

# REPORT: WORKSHOP EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



Friday November 26, 2010

**"Investing in your future"**  
Crossborder cooperation programme  
2007-2013 Part-financed by the European Union  
(European Regional Development Fund)



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## INTRODUCTION (BY WIM VAN HOOFF)

Detailing the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in wetlands is one of the goals of STEP. The partners are in different stages of obtaining/applying for the European Charter.

The goal of the workshop is to come together and to discuss how to organize the joint study or to split it up in different parts. The Biesbosch is leading Activity 1. One of the sub-actions of Activity 1 is the European Charter: studying the detailing & implementing the obtention of the Charter by the different partners.

There are different possibilities: do we propose a study to identify and unify different criteria of sustainable tourism? What are the different bottlenecks for different areas? Should we set up a study to overcome these problems? The presentations and workshops should shed some light on the principles and mechanisms of the Charter, so we can decide how to continue with the European Charter in the three areas.



## PRESENTATIONS

Note: PDF versions of both presentations can be downloaded here:

[download the presentation of Richard Denman](#)

[download the presentation of Bruce Hanson](#)

### THE EUROPEAN CHARTER: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO? (BY RICHARD DENMAN)

Richard Denman has been involved with the European Charter for many years, and is a member of the Evaluation Committee. He has worked as a sustainable tourism consultant for longer than he can remember. Much of his work (e.g. with the European Commission) has to do with protected areas.

The European Charter was developed over a long time by protected area professionals. After lots of meetings, coordinated by a French organisation, the European Charter has been operational since 2001. It recognizes a process rather than an end quality, and is all about good practice in sustainable tourism management. The Europarc Federation doesn't make lists of top places to visit, but certifies that parks and/or places are looking after the environment through tourism.

Many well-known parks have obtained the European Charter, as well as some small protected areas that have built up relationships with their environment. Networks of these areas have applied. The European Charter is awarded for five years. Many parks are now going through the renewal process. There are just over 80 Charter parks, and about ten parks per year receive the European Charter. There is a big concentration in Spain, where authorities are very keen on the European Charter to improve the management of protected areas. The European Charter is beginning to spread in Eastern Europe; there are no chartered parks in Belgium yet and only one in The Netherlands.

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### WHY DO PROTECTED AREAS WISH TO OBTAIN THE EUROPEAN CHARTER?

- They want to **strengthen the relationships** between protected area management & tourism industry in area. Setting up a framework, working together, showing the world you're doing things right.
- Protected areas become more **influential** in shaping tourism development.
- **Higher profile** for the park. A lot of it comes from what the parks themselves do with it: PR locally and with visitors sparks media interest and attracts visitors.
- Process of **assessment**. An expert comes to look, gives advice. The internal assessment is



very interesting as well: you have to go through a process, which helps visualize your mechanisms: how do we do it?

- Recognition can help to get extra **funding**.
- **Network** meetings with other charter parks - learn from each other.

The European Charter is probably not widely known to the public. In chartered parks a lot of information about the Charter can be found. It is a little like the Tourist Board rating for hotels. There is a website for the European Charter, listing the parks, and marketing of the Charter is underway. But that's not the concept anyway: it's more about how you use it yourself.

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The candidate park develops a tourism strategy and action plan. A lengthy application form is filled out and sent in. An external verifier is appointed and spends a few days in the park investigating all sorts of things and talking with stakeholders. The verifier writes a report to the Evaluation Committee. The committee decides and communicates its decision to the candidate park. The Charter is often awarded with provisions & requirements, recommendations & comments. Very rarely it is rejected wholly, often areas are asked to address issues. Areas of good practice are identified, to pass on to other parks. The European Charter consists of two parts. Part I revolves around the sustainable management of the park, involving various stakeholders. Part II focuses on the collaboration with individual businesses.

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## KEY REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHARTER PART I

1. A **permanent structure** for working together on sustainable tourism

Demonstrable links with national and regional bodies are important. Set up a permanent forum, a multi-stakeholder body. There is no prescribed form for this: some parks open up their forum to anybody who is interested by setting up working committees.

The main concern is who exactly is round the table: tourism businesses need to be engaged in this, preferably the local tourism association. Also ensure clear representation by the local community, not just the local authorities. Invite conservation bodies, pressure groups, nature bodies...

2. A **strategy** for sustainable tourism in the park

Be clear about the area you cover. You don't need to limit yourself to the park area: large parks often have villages in them, for example. Small parks where tourism facilities are outside of the park do well to embrace the wider area. A protected area can for example include a couple of villages around it.

Make sure your sustainable tourism strategy links into your park management plans, and supports



them. Develop the strategy through consultation with your stakeholders, and make sure it is adopted by the sustainable tourism forum.

In the verification process, the situation on the ground will be analyzed. A clear understanding of your visitors is important, preferably quantitative. A broad assessment of tourism facilities will be conducted, identifying your capacity, needs and opportunities. Make sure your strategy identifies clear objectives.

There is no uniform approach to drafting your strategy: you need to identify what is meaningful and relevant for your area. To obtain the Charter, it is most important to lay out what you're aiming at and how you are likely to achieve it.

3. **Actions** which address an identified set of issues

## ACTION PLAN

Your action plan should contain 8 components: your areas of action. The verification process will check if the park and its plan are addressing these issues.

1. *Protecting and enhancing natural and cultural heritage*: monitoring the impact of visitors on the environment, identifying ways of controlling this impact, how can tourism activity enhance activity (investment in cultural projects adding to conservation...). Identify and engage visitors involved in conservation.

2. *Providing all visitors with a high quality experience*: this includes demonstrating your quality standard is being met. Inclusiveness is very important: you need to deliver to ALL visitors. Exactly what is high quality, is not defined: this question should be addressed in your local area. In the UK parks strive to meet national requirements.

3. *Communicate the special qualities of the area effectively to visitors*: information delivery, education programs.

4. *Encouraging specific products based on discovery and understanding of the area*: tourist packages, kinds of development offering special experiences to visitors, involvement of local guides and tourism operators.

5. *Providing training for enterprises, park staff and other stakeholders on sustainable tourism issues*: management of facilities in a sustainable way, on what the area has to offer, training conservation workers about tourism...

6. *Protecting and supporting local quality of life*: community interface. Involvement in tourism planning, feedback to local community, communication, handling complaints about tourism.

7. *Increasing benefits to the local economy*: monitoring economic impact, supporting local economic activities, identifying ways to keep the spending in the local community.

8. *Monitoring and influencing visitor flows*: transport is very important. Take action to ensure and



offer sustainable ways of transport.

The European Charter is an ongoing process: during the five year period, demonstrate progress and build-up of actions. All parks should also become actively involved in a network of charter parks. The Charter needs to be renewed after 5 years.

Some Chartered parks have not renewed their application, some are not ready yet. Europarc is flexible: you can be awarded an extra year if really necessary. The main reason for the small drop-out is parks saying: "We're doing it anyway, and don't need you to tell us we're doing it." Others have changed staff or had difficulties for local reasons, or have shifted their priorities.

Europarc has the capacity to process all applications. Europarc consulting checks the application and appoints a verifier. There is a large number of verifiers available. There is a cost to the park for applying, calculated to meet the cost of the verification process. Otherwise Europarc would not be economically sustainable. This model is not dependant on European money: Europarc is self-financing. At the highest level there might be a money problem.

## PART II: FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Europarc intended from the beginning to make the Charter awardable to individual businesses in Chartered areas. The system is now up and running and functioning.

Europarc cannot deal directly with individual businesses. Part 2 is awarded through and by the protected areas themselves. To do so, they use a set of criteria that businesses have to meet. These criteria can be developed at a national or supranational level. Sections of Europarc combine groups of countries or associations of parks.

For the certification you can work with established labels, like the Green Tourism Business Scheme or Green Key. Some of these schemes don't cover all kinds of tourism business. Identifying criteria by park and asking businesses if they're meeting them should be enough. They should also become involved in development of visitor interpretation.

Some questions:

Q: Are there clear results of Europarc stimulating economic benefits?

A: No objective measurements about the delivery of additional income are available, nor are there more qualitative studies. Most parks, though, are able to demonstrate things they've done which they would otherwise not have done.

Q: If businesses have been awarded Green Key status and are located in a protected area, are they automatically awarded Part 2 of the European Charter?

A: That is up to parks and countries to determine. Normally not: they need to meet certain additional park-related requirements.



## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE BROADS (BY BRUCE HANSON)

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ACTION

The Broads has been involved in the development of sustainable tourism for a long time. It was a different world back in 1993, when the Europarc book 'Loving Them To Death' was edited in The Broads.

A good definition of sustainable tourism is: "... all forms of tourism development, management & activity, which maintain the environmental, social & economic integrity & well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity."

If you tell a busy businessman this, his eyes will glaze over. Translate this into **plain language**: drawing on the special qualities of the area, being concerned about what you do to the environment and local communities, now and forever. Tread softly! More than 6000 people depend on The Broads for their living. Be careful, and make sure you think through what you will do.

We identified the **special qualities** of our area (peaceful, special habitats, rare birds, cultural & human landscapes) and translated these into a sustainable tourism **practice**. We introduced the first solar boat in the UK, which we bought from Lake Geneva. This generated lots of passionate reactions: why did we buy a foreign boat? What with our ship building tradition? Others absolutely loved it. The electric boat is a success: not everybody can canoe, it is wonderful for older people etc. We also charter traditional crafts: people love the experience, and it generates interaction time.

We set up an events program, called '**Fun in The Broads**'. This has sadly been curtailed by the current economic climate. The program encompassed a range of small events to entertain/educate, like a puppet show with an environmental message. The response was tremendous.

There are many different notions of quality. That's why we set up '**The Broads Quality Charter**'. We introduced a standard for food & drink, for example: big steps forward were taken. This 'Taste Accreditation' is now recognized by Visit England.

We set up a network of canoe hire centres, to offer a sustainable tourism experience to people who don't own a canoe, and to help diversify the local industry: boat yards added another string to their bow. 6 or 12 canoes is not economically sustainable. The **Broads Bike Hire** was set up with the help of two champions who also run a camping business. They work with us to develop bike routes.

Access is really important for people with disabilities, so we built a boardwalk over 0,5 km long, with Braille interpretation.

Our work in all these fields was reason enough to want to go for European Charter status. We had been awarded **Beacon Council Status** before, which made us very proud. It handed us interesting ways of thinking about sustainable tourism: two big cities were also named Beacons of Sustainable Tourism, and we realized they faced similar challenges.



## CHARTER ESSENTIALS (1)

Working with a **wide range of stakeholders** is crucial. Some are just not interested, yet you want to get them on board. Focus on their interests in & links with tourism. Classically, there will be talking within sector, but no talking across sectors. Make people understand we're all in the same business. The **Broads Tourism Forum** was set up to address this problem.

You will encounter difficulties, and you need strong people to work with. People listen to their peers: **businesses** to businesses. Play into self-interest: people see money, we see support and help.

Don't just involve businesses, but members from **different organisations** and sectors (arts, local government, conservation groups). You will however notice that predominantly businesses will want to join.

The Broads Tourism Forum went so far as to develop a pledge, which they police carefully. Members have even been ejected from the Forum for not sticking to the pledge. The 'them vs. us' situation shifted to awareness by businesses that they depend on the quality of the environment.

## CHARTER ESSENTIALS (2)

For the development of our Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, it was important that we saw it as a strategy for **the whole of the Broads region**, not just for the Broads Authority. We give the Broads Tourism Forum things they can own: we do them, they get the credit. This strengthens & builds up the Forum.

The current economic climate is a major problem: we can't keep developing tourism like we were doing before. We have 6 small information centres, and will lose 3 of those. Luckily the Forum is active and strong. They consider engagement with the public to be really important, and are using new and innovative ways of getting information to people. STEP is important, too: tourism strategy actions will be carried out under STEP.

In 2011 we will start developing Part II of the European Charter.

Some Questions:

Q: How are the relations with tourism businesses for **parks in the Netherlands and Belgium**? Do you have tourism businesses that are difficult with protected areas?

A: In *the Netherlands* things are not the same as in The Broads. The difficulties sometimes originate from ownership of boats by private companies. There is a lot of development in getting businesses together. We are confronted with barriers: two provinces, lots of municipalities... There exists a network of tourism businesses on the south side, and we need to involve the north side in



the years to come. Last year we set up an ambassadorship course for tourism businesses, about the park, its history, protection... 20 companies signed up for it last year, and next year we're organizing another course. We also set up a 'user forum' for people who work and live in the area. It's a combination of nature organisations, tourism companies, fishermen, hunters, farmers...

The economical crisis will cause more cooperation between the non-profit and commercial sectors. The Biesbosch needs to close one visitor centre, and companies are coming together out of the need for an information point. There's also a change of attitude: we're joining forces with other Biesbosch parts, a stubborn farmer is starting to talk. The balance between economy and nature needs to be communicated well. Nature organisations are afraid of too many people coming in. You need to make the enemy your friend. It's not easy, it's a lengthy process: you need to give people time to grasp the concept and different aspects of it. They also need time to get to know each other, then trust begins to develop.

Things are totally different for *Belgium*: we are still building a protected area. We are starting to get some interest in future possibilities, and need to get businesses interested. We're still focussing mainly on local people, but not yet on businesses. We hope the process will be relatively painless.



### WORKSHOP 1: FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM PART I: HOW TO GET READY FOR THE APPLICATION

(Workshop leader: Wim van Hooff // Participants: Stefaan Nollet, Patty Kanselaar, Stefaan Nollet, Kiki Van Der Horst, Rob Vereijcken, Patrick Martens, Jan De Ryck)

#### INTRODUCTION

The goal of the workshop is to look at the application form, and to identify potential problems. A lot of documents can be found on the website of the European Charter, but not the application form. The filled-out application form of The Broads will be sent to participants via mail.

The application form needs to be completed very much from your local situation: it is more a document of intentions than a document with hard data. For The Broads it isn't clear how the application was evaluated. The verifier spoke with many stakeholders and conducted extensive research. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses, but there is no real conclusion in the assessment. There's no clear answer. The Broads was accepted, but it's not clear on the basis of which criteria.

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*Biesbosch:* The Charter is a goal for all parks, and involves many communication and education elements. So why not set up **collaboration**? The decision should be taken on a higher level.

*Polders of Kruibeke:* Awareness is a problem, especially for W&Z. There are many organisations and levels involved, and there's no clear filtering down of consciousness. The Charter offers possibilities to stimulate, and it doesn't seem hard to obtain. Many of the things you need to do to obtain it, would logically happen anyway, and are goals you would set regardless. In fact, each national park should set and want to achieve these goals, and you can collaborate to do so. Why is the National Park Hoge Kempen not chartered? Why don't we work together with them, with other possible partners, with the Netherlands and Wallonia?

The Polders of Kruibeke are still being built, and will become a pearl by the Scheldt. The Charter could be an important communication tool, a way to tell the world we are working towards sustainability. And it would be great if we could link Kruibeke to parks that are already well on their way.

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*The Biesbosch* has a management plan and a strategic plan, and is in the stage where a European Charter **Strategy & Action Plan** will be drafted. The idea is to hand in the application by December 15th, 2011. The to-be-founded Parkschap will be responsible for this. A stakeholder analysis will inform the strategy, and the actions to be taken to arrive at a **forum** which underwrites the entire strategy. This commitment is necessary: the will to listen to each other, to



create communality.

The Biesbosch has a user council, which is a start. But is it enough for the entire area? Local municipalities, for example, are not involved. The user council covers all kinds of topics, while the forum we're talking about here is all about sustainable tourism.

*The Polders of Kruibeke* has brought together all the interest groups during the construction phase, in the Management Committee. There is trust there. The municipality is not part of the Management Committee. But you need your Strategy and Action Plan to convince people of your goals, and to keep them convinced. The Management Committee could be the perfect basis for a forum, which would also include the municipality, Tourism Flanders...

It is important that the Strategy and Action Plan is carried by all those involved: don't impose the plan, but allow people to feel it is theirs, too. For some groups it will be hard to fathom if it is interesting for them. Small businesses often participate because there's something in it for them.

Q: Does it have to be one forum? Or can it also be a combination of forums?

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## APPLICATION FORM: SECTION A

### A5 (Size of area): How will you determine the boundaries of your area?

*Biesbosch*: use highways as boundaries. Size of Tourism Policy Plan seems logical.

*The Broads* has chosen a wider area.

*Polders of Kruibeke*: need to think this through, and A7 (Legal structure relating to the protected area) as well. It's worth a study to determine which connection you will make between the legal structure of the area and for example the municipality. Kruibeke, Bazel and Rupelmonde will of course be part of the 'park area'. Do you involve Antwerp as well? And when can you adjust the size of your area? Polders of Kruibeke is part of the Sigma plan, has to do with the Scheldt, and is linked to small nature areas that are part of the system: this leads to the entire Scheldt. After five years an extension, enlargement could be possible. In the document you could state the intention to grow, to connect.

### A5 and A7 (legal structure) don't necessarily match.

Impacts all the other questions. Can the stakeholder analysis resolve this? Chicken or egg... At a certain moment you simply need to choose.

Boundaries are vague: a hotel could not be interested, but the bar next to it very much so. 'The host feeling.'

### A9 (Management & staffing)

*Polders of Kruibeke*: A9 is a problem, since there is nothing at the moment. An organisation, a legal structure, needs to be set up. There are many different partners carrying out various tasks:



managing the dykes, nature, access roads...

*Biesbosch*: Many parks in the Netherlands do not have a legal personality.

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## APPLICATION FORM: SECTION B

### Principle 4: Researching visitors needs

*The Biesbosch*: some elements have been researched, but the picture is not complete.

*Polders of Kruibeke*: have started studying this. We will figure out specific tourism and recreation potentials. Soon a workshop with tourism organisations will be held.

### Principle 9: Benefits to the local community

What is the economic return of European Charter status? Would be very interesting to know, and could be very helpful in conversations with stakeholders. Businesses are very sensitive to numbers.

Intermediate evaluation is important: what economic benefits does the Charter have for hotels, restaurants, bars...? And what are the extra benefits when the businesses put in extra effort (as opposed to just operating in the area)?

If we have these numbers, then we can convince businesses to put in that extra effort, which will enhance quality and support sustainability. Possible comparisons with Green Tourism Business Scheme & Green Key.



## WORKSHOP 2: HOW TO FULFIL THE REQUIREMENTS OF PART 2: RENEWAL OF CHARTER MEMBERSHIP (AFTER 5 YEARS) AND THE NEXT STEPS FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES.

(Workshop leader: Richard Denman // Participants: Marianne de Braven (report), Sjoerd van Dijk, Mieke Vander Elst, Bruce Hanson, Simon Hooton, Fred Panjer, Hans Thiebou, Guus Verhorst)

*Richard:* Part 2 of the Charter is about awarding individual businesses with the Charter. When you apply for renewing the Charter after 5 years, **Part 2 is never obligatory**. The important thing in reapplying is that you are able to show that you have a good relationship with businesses.

*Bruce:* The Broads want to go for Part 2, because it is a logical next step, a tool in involving businesses in the Charter principle and also a way to regulate things, e.g. use of the logo. It is the experience of the Broads that businesses are interested in the Charter when they participate in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. Example: using STEP money for a bike booklet made by businesses, on the condition the businesses involved become Charter partners. Going for Part 2 is not difficult (no 'rocket science'). It even makes things easier sometimes. People ask why you do things. If you tell them it is part of the European Charter then they go 'Okay' ('Oh, I see').

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*Richard:* Don't use the Charter for businesses as a barrier to be part of the group. Keep trying to **involve other businesses** in the Charter besides the businesses that participate already.

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*Bruce:* Tourism Forum Broads: 3 meetings a year of the full forum (54 members). About 12 companies in working committee, they meet every month. The Forum develops in the direction of a destination marketing organisation. At first only the 'big boys' were in, now everybody wants to become a member. Originally local authorities and nature organisations were asked to participate, but nowadays it is mainly a tourism sector organisation.

*Marianne:* In the Biesbosch there is a 'user council', with representatives of all kinds of users.

*Richard:* If this council includes participation of private companies, it will do for the Charter. The idea is that parties talk together and develop and implement the strategy further.

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*Guus:* What kind of **subjects** does the Broads Forum discuss?

*Bruce:* Branding, quality – these are issues of big concern for businesses. To raise quality they have training courses for personnel in friendliness, gaining knowledge on the area etc. It is funded by the businesses themselves. The Forum is also telling local authorities to do their job, e.g. on waste disposal.

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*Simon:* Now that local businesses in the Broads have a logo, Green Tourism Business Scheme etc., what is their **motivation** to obtain the Charter?

*Richard:* Don't ban them if they do not go for the Charter. Show them their reward for giving information on The Broads to their guests and working with the Green Tourism Business Scheme: they will get more guests. Being labelled a Charter enterprise will add to that. But businesses must want it themselves. The Authority has to do something for it as well, like training. They can mention only Charter businesses in their promotion, or increase their promotion for them.

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*Sjoerd:* How do you stimulate businesses to **work together**?

*Richard:* A common label, a common logo, will stimulate this; eventually they will have more benefit.

*Bruce:* The Charter expresses quality: if businesses see their colleagues have it, they want it too. Be sure the Forum is independent from the authority; otherwise there will be less support. Bruce (authority) is a member of the Executive Committee of the Forum.

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*Marianne:* How do you get **sustainability on the agenda** of the forum?

*Richard:* It is everywhere. Show it will attract enough visitors.

*Bruce:* We put planners and businesses together, around the table. It creates better understanding of each other's philosophy and problems.

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*Marianne:* How do you deal with businesses that want to go for the Charter but are **outside the borders** of the area?

*Richard:* The authority decides on the area of influence for Charter businesses. They do not have to be within the boundaries ('sensible practical flexibility'). There has to be a defined boundary, but you have to be flexible in practice. E.g. there is a difference in rural versus urban areas. Dordrecht is within the Biesbosch region, but you cannot involve the whole city, as there are many other types of tourists as well. Bring Dordrecht in around the Biesbosch table and the other way around.

*Simon:* It is more a process than a fixed thing.

*Richard:* The different types of businesses should be maximised. Like farms that provide local food, transport providers, retail... Bring them in. In general: every sector that is influenced by tourism should have the chance to be represented in the forum.

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*Sjoerd:* How do you deal with **conflicting interests** between local communities as part of the Biesbosch versus their own local interests?



*Richard:* It takes time, but they have to be convinced of the common interest in the area. They don't have to merge completely, as long as they work together, e.g. in branding.

*Bruce:* Tourists don't see the difference: they want to go shopping as well as seeing the area.

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*Sjoerd:* What about **different branding** of the same area?

*Bruce:* Try cross-fertilisation; invite them to form meetings and the other way around.

*Simon:* As authority be cooperative and helpful, then communities at the border will also participate. Let them be positive instead of competitive.

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*Richard:* There is a **template** for the requirements of Part 2 made for the Island countries in Europarc (Ireland/Britain/Iceland). I will send the most recent version (NB: this version will be available on [www.STEP-projects.eu](http://www.STEP-projects.eu) under Templates – MdB)

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*Hans:* How do you **stimulate public transport** to the area?

*Simon:* We made suggestions on car-free visits to the area. You come by car, but once you are there, no car is used. E.g.: the B&B meets you at the station/car park, you get a rental bike, you are told where the bus stops are etc. It is all about mindsets.

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*Richard:* Green Tourism Business Scheme/Green Key is a start. Enterprises should be promoting public transport but this is not a Green Tourism Business Scheme/Green Key rule. It could be an extra criterion for Charter businesses: Charter companies supply visitors with information on public transport. Clippesby Hall in The Broads is a good example.

## EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP 2

*Sjoerd:* I am happy with the idea that things are happening already, that 2 areas in the Biesbosch work together, that there are a lot of businesses that see the value of the national park and are willing to cooperate ('Never underestimate a good crisis.')

*Hans:* We are already working on many elements; it should not be difficult to obtain the Charter. Make a friend of your enemy, talk with him, look what you have in common, be enthusiastic.

*Simon:* The business to business concept is a good thing.

*Bruce:* Many people see the Charter as the Green Tourism Business Scheme, for which they have to do a lot – but they are doing that already.



*Fred:* The Charter is an instrument, not a goal. Shared interests matter. The forum is independent, we are not the leader, but we should help and show them it is in their own interest.

*Marianne:* It is good to see that we are well on the way to obtain the Charter for the Biesbosch.

*Mieke:* The Charter for specific businesses is a bit early for the Polders of Kruikeke, but this workshop is useful. Most businesses in our area are concentrated in one village. Maybe we can help them to spread out better. The forum gives ideas on which economic benefits from visitors there are for the Polders of Kruikeke.

*Richard:* Don't put barriers on engaging. You want them to participate. That is the tool for Part 2.



### Q&A RICHARD DENMAN

Q: What are the **criteria** in the assessment of the application?

A: They're not very precise. The verifier looks at your application, the paperwork supporting it. He makes an assessment against what you have said. There is an internal score against each point. This is then considered by the Evaluation Committee when going through the verifier report. Awarding the scores is not strictly regulated, there is no detailed set of requirements.

Q: How can you **define the area**, the size, what do you include? Are there strict criteria there?

A: It is very much up to the protected area: what is sensible and helpful for you? Sometimes there is a formalized buffer zone (planning regulation), but in most cases this is not so. In these cases, the park must decide for itself. What we would expect is to consider the area in which there is a strong influence on the tourism sector. To what extent are their businesses potentially benefiting from this protected area, and how will the area be damaged by the activities of tourism in the area? This is not by any means precise, though.

Q: How about the **legal structure**?

A: The constitution of the forum will define the structure: who is eligible to be a member etc. It doesn't need to be a problem if different legal structures are involved. Look at The Broads: if it looks like, feels like, thinks it's The Broads, then it is The Broads.

Q: Has a study been conducted into the economic and tourism **results of Charter status**?

A: Not that I'm aware of. Some academic pieces of work are available, and some of those have asked those questions. We can certainly point to a number of qualitative case studies. I am not aware of anything quantitative in particular, but we can find an answer to that. Simply contact Europarc. This can help convincing people when setting up the forum or Part 2.



## JOINT ACTION

The ideas:

- Organisation of meetings with stakeholders to convince them of the importance of the Charter, with support from Richard and Bruce.
- Setting up an 'intervision' group: regular meetings to keep each other abreast of the evolution of the application process.
- Developing together the criteria for businesses to get involved in Part 2.
- Economic impact of the European Charter: a study into the economic benefits for the parks and local businesses.
- Green Destination Guide: The Broads will develop this guide (not certain which form). The idea could be to investigate what exactly it is we are working towards: what will the public receive when they come to these areas? The sustainable way of experiencing, the type of destination we want to be. Exemplars of best practice sustainable tourism.

*Issues:* a separate identification of green products, or use 'green' as a verb, overall concept? New opportunities added to usual information delivery: promoting initiatives, ideas, opportunities for visitors to really experience wetlands - the kind of green that you feel, packages, early morning guided walks with mist rising off the water etc. Each of the areas is able to offer this. And if you've enjoyed this: go to... Mutual promotion of wetlands experience.

- Ecosystem services: what is the actual worth of the nature in your area? Maybe we could investigate and explain that the land in protected areas is valuable in a different, non-economic kind of way.
- Focus groups: put together a group in each of the countries to ask them questions that are relevant to us, to our branding and packaging, customer approach for businesses... so we can capture their imaginations in communication, ask them what they would do to change to help lengthen the planet's life span. Is there common learning? Focus groups with potential visitors that can be compared: generic questions + focus on the kinds of landscapes and experiences on offer. Potential visitors' reactions to wetlands & their wildlife.
- The Broads has an immediate need to start implementing Charter Part 2, and could do with help charting out what needs to be done. That could be helpful for the other two areas.

**Marianne & Wim will work out a proposal, which will be sent out & discussed by mail so that by next meeting there will be a consensus about the study.**



## REACTIONS

"A very useful second day."

"It left me speechless"

"Very interesting to focus on just one subject."

"Wonderful to hear similar problems discussed by people from different countries."

"It's valuable to see each other regularly, sharing experiences: I find it energizing."

"Stimulating and interesting, and wonderful to see the Biesbosch. It's very good to talk things over with like-minded people: it helps shape sharper ideas."

"I came here 18 months ago, to discuss the possibility of setting up the project. Now I am meeting with friends, and we're probing the heart of what we need to do. You even listen to me when even I don't know exactly what I'm saying!"

"It's nice to work towards a good action plan."

"I'm still quite green, and gaining lots of experience here."

"We have so many chances to learn from each other. Just keep it simple, and pass on your own knowledge."

"It feels like seeing friends all the time, and we're moving on up and ahead."

"A few weeks ago we were discussing whether this meeting would be useful. Yes, it was! Thank you all for coming."



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### DATE & LOCATION

Friday November 26, 2010. Biesbosch Centre, Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

### PARTICIPANTS

-  Marianne den Braven
-  Wim Van Hooff
-  Bruce Hanson
-  Patty Kanselaar
-  Stefaan Nollet
-  Mieke Vander Elst
-  Dick Verheijen
-  Richard Denman
-  Clare Weller
-  Guus Verhorst
-  Timothy Vanagt
-  Fred Panjer
-  Rob Vereijcken
-  Hans Thiebou
-  Kiki Van Der Horst
-  Patrick Martens
-  Simon Hooton
-  Sjoerd Van Dijk
-  Jan De Ryck

