



## Small Towns II

A large proportion of the people in the Northern Periphery live in small towns and many of these communities are in long-term retreat. Building strong clusters of towns in remote fragile regions is a priority concern of the European Spatial Development Perspective but it requires a long-term commitment. This project is an extension of the current TOWNS NPP project which encourages the regeneration of networks of towns using 'bottom-up' planning and self-help, with each town seeking to advance through the work of voluntary groups drawn from the local business and community sectors. In this way, experiences and expertise are pooled and disseminated with other communities both locally and transnationally. However, in order to add to the results of the original project, the Small Towns II project places a greater emphasis on youth involvement.

### Objectives

Whilst the proposed extension aims principally to continue and consolidate the cumulative regeneration and collaborative work of the partners, it is also intended to focus on two particular areas of excellence – youth involvement and pan-European experience. In the first, each partner will adopt a different element of small town participation by young people and seek to demonstrate ways in which such engagement can help motivate and bond youth to their home locality. Themes such as sport and culture will be used to develop different models of participation and transnational collaboration and exchange will be central to all themes.



## Project activities

Experience shows that action programmes rooted in citizen engagement and community priorities can be deployed towards stabilising and eventually reversing decline. The TOWNS Partners remain committed to identify new ways and means of fostering whole town regeneration. These have been revealed as a series of processes, supplemented with a 'toolkit' of interventions and actions capable of wider application to other communities. All planning is ultimately an investment in the youth of the NPP area and measures which strengthen their participation and commitment to home localities and the benefits of small town living will be encouraged.

The project will support progress in participating towns by benchmarking their starting positions. In each case, the partnership will look to encourage greater confidence and local ownership of the future, and to chart each community's achievements as it progresses. The continuation of a spiral of improvement is the objective with each town at different starting points and seeking improvement at its own pace. The project resources this process of change by the appointment of shared project officers to facilitate and service the local volunteer groups.

## Expected results

The Small Towns project will use a holistic and integrated approach to community development and regional spatial networks, while building on and applying the good experience of earlier NPP-funded projects (TOWNS, IMFTS and NRBK). The overall regeneration thrust will have additional and sustainable economic benefits for the pilot communities and other areas which can access the project processes/materials. With its cross-cutting theme of participation by young people, it will also have disproportionate benefit for youth (since this is a key population sector to retain and engage in the future of their home communities) and disadvantaged groups (inhabitants of remote settlements, the elderly etc) who are most vulnerable and at increased risk where depopulation and service retraction is continuing.

## Partners

Vasterbotten Association of Local Authorities - Sweden  
City of Lieksa (with the Regional Council of North Karelia) - Finland  
Town of Saarijärvi (with Jämsä and Viitasaari) - Finland  
Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise - Scotland  
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise - Scotland  
Inverness and Nairn Enterprise - Scotland  
Municipality of Strömsund - Sweden

## Project website

<http://www.smalltownnetworks.com>

### Measure

3.2

### Total Budget

929 682

### NPP Award

464 841

### Project Period

01/08/2005 – 31/01/2007

### Countries Involved

Sweden, Scotland, Finland

### Lead Partner

#### Organisation

Highland Council, Scotland  
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### Project leader

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