

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL



# Nature Smart Cities across the 2 Seas (NSCiti2S)

Interreg 2 Seas – Programme, Project & Investment Brief



Programme, Project and investment background

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## Interreg 2 Seas – Programme, Project & Investment Brief

### Background

Interreg 2 Seas<sup>1</sup> 2014-2020 is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme covering England, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium (Flanders). The Programme is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and has a total of €241m to co-finance projects in the 2014 - 2020 period.

The overall programme objective is to develop an innovative, knowledge and research based, sustainable and inclusive 2 Seas area, where natural resources are protected and the green economy is promoted. These objectives are mutually supportive of Cambridge City Council’s Corporate Objectives.

The Programme area covers the coastal regions along the southern North Sea and the Channel area. Four different European Union Member States are involved: England, France, the Netherlands and Belgium, and the total area represented by the programme is 88,000

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.interreg2seas.eu/en/content/about-programme>

square kilometres. This makes it one of the largest cross-border Programmes in Europe (see map of the 2 Seas Programme area in Figure 1 below).



Figure 1 Map of the Interreg 2 Seas programme area

The Interreg 2 Seas strategy is based upon four thematic priorities which are defined in four ‘priority axes’. In turn, these are broken down into seven Specific Objectives. Both elements are Programme-specific but are consistent with the broader thematic objectives and investment priorities as defined by the EU. The four priority axes and their corresponding specific objectives are as follows:

- Priority Axis 1: Technological and social innovation
  - S.O 1.1: Improve the framework conditions for the delivery of innovation, in relation to smart specialisation
  - S.O 1.2: Increase the delivery of innovation in smart specialisation sectors
  - S.O 1.3: Increase the development of social innovation applications to make more efficient and effective local services to address the key societal challenges in the 2 Seas area
- Priority Axis 2: Low carbon technologies
  - S.O 2.1: Increase the adoption of low-carbon technologies and applications in sectors that have the potential for a high reduction in greenhouse gas emissions
- Priority Axis 3: Adaptation to climate change
  - S.O 3.1: Improve the ecosystem-based capacity of 2 Seas stakeholders to climate change and its associated water-related effects
- Priority Axis 4: Resource efficient economy
  - S.O 4.1: Increase the adoption of new solutions for a more efficient use of natural resources and materials
  - S.O 4.2: Increase the adoption of new circular economy solutions in the 2 Seas area

Southend of Sea Borough Council invited Cambridge City Council to participate in working towards collaboration, under the project title **Nature Smart Cities** across the 2 Seas as part of the **Adaptation to climate change** Priority Axis and specific objective. The Council is one of 11 partners working together under the Nature Smart Cities project.

## **Partners**

Of the 11 project partners, seven are cities, one is a regional association, and 3 are academic institutions. Amongst other cross-programmatic activities, the city partners will be responsible for delivering seven Green Infrastructure (GI) Climate Investment Pilot Projects, and the academics will be responsible for developing a new business model for Local Authorities (LAs).

### **City partners**

The city partners are as follows:

- Southend on Sea Borough Council
- City Of Bruges
- City of the Hague
- City of Lille
- Municipality Kapelle
- Province of Antwerp
- Cambridge City Council
- The Zuidrand Regional Association

### **Academic partners**

The academic project partners are:

- Imperial College London
- Ghent University
- University of Antwerp

### **Observing partners**

There are also 15 'observer partners' (listed below) in the project who will be engaged to further test and validate the Business Model, methodology and approval process.

- Kent County Council
- Municipality of Aartselaar
- Municipality of Borsbeek
- Municipality of Edegem
- Municipality of Hove
- Municipality of Lint
- Municipality of Kontich
- City of Mortsel

- Flanders Environment Agency
- Province of West Flanders
- Essex County Council
- Environment Agency
- Waterboard Scheldestromen
- Delfland Water Authority

Additionally, there is a 'Follower Cities network' in place as part of the project to increase dissemination and impact of the findings, and to add further opportunity for testing of the Business Model, methodology and approval process.

## **Nature Smart Cities across the sea (NSCiti2S)<sup>2</sup>**

Start date 12/7/18 End date 22/2/22

### **Common challenge**

A clear knowledge gap exists for LAs that prevents them from deploying GI on a scale that enables urban landscapes to adapt to the future impacts of climate change and build more sustainable communities. Cities and towns are not investing in GI and the valuation tools for justifying GI on economic, social, cultural and environmental grounds are simply not being used by LAs. Instead LAs are relying on EU and national subsidies, or are simply delivering GI projects on a 'one off' basis. The exceptions are capital/larger cities (populations >550,000) that have access to more finance and resources than smaller urban areas. Urban areas <550,000 people are not investing in GI. Valuation tools for GI are simply not being used and LAs lack the ability to properly account for the direct cash benefits of GI. LAs need to be enabled to overcome market barriers to using their own city-finance to fund GI climate investments and step away from subsidy dependence.

### **Overall objective**

The overall objective of the project is to enable LAs in the 2 Seas area to use their own 'city' finance to fund GI climate investment programmes\*, thereby reducing and removing reliance on subsidies to fund GI projects in cities and towns. Effectively this seeks to mainstream a self-financing method for LAs to fund GI projects by demonstrating that such projects can contribute positive net gains to LA bottom lines. We will enable more investment for adaptation to climate change measures by showing how LAs can acquire direct and 'cash' benefits as a result of their GI climate investment, whilst also benefitting from indirect and non-cash benefits – the added value of GI (social, community, environmental).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.interreg2seas.eu/en/nsciti2s>

\*Defined as types of GI and ecosystem-based solutions that can be deployed to build climate resilience to flooding, drought, and heat stress across an urban landscape, and delivered on more than a 'one-off' project/development basis (i.e. a pipeline of GI projects).

### **Main outputs**

- The main output will be a new Business Model that enables LAs in the 2 Seas area to understand how they can self-finance GI climate investments and reduce dependency on subsidies to build climate resilience in their towns and cities by (WP1). The project will also deliver:
- A step-by-step methodology and approval process (toolkit) for LAs to apply the Business Model to their own GI climate investments (WP1)
- 7 GI pilot projects (2x BE, 1x FR, 2x NL, 2x UK) that help develop, test, and validate the Business Model (WP3)
- Nature Smart Capacity Building Programmes that build the capacity of decision-makers at 75 LAs to help them apply the direct benefits and 'cash' benefits of GI climate investments to their own GI projects (WP2 and WP5)
- 7 new strategies (1 per city partner) detailing how the city partners will increase the amount of green space in their urban areas between 2020 and 2050, providing a long-term purpose for the Business Model and fostering collaborative work as 'Green Twinned Cities' (WP2)

### **Work packages (WP)**

The project is organised around five work packages. Below a short overview of each work package is set out.

#### **WP1 – Business model, Methodology and Approval Process**

WP1 will design a new Business Model for LAs that will help justify the expenditure required to finance GI climate investments in urban environments with populations <550,000.

The work will identify and articulate the direct benefits and 'cash' benefits for the 'investor' (the LA) and demonstrate how GI can be delivered as a net contributor to city finances and reduce LA dependence on subsidies to build climate resilience in urban areas via GI climate investments.

It will link in to the indirect and non-cash benefits of GI (i.e. social, environmental, economic and cultural) – collectively referred to as the 'four quadrant benefits' for GI climate investments.

#### **WP2 – Building nature smart capacity**

The aim of WP2 is to provide LA decision makers with the necessary capacity to understand how they can use and apply the new Business Model, methodology and approval process in

WP1. This will justify the economic outlay required to self-finance GI climate investments across their urban landscapes.

### **WP3 – Green infrastructure climate investment pilots**

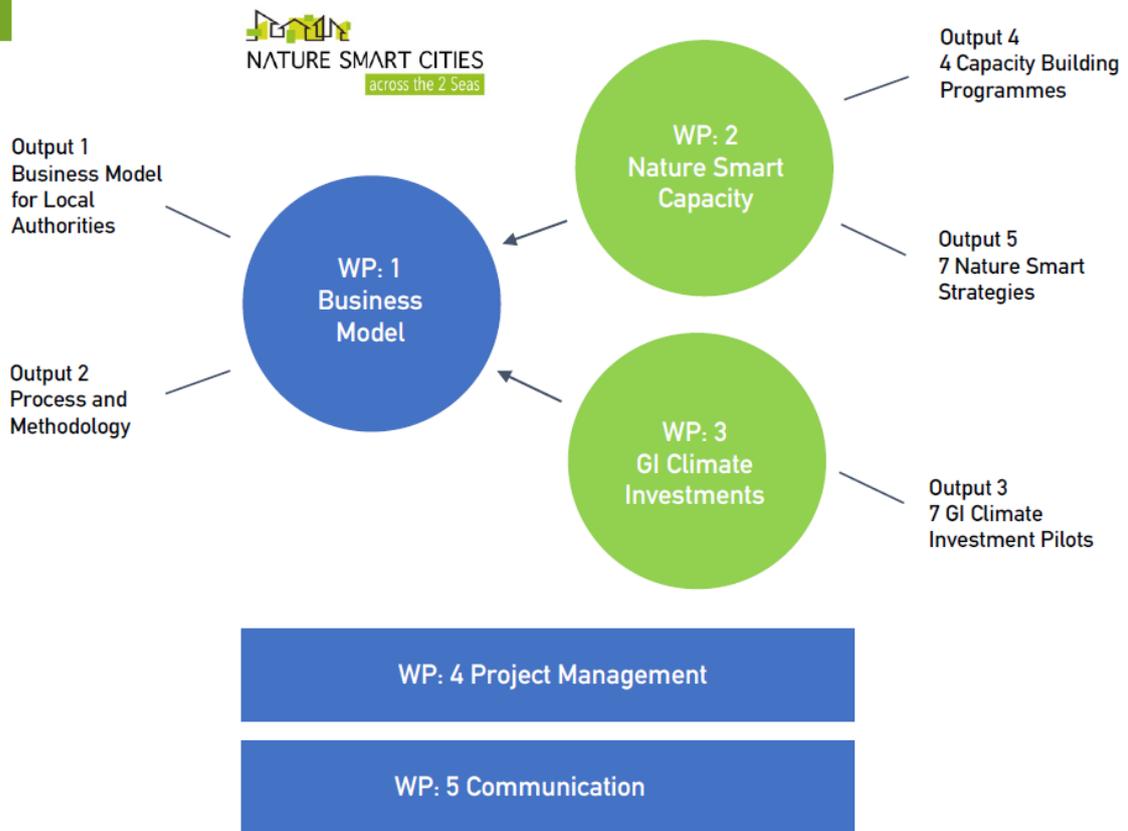
The city partners will implement new GI Climate Investment Strategies that detail how they will work as ‘Green Twinned Cities’ and increase the amount of green space in their urban landscapes by 10% between 2020-2050.

### **WP4 – Project management**

Southend-On-Sea, the lead partner is an experienced organisation in delivering successful Interreg projects and will be responsible for the overall management (OM) of the NSCiti2S project and coordination of the partnership. They will oversee the day-to-day activities of the project, providing a quality assurance role, and will provide partners with guidance in relation to producing reports and financial information as required by the 2 Seas programme.

### **WP5 – Communication**

This WP encapsulates all common, cross-border project communications under the Nature Smart Cities project. It has the aim to maximise the projects impact and provide excellent return on investment from the Interreg 2 Seas programme through its communication and dissemination activities. The overall objective will be to help LAs situated across the 2 Seas area to understand how they can utilise the project outputs (methodology, justification process, and business case) to build more climate resilience across their urban landscapes by approving GI climate investments.



### Cambridge City Council’s contribution to the Work Packages

Cambridge City Council’s GI climate investment is to increase the City’s canopy cover by 2% in WP3. It will also work with other partners to develop the business model in WP1; build nature smart capacity in WP2; and support all partners in WP4 & WP5.

## **Cambridge City Council's GI climate investment pilot description**

The Project aims to build on Cambridge City Council's tree strategy, and seeks to increase tree canopy cover by:

- Building partnerships with businesses, LAs, the health sector, farming, wildlife, and environmental organisations;
- Informing and influencing decision-making through proactive, evidence-based outreach;
- Championing innovative solutions and approaches to achieve a high quality environment; and
- Developing and sharing best practice to demonstrate how our project can be realised.

It will aim to increase tree canopy cover at both ward and land use-based levels, whilst also targeting social inequity.

Our tree canopy cover target can be supported by protection of the existing tree stock to promote natural growth. As the canopies increase so will total tree cover, although such increases will be constrained by tree loss, natural wastage, and damage by pests and disease. Protection can be reinforced through policy enforcement and development, supported by robust evidence bases.

We aim to increase our evidence base by quantifying and estimating the ecosystem service value of trees in the City. We also aim to assess tree cover in relation to other relevant ward level data to help prioritise actions. Datasets to investigate could include: index of multiple deprivation; public health performance indicators; air quality; urban heat island impacts; and surface water flooding.

Management of species diversity and placing the right tree in the right place are important considerations when planting, as these allow resilience to be built into the urban forest. Whilst we know the composition of our existing urban forest in terms of species, further information on age structure and condition could usefully be gathered through engaging the public via large-scale web-based data collecting activities (such as Treezilla and I-tree) to inform our natural capital measurements.

Enhancing tree canopy cover will focus on creating partnerships with institutions and on guidance for residents, providing advice on how they can best protect and look after their tree stock, schemes to assist in management and maintenance, and to support tree planting amongst the different ownership groups.

