the EU, the "Greenways4tour" project, spearheaded by EGWA, (see page 2), will generate an appreciation for the richness and diversity of European greenways and help to attract tourists to those regions which have a special natural environment, and are fortunate to possess these attractive, safe and accessible off-road routes.

Greenways represent a way for cyclists, walkers, families and people with disabilities to access the great outdoors, and now all these users will be able to refer to a single website to find out about the entire European network, and thus include greenways in their holiday destinations. Tourist authorities, greenway promoters and managers, and other interested organisations will all be able to provide information about their routes, and so promote them to encourage healthy leisure pursuits.

A core part of this project, the European Greenways Observatory, will help to unveil the extent of the greenways' initiative across Europe. We hope that, as a result, decision makers at all levels (EU, national, regional and municipal) will be made aware of the potential interest

in greenways and increase their support for these resources in their budgets. Further, we expect that other regions where greenway programmes are absent thus far will see the economic potential in their development and will feel encouraged to launch them.

We urge any organisation interested in greenways to join EGWA and thus help us to promote a thriving and abundant network of these routes across Europe because they are ideal resources to develop sustainable tourism and can easily compete with other forms of tourism on our continent.

Gilbert Perrin ,
President,

Carmen Aycart ,
Secretary General,

Mercedes Muñoz
Director



Photo: © FFE. Greenways offer a safe, accessible and very attractive way to discover a different Europe.

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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.

EGWA Info

EGWA to coordinate “Greenways4tour” project

EGWA is delighted to announce that it has been awarded a grant by the European Commission for a project which fits with its call to “promote transnational thematic tourism products in the European Union to develop sustainable tourism.”

The aim of the project is to promote and increase international awareness of European greenways as excellent facilities for cyclists, walkers and people with disabilities and to greatly improve sustainable tourism choices in Europe.

The “Greenways4Tour” project includes the launch of the European Greenways Observatory (EGO) - a web platform aimed at a wide audience (both greenway users and providers). The EGO will include as many European greenways as possible, describing the location and the main features of these routes. Members of EGWA and other interested institutions will have the opportunity to provide key data about their greenways which will be collected on this unique web platform, initially available in three languages: English, French and Spanish.

As part of the initiative, guides to good practice will be produced covering a number of areas:

- greenway **promotion** and other communications concerning greenways;
- **accessibility**, with recommendations on how to facilitate greenway usage by all types of user;
- greenway **services**, giving guidance on the necessary provisions for cyclists and people with disabilities, focusing on the facilities and accommodation nearby.

It will also include a short video, newsletters on the project and workshops to help promote greenways at international

and local events.

As well as EGWA, the consortium team includes Milan University (Departement of Agricultural Engineering) in Italy which specialises in web information systems and also promotes the l'Associazione Italiana greenways; the Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) which promotes greenways at a national level in Spain; the NADECE Partnership that is developing a national greenways programme in the Czech Republic; Basquetour – a regional Spanish authority in charge of tourism; the EUROGITÉS Association in France representing rural accommodation providers all around Europe; Consorci Vies Verdes de Girona in Spain and Comunidade Intermunicipal da Regiao Dao Lafoes (CIMRDL) in Portugal - both supra-municipal organisations managing greenways.

With a budget of some €160,000 over 12 months, the “Greenways4tour” project represents a big step forward for EGWA and for greenway promotion and development in Europe with the aim of increasing sustainable tourism.



Photos (left-right) ©: Voie verte des Gaves; Paco Tortosa/FFE The project will enable all kinds of users to access the great outdoors



France holds its first National Cycling Convention in Paris



transport: public health, use of public spaces, environmental impact, cycle tourism and its consequences for local economies...

In January this year, EGWA was invited to attend the first French national convention dedicated to cycling. During the morning session, a panel of experts reviewed the numerous aspects which argue in favour of a structured development of this mode of

transport. During the afternoon session, Thierry Mariani, France's Minister for Transport, outlined measures included in the National Bicycle Plan. This strategy has been developed by a working group assembled to increase bicycle usage, with representatives drawn from national and local government and relevant associations.

The convention presented an opportunity for EGWA's President, Gilbert Perrin, to welcome the newly appointed “Mr Bike” of the French Republic, Dominique Lebrun, and to tell him how much we appreciate the support given to EGWA over many years by the French Ministry of Sustainable Development. He went on to stress how he hoped the fruitful collaboration established with his predecessor, Hubert Peigné, would continue.



Plans take shape to transform Portugal's Linha do Sabor into a Greenway



Photo ©: EGWA. Participants at the meeting in Miranda do Douro.

Portugal's former railway line, known as the Linha do Sabor extends for some 105 km between Duas Igrejas (Miranda do Douro) and Pocinho (Vila Nova de Foz Côa). It passes through areas of outstanding natural beauty and environmental value such as the International Duoro Nature Park.

In February this year, EGWA participated in a working group meeting in Miranda do Douro which aimed to make progress on a proposal to convert this disused line into a greenway or 'ecopista'. Promoted by REFER Património which manages the development of Portugal's 'Ecopista' network, and hosted by the mayor of Miranda do Douro, the event was attended by representatives from the local community, tourist accommodation establishments, as well as the Portuguese Greenways Association.

EGWA's Director, Mercedes Muñoz, gave the project her full backing, showing how conversion of the disused line to an ecopista could help to achieve diversification in the region's economy. She quoted successful examples in other European countries, where greenways have led to the development of cycle tourism and boosted local economies, such as in France's Burgundy region or on Girona's greenway network.

During the meeting the hope was expressed that the planned new ecopista would one day connect with a line continuing into Spain, making it an international route and a major European tourist attraction.



News from Members

UK— A gem of a route

Walkers and cyclists can look forward to the opening of two spectacular new sections of greenway this spring on Sustrans' National Cycle Network Route 27 (part of the Devon Coast-to-Coast route and EuroVelo 1).

A fantastic 300 metre long viaduct is being built on The Drake's Trail near Tavistock by Devon County Council, providing a traffic-free crossing of the River Walkham and offering views of Dartmoor to the east and Sticklepath woods to the west. The five span, steel structure is to be known as Gem Bridge. Construction has not been without its challenges due to the steep slopes, narrow site and proximity to the river!

Nearby, Devon County Council has also purchased the disused Grenofen railway tunnel, originally built in 1859 by the famous British Engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The tunnel is being re-opened after 50 years as a cycle route and will, likewise, be part of National Route 27/EuroVelo 1.

The Gem Bridge and Grenofen Tunnel, combined with connecting paths, will add 26 km of greenway to this beautiful area of South West England. To plan a route or find out more visit www.sustrans.org.uk



Photo © Sustrans. The Gem Bridge begins to take shape in September 2011



Spain — Job-creation scheme launched on Murcia's North West Greenway



Photo ©: VV del Noroeste. Participants at the inauguration of the job-creation project.

December 2011 saw the inauguration of an exciting job-creation project on Murcia's North West Greenway. The mayors of Cehegín and Bullas, the employment councillor of Caravaca de la Cruz, together with the Director of the North West Greenway's consortium which is organising the initiative, attended the event.

A budget of approximately €735,000 has been approved for the scheme which will be a strategic, intercommunity development project, taking advantage of sustainable natural and cultural resources as well as any other tourist attractions on and around the greenway.

The project will last for 12 months and will focus on three areas: the promotion of tourism and visitor information, a workshop for landscaping and rehabilitating the countryside, and teaching bricklaying skills. It will facilitate the training of 32 unemployed people to prepare them for reintegration into the job market. The final objective of this training is to develop participants' skills so they contribute to the revitalisation of one of Murcia's principal tourist attractions, and consequently give an economic boost to the municipalities involved in the project.

www.viaverdedelnoroeste.com



Spain — Spanish greenways receive Italian award for responsible tourism

Spain's greenways programme, developed by the Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE), has been granted an Italian Award for Responsible Tourism by Trenitalia and L'Agenzia di Viaggi. Now in their third year, the awards aim to recognise tourist destinations and products that demonstrate sustainability.

At the behest of the Spanish Tourism Office (OET) in Rome, FFE put itself forward for consideration in 2011 and was delighted when it was granted the accolade. Ignacio Angulo Ranz, Councillor for Tourism and Director of the Spanish Tourism Office in Milan, received the award on behalf of FFE at a presentation ceremony on the Turespaña stand during the TTG Incontri di Rimini trade fair in October. FFE hopes that this award will vouch for Spain's greenways programme and strengthen its partnership with Turespaña aimed at promoting the concept in the Italian market.

Trenitalia and L'Agenzia di Viaggi consider respect for the environment, bio-diversity and culture when evaluating tourism operators, public bodies and companies for their eligibility for an award. The destinations and products selected, such as Spain's greenways, are also identified for their potential commercialisation. The awards are now widely regarded in Italy as a benchmark for any organisation involved in sustainable tourism.

www.viasverdes.com



Ireland— The Great Southern Trail project reports great progress

In February this year, at the Great Southern Trail (GST) AGM, participants heard how the greenway now provides 22 miles [35 km] of continuous, off-road walking and cycling route along the old railway from Rathkeale to Abbeyfeale. Until recently the continuity of the trail was broken by the N21 road at Barnagh and Rathkeale; however, the provision of 2 miles [3 km] of dedicated cycle lane parallel to the N21 by Limerick County Council has resolved this issue. These works were funded under the 'Smarter Travel' programme.

The total outlay on the GST to date runs to approximately €1.5 million and further upgrading of the greenway is scheduled for 2012 with the aid of 'Leader' funds. The invaluable support of the general public as well as European, national and local government has made all of this possible. Visits by government ministers - Dr Michael Woods, Éamon Ó Cuív, Pat Carey and Jimmy Deenihan - have also been greatly appreciated.

Further recognition of the GST manifested itself in 2011 with the award of 'Special Jury Prize' from the European Greenways Association which highlighted the fantastic volunteer effort to move the project forward. Attention will now focus on the continuation of the GST into Co Kerry for

an eventual link up with the Tralee to Fenit route, giving a total railway path length of 56 miles [90 km].

Date for your diary: the 2nd Annual Cycle/Walk along the 35 km Great Southern Trail will take place on Saturday 16 June 2012. Visit www.southerntrail.net for more details.



Photo ©GST: Junction greenways-cycle lane that will permit the car-free continuity of the GST.



Joint ECF & EGWA conference: Greenways, EuroVelo routes and cycle tourism / Nantes (France) 26 September, 2012

The first joint European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and European Greenways Association (EGWA) conference will take place in Nantes, France, on 26 September 2012.

The all-day event will feature presentations and workshops focusing on some of the key issues relating to greenways, EuroVelo routes and cycle tourism.

Further information will be made available shortly at www.EuroVelo.org and www.aevv-egwa.org



ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES VOIES VERTES
EUROPEAN GREENWAYS ASSOCIATION
ASOCIACIÓN EUROPEA DE VÍAS VERDES



EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION



New EGWA member

We would like to extend the warmest welcome to a new EGWA member:

- Danish Cyclist' Federation (DCF) www.dcf.dk



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Greenways: "autonomous 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