

**SAUL - Press Release**

**27 June 2006**

**London, United Kingdom**

**Vital Urban Landscapes – towards a new quality of life in city regions**

Over 150 delegates, including the Mayor of Amsterdam, Mr Job Cohen, will meet over the next three days at the Final Conference of the *Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes (SAUL)* project in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. They are here to celebrate the successful conclusion of a project that has tested innovative spatial planning and design solutions in a range of local projects across North West Europe. The focus of all of this work has been the transnational sharing of knowledge and learning for the benefit of the local projects, individuals and organisations involved, but also for the economic and social benefits to the European states involved. The conference will also provide the opportunity to look forward to new co-operations.

The metropolitan city regions of Europe are facing major challenges as a result of the unprecedented speed of change in recent decades. As a result of globalisation, economic restructuring and changing social patterns in city regions, land use in general no longer conforms to traditional concepts of either *city parks* or *countryside*. These environments, described as *New Urban Landscapes*, are characterised by brownfield land and urban sprawl, with the growth of out of town shopping malls, new focal points around airports, major transport corridors, the growth of satellite settlements and surrounding areas of agriculture and forestry that no longer sustain their former economies. They play a key role in people's quality of life.

*SAUL* has addressed the challenges of these landscapes through local projects which have demonstrated the benefits of engaging a wide partnership in open space environments, including the public and private sectors, and ordinary people. The project has also discovered the unique significance of *New Urban Landscapes* in developing liveable city-regions at the heart of a competitive Europe's future economy.

The SAUL Final Conference is hosted by the SAUL Partnership with the Mayor of Amsterdam on behalf of SAUL Partner the Municipality of Amsterdam, with the assistance of Staatsbosbeheer, the Dutch government organisation with responsibility for managing the natural heritage. The SAUL partnership is led by Groundwork London, the regional arm of Groundwork UK in the capital.

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## Notes to editors

1. The SAUL project was launched in June 2003. From then until June 2006 the six Metropolitan regions in North West Europe have worked together to address four key areas:
  - The vital role of socially inclusive spaces in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions
  - Regional identity
  - Planning through partnerships
  - The transnational value of the 'learning region' approach
2. The Conference will include the launch of the SAUL Final Report, which will explain the project's findings in more depth. It will also include excursions to SAUL projects around Amsterdam and the first showing of the SAUL film, illustrating the project's 'Messages to Europe' (see SAUL Final Report Factsheet) through projects from each of the six Regions.
3. The SAUL project is funded by INTERREG IIIB North West Europe programme, a European Regional Development initiative that is focused on transnational cooperation to address territorial development issues.

**For further information, please contact Martin Jones or Rhiannon Lewis at Groundwork London on +44 (0)20 7922 1230**  
[martinR.jones@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:martinR.jones@groundwork.org.uk) or  
[rhiannon.lewis@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:rhiannon.lewis@groundwork.org.uk)

