

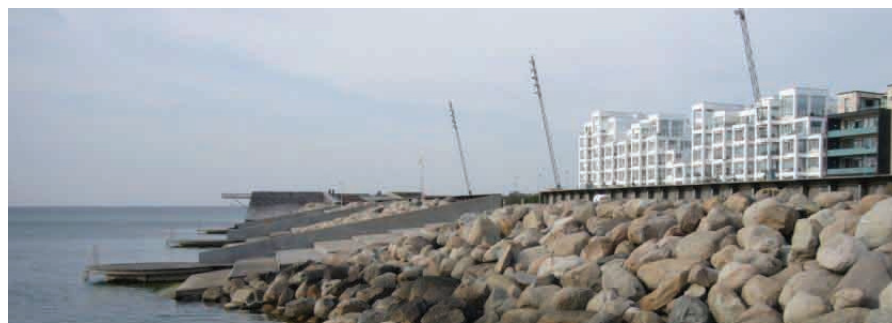


## GRaBS News

Issue 1

June 2009

# Welcome to the first newsletter of the GRaBS project (green and blue space adaptation for urban areas and eco towns)



Flood defences, Western Harbour, City of Malmö

Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations are at their highest level for three million years; climate change is already with us, and the urban environment is likely to be particularly vulnerable to its impact. This is a major challenge throughout Europe with towns and cities facing increased temperatures and/or flooding and therefore the need to adapt is enormous and urgent.

Through the GRaBS project we aim to raise awareness of how regional spatial planning and

urban design can provide solutions that make our communities less vulnerable to these risks.

Green infrastructure, including gardens, parks, productive landscapes, green corridors and green roofs and walls, and blue infrastructure, such as water bodies, rivers, streams, flood-plains and sustainable drainage systems, play a vital role in creating climate resilient developments; a role, which is not sufficiently recognised and generally lacks integration in mainstream planning.

**Financed by the European Union European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and made possible by the INTERREG IVC Programme, the project will facilitate the much needed exchange of knowledge and experience, and the actual transfer of good practice on climate change adaptation strategies, to local and regional authorities across Europe.**



The 14 partners of the GRaBS project are drawn from eight Member States and represent a broad spectrum of municipal authorities and climate change challenges, all with varying degrees of strategic policy and experience. The GRaBS partners located in the southern Mediterranean region – Greece and Sicily – will need to adapt to increased and prolonged drought conditions, whereas those in northern Europe – Sweden, Lithuania, England and the Netherlands – are facing not only higher temperatures but also increased rainfall and rising sea-levels. And in central Europe – Austria, Italy and Slovakia – there are already significant increases in temperature which are impacting on urban life. The differences between those cities which choose to adapt and those which do not will be stark. Research at Manchester University, one of the GRaBS partners, has already found that an increase of 10 per cent in urban green cover would be enough to keep temperature close to current levels.



Cooling down in Manchester city centre

The GRaBS partners aim to raise awareness of how regional spatial planning and urban design can provide solutions to make our communities less vulnerable to these risks. The implementation and maintenance of high-quality green and blue infrastructure can play an essential role in adapting our built environment to the impacts of climate change, but this role is currently not sufficiently recognized, nor integrated into mainstream planning – which would facilitate the delivery of climate change adaptation.

By advancing the knowledge and expertise of GRaBS partners and key stakeholders – decision makers, politicians, communities, regional and local municipalities – we will be able to make a more informed and strategic response to climate change adaptation. In the long term, communities will reduce their vulnerability to the environmental, social and economic damage related to climate change impacts including extreme temperature increases and flooding incidents.

## THE PARTNERS

### AUSTRIA

Provincial Government of Styria

### GREECE

Municipality of Kalamaria

### ITALY

Etnambiente SLR  
Province of Genoa  
University of Catania

### LITHUANIA

Klaipeda University  
Coastal Research and Planning Institute

### NETHERLANDS

Amsterdam, City District of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer

### SLOVAKIA

Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, Country Office Slovakia

### SWEDEN

City of Malmö

### UK

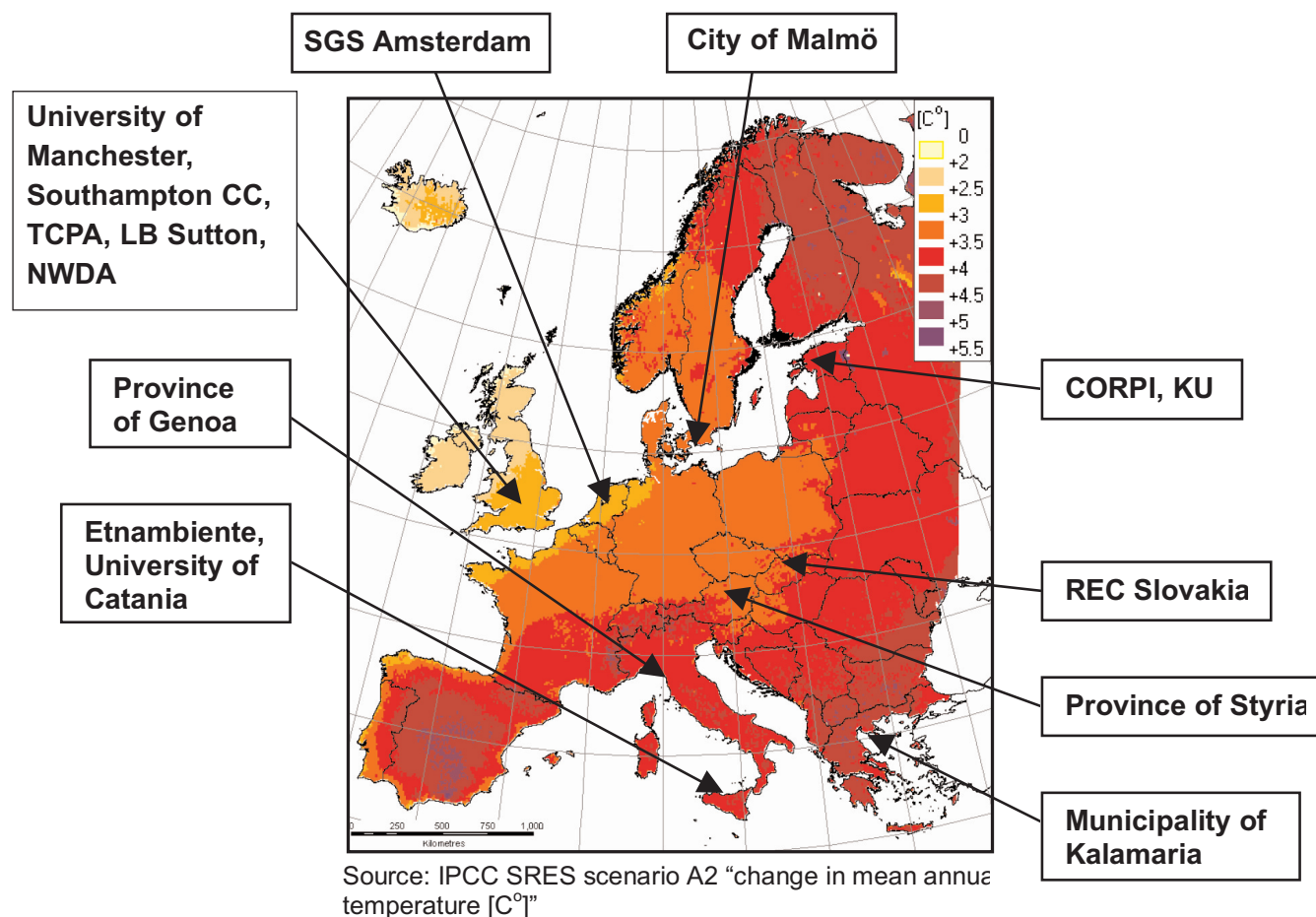
London Borough of Sutton  
Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)  
Southampton City Council  
Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)  
University of Manchester



First Project Steering Committee Meeting, London



## Introducing the Partners



### AUSTRIA



Located in south-east Austria, the **Provincial Government of**

**Styria** has a major opportunity to influence the content of regional policy and sub-regional spatial plans of its 542 municipalities. The region is known as the 'Green Heart of Austria', and is home to 1.2 million people – about a quarter of whom live in the provincial capital, Graz. A major challenge for the Department of Urban Planning is the likely increase in flood disasters from the city's many streams and channels, and to protect endangered settlements situated in the catchment area. Working with the project partners, regional and sub-regional stakeholders, the Department has begun to develop an adaptation action plan framework (by conducting a SWOT analysis of the existing capacity to implement adaptation measures), which will be replicable by local authorities within sub-regional area development frameworks. The Province is already preparing for a study visit by the partners, and other interested parties, in April 2010.

### GREECE



The **Municipality of Kalamaria**, located in Northern Greece, and within the urban area

of Thessaloniki, is surrounded by sea. Due to rapid urbanisation and expansion, the municipality is facing severe pressure on its environment, particularly the green spaces. This is expounded by its vulnerability to hot, dry summers, and the urgency of coastal zone protection. Through GRaBS, the Municipality aims to increase awareness of the risks and social implications of climate change amongst local and regional planners, developers, urban designers, and architects; and spread understanding about the important role and multi-functionality of green and blue infrastructure in creating climate change resilient development. The Municipality, along with the other partners, has embarked on a SWOT Analysis of its capacity to implement climate change adaptation, as the initial stage in developing an adaptation action plan for the area.

## ITALY



**The University of Catania** is Sicily's oldest university, and one of Italy's largest. Founded in 1434, it has over 70,000 students. The University's activities, infrastructure and facilities are spread across the whole of south-east of Sicily – its campuses form a substantial amount of the urban fabric of Catania (Sicily's second largest city) – and it can therefore influence regional and local planning policy, with the involvement of a wide community network. **Etnambiente SRL**, also located in Sicily at the foot of Mount Etna, is a public-controlled company that collaboratively produces environmental and regeneration strategies for the Province of Catania. These partners will work closely together to address key concerns such as coastal zone flooding and high temperatures, informed by the exchange of best practice via the GRaBS project. Both hope to inspire adaptation action through integration into regional legislation and urban planning policy. The University will play a key role in transferring its expertise in sustainable mobility and transport management to other partners, ensuring that a set of related policy guidelines feature in climate adaptation action plans. In December 2008, Etnambiente was quick to present the GRaBS project and its objectives to local and provincial stakeholders at a conference they held – around 100 people participated.



**The Province of Genoa** is located in the Liguria Region in the north-west of Italy, and is home to around 890,000 people. As part of the Province's Plan (for territorial planning), the Administration is implementing the 'Città dello Scrivia' project, focusing on the regeneration and further development of the urban fringe area of the Scrivia Valley. GRaBS will provide the Province with the opportunity to ensure that the redevelopment of the valley is designed to meet climate change challenges, particularly with regard to flood risks generated by the Scrivia River, through an adaptation action plan. Over the past months, the Province has been busy presenting GRaBS as an integral part of the Scrivia Project, at both the Public Administration Forum 2009 held in Rome, and at an exhibition called Energethica in Genoa. They are also preparing to host one of the first mentoring visits at the end of June.

## LITHUANIA



**The Coastal Research and Planning Institute (CORPI)** is a research and education unit within Klaipeda University, focusing on several fields including integrated coastal zone management, sea-use planning, environmental impact and risk assessment, and climate

change analysis. The main climate change threats to the region are rises in sea level (causing seasonal flooding), and coastal erosion, which will endanger the many inhabitants, and tourists, who live on, or visit the coastline. The GRaBS project will enable CORPI to develop links between planning for green and blue infrastructure and integrated coastal zone management, and apply the Risks and Vulnerabilities Assessment Tool to sensitive coastal zone areas.

## NETHERLANDS



**The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer (SGS)** is one of

the four western garden cities of the Municipality of Amsterdam. It is characterized by 1950s low-rise buildings, housing a multicultural population of around 41,000. The main aim of SGS in the GRaBS project is to preserve existing green and blue spaces from the growing pressures of urban densification and pollution, as well as incorporating new infrastructure into a large-scale regeneration programme in order to strengthen the recreational and ecological values of the City District. The team at SGS has gained extensive experience in engaging communities in neighbourhood management and planning processes, which is being further developed and shared with GRaBS partners through the extensive mentoring programme. A Community Involvement Task Team has been set up to oversee this, and members first met in Malmö in April which has led to the production of detailed guidance for partners to take into account when considering existing and potential local/regional conditions for optimal community participation in developing effective climate change adaptation plans (as part of conducting a general SWOT Analysis).

## SWEDEN



**The City of Malmö** is the third largest city in Sweden, and internationally renowned for its commitment to environ-

mental and social goals. The municipality will work with GRaBS partners to ensure climate adaptation principles are considered at an early stage in planning processes at both local and regional levels, and that stakeholder and community involvement is intensified. A key outcome will be to create a multidimensional planning strategy for the Skåne Region. In a recent GRaBS study visit to the City, partners witnessed first-hand the outstanding achievements made in working towards sustainable development, including best practice in incorporating green and blue infrastructure in new developments as well as retrofitting adaptive measures in existing developments. It was an excellent opportunity to share and exchange its expertise with other partners (see pages six and seven for details).

## SLOVAKIA



A non-governmental organisation, the **R e g i o n a l E n v i r o n m e n t a l**

**Centre for Central and Eastern Europe**, Slovakia, works with, and informs, environmental NGOs, governmental and academic institutions across the country, as well as the Slovak municipalities. Slovakia's cities will be subject to the negative impacts of climate change (such as increased temperatures causing an urban heat island effect), and currently it is experiencing the large-scale construction of housing developments which do not take into account the principles of sustainable planning. A key objective of participating in the GRaBS project, therefore, is to disseminate recommendations, stemming from an adaptation action plan, on the integration of green and blue infrastructure in new and existing urban area renewal and developments. REC Slovakia has been preparing to host a mentoring visit in mid-June where, amongst many other activities, a workshop on community participation in planning will be held.

## UK



**The London Borough of Sutton** forms part of the Region of Greater London. The River Wandle (a tributary of the River

Thames) makes up the second largest river catchment in London, and a major concern is that 45,000 of Sutton's dwellings built on its floodplain are at risk of flooding. LB Sutton needs to balance this risk with an intense pressure for housing growth and densification. Representatives of the TCPA recently went to visit the neighbourhood of Hackbridge, which has been designated to become a 'sustainable suburb' for regeneration and growth. Experience and expertise gained from partners through mentoring visits will be invaluable for informing this project, and Sutton looks forward to hosting the first of these visits in mid-June.



**The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)** is responsible for the economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest

region. Impacts of climate change are expected to be warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, with measurable sea-level rises: with the longest stretch of coastline of all the English regions, this is of great concern. The Agency has a major opportunity to enhance the sustainability of new development and regeneration in the region, through its influence on regional policy. It can particularly contribute to the economic arguments for climate change resilient development, and share its extensive expertise in implementing climate change action plans across the partnership.



**Southampton** is a major port city on the south coast of England, with a population of 231,000, vulnerable to impacts such as flash flooding and temperature increase. Southampton

City Council (SCC) will bring invaluable knowledge to the project, such as experience in adapting and developing existing greenways and open space networks. Knowledge gained from the GRaBS project will also be transferred to the regional Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) – a group of 11 local authorities from across south Hampshire – and will help steer the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the sub-region. The SCC partner chairs the Assessment Tool Task Team, which met in London earlier this year and is steering the development of the Tool.



**tcpa**

**The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)** is an independent charity working to improve the art and science of town and country planning, inspiring government, industry and campaigns to take a fresh perspective on major issues, including planning policy and climate change. The TCPA is

delighted to be the Lead Partner in the project, working with partners towards the overall goal of raising awareness of climate change adaptation, and ensuring that it is integrated into spatial planning throughout Europe. The TCPA has been busy with various activities, including coordinating the first Progress Report, developing the GRaBS project website, and arranging the second progress steering committee meeting, thematic seminar and study visit to the City of Malmö (see details over the page). The TCPA has also begun its role in sharing experience related to the UK government Eco-towns initiative, and the Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change.

**MANCHESTER**  
1824

The University of Manchester

**The University of Manchester (UoM)**, located in the north-west of England, is the largest university in the UK. The

GRaBS team, based in the School of Environment and Development, specialises in climate change impact research and environmental planning and management. The UoM has specific responsibility for developing the climate change Risk and Vulnerabilities Assessment Tool to be used as a decision-making aid in the strategic planning of climate change adaptation responses in urban areas. At a recent workshop held in the City of Malmö, GRaBS partners discussed potential user needs and requirements for the tool, in anticipation of piloting the prototype tool in their case study areas over the next few months. The UoM has also begun compiling a database of Good Practice Case Studies on green and blue space adaptation approaches, in collaboration with project partners.



# INSPIRATIONAL INSIGHTS INTO ADAPTATION IN MALMÖ

**Malmö, in southern Sweden, aims to be a world-leading climate city, and they're making excellent progress. On 27 April 2009, as part of the second project steering committee meeting, GRaBS partners embarked on the first study visit of the project to witness how innovative concepts in sustainable development and infrastructure have been applied in the city. The visit included a guided tour of the Green Roof Institute, the Ekostaden Augustenborg Community Project, and the Bo-01 and Western Harbour area.**

Augustenborg, once a rundown 1950s/60s neighbourhood, has been redeveloped and re-energised as part of a very successful and far-reaching project called EcoCity Augustenborg. It is now an excellent example of an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable quarter, with climate change adaptation playing a key role.

Situated on top of several industrial and office buildings in the area is the Green Roof Institute, where the world's first botanical roof garden was constructed in Malmö back in 1999, and now provides a valuable resource for research and education. GRaBS partners learnt about the multi-functional



benefits of green roofs on urban ecology, including adapting to climate change as well as contributing to food production and increased levels of biodiversity.

Trevor Graham, Head of the Sustainable Development Unit at the City of Malmö, gave partners a detailed tour of the rest of the Augustenborg neighbourhood.

Top: Green and blue spaces in the Bo-1 district, Malmö

Left: Learning about water systems, Augustenborg, Malmö

Below: Green roofs and SUDS at the Green Roof Institute, Malmö



**many of the partners left the Institute determined to introduce green roofs back into their municipalities**





**parks and recreation infrastructure designed to act as focal meeting points for all age groups**

**Partners witnessed first-hand how green and blue spaces have been incorporated into the regeneration plans to address issues such as flooding (with extensive community participation), including retrofitting the area with innovative new surface water systems, green roofs, gardens, recreation areas, and renovated courtyards.**



In the afternoon Tor Fossum, from the Environment Department, led partners in a tour of Bo-01 and the Western Harbour to show how an old industrial estate can be transformed into a leading national and international example of environmental city living by means of collaborative, high quality urban design. The Bo-01 district is supplied by 100 per cent locally generated renewable energy and offers excellent public transport and cycling facilities as well as generous use of space for green and

blue infrastructure with a strong focus on social sustainability.

In the evening, after an introduction by Professor Sir Peter Hall, Professor John Handley was the keynote speaker at the thematic seminar on climate change adaptation. As Director of the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, based at the University of Manchester (UK), Professor Handley has become an expert on the development of adaptation strategies for climate change impacts.

He gave an informative and lively account of the adaptation agenda, and successfully reminded his audience of what the GRaBS project is really aiming to achieve.

Overall, the study tour to Malmö was hugely successful in raising awareness and increasing the expertise of the project partners of how to work with sustainable urban development in a climate-smart way. Various tools for adaptation were evident, including open storm-water systems, green facades, and green roofs – the partners saw a cross-section of green and blue spaces in both existing and new mixed use urban development, with the express purpose of adapting to projected climate change scenarios.

The GRaBS partners now look forward to the next study visit to the Netherlands in the first week of November, where case studies (of both good and bad practice) and a community involvement event will advance the knowledge of all involved.

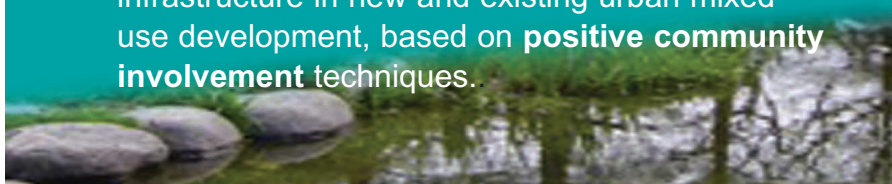


**Green Roof Institute, Augustenborg**

## GRaBS in Summary

The GRaBS project has four main objectives

- 1** To raise **awareness** and increase the **expertise** of key bodies responsible for spatial planning and development on how green and blue infrastructure can help new and existing mixed use urban development adapt to projected climate scenarios.
- 2** To assess the delivery mechanisms that exist for new urban mixed use development and urban regeneration in each partner country and to develop good practice **adaptation action plans** to co-ordinate the delivery of urban greening and adaptation strategies, as well as cooperation amongst:
  - **Planners**
  - **Policy-makers**
  - **Stakeholders, and**
  - **Local communities**
- 3** To develop an innovative, cost effective and user friendly **risk and vulnerability assessment tool**, to aid the strategic planning of climate change adaptation responses.
- 4** To improve stakeholder and community understanding and involvement in planning, delivering and managing green and blue infrastructure in new and existing urban mixed use development, based on **positive community involvement** techniques.



**Hot off the press** – the first GRaBS Expert Paper has recently been published, setting out the case for climate change adaptation and how, in particular, people or places facing poverty and disadvantage must not be disproportionately affected by climate change, or by policy or practice responses to it. The paper is now available to download at: [www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/expert-papers.html](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/expert-papers.html) or request a copy using the contact details opposite.

## Coming Up

### STUDY TOURS

Partners hosting subsequent study visits whose dates have been finalised include:

Week commencing 2 November 2009: SGS Amsterdam, Netherlands

Week commencing 26 April 2010: Styria, Austria

Week commencing 8 November 2010: REC Slovakia

*If you are interested to know more about participating in the study visits, please contact the TCPA for more information.*

### MENTORING VISITS

Part of the methodology for GRaBS is for partners to learn from each other through a mentoring process, and in June 2009, several partners will take part in visits to Sutton in the UK, Genoa in Italy, and Bratislava in Slovakia.

**Check out the next edition of the newsletter to find out how these went.**

### CONTACT DETAILS

Get involved in the GRaBS project through:

**International Study tours and workshops**

**Best practice case studies**

**Expert papers**

**Newsletters and articles**

More information can be found at the project website:

**[www.grabs-eu.org](http://www.grabs-eu.org)**

Or contact the lead GRaBS partner, the TCPA:

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