

Good Practice in Action

Principles to observe

Reflect existing designations and plans

Keep in mind the requirements of the designation, such as directives 6.1-6.4 for Natura 2000 sites. Integrate the sustainable tourism strategy into existing management plans.

Start by understanding the site

Base all that you do on a full knowledge of the site's needs and sensitivities. Carry out a detailed and complete inventory of natural and human resources, assessing their wellbeing and need for conservation, and potential to benefit from tourism.

Identify capacity limits

Decide whether, where and when there are limits to the number and types of visitor the site should receive in the future if the environment and heritage is not to be degraded. Consider environmental, social and inter-user capacity limits.

Know your existing visitors

Use surveys to understand exactly who is visiting the site at the moment, when, why and with what impact.

Select types of tourism to match resources and markets

Based on the assessment of needs, resources and markets, identify the kinds of tourism appropriate to the site in the future.

Undertake further research

If necessary, bring in new expertise to research areas under pressure and endangered species, to have a better idea of their vulnerability.

Workshop 1.1: Assessing resources, recognising vulnerability, choosing appropriate tourism

A good practice in action:

Tammisaari Archipelago National Park as a part of Natura 2000 site, Finland

Located in the western part of the archipelago of Uusimaa Province, the Tammisaari National Park (established in 1990) is a group of islands extending from the open marine area right across to the island of Älgö. The National Park is part of a much larger Natura 2000 area.

The area is under great pressure from different types of users: the large number of boats on the busy boat route between Helsinki and Hanko, guests or owners of summer cottages who use the site for outdoor recreation, land-owners with building rights. It has been necessary to regulate the site in order to minimise the impact on the natural and cultural environment.

A master plan has been set up. Its goal is to minimise disturbance to nature in the parts of the park which are open to the public. Several inventories have been conducted in order to gain a better overview of the site's resources and potential. Inventories were begun before the Park's creation and are still in progress. The park is also a subject of studies for students and scientists.

Research and inventories on habitats and species have led to the identification of the most fragile zones, leading, in turn, to restrictions in these areas. Thanks to the Water Regulation Law, water traffic has also been restricted in the most fragile areas.

In order to manage visitor impact, facilities are provided in the less sensitive areas. Restricted and closed areas are not equipped with any facilities to discourage visitors. Due to the presence of many rare and endangered bird species, access to islands and islets in the marine zone is prohibited during spring and summer. However, visitors are permitted to land on restricted areas on weekdays when a guide is present. The Park visitor centre is situated on the mainland in order to avoid too much boat traffic and to allow people easy access to information without taking a boat out.

Visitor surveys have been conducted in the park to determine when visitors are visiting the site, why and with what impact. The Park Authority also receives information from the Tourist Authorities who regularly carry out visitor surveys. The Park Visitor Survey aims to influence national policies for the allocation of more funding. Available resources are insufficient for the implementation of adequate visitor monitoring.

In 1996, Tammisaari National Park was awarded the European Diploma by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

Key words:

- **Inventory of natural resources**
- **Visitor survey**
- **Visitor management**
- **Identification of sensitive areas**

Secret of success

- ☞ **Nature inventory and research**
- ☞ **Reference to existing laws**
- ☞ **Identification of the most fragile areas**
- ☞ **Survey and management of visitors**

Principles to observe

Reflect existing designations and plans
Keep in mind the requirements of the designation, such as directives 6.1-6.4 for Natura 2000 sites. Integrate the sustainable tourism strategy into existing management plans.

Undertake further research

If necessary, bring in new expertise to research areas under pressure and endangered species, to have a better idea of their vulnerability.

Start by understanding the site

Base all that you do on a full knowledge of the site's needs and sensitivities. Carry out a detailed and complete inventory of natural and human resources, assessing their wellbeing and need for conservation, and potential to benefit from tourism.

Identify capacity limits

Decide whether, where and when there are limits to the number and types of visitor the site should receive in the future if the environment and heritage is not to be degraded. Consider environmental, social and inter-user capacity limits.

Select types of tourism to match resources and markets

Based on the assessment of needs, resources and markets, identify the kinds of tourism appropriate to the site in the future.

Workshop 1.1 : Assessing resources, recognising vulnerability, choosing appropriate tourism

A good Practice in action :

Eco-development, Ecotourism and Conservation in Nestos-Vistonis-Ismarida Wetlands, Greece :

Key words :

- Biodiversity
- Conservation problems
- Eco-development
- Ecotourism

The Nestos-Vistonis-Ismarida Wetlands are a large wetland complex along the northern coast of the Aegean Sea. All three wetlands are RAMSAR sites since 1974, SPAs since 1987 and, more recently, Natura 2000 sites. Wildlife is outstandingly rich and biodiversity is very high. However, the area is facing problems due to agricultural infrastructures, coastal housing areas, tourism, lagoon fisheries, the dumping of rubbish, pollution, hunting and road-building.

EPO (the Society for Protection of Nature and Eco-development) is a non-governmental organisation, founded in 1988 working for nature conservation and sustainable development in North East Greece.

EPO believes that conservation and eco-development must be based on sound knowledge. Since the beginning, EPO has carried out many scientific conservation and management studies into the area's flora and fauna, agricultural practices, the management of bio-topes and rare species, tourism infrastructures and traffic.

Since 1989, EPO runs its own "Nestos Nature Museum - Information Centre" and carries out many environmental education programmes, youth work camps, and seminars on biological farming, ecotourism and sustainable development.

The concept of conservation and ecotourism is being developed and promoted in large parts of the area. Nature trails, observation towers, kiosks, etc. have been put in place. The protection of some of the more sensitive areas has been improved by passive conservation measures (inaccessibility) and visitor management.

The bio-farming and grazing of traditional domestic animals is widely promoted as a strategy to protect core bio-topes from negative impacts of agriculture and, at the same time, to produce healthy food products in order to reinforce awareness amongst visitors and tourists.

The area has been advertised widely in Europe and ecotourism has become an important factor in the local economy and in further development strategies. EPO sees its role as a promoter of sustainable development and hopes to play an important part in the implementation of the third phase of the "EU Structural Development Programmes" and in the management and survey of the planned National Park.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Detailed scientific research to gain full knowledge of the site and the problems faced**
- ☞ **Promotion of traditional farming activities**
- ☞ **Ecotourism for economic and sustainable development**

Principles to observe

Involve all stakeholders from the beginning

Involve a wide range of local partners from the beginning. Consider holding an open forum at the outset. Make sure the strategy is based on a wide consultation between site managers, conservationists, tourism operators and local communities.

Establish partnership groupings

Take the strategy forward through establishing working groups and seminars. Encourage an association of local tourism professionals to become official partners responsible for the strategy.

Raise awareness and commitment

Promote widespread awareness of the strategy process. Involve local media. Organise field trips locally and to other areas. Ask all stakeholders to formally commit themselves to the strategy, including signing any resulting charter.

Allocate necessary resources

Allow sufficient time to create the strategy (minimum of 6 months). If necessary use external consultants to help with methodology, drafting and evaluation. Designate and train a specialist in sustainable tourism to co-ordinate and oversee the strategy.

Keep everyone involved and informed

Inform your partners at every stage. Have a wide discussion on early drafts. When finalised, launch the strategy officially through an event and promote early results and visible benefits.

Translate the strategy into an action plan and local charter

Adapt the charter to the local context and specificity of the region. With all the stakeholders, define actions to be implemented in order to achieve objectives of the charter. Define commitment of each partner, budget, and duration of each action. Translate it into a local charter and ask

Workshop 1.2: Creating a strategy based on consultation and partnership

A good practice in action:

The Zona Volcanica de la Garrotxa Nature Park: a strategy of collaboration and dialogue, Spain

Situated in the North East of Catalonia, the Zona Volcanica de la Garrotxa Nature Park covers an area of 12,000 ha with a population of 33,000. Wide consultation and ongoing dialogue with representatives from all sectors have led to unexpected results: an efficient partnership between the Park and the tourism industry, the use of local skills, an increased number of tourists, a rising respect for the environment and the increased satisfaction of the inhabitants.

At the beginning of the 1990s, tourism was increasing rapidly and the Park realised it was necessary to include tourism into its strategy, while taking into account nature protection. The Park's willingness to implement a sustainable tourism strategy made it logical for the Park to become a pilot park for the creation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

The Park decided it was necessary to create an independent body to be the interface between the Park and the local population. The AGTAT ("Asociacion la Garrotxa Terra d'Acolliment Turistic") was created at the Park's instigation in 1996 to organise and encourage sustainable tourism in the Park. Field trips to "Haut Languedoc" and "Vosges du Nord" French Regional Nature Parks and the exchange of experiences with similar structures were the first steps in the implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy.

The task could not be achieved without involving the local population and gaining the support of all the actors. The first action carried out by the AGTAT and the Park was to bring together and co-ordinate a network of associations and professionals. Through numerous meetings, seminars and workshops involving all the stakeholders, the organisation of the network led, step by step, to the definition of general trends. The network was to work on implementing sustainable tourism in the following areas: promotion, communication, information and training.

Financing these actions was necessary. The EU funding programmes, ADAPT and LEONARDO, enabled the implementation of the Charter, the publication of a guide on environmental management for tourist enterprises, and provided training for businesses and trainers.

A general inventory of the Garrotxa region was carried out by the University of Girona. This was the first stage of a more precise expertise conducted in 1999 by a working group accompanied by a French expert specialised in sustainable tourism and the implementation of the Charter, and who is still accompanying the group in the implementation of its programme.

At present, a strategy has been defined following many discussions, workshops and consultation with local representatives. A five year action plan is being finalised that will enable the Zona Volcanica de la Garrotxa Nature Park to present its application

Key words:

- Testing & implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism
- Dialogue & Consultation
- Partnership with public & private operators

for the European Charter. The next step will be to translate this into a local charter or convention for the Garrotxa region which will confirm the commitments made.

Secret of success

- ☞ **A designated co-ordinator, competent in sustainable tourism, at the disposal of the Park**
- ☞ **Ongoing consultation of all the stakeholders**
- ☞ **An independent body (AGTAT) to co-ordinate and bring together all the tourism actors**

Principles to observe

Seek evaluation and recognition for the strategy

Ask external consultants to evaluate the strategy and results or refer to official national or European assessment processes.

Use a range of direct action, incentives and controls

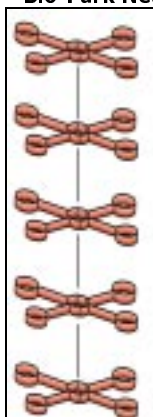
Include action to be undertaken directly by the site management, as well as incentives and controls on others. Use relevant local and regional laws and measures such as financial incentives, planning controls, labels and awards. Include corrective measures and actions to rectify problems as well as pursuing new opportunities.

At the outset, consider what kinds of indicators of performance and impact should be used to monitor the strategy and judge success.

Review the strategy every 3-5 years

See the strategy as a dynamic process. Seek to review it every 3 to 5 years.

Bio-Park Network Modelling Process



Monitoring and Indicator network

Interest Sites / Commercial Activities

Network of Trails

Arboreal Infrastructure

Stakeholder Network

Workshop 1.3: Implementing, evaluating and updating a sustainable tourism strategy. Relating it to national policy

A good practice in action:

Monchique Bio-Park Network, southern Portugal

Monchique, a part of southern Portugal's Algarve province, is a mountainous Mediterranean coastal hinterland eco-system containing cork-oak forests, cistus scrub, and eucalyptus. It is traditionally an agricultural area that has been abandoned to monoculture forestry with the advent of coastal tourism. It was recently listed as a *Natura 2000* site, and is also on the WWF list of *Mediterranean Hotspots* (environments under severe threat). The social economy of *Monchique* is dominated by modern agro-forestry, represented by huge monocultured forests of eucalyptus, cork oak and pines, which make up more than 70% of this rugged Mediterranean coastal hinterland.

The *Bio-Park Network* Project started in response to a deteriorating ecological situation that was related to the development of coastal tourism and modern agro-forestry practices. Private and public entities were unable to implement or were unaware of solutions to these problems. The *Bio-Park Network* project is being developed by the *Instituto Português de Ecologia* (INPECO www.inpeco.pt), with the aim of bringing to the area the principles of *Agenda 21* and *Agenda 2000* to conserve remaining wilderness and revitalise the local economy via sustainable tourism and sustainable agro-forestry.

Three hundred kilometres of walkways and cycle routes have been mapped, linking natural forests, fresh-water lakes, botanical gardens, innovative energy projects and local sites of historic interest. All this work is being done to stop the problems of habitat destruction and community disintegration so commonly faced by rural areas in the modern high-pressured economy. The *Bio-Park Network* aims to put the area back on its economic feet, integrating work in the fields of tourism, rural development and forestry to preserve the natural beauty of the area, and develop a haven for wildlife, nature enthusiasts and outdoor sports.

The key ingredients of the strategy are: environmental awareness, the participation of stakeholders, mapping and networking and monitoring.

Since publishing the initial project report entitled '*Sustainable development in Monchique - Integrating Rural Development, Agro-Forestry, Tourism and the Environment*' (1996) The project co-ordinators, INPECO, have produced the *Monchique Bio-Park Map and Nature Guide* (1998), and are in the process of completing a unique CD-Rom project entitled '*Algarve Landscapes and Nature*'. The *Instituto de Agua* have prepared a sustainable development plan for the watershed of the *Barragem de Bravura*, which is one of the major practical developments in the area.

The *Bio-Park Network* process now requires a stronger local partnership, especially with the local council; more funding and resources; stronger European networking; and better academic involvement. Most of this will be realised through European networking of good practice via the *EcoTrans* Network, and bilateral information flows between the UK and Germany. The *Bio-Park* concept has been accepted in to the Algarve's strategic development plan 2000 - 2006. A wider **Algarve Wildspaces Network** is now being envisaged, within which the *Bio-Park Network Modelling Process* will be tested as an *Agenda 21* implementation tool at a regional level.

Key words:

- Discussions forums
- Network layering
- Multidisciplinary Euro-regional research teams
- Monitoring and indicator systems

It now remains to be seen if the funders, project directors, local politicians, the business community and local residents can come to terms with the reality of sustainability thinking.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Networking people, paths, places**
- ☞ **Mapping**
- ☞ **Building a core verifiable information system for targeted use**
- ☞ **Monitoring the stability of eco-systems through Agenda 2000 indicators**

Principles to observe

Design and test innovative packages

Identify specific visitor experiences that reflect the real value of the site, and environmental management and educational priorities. Where appropriate, work up packages with tour operators and events with local communities, and test the market reaction to them.

Consider including new themes and sites

Make a list of new locations or themes that have not been identified or promoted for tourism but may have capacity and offer potential. Consider, in particular, opportunities for observing wildlife, developing new nature guided tours, understanding and participating in local traditions, visiting farms and craft producers, etc. Pay attention to opportunities in the buffer zone.

Network with other protected areas

Work with other sites and protected areas to promote a range of show case packages based on enjoying and learning about the very specific natural and cultural environment of these areas.

Provide recreation opportunities that reflect environmental conditions

Pay attention to a growing demand for outdoor recreational activities. Where appropriate identify walking and cycling routes away from the most fragile areas and of a length to meet the demands of different kinds of visitor. Control intrusive recreational activity.

Workshop 2.1: Knowing and targeting new markets, creating new innovative packages

A good practice in action:

Hôtel au Naturel: the "Villa Rosa" experience, France

Villa Rosa, created in 1979 is a small hotel (9 rooms) situated in the Ballon des Vosges Regional Nature Park in the East of France. The owners, Anne-Rose and Alain Denis, both eager to help people discover the natural and cultural heritage of the region, joined the network of "Nature Hotel" in 1994. They find it natural to transmit their concern to respect the environment to their hosts by sharing their passion for botany and traditional cuisine with them.

The hotel, Villa Rosa, belongs to the chain of the certified "Nature Hotels" situated in French Regional Nature Parks. The 11 "Nature Hotels" have all signed agreements with the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks (FFPNR) who awards this seal of approval to hotels that have implemented long-term programmes to make environmental protection an integral part of their hotel activities: the reduction of energy and water consumption, recycling, the use of environmentally-friendly products, the use of local products...

In addition to providing accommodation, "Nature Hotels" give out information and advice to help visitors discover the region's local heritage. Each hotel has a library with books on the region and its history. The hotels are promoted in a leaflet produced and widely distributed by the FFPNR.

Villa Rosa offers different formula: all-inclusive stays or day-long activities open to everyone. Anne-Rose personally tests every product or itinerary, and tailor-made activities can be organised on request.

Among the activities on offer, Anne-Rose takes guests on botanical trails to look for wild orchids in spring and organises visits to organic vineyards with local producers. Guests are taught the art of recognising weeds by an internationally well known ethno-botanist in the hotel's organic botanical garden. Later, they learn how to transform the herbs into a delicious and unusual dish.

Other activities proposed by the hotel include thematic days or weekends led by specialists in different fields: flower painting on wood, the discovery of old species of roses or Alsace legends and traditions. All these products are programmed in low season to reduce seasonal effects.

The hotel works directly with the Park, supporting its activities and special events as well as other operations organised in the region. An example of this is the creation of a botanical path, at Anne-Rose's initiative, which has been carried out in collaboration with the Park. Anne-Rose also participate in the Park's summer events, organising nature interpretation walks. The Park will contribute 40% of the funding for the creation of an organic botanical and educational garden in Villa Rosa, which explains the process of associating plants.

Villa Rosa benefits from being part of the "Nature Hotels" network. The owners report an increase in the number of bookings both for short and long stays (which is a new trend), in 2000.

Key words:

- Innovative products with original themes
- A chain of "Nature Hotels"
- Nature and culture

The majority of new visitors have found out about the hotel through the leaflet or because they have already stayed in a "Nature Hotel".

To reinforce links between the hotels in the network, in 2000 during the national "Taste Week" Villa Rosa launched the "Cabbage Week" in all the Nature Hotels. This operation will be repeated each year with each hotel choosing a regional product as the theme of the week.

Secret of success

- ☞ **The owners' motivation**
- ☞ **Tailor-made stays and activities**
- ☞ **Small structure creating friendly links between guests and hosts**
- ☞ **A label, a network & the support of the Regional Nature Park**

Principles to observe

Design & test innovative packages
Identify specific visitor experiences that reflect the real value of the site, and environmental management and educational priorities. Where appropriate, work up packages with tour operators and events with local communities, and test the market reaction to them.

Explore new types of marketing
Build up partnerships with tour operators. Test the packages right from the beginning. Create specific events to target new markets. Focus on specialised & alternative form of commercialisation.

Work with people who are in touch with markets
Build up partnerships from the start with specific tour operators that have developed their own sustainable tourism policy, code of ethics and partnership with Natura 2000 sites. Ask them to help design new packages. Ask specialist associations for advice on how to adapt your offer to the needs of specific clientele, such as associations of disabled people.

Provide appropriate guidance and training
Provide direct advice, seminars and training programmes for local tourism enterprises to help them understand the special sensitivities and qualities of the site, as well as improve their own performance.

Workshop 2.1: Knowing and targeting new markets, creating new innovative packages

A good practice in action:

Reisepavillon – A marketplace for sustainable tourism, Germany

Reisepavillon is a mixture of a tourism fair, a tourism conference and a meeting point for professionals. It is held every year in Hanover on the third weekend of January. It conveys the message about sustainable tourism by presenting sustainable tours on offer.

The original aim of the Reisepavillon was to bring sustainable tourism out of its niche, and to make it accessible to a wider public. Organised by Stattreisen Hannover, it is known as *the* forum for environmentally and socially responsible tourism. What began as a small group in 1991 developed within a few years into a nation-wide travel exhibition which is also the most important trade forum for this particular type of organised tourism.

The professional area provides sustainable tour offers in European and international areas. The "holiday feeling", re-enforced by cafés, extra programmes for children (including baby-sitting), activities for the older generation, makes customers feel at ease. They can meet the tour organisers in person. These are exclusively small and medium sized companies, most of whom have experienced the journeys themselves. The travel experts, regional tourist offices and environmental groups guarantee the customer an individual consultation, information details and suggestions.

The supporting programme, in conjunction with the fair itself consists of a series of presentations, seminars and workshops aimed at professionals and the public. It gives participants and professionals the opportunity to discuss critical issues about the various facets of tourism. The presentation of several sustainable tourism projects helps to make tourists aware of such activities.

The themes of the event are chosen in collaboration with representatives from the tourism sector, politicians, non-governmental organisations, associations, etc. In previous years, "Tourism and biodiversity" (1997) and "Marketing nature as a strategic factor in tourism" (1998) have been topics for debate.

The Reisepavillon event has achieved great results. Examples of its success are the increasing number of exhibitors and visitors, increasing media and political support, a web site in 1997, an advisory board created in 1998 and a group of small and medium sized companies founded at Reisepavillon.

Above all, Reisepavillon has the same aims as the "Natura 2000 and Sustainable Tourism" conference held in Lisbon (December 1999). A continuation of the Lisbon conference could take place at the 11th Reisepavillon, as it offers the possibility to organise a conference for professionals, to inform the media and tourists about Natura 2000 and its value for tourism, to get into contact with tourist enterprises which are interested in promoting Natura 2000 and sustainable tourism, and, most importantly, to present Natura 2000 to the public and explain why nature protection is necessary.

Key words:

- A public information event on Sustainable Tourism
- A trade forum
- Discussions and workshops
- Reisepavillon & Natura 2000

Secret of success

- ☞ **A new kind of event gathering together professionals and tourists**
- ☞ **Promotion and raising awareness right from the beginning**
- ☞ **An attractive atmosphere to promote sustainable tourism holidays**
- ☞ **The participation of the professionals into the discussion forums and debates**

Principles to observe

Reflect new trends in nature tourism

Refer to existing national and international data on new trends in nature related tourism, and relate this to your knowledge of existing visitors.

Explore new markets which fit the needs of the area

Identify specific niche markets which can be easily targeted and which fit the needs of the site in terms of special interest, volume, timing of visits and environmentally friendly activities.

Design and test innovative packages

Identify specific visitor experiences that reflect the real value of the site, and environmental management and educational priorities. Where appropriate, work up packages with tour operators and events with local communities, and test the market reaction to them.

Provide mechanisms for visitors to support conservation

Ensure visitors are fully aware of the conservation needs of the site. Explore with tourism businesses specific mechanisms for raising voluntary financial contributions from visitors (visitor payback schemes). Encourage programmes for direct participation by visitors in conservation. Ensure the results of action supported are regularly communicated.

Support traditional economic activities through tourism

Support forms of tourism or specific initiatives which in turn support other traditional sectors and the retention of traditional landscapes, such as low intensity agriculture and wildlife management.

Promote local employment

Favour the employment of local people in tourism and educational services. Encourage young people to take up opportunities and provide relevant training.

Workshop 2.1 : Knowing and targeting new markets, creating new innovative packages

A good practice in action :

Discovery Initiatives: Tourism and Conservation Partnership, UK

Discovery Initiatives is a tour operator set up in 1997, with strict principles about supporting conservation. It works in partnership with conservation agencies and local communities to support wildlife conservation and community initiatives.

For the past five years Discovery Initiatives has been sending fee-paying participants to Lake Hövsgöl National Park to contribute to the North Mongolia Conservation Project. The project was conducted in collaboration with the Mongolian Ministry for Nature and Environment (MNE), the Department of National Parks and Ecotourism, the Hövsgöl National Park Administration, the Mongolian Institute of Sciences, and the University of Mongolia.

The aim of the project was to conduct research into the wildlife and socio-economic situation of the Park in order to make recommendations for conservation. At the same time, the participants (local population and tourists) would learn how to conduct scientific surveys. The idea was to generate economic revenue for local people, both through direct employment and through general support for the local economy, and to raise environmental awareness.

Through this project, Discovery Initiatives has effectively piloted an approach to minimal impact tourism. It has worked in close collaboration with the National Park authorities and has adhered to the park regulations: consult with park managers when setting up base camps; when travelling away from base-camp do so in groups of no more than six individuals; where possible obtain resources (both human and natural) from the Hövsgöl region; adhere to all Park regulations and pay appropriate park fees; inhabit and visit areas which have minimal impact both on local inhabitants and the environment and use existing trails when exploring the Park.

The participants' fees have enabled both provisions and staff to be financed locally. It has helped fund the work of a range of experts and has helped students at Mongolia University conduct fieldwork for dissertations. In total, 50 fee-paying participants have joined researchers and more than 40 Mongolians people have been employed. Discovery Initiatives raised funds to publish a fully illustrated and comprehensive visitor guidebook to the Park in Mongolia. Half of the profits will go to the National Park and private camps. The other half will be used for further publications and for producing a version in Mongolian (for 2000).

Discovery Initiatives has adopted an exemplary approach founded on the basis of the success of the North Mongolia Conservation project. A series of programmes and tours have been developed in co-operation with over 23 separate local and international conservation bodies and community representatives. It continues to prove that tourism, if managed and traded fairly, can become a significant tool for conservation in protected areas, which can be applied to Natura 2000 areas.

Key words :

- **Contribution to conservation**
- **Partnership between NGO's and tour operators**
- **Visitor Payback**

Secret of success

- ☞ **Good working relationships and mutually beneficial partnerships**
- ☞ **Beneficial, not superficial actions**
- ☞ **Allowing local authorities and key individuals to decide on programmes (with the tour operator in an advising role)**
- ☞ **Creating economic incentives for conservation. Trading for resources and services**

Principles to observe

Ensure tourism development which reflects local heritage

Favour small scale tourism developments which use existing resources and reflect natural and historic heritage in style, design and setting.

Encourage use of local products

Identify locally produced food, crafts and other products. Encourage sale to visitors and use by tourism enterprises. Support networks of local producers and improve distribution systems.

Link product providers together

Encourage small accommodation enterprises, attractions, nature guides and other local services to work together. Encourage tourism enterprises to work more closely with other sectors, such as agriculture.

Provide mechanisms for visitors to support conservation

Ensure visitors are fully aware of the conservation needs of the site. Explore with tourism businesses specific mechanisms for raising voluntary financial contributions from visitors (visitor payback schemes). Encourage programmes for direct participation by visitors in conservation. Ensure the results of action supported are regularly communicated.

Support traditional economic activities through tourism

Support forms of tourism or specific initiatives which in turn support other traditional sectors and the retention of traditional landscapes, such as low intensity agriculture and wildlife management.

Workshop 2.2: Improving the offer, supporting traditional and local products and appropriate accommodation, providing guidance to local entrepreneurs

A good practice in action:

The Rhön Sheep: An old domestic breed returns to the Rhön, Germany

The family-run hotel and restaurant, “Gasthof sur Krone” is situated in the centre of the Rhön region, which lies in the German states of Bavaria, Hesse and Thuringia. UNESCO has officially designated the area a Biosphere Reserve. This has encouraged the Gasthof to put good environmental practice into action in the management of the hotel.

The project “Rhön sheep – protection through consumption” marked the beginning of an initiative where guests, restaurant owners, farmers and producers use and maintain the landscape of the Rhön. In the Rhön region, the local breed of sheep had experienced a sharp decrease in numbers over the past 50 years. To help the survival of farmers in this area and to maintain this precious landscape, it was necessary to take several measures.

Thanks to the creation of the Biosphere Reserve and the involvement of both the federal and the Bavarian Nature Conservation Association, the conservation of the Rhön sheep has been achieved.

The “Gasthof Zur Krone” family business was willing to support this initiative right from the beginning. Traditional and new recipes using Rhön sheep meat were introduced to the menu. A book was published in 1993 titled “Dem Rhönschaf auf der Spur” (“On the trail of the Rhön sheep”). As a result of the success of the Rhön sheep meat promotion, the demand has risen continuously. “Protection by consumption” has saved the Rhön sheep from extinction. At the same time, flocks of Rhön sheep thrive on rough grazing and help to maintain the Rhön region’s landscape, the “land of wide open distances”.

By marketing natural and high quality products, the restaurant contributes to the conservation aims of the Biosphere Reserve. Guests can also contribute to the maintenance by consuming Rhön Sheep meat or other local products.

Gasthof Zur Krone not only cooks typical and traditional dishes with local supplies but buys products directly from the farmer and informs customers by including a list of the producers, giving their names and addresses. Guests can also take home recipes and then buy ingredients from local farmers or at regional markets.

Moreover, hotel managers want to make guests aware of why the products are produced in the Rhön region by setting up guidelines addressing environmental issues.

With this new approach in hotel and restaurant management, the business has received publicity in the press, on the radio and even in television reports. New jobs have been created and other hotels, restaurants and farmers are following this example. Partnerships such as the association “Aus der Rhön – Für die Rhön” have been founded on this basis.

Key words:

- Use of local products
- Support of local agriculture
- Promotion of traditional species of sheep
- Partnership with farmers

This project has gained several awards, for "Nature protection and tourism " and as an "ecologically-orientated business" demonstrating to other businesses that change is possible and can be very successful.

Secret of success

- ☞ **"Nature conservation can be delicious !"**
- ☞ **Information and involvement of visitors**
- ☞ **Regular training for the hotel personnel**
- ☞ **Direct from the farmer to the customer's plate**

Principles to observe

Apply environmentally friendly management to accommodations

Reduce waste by avoiding the use of individually wrapped products and favouring fresh products. Recycle waste as much as possible. Use recycled or partially recycled products as often as possible.

Reduce energy consumption

Reinforce insulation to avoid heat loss. Reduce CO₂ emissions by using wind or solar power. Install low energy bulbs for lighting and low consumption electrical equipment.

Communicate on your environmentally oriented strategy

Explain the measures you have taken and the reasons for them to your guests and clients through an information leaflet and/or posters. Insist on the results achieved (savings in energy consumption and costs). Inform your guests of rules which are simple to observe and that can save energy. Organise special events to inform guests about environmentally-friendly management through games or competitions.

Assess the quality of the existing offer

Give priority to improving existing facilities and services before developing new ones. Introduce quality checking and improvement procedures based on obtaining feedback and setting standards.

Encourage the use of environmentally friendly products

Encourage the use of environmentally-friendly products by "eco-taxing" non environmentally-friendly products.

Workshop 2.3: Supporting conservation and local economies & communities applying sustainable management to accommodations

A good practice in action:

Mirow 21: A model project for Youth Hostels, Germany

Mirow is a small town of 4500 inhabitants located in Mecklenburg, West Pomerania, close to the Müritz National Park. "Future Project Youth Hostel" is the official title of "Mirow 21", a project which aims to build a new kind of youth hostel respecting the ideas of sustainability put forward at Rio. Construction began in 1998 and the hostel is due to be open in 2000.

The German Youth Hostel Association, DJH (Deutsches Jugendherbergswerk) is the project holder and the Federal Foundation for the Environment is subsidising the project with 3 million DM (± 1,5 million Euro).

One of the project's aims is to prove that an environmentally friendly building is not necessarily more expensive than a conventional building. The rooms have been designed with a multi-functional purpose in mind. For example, one of the seminar rooms can be transformed into a discotheque if necessary. By planning in this way, the high cost of building a basement has been avoided.

The new Youth Hostel building incorporates an existing hostel and has been equipped with high quality insulation to avoid energy waste. Energy needs for heating have now reached low consumption standards (50-60kw / m²).

In addition, the "Mirow 21" central heating does not emit CO₂. Different energy sources are used: solar power, wood, rape seed. A separate energy centre provides the energy supply for the buildings, and a small power plant, which runs on rape oil, produces electricity. In comparison with a conventional building, the CO₂ emissions have been reduced by 75%. In order to support environmentally friendly products, an eco-tax is applied to products sold in the hotel that are more harmful to the environment.

"Mirow 21" will inform guests about the efforts made to reduce energy consumption and to encourage them to use energy resources economically through the German YHA "Feel Good" project: a joint environmental education and information programme in the YHA network.

The Youth Hostel is being built exclusively by local or regional enterprises, and an independent engineer's office has been commissioned to take care of the quality control. In order to control the management of the enterprise, an extended EC environmental audit has been developed, a so-called "Check 21", based on sustainability indicators.

"Mirow 21" could become a milestone in the joint effort for future sustainable development. Considering the impressive number of YHA members (2 million), this project is a significant education tool to spread the idea of sustainability to young people. It brings together a strong network of reliable partners inside and outside the region. This experience could be used as a reference for the development of facilities or infrastructures in Natura 2000 sites.

Key words:

- Low energy consumption
- Environmentally friendly management
- Agenda 21
- Environmental education

Secret of success

- ☞ **A global involvement in sustainable orientated management by the YHA Federation**
- ☞ **The concrete application of environmentally-friendly principles in the YHA environmental education programme**

Principles to observe

Provide mechanisms for visitors to support conservation

Ensure visitors are fully aware of the conservation needs of the site. Explore with tourism businesses specific mechanisms for raising voluntary financial contributions for visitors (visitor payback schemes). Encourage programmes for direct participation by visitors in conservation. Ensure the results of action supported are regularly communicated.

Involve local residents in tourism planning

Ensure local residents are involved in the tourism strategy and have a regular opportunity to express their views and concerns

Encourage tourism operators to support conservation

Seek direct support from tourism enterprises for conservation schemes. This may be financial or support in other forms.

Workshop 2.3: Supporting conservation and local economies & communities applying sustainable management to accommodations

Key words:

- Visitor payback schemes
- Partnership
- Awareness raising
- Conservation

A good practice in action:

The Pathway Appeal, Lake District National Park, UK

Situated in NorthWest England, the Lake District National Park is the largest of the 11 National Parks in England and Wales and receives between 12 and 14 million visitors each year. The National Park Authority is responsible for conserving and enhancing the National Park and promoting understanding and enjoyment. It has to take into consideration the social and economic well being of the 42,000 people who live in the National Park.

The Park Authority has an annual budget of £5.5 million, which is not sufficient to look after the Park. It therefore works in partnership with many organisations and government bodies, in order to maximise the funding that is available, and more and more with the tourism industry and visitors to increase the amount of money which is available for conservation work.

An example of one of the initiatives developed is The Pathway Appeal. Established in 1998, this is a partnership between the National Park Authority and a locally based clothing company, Hawkshead, which is part of a publicly quoted company, the Arcadia Group.

The project is based on an integral link between a Hawkshead product, the Pathway hiking boot, and the major conservation issue of footpath erosion in the National Park.

The aim is to raise funding for footpath repair work by donating £1 from the sale of every pair of Pathway boots. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness amongst Hawkshead's customers about the need to protect and conserve the landscape and their impact on the landscape.

Over three years, £80,000 has been raised which has funded four major footpath repair projects in the National Park. The National Park has been able to communicate an important message about the National Park to Hawkshead's customers, and Hawkshead have been able to differentiate themselves from their competitors through a direct link to conservation work in the National Park.

A similar initiative is the Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership which brings together some of the key tourism operators in the Lake District and has raised nearly £100,000 over 4 years to fund different conservation projects. Visitors are given the opportunity to contribute, for example by donating £1 when booking a holiday cottage.

The success of the project highlights factors, which are critical if protected areas and the private sector, are to work together, notably the need for a clear link between the project and the funder, and the need for shared objectives of all partners.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Direct link between the product (the Pathway boot)**
- ☞ **Raising awareness amongst Hawkshead's customers**
- ☞ **Clear objectives with the support of all partners**

Principles to observe

Support traditional economic activities through tourism

Support forms of tourism or specific initiatives which in turn support other traditional sectors and the retention of traditional landscapes, such as low intensity agriculture and wildlife management.

Promote local employment

Favour the employment of local people in tourism and educational services. Encourage young people to take up opportunities and provide relevant training.

Involve local residents in tourism planning

Ensure local residents are involved in the tourism strategy and have a regular opportunity to express their views and concerns.

Support facilities and services for local residents

Support ways of improving the quality of life of local residents, including access to the site and use of local facilities and services.

Ensure tourism development which reflects local heritage

Favour small scale tourism developments which use existing resources and reflect natural and historic heritage in style, design and setting.

Provide appropriate guidance and training

Provide direct advice, seminars and training programmes for local tourism enterprises to help them understand the special sensitivities and qualities of the site, as well as improve their own performance.

Workshop 2.3: Supporting conservation and local economies and communities

A good practice in action :

"The houses of the Park" in the Monti Sibillini National Park, Italy

Monti Sibillini National Park is situated in the Marche/ Umbria region in Central Italy. The Park was created in 1993 and covers 70,000 hectares. 70% of the total area is made up of 19 areas classified as Natura 2000 sites. 15,000 residents live within the boundaries of the Park.

Monti Sibillini National Park started the project "Houses of the Park" in 1995, in collaboration with an association of young people grouped together into 9 co-operatives. The majority of these co-operatives work in the environmental services sector, others are mixed co-operatives (for example, agricultural co-operatives which also provide tourism services). Their common role is to provide job opportunities for young people. The Park contributes 550,000 Euro annually to these co-operatives and additional income comes from the activities they organise (the management of centres for environmental education, training courses, excursions...)

The main objective of the project was to use the 15 "Houses of the park", or visitor information centres, as a way of involving people, particularly young people, in the life of the Park and of encouraging sustainable tourism. The project is expected to lead to the adoption of the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

The project is divided into 2 phases: 1995-99 and 2000-04. In the first phase, the aims of the "Houses of the Park" were defined. They form a network of high-quality, environmental and tourism services welcoming visitors, encouraging the local population to participate in issues concerning the Park, providing information, and organising activities related to sustainable tourism. The Houses carry out common activities necessary to their day-to-day running and other activities which are specific to each House and which characterise the different areas of the Park.

Information provided by the "Houses of the Park" has helped raise public awareness about nature protection. Effective monitoring of the areas at risk is effective. Other measures have been set up such as the training of managers and the creation of new businesses linked to sustainable tourism and to local produce.

The creation of this network of young, motivated managers working for sustainable development has led to concrete actions. Thanks to the initiative of two Houses of the Park, the ancient practice of charcoal burning has been conserved and developed. This practice has almost totally disappeared in Italy (only two charcoal burners remain). The charcoal from the park is now handled by the biggest distribution network in Italy (Coop Italia) and has resulted in an increase in the income of the charcoal burners.

Phase two of the project (2000-2004) plans to provide specialised training in sustainable tourism for the 50 managers of the "Houses of the Park" and to involve at least 50 other business operators in the development of a sustainable tourism strategy. The "Houses" will be encouraged to become self-financing. The Park's financial contribution will decrease and the "Houses" will be encouraged to diversify their activities to reflect local characteristics and needs.

Key words :

- Involving young people
- Participation
- Visitor awareness
- Contributing to the local economy

The second phase also provides for the promotion of the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, within the Park and in areas outside the Park which are affected by the 2 GAL (Leader II).

At the beginning of the second phase the first European Forum for young people will be organised in the Park (in Norcia) to offer young people working in the Park an opportunity for training and for trans-national co-operation. The Forum will be preceded by a European Competition, "Parks, Young People and Opportunities", that will bring together the most significant working experiences from protected areas and Natura 2000 sites.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Involving residents in the Parks's activities**
- ☞ **Great interest, skills and enthusiasm of the young people of the Park**
- ☞ **Divisions between individual areas within the Park's territory have been overcome**

Principles to observe

Identify the core values of the area
Identify and discuss the current strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the tourism and nature product : landscape, biodiversity, living and built culture, facilities and relationships between local people and visitors.

Consult and agree on images and messages
Compare the core values with images held by local people, visitors, local tourism enterprises and tour operators (via mixed discussion groups and surveys).
Agree on an image to promote and where appropriate use experts to help articulate this.

Work with others to implement communication
Identify a programme for improving communication and changing images held about the site. Identify the right way of communicating with specific target groups (local people, tourism enterprises, visitors) and also of improving communication by them to others.

Use creative tools in communication delivery
Choose the most appropriate communication tools for the target audience. Provide mechanisms for joint promotion between local enterprises and organisations. Form promotional alliances with other sites (horizontal links) or tour operators, conservation bodies (vertical links) at a local, national or European level.

Workshop 3.1 : Developing the right image, messages, information and interpretation

A good practice in action :

Green Holiday in Himmerland, Denmark

The Himmerland area is situated in northern Jutland in Denmark. In 1995, twelve municipalities founded Destination Himmerland (DH), a tourism network co-operation made up of 138 members from the public and the private sector. Its main tasks are marketing and tourism product development in Himmerland and it also provides guidance for local tourism companies.

The Himmerland area has eight varied Natura 2000 sites (lakes, broads, river valleys, forest, moors, fjords, bogs). Compared to the West Coast of Denmark, the area does not receive many tourists and aims to build up tourism activity in the area through the development of exciting "green" tourist products.

In 1998, Destination Himmerland was granted funding from the Danish Ministry of Environment to implement a two-year project, in Danish, "Grøn Ferie i Himmerland" (Green Holiday in Himmerland). The aim of the project was to develop Himmerland as an active and green holiday and recreational area. Through this it aims to create jobs and reduce the negative influences of tourism on the environment.

In practice, the project involves supporting dialogue between members of the network, implementing concrete actions and providing guidance and information about national and international initiatives related to sustainable development. Great importance is attached to the involvement of the local population in the development of their area. At the beginning of the project, members of the network were contacted about it and interested members meet regularly and collaborate.

Some the many actions carried out so far are:

- A training course for people who wish to develop farmhouse holidays (accommodation, shops, restaurants, visits), and a network created for them to co-operate.
- A list of the local producers of organic food to encourage restaurants to buy their ingredients locally.
- Information and guidance to accommodation managers on environmental certification. Two of Himmerland's biggest Natura 2000 sites have accommodation, which has been, awarded the eco-label "The Green Key".
- A conference attended by 100 people, on how sustainable tourism can lead to financial savings and an improved image for marketing.

The Himmerland area produces an activity guide, which brings together local enterprises and organisations in the joint promotion of the area. Since the implementation of the project, "Green Holiday in Himmerland" figures more and more prominently (from 2 pages in 1999 to 16 pages in 2000). Information about "green" sites, activities and accommodation are included.

A map of alternative "green" sites is also being developed locating and describing places of interest such as windmills, organic farms, factories which have been awarded an environmental certification, nature-friendly sites... This map is intended to be of interest to local people and not just for tourists.

Key words :

- **Marketing & product development**
- **Development of a green image**
- **Community based approach**

Himmerland is participating in “Destination 21” (a scheme which aims to set up an eco-label for sustainable tourist destinations) as one of the seven pilot projects. This project has highlighted the interest of the decision-makers and the tourism industry in developing a green destination and the need for initiatives to be deeply rooted in the local community.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Initiatives deeply rooted in the local community**
- ☞ **Dialogue and effective networks**
- ☞ **Development of a joint promotion**
- ☞ **Practical actions are very important**

Principles to observe

Extend environmental education

Assess the impact of any educational programmes provided, such as guided walks, and seek to extend their outreach. Consider establishing codes of conduct for visitors.

Use innovative methods to put over educational messages

Use original supports and methods to work with specific targeted groups. Make the learning be fun when working with children

Work with others to implement communication

Identify a programme for improving communication and changing images held about the site. Identify the right way of communicating with specific target groups (children, adults) and also of improving communication by them to others.

Use creative tools in communication delivery

Choose the most appropriate communication tools (word of mouth, local newsletters, regional guides, internet, etc.) for the target audience.

Provide a follow-up to the initiative

Produce material on the implemented initiative, reminding objectives and results achieved. Distribute it to all the people who did participate. If possible, make it be used as a tool.

Workshop 3.1: Developing the right image, messages, information and interpretation

A good practice in action:

Eco Puppets of the Delta, UK & Romania

Two teams of people, seven British and five Romanians, have come together to collaborate on a unique project which has used the unusual integration of environmental education nature preservation and the arts, specifically puppetry.

This project has linked two wetlands of international wildlife, navigation and cultural importance; the Broads of England and the Danube Delta of Romania.

It builds upon the 14 years of experience of environmental puppetry in the Broads, collaboration between the Broads Authority and Nutmeg Puppet Company. Since the 1990s, the Broads Authority has been building up a relationship with the Danube Delta. through the EUROPARC Federation.

The idea came to develop this link through the development of an education project involving puppetry. The main objective was for the Broads team to work with the DDBRA (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority), teachers, art workers and young people of the Danube Delta to influence and inspire the young generation of Danube Delta inhabitants. Puppetry was to be used to put across issues affecting the Delta.

It was important to establish a network of interested people who could adapt and develop the model so that this method of environmental education would continue to thrive after the life of the project.

Between 1997 and 1999 the project took shape. A demonstration shadow puppet show was prepared and several workshops organised for children and teachers on how to make their own environmental shadow puppet show. It was also an opportunity to bring together the network of teachers and DDBRA staff to work together on a practical level.

A visit to Romania to assess the project highlighted initiatives, which have been taken to extend the project. The DDBRA has formed a link with Gulliver Puppet Theatre to produce a touring production of Little Red Riding Hood adapted to include ecological information about the Delta.

A handbook has been produced as a practical guide for using puppetry to interpret the environment and educate children – or adults. It includes detailed instructions on how to make an environmental shadow puppet show and is published by the Broads Authority.

Key words:

- Environmental education
- Innovation & creativity
- Partnership & networking
- Exchange & c-operation between East and West

- ☞ **Creation of a network of interested people**
- ☞ **Exchange of information and techniques**
- ☞ **Transposition of the experience into a practical guide**
- ☞ **Innovative method for a specific target group**

Principles to observe

Communicate good practice in your area

Identify examples of good practice (e.g. in accommodation, guided tours or local food and products) and identify their specific strengths with respect to your own priorities. Promote awareness of them within and outside the local area (e.g. through articles in the media).

Investigate existing eco-labels and awards

Research and compare existing eco-labels (from the internet or experience of others). Check their criteria, target groups and achieved success or weaknesses. Compare them with your interests and identify potential for co-operation.

Join suitable existing schemes

Discuss with others the "pros & cons" for joining regional, national or international eco-label and certification schemes. Join or recommend an existing scheme if compatible with your desired image, criteria and target groups.

Develop your own eco-label if appropriate

Develop your own scheme if nothing appropriate already exists. Establish a clear, achievable and dynamic set of criteria. Give advice and support to those who are interested in being awarded, through seminars, individual checking, consultation, manuals and guidance on sources of information. Make sure that the awarding process is transparent and that the awarding institution is independent from and accepted by the applicants.

Promote the awarded products and services

Support the marketing of the awarded facilities, services and entrepreneurs through your own communication tools. Co-operate with external information services, networks and media to multiply the information about your eco-label and the awarded suppliers and products.

Workshop 3.2: Developing and communicating eco-label and certification schemes

A good practice in action :

The European Centre for Eco Agro Tourism certificate, The Netherlands

The European Centre for Eco Agro Tourism (ECEAT) is a non-governmental, non-profit-making organisation that aims to integrate tourism with sustainable land use and nature protection in depopulated areas. The mission of ECEAT is to ensure that this development is economically and ecologically sustainable.

ECEAT has recently developed a European Quality System. Accommodation that is proved to be sustainable receives an ECEAT certificate. ECEAT works with non-governmental organisations in 20 European countries that act as National Co-ordination Centres. They select and check accommodation as well as provide training and other kinds of support.

ECEAT supports more than 1600 farms and other types of rural accommodation in Europe that supply sustainable tourist accommodation. Many of these are situated in the "buffer zones" of nature reserves.

One project of specific relevance to nature protection is the **development of nature protection criteria for tourist accommodation near nature reserves**. ECEAT has tested these criteria in 40 accommodations in Poland and the Czech Republic. The owners receive training in landscape management and in how to communicate their knowledge to tourists through guided tours or excursions. Some of this information, such as the description of specific flora and fauna and information on the nature reserves, will be published in "**Green Holiday Guides**". In 1999, ECEAT sold more than 20,000 of these guides to tourists.

ECEAT aims to award accommodation specialised in nature protection with a special certificate or "eco-label". ECEAT believes that it is better to integrate new criteria for nature protection into existing quality systems, rather than confusing consumers with a new eco-label.

ECEAT also implements "**special novelty projects**". These projects initiate and support new developments in the field of sustainable development. One current project involves the setting up of women's co-operatives in Poland that sell regional products to tourists. Another recent project aims to test sustainable energy systems for tourist accommodation in isolated dwellings in Romania.

In the future, ECEAT aims to **encourage more co-operation between certifying organisations** to find a common standard and perhaps to establish a **European quality system for sustainable tourism**, which would be clearly recognisable and trustworthy for tourists, tour operators and nature protectors.

Key words :

- Eco-labelling of farms & rural accommodation
- Training of accommodation holders
- Green Holiday Guide
- Sustainable land use

Development of nature protection criteria for tourist accommodation near nature reserves

- ☞ **A network of rural accommodation**
- ☞ **Integration of criteria into existing quality systems**

Principles to observe

Communicate good practice in your area

Identify examples of good practice (e.g. in accommodation, guided tours or local food and products) and identify their specific strengths with respect to your own priorities. Promote awareness of them within and outside the local area (e.g. through articles in the media).

Investigate existing eco-labels and awards

Research and compare existing eco-labels (from the internet or experience of others). Check their criteria, target groups and achieved success or weaknesses. Compare them with your interests and identify potential for co-operation.

Develop your own eco-label if appropriate

Develop your own scheme if nothing appropriate already exists. Establish a clear, achievable and dynamic set of criteria. Give advice and support to those who are interested in being awarded, through seminars, individual checking, consultation, manuals and guidance on sources of information. Make sure that the awarding process is transparent and that the awarding institution is independent from and accepted by the applicants.

Promote the awarded products and services

Support the marketing of the awarded facilities, services and entrepreneurs through your own communication tools. Co-operate with external information services, networks and media to multiply the information about your eco-label and the awarded suppliers and products.

Workshop 3.2: Developing and communicating eco-label and certification schemes

A good practice in action:

Eco-label Luxembourg: certification of tourism enterprises, Luxembourg

The Ministry of Tourism in Luxembourg has set up an eco-label for tourism enterprises. Its aim is to promote hotels, rented holiday accommodation and campsites, which respect the environment. Oeko Fonds, a state-approved foundation, is in charge of the application of the project and the implementation of an awareness-raising programme.

The project began in 1996 with the creation of the steering committee. Initially, a questionnaire, inspired by existing eco-labels, was sent to selected hotels and campsites and the results of the survey helped develop criteria for the nomination of enterprises to an "Environment & Tourism" competition. In 1997, 31 enterprises were nominated.

The next step was to develop the concept of the eco-label. This was carried out in collaboration with all the partners involved. The result was a set of criteria to which companies have to adhere in order to obtain the label. These include compulsory criteria and optional criteria and are reviewed every 2 years. The eco-label is valid for 2 years, after which the enterprise has to be re-assessed.

In May and October 1999, the label was awarded to the first 16 enterprises. New assessments are to take place in May 2000 and the first certified enterprises will be audited in May 2001.

This initiative has led to very concrete actions. For example, the nominated enterprises have excluded the use of cleaning products containing bleach in favour of less aggressive products. Several enterprises are encouraging guests to come by public transport and providing information in their promotional leaflets. Some of the nominated enterprises are offering small gifts or discounts to clients who come by these means of transport.

Actions taken to manage energy and waste are proving economical. In a hotel with 150 beds, the installation of liquid soap distributors instead of individually wrapped soap is saving 2500 Euro per year. A hotel with 40 rooms, now equipped with low energy consumption light bulbs is saving 3150 Euro per year.

The eco-label has benefited the whole region. Positive benefits of the eco-label for the nominated enterprises include joint promotion, a new type of clientele, meetings and the exchange of experience within the network, a campaign for the joint purchasing of recycled paper. Companies, which have not been nominated, have also benefited by improving the quality of services and reducing their energy costs.

Collaboration between the tourism industry and the agriculture sector is in place and local products and regional activities are being promoted through this operation.

Key words:

- **Eco-label**
- **Audit by independent experts**
- **Promotion**
- **Energy saving**
- **Concrete benefits**

Secret of success

☞ **Training programme and ecological advice available for all the tourism enterprises and not only for candidates**

☞ **A network for communication, collaboration and the implementation of joint actions**

☞ **An initiation survey and the analysis of existing eco-labels prior to the development of Eco-label Luxembourg**

Key words:

- Natura 2000 site
- Assessing visitor pressure
- Environmental impact assessment
- Remedial actions

Use EIAs

Ask for an environmental impact assessment of all proposed development of tourism facilities and infrastructure, irrespective of size. Use established methodologies for EIAs

Work with others to assess impact

Form partnerships with local conservation bodies.
Encourage and train local people (including tourism operators) to observe impacts on the environment.
Ask visitors to report on changes and problems they encounter.
Work with groups and clubs to monitor their impact.

Assess impact on local people

Obtain feedback from local people on the impact of tourism.
Assess the contribution made by tourism to local jobs, as well as negative impact from congestion and intrusion.

Seek to rectify adverse changes

Use measures of impact positively, as a basis for introducing action to reduce negative impact and restore damage caused.

A good practice in action:

Environmental impact assessment in Banna Akeragh Lough, Ireland

The Banna Akeragh Lough dune system is a rich wetland and dune complex on the North Kerry coast in Ireland. Apart from agriculture, tourism and recreation have long been the established use of both private lands and state owned foreshore. The most obvious signs are long stretches of caravan parks at the North end and smaller car parks dotted in the dunes.

Akeragh Lough used to be one of the richest bird wintering areas in the British islands. It was designated a Special Protection Area under the EU "Birds Directive", but its status was unknown locally and no management plan produced. The conservation body, Birdwatch, noted a decrease in the number of birds. The site was resurveyed when the Habitat directive came along and put on the priority habitat list

Visitor and other pressures have built up slowly. Since 1950, various factors have combined to reduce the size of Akeragh Lough by approximately 30%. Surrounding wetlands have been drained to increase caravan parks, a pitch-and-putt has been built, without planning permission, around the lake.

Although local people and NGOs had expressed concern about individual pressures on the site, nobody had sought a full overview of all the pressures. It was the Easter weekend 1998 when the storm blew up; a developer bulldozed dune ridges into the deep slacks to create flat land to accommodate a caravan park. Locals who tried to stop it had difficulty in establishing who officially could halt it. It turned out to be a County Council planning matter. Local politicians were lobbied hard and the matter received lots of media attention. The County Council voted unanimously that the site should be restored which was a unique achievement.

Two years later, a restoration plan has been put into place and some replanting has been carried out. While damage is still not remedied, local people are now organised and a local management committee, led by Kerry County Council, has been set up.

Coastwatch Europe has been asked to assess the site and address the management committee. A network of environmental and educational groups in 24 countries, Coastwatch Europe is increasingly involved in the assessment of Natura 2000 sites for site value and damage and provides advice on remedial and protective action.

Against this background, the organisation highlights the need for key assessment tools in the protection and management of Natura 2000 sites (baseline audits, EIAs, spatial planning), for good scientific understanding, training for site managers, the availability of information and monitoring systems.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Carrying out assessment of the site**
- ☞ **Local forum in place**

☞ **Restoration plan and management committee set up**

Principles to observe

Use zoning techniques

Identify areas most suitable for different forms and levels of tourism activity. Seek to manage tourism and influence development in a buffer zone around the site. Work with the neighbouring areas to identify alternative sites to promote away from the more sensitive locations.

Restrict access if necessary

If the environment is threatened, be prepared to restrict or reduce access if necessary, restrict traffic on certain roads at certain times. However, be aware of the needs of disabled visitors and local residents.

Use information positively

Influence visitor behaviour and visit patterns with information which is positive, explaining the reason for any restrictions and promoting alternative opportunities.

Encourage non-polluting transport

Favour access by walking, cycling, non-polluting vehicles and public transport, both to and within the area. Work with the local bus and rail operators. Consider providing shuttle services. Promote alternative transport as a positive opportunity for visitors, not just a restriction.

Workshop 4.2: Managing visitors and traffic ; reducing energy consumption and pollution

A good practice in action:

Management of sports activities in the Steinhuder Meer Nature Park, Germany

The Steinhuder Meer Nature park, located in the north of Germany near Hanover, is one of the three German pilot parks for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The core and most attractive part of the park is the Steinhuder Meer (30km²), the biggest lake in northwestern Germany.

The lake, parts of the lakesides and the adjoining bogs are an important bird habitat (Ramsar area, EU Bird Protection Directive area and FFH area) and the site will be integrated into the Natura 2000 network.

The Steinhuder Meer is also the most attractive recreational area for the conurbation of Hanover (1 million people). On nice summer weekends, up to 50,000 people visit the area. The main sports and recreational activities are watersports, biking and hiking.

In order to protect nature and to offer attractive facilities for recreation, the park, in co-operation with local and regional authorities, has established a zoning system. All recreational and tourism facilities are concentrated in two areas and the other more sensitive parts of the lakeside are strictly protected.

The park's visitor management system is based around limiting access to nature without banning it completely. A circular path around the lake has been built, good for hiking and biking, but at the same time, concentrating people in certain areas. The route is well marked with good information explaining the reason for the restrictions.

In order to avoid disturbance of the birds by watersports on the lake, similar measures have been taken. Practising watersports is now only allowed from 1 April to 31 October. Certain parts of the lake have been designated nature protection areas, and access to these parts is prevented by buoy chains.

The park has made attempts to encourage the use of non-polluting transport. A free shuttle service transports visitors from larger car parks built away from the core area of the park. The park is also accessible by bus and railway and bike rental is available at the stations.

Visitors have broadly accepted the actions introduced by the park. The watersports limitations have been less well accepted than others and the use of private cars remains predominant.

Key words:

- High visitor pressure
- Visitor management system
- Regular round table
- Nature protection areas
- Zoning & restricted use

Secret of success

- ☞ **Limiting, but not banning, access to nature**
- ☞ **Involvement of relevant stakeholders**
- ☞ **Positive use of information**
- ☞ **Favouring intelligent visitor management**

Principles to observe

Reduce seasonality

If appropriate to the site, promote access at less busy times and discourage over-promotion of the busiest periods. Take account of the natural seasons of the site and species it supports, in terms of how this affects visitor interest as well as vulnerability.

Influence land planning policies

Make sure that policies to control and influence the form of tourism development and promote conservation are closely integrated into the statutory planning legislation for the area, and the local management plan for the site.

Obtain regular visitor feedback

Provide a means for all visitors to give their reaction to the site and services offered. Undertake a regular survey of visitors to measure levels of satisfaction.

Measure tourism flows

Keep a regular check on volumes of visitors, including traffic flows and car parking. Concentrate on most densely visited areas, and so on most fragile areas.

Use zoning techniques

Identify areas most suitable for different forms and levels of tourism activity. Seek to manage tourism and influence development in a buffer zone around the site. Work with the neighbouring areas to identify alternative sites to promote away from the more sensitive locations.

Workshop 4.2: Managing visitors and traffic; reducing energy consumption and pollution

Key words:

- Zoning system
- Monitoring visitors
- Visitor feedback
- Effective local planning

A good practice in action:

Visitor management on the island of Terschelling, The Netherlands

Terschelling is one of the Frisian Wadden islands in the Wadden Sea. The island is roughly 30km wide and has about 4700 inhabitants. 50% of the site is already Natura 2000; the rest of the site is expected to become part of the Natura 2000 network by the end of 2000. The National Forest Service (Staatsbosbeheer) owns and manages 80% of the island (9500 ha).

Tourism is the most important factor in the local economy. About 350,000 tourists flock to Terschelling each year and stay on average six days, all year round. The total number of site visits is estimated at 3,500,000 per year. Visitor management is central to the National Forest Service's work.

On Terschelling, a zoning scheme has been developed over time based on the segmentation of the main categories of visitors (conservationists, nature lovers and other tourists less interested in nature). Different facilities are provided for each category, taking into account the vulnerability of the different natural areas:

- Facilities for **conservationists** are left in as natural a state as possible. Paths and tracks are not paved, and facilities are scattered or non-existent.
- Facilities for **nature lovers** (marked trails for walking or cycling) are concentrated in the central part of the island, which is best, adapted to tourism.
- A zone for **visitors who are less interested in nature** has been created on part of the beach with a small dune lake, parking area, and a path connecting the beach and the campsites.

Close co-operation with the Municipality who is responsible for the planning of the whole island has helped maintain the natural value of the site. In 1974, the Municipality drew up a long-term vision plan, which integrated policies for agriculture, nature protection, and tourism development plans. It is coherent with the policies and management plans of the National Forest Service.

The site is able to monitor tourism flows effectively as all visitors arrive by boat to the island. The Municipality set up regular monitoring of the needs of tourists in 1999. Each year tourists will be asked to fill in questionnaires during the boat crossing to gauge levels of visitor satisfaction.

Although the number of tourists on Terschelling has increased (the number of visitors has doubled since 1977), the site has recorded an increase in the number of birds and species compared to 20 years ago. Monitoring and supervising the impacts of tourism is an essential part of the site's visitor management, for the prevention of negative impacts.

Over the last 25 years, this approach to visitor management, which consists of integrating new views in good time, has proved very successful.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Concentration of tourism in the most suitable areas**
- ☞ **Monitoring and gaining feedback from visitors**
- ☞ **Very close co-operation between the National Forest Service and local planning authorities**

Principles to observe

Obtain regular visitor feedback

Provide a means for all visitors to give their reaction to the site and services offered. Undertake a regular survey of visitors to measure levels of satisfaction.

Obtain regular feedback from staff and partners

Ensure everyone working on site management is involved in delivering quality and can make suggestions for improvement. Obtain regular feedback from local tourism enterprises on their needs and opinions.

Set quality standards for all tourism services

Ensure all tourism operators meet optimal standards of safety and comfort. Promote existing quality assessment schemes where appropriate. Set quality standards for all services delivered by the site management team.

Maintain a programme of improvement and training

Introduce initiatives to improve quality, especially through appropriate training programmes for staff and local enterprises.

Restrict access if necessary

If the environment is threatened be prepared to restrict or reduce access. If necessary, restrict traffic on certain roads or at certain times. However, be aware of the needs of disabled visitors and local residents

Workshop 4.3: Developing Integrated Quality Management, benchmarking and transborder co-operation

A good practice in action :

The Trossachs Trail Tourism Management Programme, Scotland, UK

The Trossachs is an area of about 260km² situated in the District of Stirling, in the heart of Scotland. The site is a national scenic area, a national nature reserve, and contains sites of specific interest. Each year this beautiful landscape attracts large numbers of visitors (2.2 millions), due to easy accessibility from nearby cities. The increasing number of visitors and the lack of investment in facilities has led to a decline in the quality of visitor services and to some damage to the environment.

The Trossachs Trail Tourism Management Programme was set up in 1992. The project aims to develop tourism whilst sustaining and enhancing the natural resources of the Trossachs. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, local businesses, community councils and visitors to the area support the programme. It will end in 2001, when the area is included in Scotland's first National Park (April 2001).

The first step towards **quality improvement** has been a comprehensive monitoring programme. This programme has led to better knowledge of visitor attitudes and satisfaction and of the scale and distribution of visits to the area. This has been achieved through visitor surveys, people and traffic counters placed on roads and footpaths and interviews with 130 local enterprises to identify levels of businesses and measure awareness and the impact of the programme.

In addition to the **monitoring programme**, several schemes have been adopted to **improve quality in local industry**, such as a grant scheme offering 8000 Euros for improvements or market development, and training programme offering workshops on specific themes. The Scottish Tourist Board's Quality Assurance Scheme is an award scheme, which classifies establishments by type and awards a one to five stars following an annual inspection. The establishment requires a certain amount of points, scored against a list of quality checks.

Visitor codes and environmental messages have been spread widely and promoted through the Trossachs Discovery Centre. In some restricted areas, **interpretation boards** have been placed at suitable viewpoints on the paths so people can enjoy the sites from a distance. At the visitor centre, images of daily life in a peregrine's nest are transmitted by a video camera, which has been set up in the nest.

A survey of visitors conducted at the Trossachs Discovery Centre has shown high satisfaction levels (90-95% visitor satisfaction). 20% of local businesses feel that the Programme has made a positive contribution to the upturn of business. In 1994, the Trossachs area won the Scottish Tourist Board Thistle Award for Best Area Initiative, for the way the natural and man-made attractions are combined in this small area. It is one of 15 projects chosen to illustrate recommendations for integrated quality management in rural areas.

Key words :

- **Integrated Quality Management**
- **Strategy & action plan**
- **Partnership**
- **Assessment & audit**

The Trossachs case study has been chosen with a few other cases to illustrate Integrated Quality Management in the European Commission's "Towards Quality Rural Tourism" publication (1999)

Secret of success

- ☞ **A development officer to manage the project**
- ☞ **Improvements to increase the quality of the visitor experience**
- ☞ **Visitor orientation and providing information**

Principles to observe

Foster cross-border co-operation

Where sites are close to international borders, seek partnerships with sites and protected areas across the border. Extend the principles of Natura 2000 and sustainable tourism across the whole of Europe, East and West. Identify an exemplary protected area to lead the network.

Establish and follow common rules for tourism operators

Offer combined products in both protected areas. Provide joint training for local operators working in both areas. Define quality standards to be reached by operators in both areas.

Define common objectives

Identify common conservation and visitor management issues and opportunities for co-ordinated programmes. Consider creating common eco-label or certification scheme. Collaborate to implement joint tourism planning.

Develop a communication strategy in partnership

Produce joint documents on both areas and organise joint events. Provide each site with information on the other site. Promote environmentally-friendly activities extended to both parks.

Involve staff in co-operation

Organise field trips to protected areas across the border. Reinforce the links by organising regular meetings or projects involving staff from both parts. Organise joint training sessions as language training to help communicating.

Workshop 4.3. : *Developing integrating quality management, benchmarking and trans-border co-operation*

A good practice in action :

Oulanka and Paanajarvi National Parks in close Co-operation, Finland & Russia

Oulanka (Finland) and Paanajarvi (Russian Karelia) National Parks are situated on either side of the Finnish and Russian border. Oulanka National Park (27,000 ha) was established in 1956 and receives 150 000 visitors a year. It belongs to the network of Natura 2000 sites. Paanajarvi National Park was established in 1992 and is four times bigger than Oulanka NP. It receives just 3,000 visitors visit each year.

Co-operation between the parks seemed natural. Both parks are very close geographically, share the same nature conditions and have the same basic goal of nature conservation. The main objective of the project, led by Metsähallitus, the Finnish Forest and Park service, has been to develop both parks in a sustainable way, especially concerning tourism activities and guidance.

This co-operation began in 1992 when Paanajarvi National Park was established. The first initiative came from the Russian side. In the first four years, co-operation was concentrated on training park staff through visits to both sides. Oulanka National Park staff set up the first basic infrastructure in the Paanajarvi area. The first joint brochure was published in 1995.

Collaboration with different partners such as local tourism entrepreneurs, local authorities, the University of Oulu and the Karelian Science Academy helped the implementation of several projects in co-operation.

A two year project funded by the EU Interreg Karelia II programme and carried out by Metsähallitus began in 1997. Further work in partnership has led to the improvement of services through training for customer-orientated services and Russian language training. Information on Oulanka and Paanajarvi National Parks was published jointly and widely distributed along with information on needs for nature conservation and sustainable ways of using National Parks. The two parks organised slide shows and put on an exhibition in the visitor centre.

Part of the National Parks' budget is used to improve co-operation. The most important activities have been the planning and implementation of nature trails in collaboration with voluntary groups (WWF Finland, Prince Nature Support, Germany). Planning and implementing waste treatment is also a result of this collaboration. A tourism strategy for Oulanka National Park has been drawn up in 1999 using participatory planning and an international standard as a guide.

However, making the strategy for Paanajarvi NP next year will be a challenge, both Parks facing a difference of standards of living. How to make sure that Paanajarvi NP and local people will get advantages from tourism run by Finnish Tour Operators ? How to use the principles of N2000 in Russia ? Pressure to Paanajarvi NP will increase rapidly within next five years and visitor's services will have to be ready.

Key words :

- **Cross-border co-operation**
- **National Park management**
- **Improvement of quality**

The main goal for co-operation in the long run is for Oulanka and Paanajarvi National Parks to become an internationally well-known and well-managed joint nature protected area (twin National Parks). Thanks to a wide information campaign, huge interest has arisen. Park authorities have managed to get TACIS funding for new projects aimed at strengthening the activity of Paanajarvi and at developing four new National Parks in Karelia. The Paanajarvi National Park would have the role of leader in this network.

Secret of success

- ☞ **A National Park across the border as a supporting partner**
- ☞ **The establishment of common objectives and actions**
- ☞ **The involvement and willingness of the staff of both parks to co-operate**

Principles to observe

Involve all stakeholders from the beginning

Involve a wide range of local partners from the beginning. Consider holding an open forum at the outset. Make sure the strategy is based on a wide consultation between site managers, conservationists, tourism operators and local communities

Define common objectives

Identify common conservation and visitor management issues and opportunities for co-ordinated programmes. Consider creating a common eco-label or certification scheme. Collaborate to implement joint tourism planning.

Assess the different guidelines available

Find out about the various guidelines available for sustainable tourism in protected areas and sites. Set their objectives, content and approach against your own situation and requirements.

If necessary adapt guidelines to your situation

If existing guidelines do not meet your needs, consider how they can be adapted or improved. Relate them to other accreditation or training schemes for individual facilities in your area.

Workshop 4.3.: Developing Integrated Quality Management, benchmarking and trans-border Co-operation

A good practice in action :

Sustainable Tourism Development and recreational use in the Wadden Sea Region, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands

The Wadden Sea Region extends along the Danish, German and Dutch coastline for almost 15,000km², separated from the North Sea by a chain of barrier islands. Two thirds of the area constitutes the Wadden Sea itself, which is the largest wetland within the European Union. The majority of the area (10,000km²) has been nominated as a Natura 2000 area.

The area is of vital commercial significance for large parts of Europe because of its proximity to the North Sea. It is also an important recreational area. Roughly 8-10 million tourists visit the area annually and, in many areas, tourism is an important economic activity.

On a national level, the national authorities in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have co-operated in the protection of the area since 1978. Trilateral Governmental Conferences are held every 3 years. In October 1997, the Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan was adopted for the management of the area based upon the co-operation of the three countries.

In order to strengthen the joint efforts of the three countries at the regional level, the Inter-Regional Wadden Sea Co-operation (IRWC) was set up in 1994. This co-operation is made up of representatives of the regional authorities of the 6 Wadden Sea Regions. At the 1997 Inter-regional Conference the Co-operation decided to ***develop proposals for common policies on sustainable tourism whilst involving local inhabitants.***

The Tourism Project was launched in January 1997. It is an EU-demonstration project on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and is partly financed through the EU LIFE fund.

As part of the process to develop common policies, the IRWC set up an independent forum, ***NetForum***, which is cross-national and cross-sectorial. It is made up of representatives from tourism organisations, environmental organisations, the municipalities and the regional authorities of all three countries, and from the Wadden Sea islands and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Co-operation.

The forum has held workshops and meetings to discuss key issues and formulate proposals. Newsletters in all three languages were produced throughout. In November 1999, a conference was organised to gain feedback on the proposals, and promote dialogue between experts and local politicians.

The final report puts forward guidelines for sustainable tourism in the area, which focus on nature and recreational activities, culture and cultural tourism, accommodation, accessibility and transport. NetForum took into account the Natura 2000 status of the area, which makes these proposals particularly relevant to Natura 2000 sites. They highlight, among other aspects, the need to promote communication and exchange and to improve monitoring of tourism impact.

The next stage is to bring the final report into the broader public national debate by presenting the joint proposals for tourism at the next trilateral conference (in 2001).

Key words :

- Trans-border co-operation
- Forum for cross-border communication
- Local participation
- Wetlands

The work of NetForum will be used in the political decision-making process on the trilateral level. The project has highlighted the importance of integrating this type of forum into the existing political systems of the Wadden Sea Region.

Secret of success

- ☞ **Establishment of a working group made up of representatives from all levels in three neighbouring countries**
- ☞ **Promoting local participation**
- ☞ **Using existing cross-border co-operations**
- ☞