

# Eurosite Annual Conference 2009

## WORKING GROUP Sessions – afternoon, Thursday 28th May

Notes:

- The afternoon of Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May will feature 6 working groups on the subjects listed below. Working groups 1, 2 and 3 run at the same time in Session 1: 12.30 to 14.00 and working groups 4, 5 and 6 run at the same time in Session 2: 15.30 to 17.00. Each working group is scheduled to last 90 minutes.
- The chair will ask participants at the start of each working group what they would like to focus on or any particular issues they wish to discuss.
- Each working group will consist of the Chair + two speakers – if the Chair makes a presentation, this will mean a maximum of three presentations per working group. Each presentation should be 15 minutes long, allowing for 1 hour or 45 minutes discussion.
- The working groups will be run as 'open' sessions – all Conference participants will be invited to join the group of most interest for them.
- Unless arranged in advance, at the beginning of each working group, the Chair will ask for a volunteer to capture the main points of discussion relating to the Conference theme and the subject of the working group. These will be used to form the basis of post conference reporting and to inform future planning within Eurosite.

### 1. Interpretation and Public Access to Natural Areas

***Aim: to share experience and identify good practices for interpretation of and responsible public access to natural areas.***

Effective interpretation and responsible public access to natural areas involves good communication and cooperation between site managers and various stakeholders, including site visitors. Management teams require to know what different groups (local communities; visitors; environmental, cultural and social associations; sports clubs; etc.) want, need and expect when they are 'on site', whilst ensuring that their conservation aims and objectives can still be realised.

In this working group, participants will be able to discuss methods used to develop interpretation and public use plans for natural areas (nature reserves, protected areas etc). There will also be an opportunity to discuss the challenges involved in formulating such plans and the techniques and methods used to engage and meet the needs of a diverse and varied range of stakeholders. How do we define what is 'responsible' public access? What makes interpretation 'effective'? Based on sharing experience, what best practices can be defined for effective interpretation and responsible public access?

This is core work for most, if not all, nature conservation organisations. This working group provides an opportunity for management teams to learn about various public use activities in protected areas and also techniques to capture feedback, assess impacts and meaningfully engage people. Successful case studies from within the Eurosite network will be presented during the working group.

**Chairperson:** Dña. Zafira Ferrer Allkins. Técnico en Uso Público VAERSA - Consellería de Medio Ambiente, Agua, Urbanismo y Vivienda, Spain

**Speaker:** Donald McNeil, Forestry Commission, Planning and Environment Manager. UK.

**Speaker:** Xavier Ariño, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and scientific collaborator of the Federació d'Entitats Excursionistes de Catalunya (FEEC).

## 2. Branding and Quality Standards

***Aim: to explore issues connected with branding and quality standards applied within sites or by nature conservation organisations and whether, as methods, these can be used to increase self-sufficiency in financing for natural areas or be used to communicate and engage the public.***

Design and development of 'specific brands' for nature and nature conservation organisations can be used to ensure that certain standards of quality and environmental management are maintained within a site or by an organisation. Branding products and services within a site or an organisation can also have beneficial marketing advantages for those local businesses or products that are eligible to use the brand, helping to boost the local economy and promote good practices within the protected areas. Marketing the 'nature' of a site or the work of a nature conservation organisation responsible can be a means of generating income or engaging public support. Branding and development of standards to assure quality can be effective ways to promote nature as the primary asset of the site and a local area: it can also be used to promote the work of a nature conservation organisation to the public. At one level, one goal is to enable sites to be self-sufficient in terms of financing – for example, a site which utilises, develops and applies branding and quality standards for specific 'nature products': on another level, another goal is to develop branding and quality standards as a promotion or communication tool with the public – for example, a nature conservation organisation commits to working according to a set of quality standards in order to conserve nature and these are used to positively engage the public.

This is a complex and challenging area for most nature conservation organisations. What examples are available for discussion – what works and what does not work? What does the development and application of branding and quality standards involve and who should be responsible? What are the consequences of not meeting standards? What steps should be taken to enable standards and branding to be achieved and then re-secured on a recurring basis?

**Chairperson:** D. Pedro Ondarzabal Aizpurua. Técnico en calidad. VAERSA - Consellería de Medio Ambiente, Agua, Urbanismo y Vivienda, Spain

**Speaker:** Henriët Leenen – Staatsbosbeheer

**Speaker:** Christian Ringot, Director for Communication and Stakeholder Involvement, EDEN 62, France: *“Developing the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) as a labelling tool for natural areas in Pas de Calais, Northern France.” “Vers l’écocertification EMAS des espaces naturels départementaux du Pas de Calais.”*

## 3. Wetland Restoration

***Aim: to share experience and discuss management treatments important for wetland restoration.***

Wetland restoration involves many different activities such as removing material, restoring tidal flow to a restricted wetland, and controlling invasive species. It also involves a wide variety of stakeholders and specialists. Wetland restoration is important because wetlands provide many services to society and are extremely biologically productive. The goal should be to restore the lost functions and values of the wetland. These functions can include the ability to reduce flooding, improve water quality, and to provide habitat for a wide variety of species. During this working group, case studies of wetland restoration within the Eurosite network will be presented and discussed. Participants can exchange lessons-learned and set mutual aims for the future.

**Chairperson:** D. Salvador Palop Guillem, Jefe del Servicio de Análisis y Evaluación de la Consellería de Medio Ambiente, Agua, Urbanismo y Vivienda, Spain

**Speaker:** Freek Zwart, Staatsbosbeheer, Terschelling, the Netherlands: *“WET DUNES – DRY FEET- An ecological restoration project and its consequences for other functions of the dunes”*

**Speaker:** Toni Costa, biologist from Consorci de l'Estany d'Ivars i Vila-sana will present the case of the restoration of the biggest inland lake (126 ha) in Catalunya. The process started in 2005 and is now reaching the stabilising point.

**Target Group:**

- Eurosite members facing climate change in their work;
- Eurosite members interested in sharing their actions on wetland restoration;
- Eurosite members with an interest in exploring common management approaches to particular aspects of wetland management, such as reed-bed management.

#### 4. Marine Conservation

***Aim: to share experience and ideas required for and involved in implementation of the marine strategy framework directive.***

**Target group**

- Eurosite members involved in coastal and marine conservation
- Eurosite members interested in learning best practices in coastal and marine strategies
- Eurosite members interested to get involved in the Coastal and Marine Initiative, a three year programme

The aim of the European Union's ambitious Marine Strategy Framework Directive (adopted in June 2008) is to protect more effectively the marine environment across Europe. It aims to achieve good environmental status of the EU's marine waters by 2021 and to protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend.

Each Member State should therefore develop a marine strategy for its marine waters, which includes the designation of marine protected areas. The designation and protection of marine sites is still in the initial stages, especially when compared to the well-developed terrestrial Natura 2000 sites, which have advanced management plans. This working group will discuss the role and value of networking in relation to marine conservation. Also, it will include successful marine conservation strategies, including coastal integration and discuss the problems and obstacles involved in such plans.

**Chairperson:** Emmanuel Thévenin, Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels (FR)

**Speaker:** Sophie Elliott, Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC), UK, Marine Protected Area Stakeholder Engagement Officer

**Speaker:** Roger Estève, Conservatoire du Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres, France. The strategy of the Coastal Conservancy and the first results of the actual national public debate on marine issues 'Le Grenelle de la Mer'.

**Presentation and discussion on the Coastal and Marine Initiative**, a three year programme of workshops and exchange of good practice on marine issues, designation of marine protected areas, involving stakeholders in management planning. A first workshop is planned in autumn 2009.

#### 5. Adaptive Management

***Aim: to discuss site management capacity building needs within the network and mechanisms to identify, continuously improve and support implementation of best practices.***

As part of core business, Eurosite aims to facilitate good nature conservation management and practice. To date, this has mainly been achieved through the development of the Eurosite Management Toolkit and a mix of Eurosite-led projects, twinning relationships and dedicated workshops, which focus on sharing

information and experiences about specific site management issues. With 96 members in 24 countries, Eurosite has access to a treasure-trove of knowledge and experience. Making the most of that resource though is not straight-forward – there are many differences in the contexts in which members work and, often, members are at different stages of development.

Building on valuable work to date, Eurosite believes that the network can benefit strongly from a set of evolving best practices, adhering to a certain, jointly formulated “standard”. This is not new: the Eurosite Toolkit is in a way a “standard”. However, how do members, as a network, ensure that good practice can evolve into best practice? How can insights best be captured? And in continuously evolving best practices, how do we decide what the “standard” is?

Linked to all of this are questions relating to the benefits of creating a ‘needs-driven’ strategic capacity building programme. How can the network come together and build the capacity required for practicing site management on this agreed level?

Key questions for discussion are:

- How do we work together to pool resources to build the necessary capacity to practice?
- How can we finance / seek funding for the network of coaches?
- Would we benefit from seeking alliances with other networks? If so, how?

#### **Target Group:**

- Eurosite members with urgent management capacity needs.
- Eurosite members with an interest and/or involvement in sharing and learning of best practices and/or management methodologies.
- Eurosite members interested in finding out more about similar efforts by other networks and the resulting open standards.

**Chairperson:** Ilke Tilders, Foundations of Success (FOS) Europe [ilke@fosonline.org](mailto:ilke@fosonline.org)

Speaker: Tim Coleshaw, National Nature Reserve Project Manager, Natural England

Speaker: Xavier Escuté i Gasulla Departament de Gestió del Territori Àrea de Territori i Paisatge Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya

## **6. Connectivity and large-scale Conservation**

***Aim: to discuss the need to manage sites as part of a connected ecological landscape and the practical steps involved in managing beyond sites.***

One of the largest threats to European biodiversity is the fragmentation of natural habitats. The development and conservation of networks that enable species, habitats and ecological processes to move freely across Europe is therefore crucial to the long-term protection of biodiversity. Large-scale conservation includes linking sites through corridors and enables ecological processes to adapt to the changes caused by climate change.

Whether the large-scale conservation involves the protection of large, wilderness areas or the connection of many smaller sites through corridors, a multi-sector approach to the management is necessary. Due to the involvement of various countries, regions and languages, designing such large-scale conservation plans involves a wide range of stakeholders. Successful communication is crucial to the long-term survival of large scale-conservation across Europe. This working group will discuss the many issues involved and present a collection of work taking place across Europe.

**Nominated Chairperson:** Irene Bouwma, Landscape Centre, Alterra, the Netherlands

**Speaker:** Aysegul Cil, Program Manager-Nature and Society, ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation, The KEN project (Knowledge for Ecological Networks) & SPEN project (Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks)

**Speaker:** Miquel Raga, Director, will present the Cantabric to Alps corridor