

NEST

Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism

Protected areas, whether they are national parks, World Heritage Areas or other European or national government designations, create particular challenges. On one hand such natural and cultural resources are spectacular and offer a perfect resource for tourism development, yet on the other hand the resource merits particular protection and careful management of development. For some the protection of land in the national interest is at the expense of rural development, but for others it is an opportunity and a stimulus for sustainable rural development.

The NEST project will establish a transnational network and facilitate the exchange of experience on how to use natural and cultural resources to best effect for the sustainable development of the area. All partner areas benefit from a high quality natural and cultural resource but are at different stages of awareness of this resource and approaches to its development. A key focus is the support and development of local and transnational networks of key stakeholders. From this base of collaborative working, the project concentrates on protected areas as a source for identifying and realising business opportunities, promoting and investigating sustainable tourism management and quality marketing, and how educational nature school programmes can be developed using the partners' shared geological heritage.



Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to promote sustainable rural development through the growth and management of nature and culture based tourism within and in connection to protected areas. Local as well as trans-national networks will be mobilised to exchange experience and knowledge, and identify critical issues concerning the development of tourism potential within protected areas, as well as evaluating tourism's impact on natural resources.

Project activities

To fulfil the key objectives the project will be divided into four interrelated themes:

1. To develop and maintain networks:
 - a. Local networks to foster collaborative working to realise innovative approaches towards tourism potential and management, as well as to encourage conflict resolution on land use and land management.
 - b. Trans-national network to transfer knowledge and experience between partners.
2. To encourage local people to perceive new business opportunities in connection with protected areas.
3. To reinforce the importance of sustainable tourism management and ecotourism quality marketing (i.e. eco-labelling).
4. To develop and promote educational nature programme using protected areas as a study laboratory by:
 - a. developing and encouraging nature school programmes for local and international participants.
 - b. developing and constructing transferable exhibition on the northern dynamic glaciations history and its implication on climatic change, as well as the geological heritage in the participating countries.

Expected results

- Reduced conflicts between different interest groups and the sharing of experience and information on how best to realise tourism potential within and between protected areas in the participating countries.
- Best practice examples on networking, environmental education, park related business and quality labelling by collaborative working within and between participating countries.
- Better understanding of the importance of sustainability for rural development in peripheries areas.
- Increased social capital in both trans-national and local networks when planning local and trans-national projects, including new approaches to joint agency and community working.
- New proposals for nature school procedures and international co-operation of nature schools, as well as international educational geo-trails.
- New “park and protected nature” - related economic products for tourism markets.
- Motivated transferable exhibition.
- Transferable models for decision makers to evaluate tourism carrying capacity.
- Extended tourist season and increased visitors diversity.

Partners

Development Centre of East-Iceland - Iceland
Hornafjardur Municipality - Iceland
Skaftárhreppur Municipality - Iceland
Finnish Forest Research Institute, Joensuu Research Centre (METLA) - Finland
County Administration of Västernorrland - Sweden
The Highland Council - Scotland
Scottish Natural Heritage - Scotland
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise (RACE) - Scotland

Measure
1.2

Total Budget
1 010 094

NPP Award
527 218

Project Period
01/10/2004 – 30/09/2007

Countries Involved
Iceland, Finland, Scotland,
Sweden

Lead Partner Organisation
University of Iceland:
Hornafjardur University
Centre

Project leader
Dr Rannveig Olafsdottir
ranny@hi.is