



EUROPEAN GREENWAYS INFO

Greenways provide the answer to preserving Europe's railway heritage

Europe possesses thousands of kilometres (1) of disused railway lines which form part of the cultural and industrial heritage of the continent and which are in grave danger of disappearing. We risk losing an architectural heritage of inestimable value; the deterioration and ultimate ruin of impressive masterpieces of engineering, as well as, in many instances, the unlawful appropriation of public lands due to the absence of controls by the landowning entities.

In most cases, railway companies are obliged to protect their extensive and rich heritage without having adequate resources to do so. However, the transformation of disused railways into greenways is one way to preserve this heritage thanks to the restoration and maintenance of structures such as tunnels, viaducts and station buildings. In addition, these initiatives safeguard the continuity of transport corridors to such an extent that, if it came to it, the trails could revert to their original use as railway lines.

On the other hand, converting old railway lines into greenways provides a perfect opportunity for the development of ecotourism and sustainable travel, as well as sporting and leisure activities consistent with new social demands.

The European Greenways Association (EGWA) brings together organisations with wide experience of transforming disused railways into greenways. The process involves close collaboration between various government departments and other partners to resolve legal issues and secure the necessary funding to make the schemes a reality. Noteworthy examples of success have been dependent on the involvement of community groups, too. These established greenway networks serve as a point of reference for other European regions where the greenway concept is in its infancy, or has yet to be launched.

EGWA advocates the transformation of disused railway lines into greenways as the most appropriate way to ensure that Europe's railway heritage is preserved and maintained, and at the same time generates local economic opportunities. EGWA seeks to help more organisations get involved with greenway development and, at the same time, makes a special appeal to government administrations and railway companies - the main owners of these infrastructures - to embrace the movement, offering its full collaboration for that purpose.

(1) In the absence of a comprehensive European inventory, a number of examples can be quoted: in Spain there are in excess of 7,000 km of disused lines, of which almost 2,000 km have already become greenways; in Italy 6,400 km of which 600 km are greenways; Portugal has 750 km of disused lines, of which 120 km are now designated as "ecopistas"; the Walloon region of Belgium has converted half of its disused railway track into greenways, amounting to 500 km of off-road route; in Luxembourg 90% of abandoned railway lines have been converted into greenways; and in the UK, 13,890 km of railway track were closed but 1,840 km have been transformed into greenways open to walkers and cyclists.

Gilbert Perrin,
 President,

Carmen Aycart,
 Secretary General,

Mercedes Muñoz
 Director



Elipsos Trainhotel: another green way to travel

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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

Greenways4Tour project launched in Spain



© AEVV. Vitoria-Gasteiz workshop dedicated to best practices on greenways.

April saw the official launch of the Greenways4Tour project, the aim of which 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.

Development and the President and Director of EGWA presided at the meeting.

Prior to the launch of Greenways4Tour, a meeting was held to address the internal co-ordination of the project, and included a technical visit to the Salburúa Nature Interpretation Centre and the Vasco-Navarro greenway which passes through Vitoria, as well as to its new visitor centre at Antoñana.



The project was presented in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, at a workshop to highlight best practices on greenways. Vitoria-Gasteiz has been appointed European Green Capital 2012 so it was fitting that the start-up event was held in the city thanks to Basquetour, a partner in the project. A number of successful greenways were introduced as examples of best practice and gave a flavour of how the European greenway network can enhance sustainable tourism across the continent.

Isabel Muela, General Director for Tourism in the Basque Country, accompanied by Vitoria-Gasteiz's Director for Economic



© AEVV. Greenways4Tour team members at the launch of the project

The project fits with the European Commission's call to "promote transnational thematic tourism products" to develop sustainable tourism in the EU. 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.



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Vasco-Navarro greenway visitor centre at Antoñana. The three coaches house a shop selling local products, a greenway information area and a museum dedicated to the old "El Trenico" train.



EGWA rallies the greenway movement in central Europe

In June, a conference on the theme of « The importance of greenways for the development of tourism in rural areas of the Visegrad countries » was organised by a number of Polish partners. (To remind ourselves, the Visegrad countries include Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.)

that, together, we can get our message across more effectively to European authorities.

EGWA was represented by its president, Gilbert Perrin, and Daniel Mourek, member of the executive committee. Mr Perrin took the opportunity to recall EGWA's involvement in several European projects since its foundation, of which the current Greenways4Tour initiative places the emphasis precisely on the development of local economies, especially in rural areas. He invited all the organisations present to join EGWA so



© Mila.



EGWA participates in "Crossroads of Europe" conference

The first "Crossroads of Europe" Conference about cultural and religious routes was held in the Italian city of Pavia in June. It included a session by EGWA Director, Mercedes Muñoz, who spoke about "Accessible Greenways".

She illustrated how greenways provide all types of users with an exceptional and respectful means to access nature due to their use of safe and accessible preexisting infrastructures, such as canal towpaths and disused railway lines, integrated into the landscape. She went on to explain that greenways allow us to journey through the countryside, the culture, the history and the heritage of Europe.

The aim of this annual "Crossroads of Europe" event is to promote cooperation and exchange between stakeholders and to raise awareness of the potential for a new kind of sustainable tourism which is respectful of nature and cultural traditions. The inaugural conference in Pavia also included thematic workshops, expositions, cultural events and more.

In the closing session, Vice-President Tajani emphasized

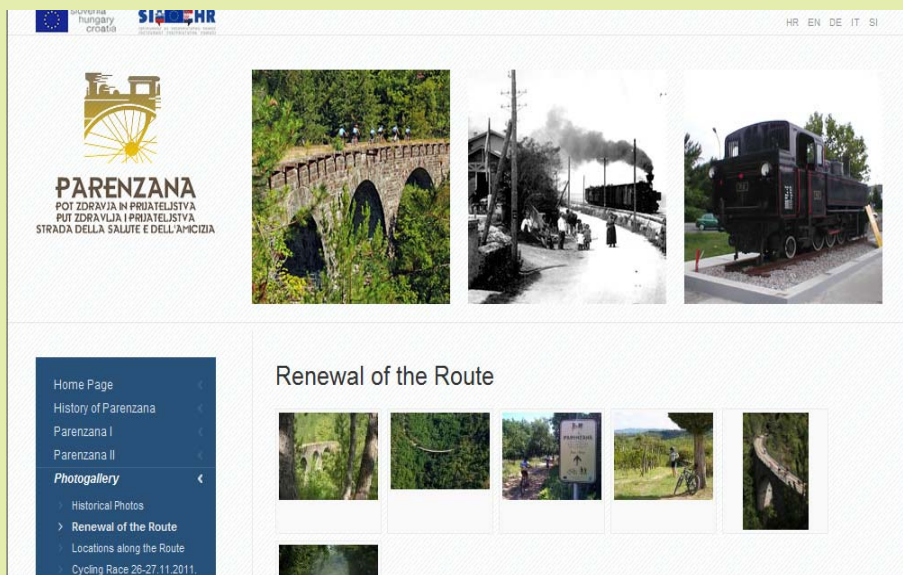
the European Commission's efforts to promote cultural and thematic tourism and cultural itineraries, mentioning greenways among the projects supported by the EC as they have great potential and value for the development of sustainable tourism in Europe.



Mercedes Muñoz illustrates how greenways provide exceptional and easy access to nature and cultural attractions of all kinds.



Greenways welcomed at International Rural Tourism Congress



the European greenway network through co-operation and experience sharing with Croatian organisations. Future workshops and projects to convert disused railway lines into greenways in Croatia now seem likely, as does better promotion of the existing Parenzana cross-border greenway. This cycle path extends from Trieste in Italy to Poreč in Croatia and provides an ideal way to discover this beautiful part of Europe.

During exchanges in a questions and answers session, our EGWA director heard about the recently abandoned railway from Athens to Patras in Greece. The transformation of this 140 km line into a greenway would be a

In May, the third International Rural Tourism Congress was held in Osijek, Croatia, and dedicated to "Rural tourism – a sustainable development driver". EGWA Director, Mercedes Muñoz, presented a session entitled "Greenways for regional development" showing clear examples of the important contribution that greenways make to local development.

great opportunity to protect the area's heritage, encourage active travel for everyday journeys and aid the development of sustainable tourism. EGWA would be delighted to be involved in making it a reality.

Discover the beautiful cross-border greenway at: www.parenzana.net

The event provided an excellent opportunity to expand



News from Members

U.K.—Wales leads the way with Active Travel Bill

New plans to legally oblige Welsh local authorities to provide cycling and walking routes have been described as 'ground-breaking' by transport charity Sustrans.

The proposed Active Travel (Wales) Bill will be the first of its kind in the world, making it a legal requirement for local authorities to plan and deliver routes that link up schools, hospitals and shopping areas with traffic-free routes and cycle lanes.

The announcement follows a five-year campaign by Sustrans in Wales. The campaign had the backing of all parties in Wales and a range of organisations including BT, Royal Mail, the British Medical Association and the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Malcolm Shepherd, Chief Executive of Sustrans, said:

"This is a ground-breaking move by the Welsh government that will help people get around more safely, cheaply and healthily.

"People all over the UK want to cycle and walk more for every day journeys but are held back by safety concerns.

"Walking and cycling are the answers to the UK's rocketing fuel bill and expanding waistline but getting

around actively must be made safer and easier across the country."

<http://www.lefffootforward.org/2012/05/cycling-walking-active-travel-wales-bill-consultation/>

The Bill is currently in consultation stage. More info on the Bill can be found here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/transport/activetravelbill/?lang=en>



©Jon Bewley/Sustrans

People in Wales will be able to make more everyday journeys on foot and by bike as a result of the Active Travel (Wales) Bill.



Spain — Murcia's North Western Greenway (Vía Verde del Noroeste) launches a network of hostels

Visitors who enjoy walking and cycling on Murcia's North Western Greenway can now stay on the route, too. In May this year a new network of hostels opened to complement this already popular tourist destination.

Collectively called "Alverdes", seven hostels with associated services and nearby tourist attractions have opened their doors for business on the greenway. In five cases, the new accommodation makes use of the original station buildings along the Murcia to Caravaca railway line: at Campos del Rio, Albudeite, La Luz-Mula, Cehegín and Caravaca. The two remaining buildings are more contemporary and purpose-built although their surroundings are quite different: the hostel in Alguazas is in an urban environment whilst the one in Bullas is in a more rural setting.

Taken together, the seven hostels have a capacity of 230 beds. Four of the hostels have a variety of room types and all of them cater for people with disabilities so that those with special needs can enjoy the pleasures offered by the greenway too.

So now there is no excuse for missing out on this beautiful, unique and sustainable way to tour this region which includes important elements of Murcia's natural and cultural heritage. The greenway passes directly through three nature conservation areas designated by

the Red Natura 2000 network, and other equally picturesque rural areas. It also gives access to sites of special cultural interest and, notably, three old town centres recognised for their cultural and historic value.

For further information visit:

www.viaverdedelnoroeste.com and www.alverdes.es



©Murcia's North Western Consortium.

Railway station buildings provide the perfect accommodation for tourists on the North Western Greenway.



Irlanda— New funding to extend Great Southern Trail

The Great Southern Trail (GST) Action Group recently welcomed the announcement that funding has been made available to extend the greenway from Abbeyfeale to the Co. Kerry border, a distance of 3.2 km (2 miles). Limerick County Council has been awarded €290,000 by the Department of Transport to carry out the work.

The GST is grateful to the council for applying for the grant which complements recent funding of over €60,000 from West Limerick Resources to upgrade the existing Barnagh to Abbeyfeale section of the trail. It is hoped that similar initiatives by Kerry County Council and North & East Kerry Development will result in further extensions of the greenway to Kilmorna, Listowe, Lixnaw, Abbeydorney, Ardfert and Tralee where it will link up with the Tralee to Fenit path, already under construction.

This latest extension is one of 16 new projects which will be funded across Ireland following a commitment in the Programme for Government to make a significant investment in cycling. Public Transport Minister, Alan Kelly, announced that €7 million will be spent on new

cycle routes over the next two years, adding an additional 334 km to the National Cycle Network. This will include investment in a further 40 km of greenways along canal towpaths or former railway lines.

For further details, visit:

<http://www.southerntrail.net/documents/Press%20Release%20with%20Grant%20Details%20June%202012.pdf>



Greenways and other high-quality cycle routes are the key to creating a more cycling-friendly culture across the country



Wednesday 26th September 2012— "EuroVelo, Greenways and Cycle Tourism" Conference, Nantes (France)



The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and European Greenways Association (EGWA) invite you to attend the first Joint Conference on "EuroVelo, Greenways and Cycle Tourism".

- connections to new niche market (e.g. Accessible tourism, senior tourism);
- political frameworks and funding possibilities.

The programme is available at:

www.eurovelo.org/home/ecf-and-egwa-joint-conference/

For more details, visit:

www.aevv-egwa.org www.eurovelo.org

The conference will be followed by the 16th Annual Congress of the Départements & Régions Cycling Network (DRC) on 27th and 28th September. Why not take this opportunity to learn about the latest developments in cycling across France? See the [DRC website](#) for programme details.

This full-day conference will include presentations from notable speakers in the fields of cycle tourism and greenway development and plenty of forums to discuss European best practice. Key topics include:

- web solutions and social media;
- usage monitoring and impact assessment;

New EGWA member

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

- Município de Montemor-o-Novo
(Ecopista do Montado), Portugal



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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. In this respect, canal towpaths and disused railway lines are a highly suitable resource for the development of greenways". Declaration of Lille, 12th September 2000