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Europe joins forces in battle to turn cities green

An ambitious collaboration between eight European Union member states is aiming to help cities adapt to the effects of climate change.

Dr Jeremy Carter from The University of Manchester, which is providing academic leadership for the project, will assist in the production of adaptation action plans for 10 cities and regions across the continent.

Managed by the Town and Country Planning Association, the project will raise awareness among local and regional authorities about which neighbourhoods are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

It will also devise approaches to help them respond.

According to Dr Carter, heat waves, flooding and subsidence will be the main threat to cities which have not adapted to climate change.

Included on the wide-ranging agenda will be proposals to adapt cities by using urban green spaces, waterways and lakes.

"The need for cities to adapt to climate change is enormous," he said.

"If we protect and enhance green and blue space and encourage sustainable urban development then a viable future for our cities can be achieved.

"The differences between those cities which chose to adapt and those which do not will be stark.

"Research at Manchester University's Centre for Urban Regional Ecology (CURE) has already found that an increase of 10 per cent in urban green cover would be enough to keep temperature close to current levels, even accounting for the increases predicted by climate modellers.

"Greening the city is not just about coping with climate change but also has health, social and economic benefits too."

Dr Carter is also working on a related project known as "Eco Cities" which will develop Greater Manchester's first integrated climate change adaptation strategy.

Eco Cities is a partnership between the University's School of Environment and Development, Bruntwood Estates and other organisations.

The project is known as Green and Blue Space Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in Urban Areas and EcoTowns or GRaBS.

TCPA Chief Executive, Gideon Amos said: "In a highly competitive bidding process we are delighted that the GRaBS project has won funding from the European Union European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) INTERREG IVC Programme."

"From Sweden to Slovakia, Greece to Manchester, Lithuania to Austria, and Sicily to Sutton the 14 project partners, drawn from eight member states, represent a broad spectrum of authorities and climate change challenges, all with varying degrees of strategic policy and experience.

"By sharing best practice and advancing the knowledge and expertise of partner staff through the project, regional and local municipalities, decisions makers, politicians and communities, will be able to make a more informed and strategic response to climate change adaptation."

Dr Carter added: "Cities like Stockholm, Malmo, Amsterdam are much better adapted to climate change than some urban areas in Europe – there are important lessons to be learnt. Great strides can be made."

"Adaptation to climate change has up to recently been largely neglected by policy makers - and the press.

"The focus has been much more firmly on emissions reductions. But adaptation is as equally important as some degree of climate change impacts is inevitable."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Project partners are:

- *Town and Country Planning Association (Lead Partner)
- * University of Manchester
- *City District of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer (Amsterdam)
- *London Borough of Sutton

- *Province of Genoa (Italy)
- *City of Malmo (Sweden)
- *Regional Environment Centre for Eastern Europe (Slovakia).
- *Municipality of Kalamaria (Greece)
- *Etnambiente (Italy)
- *University of Catania (Italy)
- *South East England Development Agency
- *Southampton City Council
- *Klaipeda University Coastal Research and Planning Institute (Lithuania)
- *Provincial Government of Styria, Department of Spatial Planning (Austria)

Dr Carter and Gideon Amos are available for comment

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