



INTERREG IVB

Progress Report October 2013 (Short)

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. General Project Data

Project title The social economy and the management of green infrastructure

Acronym Green And Blue Futures Project Number 2641

Nationality of the Lead Partner UK

Start date 01/07/2011

Total eligible project budget 3,241,288.01

Priority P4 - Strong & prosperous communities

Duration in months 51

1.2 Details on reporting period

Official reporting deadline 31/10/2013

Date of submission 11/11/2013

To

31/08/2013

To



Contact details of the person responsible for the report

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1.3 Summary description of project in English

The Operational Programme for North West Europe recognises that the quality of places and environmental and cultural assets is important for creating strong and prosperous communities. Europe's green & blue infrastructure (nature sites, parks, open space, woodlands & waterways etc.) forms an important part of these assets, which is often managed by local authorities or other public agencies. With the current financial crisis however there is increasing pressure on public sector funds. Therefore new, more cost-effective models for resource management need to be developed. An opportunity for doing this is through increased involvement of the social economy in resource management via not-for-profit organisational structures. Such an approach can have the added benefits of achieving greater involvement of local stakeholders with the resource & delivering social outcomes, such as employment for disadvantaged groups.

The aim of G&BF is to develop a strategic framework for doing this in an effective way that can be promoted throughout North West Europe with the aim of widening adoption of such approaches. Lessons learnt through the project will also feed into furthering European policy (particularly Europe 2020) and input to future delivery of the European structural funds. The project will also develop an approach for assessing the benefits of such schemes, by relating cost savings to the public sector (through the more efficient management of the infrastructure) to the wider benefits delivered to society (through, for example, increased employment amongst target beneficiary groups). Finally the project aims to develop opportunities for transnational labour mobility both for social entrepreneurs and for stakeholders and beneficiaries of schemes.

II. PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT - LAST 6 MONTHS

2.1 What has been achieved in the last 6 months?

At a project level Claim 2 online completed, albeit late due mainly to issues the LPFLC had with salary costs. We are satisfied though that the work to (1) standardise Timesheets, payroll reporting and explanation of cost calculations will help speed up claims in future and (2) protect us from any unfavourable higher level EU audits requesting payback of re-imbursed costs in future.

Partners were duly re-imbursed their due amounts of ERDF as required for Payment Claim 2/

We took steps to try and add Canal Connections, an existing UK social enterprise in Yorkshire to the project. Work was done to produce draft re-application, though extra funding was deemed unlikely unless it could be transferred from existing partners.

We assessed the proposed SWT budget changes – and informed the JTS of this. A formal Budget Line Request will be made prior to PR4.

The 2nd Steering Group Meeting in Hainaut was a success and the LP took the opportunity to remind partners of their obligations with regard to controls and reporting.

The other main benefit from the meeting was that partners were able to work more transnationally. Again a number of discussions took place about the types of social enterprises operating across the project helped partners see the wider and differing types – and led to some to start to focus on additional activities and outcomes from the project (e.g. West Flanders move to include volunteering and SWT's interest in the European employability qualification)

Other important group discussions/decisions centred on project evaluation where the best methods for monitoring outcomes for individual projects and G&BF as a whole took place. The intention is for partners (SWT, STCC and Hainaut to lead on this) to agree on a suitable 'standard' solution.

Another initiative set underway was the setting up of a training skills group which will enable partners to consolidate knowledge and understanding of what's on offer in each country – and start to work towards agreeing the wider European 'standard' qualifications we want to offer to trainees. CRT will lead on this action.

Recruitment of volunteer Communications Manager started – though this was hindered by the formal processes taking longer than expected and short timeframes involved with term times (these volunteers are being recruited from Universities)

Encouraged small groupings of geographically close partners to discuss commonalities (eg Sambre/Hainaut) and (CRT / Scottish Canals / SWT)

Canal & River Trust (CRT)

Chris Bailey attended a series of meetings with the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership to talk about accredited training – that will not only apply to volunteers and unemployed trainees locally, but can be 'rolled out' across Europe. This links to the group set up as a result of the Hainaut meeting. He also met with meeting with Scottish Canals & Scottish Waterways Trust (1) to assess progress on G&BF activities and (2) to help with preparation of brief about WP1 & WP4 to agree progress with SWT for presentation at the Hainaut SG meeting.

At the local project level employment and deployment of volunteers in the Churnet Valley works continued. Balsam removal has been a major work type completed in the period.

The summer season was not the correct time for hedge laying, planting and other vegetation management. These tasks will recommence in the Autumn and Winter.

The 'Big Pull event' (which sees links to STCC work in WP2A4) saw large areas of Himilayan Balsam plants being pulled up around the River Churnet and Caldon Canal and the initiative has been very successful.

Future tree management work and habitats suitable for bird and bat boxes have been identified and will be delivered during the winter months. 288m of hedgerow has been laid by volunteers and 300 hedgerow whips were planted before the summer by volunteers.

West Flanders moved from the "planning stage" of their conservation plans, to delivery of the actual work by the hired social economy enterprises. Social economy companies were deployed to coppice willows, mow the water buffers dryer areas and thin out hard to reach forests. These projects were delivered in accordance with the nature management plans. Further to advice and guidance given by G&BF partners in Lichfield and Hainaut a second aspect of social economy was put into action to enhance both nature and landscape values in West-Flanders. Volunteers were engaged to coppice willows and to help the amphibians in West-Flanders. This was also done in collaboration with social economy enterprises.

Hainaut proceeded extremely well and at the SG meeting in Hainaut (17-18 Apr) two fields visits took place at Forestaille (Lobbes) and Delsamme (La louvière) where G&BF partners were shown current activities and expected developments. They also met trainees and talked to the press about the G&BF project.

The Charleroi pilot action started its operation and technical support was specially set up to help this structure. This was the last of the 3 Hainaut Enterprises as part of Action 5 to start. Work is being done in collaboration with the 2 other structures and Hainaut have started to share good practices through a series of meetings and exchange visits.

Hainaut participated in a symposium on social economy and territorial development (April 13) They developed training with sub-partners about better food education in deprived areas and attended a number of meetings about health promotion, and bio gardening for better quality food in central Hainaut. They also visited bio gardening business in Hainaut. Also on this theme they investigated possible development of a Bio gardening business incubator in Hainaut and visited an existing one in Liege region

In WP3 Hainaut authorized the opening of a school section called "certificate of proficiency in horticulture and market gardening" organized under a school network called "promotion sociale" 10 meetings took place to reorganize teaching sheets and agreement between school and Ferme Delsamme was approved in May. Courses are planned to start in November 2013.

Hainaut successfully kitted out their Enterprises with the following investments: (Investment 4 - Charleroi) Tooling €24k Truck €25k. (Investment 5 - Delsamme) Refurbishment of existing greenhouse and new one €39k (Investment 6 - Forestaille) Tractor €31k

South Tipperary (STCC) managed delivery of the River Communities Arts Project and a new communities arts project which is part of the EU Art partnership Scheme. They handled tenders from Organisations offering to deliver these actions.

Community Networking continued with work on heritage value enhancement, biodiversity projects, tree planting / hedge laying.

They worked on the River Tidy Town Pilot (part of and based on Irelands national "Tidy Towns" completion) which encourages learning from each other's experiences to date and implementing best practice from neighbouring towns.

Further River communities festivals and events were planned – including Festival Cluain Meala Aug 2013 and their major Event tied in to the G&BF SG meeting in October the conference "Developing the socio economic potential of waterway corridors" (which will be reported on fully in Prog Rep 4)

Work to identify and map all existing access points along 56 Km's of the River Suir was completed Further developments along the river included the audit of the River for suitability to develop a Canoe/ Kayak trail along between Cahir, Clonmel and Carrick on Suir. Priority Access points were identified for development. The Rural Recreation Officer is working with community group – Clonmel Canoe Club and other river users and the approach is based on Canoe Northern Ireland successful format.

River Suir Youth Access Project continued its work encouraging the development of social inclusion project. The partnership made up of the Local Authority, Fisheries Board, youth services, Volunteer employment Council and other relevant stakeholders focused on an engagement / training programme amongst young people at risk focused on the River Suir.

The feasibility Study to identify the potential of Suir Island as a Community & Recreation Resource in Clonmel was commissioned.

Scottish Waterways Trust (SWT) appointed 5 staff to run Canal College Courses (2 co-ordinators and 3 Consultants) The first courses started 1st June. They prepared the detailed modules and ensured safety aspects were in place

They recruited for the two programmes (training must be 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETS) and also recruited 6 volunteer mentors to work alongside trainees. This mentoring of trainees is one other aspect which will link to the volunteering recommendations in G&BF.

A consultant was appointed to draft an Evaluation Action plan – to measure the key outcomes we need to deliver in the project – Following discussions in Hainaut and later it was agreed that this is to be rolled out across G&BF in consultation with partners so that a standardised evaluation across the project takes place.

SWT worked with Scottish Canals to plan the induction days and 'How Canals Work' module of programme 1 on their waterways (and using SC staff) They had to apply to Historic Scotland for permission to carry out work on the culverts at the historic Edinburgh lock flight. All the above took longer than expected so SWT decided to switch some of their heritage content to other areas rather than incur further delays.

2.2 How has it been communicated to the project's stakeholders/target groups?

A Flyer was produced for partners to use to promote the project. It is in Microsoft Publisher format so that partners can adapt the 'generic' version locally (e.g. translating or putting more emphasis on their activities) This template will be used throughout the life of the project.

Planning for STCC's Conference in October included pre-event publicity (which made use of the Conference brochure and G&BF Flyer)

SWT's trainee celebrations (attended by the Provost & local councillors) promoted the Canal College / G&BF work and successes and generated associated press articles & publicity. SWT's Newsletters continue promotion of their activities on a regular basis.

Chris Barnett attended the North Sea Region Annual Conference in Halmstad and as part of this event visited schools and learned about entrepreneurial training and also talked to other delegates about G&BF (and Numericanal) projects.

On the 26th May, in Roeselare, West Flanders promoted the influence of Europe in Mid-West-Flanders. G&BF was highlighted as one of the different projects organised within the region and visitors were able to ask questions on all of the projects. In total over 1000 people visited the event.

Hainaut participated in a conference on Agroecology and established contacts for widening their network and collaboration. They also set up a "green and blue intelligence" programme and 8 'intelligence updates' were sent on a weekly basis from April 2013 to June 2013 (to 14 different public structures)

Signage at Caldon (CRT) was installed promoting volunteer works locally as well as G&BF at a European level. Time taken to ensure rules met etc

SWT held a seminar inviting stakeholders to agree the content, outputs etc they would like to see in Programme 1 and also to assist in the induction /training modules such as how canals work.

Hainaut's SG meeting gained publicity in the local press including a video article featuring Project Manager Stephane Ramu. A journalist attended the meeting and interviewed partners from across the partnership who explained what they were getting from the project. Other promotional work organised by Hainaut included Regional blogs: for exchange of good practices which were setup and updated with activities :

<http://maraiachonspourinsertion.wordpress.com/> (12 articles published) and

<http://maraiachonsetdocumentation.wordpress.com> (11 articles published)

The Flickr site for the Green and Blue project continues to show photos on activities organized in Hainaut for Green and Blue Futures

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/greennandbluefutures/>

2.3 What problems have been encountered?

Administratively most partners struggled with OLF and had some initial misunderstandings in use of the system. But apart from probably needing to set the claim submission times (from partners to us as LP) earlier in future, we hope to have learned lessons as everyone got used to the system. We did appreciate the help we have received from Catalin to overcome certain problems.

Most control issues with claim were due to incomplete or unsatisfactory FLC work on claims and no tallying of hours to timesheets and poor reconciliation with payroll reports setting out the claimable salary costs that could be included. The LPFLC Controller has had to revert some claims to partner / FLC's in order to get the improved / revised Control Reports and necessary documentation from them. The quality of some FLC's has been questioned by the LPFLC and he will have highlighted this in his reporting. But again, we are confident that the measures put in place by the LP and LPFLC will address future problems.

Overall, staff costs will be lower than originally planned due to resourcing issues in project management deployment of volunteers and more staff costs will be claimed later than expected. The partnership has had some misfortune regarding staff resourcing, including the departures of the STCC project manager and the Sambre project co-ordinator during the period.

Investments for all partners are slower than anticipated due to a slower start to the project than envisaged and uncertainty of what can be included.

This staff departure in Sambre had caused some misunderstandings in work activities and the claim process but this is hopefully being rectified by visit from Chris Bailey and employment of a new co-ordinator who is a native English speaker.

The lack of input from Scottish Canals was disappointing though we are now satisfied about their commitment to the project. SC staff have met with SWT and CRT staff and explained their plan to contribute as planned. Engagement of a staff member working on their VWP took place and they have assisted SWT in the Canal College induction training. They were also due to attend the Tipperary SG meeting and also deliver a presentation at the Conference so we are happy that other G&BF partners will be aware of their role and contribution to the project going forward.

Budget complications for SWT – caused by late decision on other funding (not EU) affecting their earlier activities. This had knock on effect and delays to staff recruitment. Further effect as small number of existing staff had to also help deliver training. Also the Falkirk programme work was delayed by needing tree removal from lock flight and other environmental restraints.

We have been delayed putting reports prepared through WVP1, presentations & summaries from the workshops, on the project website as this has not been set up as yet. As reported elsewhere we will catch up on this following appointment of volunteers to handle G&BF communications tasks. We will supervise production of the first project newsletter, which will feature the Activities undertaken in the workshops. Opportunities will be taken to promote actions and their findings / results at international events and via press / media articles. General awareness raising regarding the project, its objectives and the role of EU funding will also take place during this phase of activity.

Some partners have reported that not many results can be communicated at this stage of the project e.g. West Flanders commented " ..as the projects that are being performed are not the main interest of the press"....As soon as the neighbourhood green projects is able to produce its first results, this will be communicated through general press releases and the magazine of the city of Roeselare"

2.4 Were there any changes in the implementation plan?

No significant changes were made. The only potential deviations will be at a detail (e.g. Activity location) or Budget Line level

The proposed SWT budget changes will affect locations of work or means of delivering the Canal College courses - not the content as set out in the Application

'Canal Connections' – a Social Enterprise based on and around the Leeds& Liverpool Canal in West Yorkshire – attended the Hainaut Partner Meeting in May. They have a lot to offer the project given their involvement in training, education, and personal development of young people on and around waterways and there has been a great deal of mutual exchanges of advice and experiences between them and G&BF partners. They were keen to get involved more formally with the project and we asked them to submit a proposal setting out how they can complement work in the project and add to the transnational learning of the partnership. LP is to work on this action.

Communications activities slow to start but should speed up with appointment of volunteer Comms person (setting up web, newsletters etc and also encouraging other partners)

2.5 What was the added value of working transnationally?

Almost all partners reported they had learned a great deal about the social economy and its different types of operating to deliver social and economic outcomes. One more specific finding has been the strength of volunteering in the UK and how the changes through G&BF have set in place concrete plans to trial and introduce such structures elsewhere. West Flanders has reported this in their Progress Report.

Skills training is another of the lessons learned from the UK and Walloon partners who have lead on the serious consideration of setting up a recognized validation system of the skills people learn from working within a social economy enterprises and volunteers. SWT picked up a lot from partner meeting in Hainaut (the site visits were particularly enlightening) and with Hainaut and CRT will meet and will look further at issues re European qualification for employability.

Other than these specific examples we can report that there is a lot of enthusiasm about the work being done in the project – and partners are genuinely benefiting from the transnational exchanges and collaboration. We are aware that the formal structuring of these sub-groups is behind schedule but that informal exchanges are taking place and the LP will ensure these are in place by the next reporting deadline.

2.6 Comments from the Lead Partner

Sadly we have to confirm the death (on Sept 29th) of Glenn Millar. Glenn was the inspiration behind Green & Blue Futures and the designated Project Manager. Many tributes were paid to him and all involved in the project appreciated the kind words offered by Mr Louwers and staff at the JTS.

Chris Bailey aimed to visit all the partners before October 2013 (all but one achieved by this deadline) to ensure partners understood the tasks ahead and stay focused on the transnational requirements of the project. In addition he will be assisting them with setting up the stakeholder groups as required, utilising his experience in these through his work with various partnerships/stakeholder groups at CRT.

In CRT some T&A costs have been included for September – though these will not be reflected in Timesheets for Sept.

Scottish Canals' activities in G&BF are not planned to start in earnest until late 2013 and they are completing the process of appointing staff to work on their prescribed project activities. We (the LP and FLC) had however expressed our dissatisfaction that they have not attended any project meetings to date – and assurances were given that they will attend the next meeting in Tipperary (Oct 2013) and contribute fully to the transnational work of the partnership. Their task in WP2 (to establish a Social Enterprise Zone as an incubator for social enterprises), has to be extended to other partners as the project progresses so we stressed the importance of delivering this in good time.

2.7 Changes in the contact details (if any) of the Lead Partner organisation and/or project management team

As reported in PR2, Chris Barnett is responsible for co-ordinating the project, delivery of Progress Reports and Finance Claims and providing liaison with partners, the FLC and the JTS.

Chris Bailey has been working part time since Sept on the project overseeing the CRT activities locally – and since Nov 2012 has been engaged to oversee delivery of project activities across the partnership.

III. MONITORING OF QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

Name	Score	Comments/Justification
Level of cooperation and partnership building (experience/ knowledge transfer, trust, confidence, learning)	3	The co-operation amongst partners is very good and clear areas of learning and real co-operation have already been identified. The score is lower than could be as we recognise that this informal and infrequent co-operation needs to be put on a more formal and regular basis This has not really happened as yet. The stakeholder groups involvement potential is limited though SWT have made use of local stakeholder groups to input to Canal College activities to influence training needs they identify. Hainaut have made good efforts to look at the Walloon region's focus on social enterprises and set out what they can do with their enterprises set up through G&BF.
Project clustering activities (synergies with other projects, networks development, institutional linkages)	2	We have good links to Organisations who have worked on projects in the North Sea Region and continue to maintain links and co-operation with them. Certain links through the NWE project Numericanal may emerge (e.g. through sharing communications deliverers) though there are possibly too many differences in the project content and aims to make too much of this. There are limited opportunities for new technologies to emerge. The main opportunities involve the relatively new concept of social enterprises to deliver the variety of benefits it can offer.
New ways of doing, thinking, working / new technologies	3	We have already seen good exchanges of ideas leading to the (previously untried) introduction of activities such as volunteering to also deliver such benefits. The project has made progress and inclusion of these groups is key to a lot of the work being done in the project. The UK based partners in particular have been working with civil society groups for some time - and British Waterways move to become the Canal & River Trust means they are very focused on inclusion of such groups to support the Organisation.
Involvement of civil society, community, ethnic, rural/urban groups	4	South Tipperary's work in G&BF is specifically related to garnering greater involvement by community groups and West Flanders, Hainaut and Sambre are operating a mix of rural/urban social enterprises. West Flanders have indicated they want to involve volunteering as a result of their findings through G&BF and this extends their involvement with civil society and community groups.
Involvement of private sector	2	The only area where we cannot say there is any marked increase in involvement is from ethnic groups - though some of the activities with disadvantaged/community groups along the River Suir in Tipperary are particularly aimed at Traveller communities This is currently somewhat limited though West Flanders are hiring social economy companies to fulfill their expectations from the nature management plans. In Flanders these have to compete and be profitable in their own right.
Building on results of previous projects	3	The project has been informed by some of the lessons learned in the Interreg 4B North Sea Region project 'Waterways for Growth' which looked at sustainable development of Inland Waterways - and featured work with volunteer/community groups. CRT and South Tipperary were both involved in the Interreg 4C project 'Waterways Forward' and a number of the

good practices and policy recommendations identified there have been incorporated in this project. South Tipperary's River Suir Action Plan was a direct result of their work in Waterways Forward and details the actions to be carried out. A number of these relate directly to actions carried out in G&BF.

IV. DATE AND SIGNATURE OF THE LEAD PARTNER

The information and documentation in this report and its attachments give a fair and correct description.

Name (in capitals) CHRIS BARNETT
Date and signature 12/11/13
Position in the Lead Partner Economic Development Officer
organisation
Date and signature of the Lead Partner 12/11/13



