

Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Maribo Lakes Nature Park, Denmark

Name of verifier: Richard Partington

Date of submission of application by protected area: August 2011

Date of verification visit: 19 - 20 April 2012

Date of completion of this report: 1 May 2012

Where is shown, I have indicated a score, using the following system:

- X Not relevant
- 0 Not happening
- 1 Weak – little action
- 2 Moderate – action happening in this area, sufficient at present
- 3 Good – significant action, totally satisfactory

A star * is added to a “3” score to indicate an excellent example of best practice (3*).

Comments on individual questions provide further information or explanation and the reasons for any score under 2 is briefly explained and highlights any particular causes for concern.

The reasons for any score of 3 * awarded is explained: e.g.what makes this an example of best practice? The star is used sparingly, and only for outstanding initiatives or actions which can serve as models at the European level.

The format for this verifier's report is linked closely to that of the Application Report completed by the protected area. Information copied from the Application Report into this report to support particular answers where this is helpful is in a blue typeface.

My own observations relating to the information provided by the protected area and gained on site are, of course, particularly important – the Committee will have the full Application Report available to refer to as necessary.

Attached is a list of documents received from the protected area or presented during the visit which were not included in the original application.

Programme of visit, key sites, people and partners visited:

Thursday 19th April 2012

09:00: Briefing at Hotel Maribo Søpark: with Catharina Oksen, Archaeologist and Kitty Sommer Tourism Development Officer, the verification visit organisers.

Meeting/discussion: with Yvonne Rasmusson, Manager, Hotel Maribo Søpark. (Maribo nature park partner), Carsten Drejer (Maribo User Group member) and Nick Rasmussen both members of the local committee for the Danish Society for Nature Conservation.

10.15: Depart for Maribo Nature Park visit:

10.30: Open Air Museum: meet with Anne-Lotte S Mathiesen, Information & Interpretation Officer and Leif Nielsen 'Salle', museum caretaker. (Part of the Lolland-Falster Museums and Maribo park partner).

12:00: Nature School: meet with Ranger, Uffe Nielsen and Frederik Cordes, Team leader (nature, environment and planning) See facilities including new toilets and benches for people with disabilities.

12.30 Sandwich lunch at the Nature School

13.00: Røgbølle lake by Sørup: see new facilities for people with disabilities and discuss visitor management and nature conservation work. Meet with landowner Elsebeth and Ib Friederichsen.

14.00: Drive to the east side of the nature park and at Hejrede walk through Hans Jenson Beech woodland: discuss existing and proposed facilities including further funding following the PARKS & BENEFITS project on infrastructure improvements including a new water pumping system and the location of a new welcome centre.

15.00: Godstedlund, café, B&B and Art Gallery: meet with owner Kis Nellman. Discussion on provision of public/private visitor facilities led by Kitty Sommer on the work on new public footpath and bicycle routes (Jernbanestien and Munkevejen) in and around Maribo Nature Park.

17.00: Camping Site: meet with proprietor Bodil Clemmensen, discuss facilities such as local produce, recycling, energy efficiency, waste management, cabin, bike & canoe hire. Discussion about the work of the User Group

18.00 Return to the Hotel Maribo Søpark.

19.00: Walk from hotel to restaurant at Bangs. Have dinner with Cath Oksen, Kitty Sommer, Frederik Cordes, Uffe Nielson and Jan Woolhead from the regional government. Discussions around management planning and governance.

Friday 20th April 2012

09.30: Meeting at Hotel Maribo Søpark with Cath Oksen, to discuss the Maribo Vulnerability Plan, the work of the two local authorities Lolland & Guldborgsund and how the Co-ordination Group steers and guides practical management of the area.

10.00: Walk to the centre of Maribo to visit the town Tourist Information Centre, examine the offer, products and service.

11.00: Drive to the Guldborgsund administration offices at Nykøbing Falster for final briefing/clarification session with Team Leader Frederik Cordes and Cath Osken. Discuss Ranger tours, coordination and publicity of public events and activities and visitor payback.

13.00: Depart for Nykøbing Falster Railway Station and leave for Copenhagen.

Overall Impressions

The Maribo Lakes Nature Park, located in the Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities, was one of Denmark's first regional nature parks. It is the only inland lake area in Denmark protected as a natural landscape (Landskabsfredning) and a wildlife sanctuary (Vildtreservat) as well as being designated as both Ramsar and Natura 2000 sites. It is a IUCN Category V area.

The Nature Park was created in 1994, and covers approximately 50 sq.km, including four shallow eutrophic lakes: Nørresø, Søndersø, Hejrede Sø and Røgbølle Sø (Sø = lake). The lakes have numerous coves, peninsulas, islands and islets and are surrounded by reed swamps, meadows and forest. Around the lakes are large manor houses with woodlands, cultivated fields as well as fallow farmland and in some places, free-standing oaks.

The area also contains many cultural and historic attractions and ancient remains as well as an area of extremely high biological interest because of the unique plant, bird, and animal life. This includes: grebes, cormorants, bitterns, herons, mute swans, greylag goose, shelduck, gadwall, teal, mallard, garganey, shoveler, redcrested pochard, pochard, tufted duck, white-tailed eagle, marsh harrier, water rail, common moorhen, coot, black-headed gull and common tern. In the woodlands: buzzard, honey buzzard, sparrowhawk, goshawk, hobby and kestrel. Passerine birds include species such as golden oriole and red-backed shrike. Internationally, the lakes are a very important resting area for migratory birds including many species of duck: white-fronted, bean, Canada, pink-footed and barnacle. In addition, diving ducks such as goosander, smew and goldeneye. Cranes and various raptors over-winter here.

Most of the area is privately owned and the two municipalities therefore share the management responsibility with the private landowners in consultation with a User Council which was established in 2008. Management of the area is functioning well and relies on a high degree of collaboration, coordination, voluntary agreements and a broad acceptance of the management tools such as overall strategies, management plans, User Council consultations, access agreements, etc.

Comments on the application from the protected area and evaluation visit:

All of the application documents were relevant, clear and understandable. Prior to my visit I advised Maribo what I wanted see and understand during the verification. I wanted to be reassured that legislation, governance, finance etc., through management plans, tourism action plans etc. had appropriate structures in place for good and appropriate management. Particularly whether the tourism management and partnership arrangements and structures are working well and if they are delivering for both the environment and for the business community. Broadly to get an over view of operations, the areas governance structures and how Maribo Lakes Nature Park organises itself around tourism and particularly the partnership arrangements with stakeholders and community interests.

During my visit I saw a number of key learning points and good practices examples where other protected areas could learn from the Maribo experience. I was particularly impressed with the approach taken to develop 'partnership agreements' which explicitly link the EUROPARC Federation, the Charter Principles, what the nature park and the partner business will do in support of their agreed vision for Maribo Lakes Nature Park.

The Charter process has highlighted issues and focused thinking and their own assessment of strengths and weaknesses illustrating simply what is special about the place and the main areas to work on.

Main strengths:

- Good location
- Beautiful landscape
- Birdlife
- Room for more activities

Main weaknesses:

- Unknown
- Limited area
- Lack of formal information centre

After the visit I left with an understanding of their practical operations, projects and overall management and direction as well as understanding their approach to sustainable tourism and the relationships with partners. The visit was well organised and I would like to thank all whom I met for their candid views, openness and friendly hospitality. Particularly a special thanks to Cath Oksen, Kitty Sommer, Frederik Cordes, and Uffe Nielson for their time and contribution to the Charter process.

Verifier's assessment

Overall comment on the sustainable tourism strategy and action of the protected area and how it relates to the European Charter:

Staff and governing bodies of the Maribo Lakes Nature Park have taken a methodical approach over some years to consider whether sustainable tourism is appropriate for the area. They have looked at the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and have worked hard to organise their management towards the goals of the Charter.

The area is relatively small with a closely connected community. Therefore developing good relationships with land and business owners has been essential. I am pleased with the progress made in recent years to work towards sustainable tourism and embrace the Charter principles. The following points capture the essence of Maribo Lakes Nature Park:

- it is characterised by great natural and cultural values, its tourism qualities and is recognised locally, regionally and internationally
- offers a nature park 'brand' which increases visibility and perception and is a national pioneering example of a regional nature park
- provides a framework for sustainable tourism development with positive dialogue between landowners, interest groups and the business sector
- it is a positive asset for the local economy and provides good facilities for outdoor recreation.

Conclusions and recommendations for the protected area:

Steady and good progress has been made and I consider that one area of European best practice was demonstrated. The approach used for the Maribo Partnership agreements (2,21 & 2,22 plus annex) is a simple but effective method of co-operative working between businesses and the protected area. It is something which could be replicated and used by others.

However there is always more that could be done and the following recommendations are offered for consideration and possible action over the next two to three years:

- The Fehmarm Belt tunnel connection between the two countries offers both an opportunity and a threat. There is a need to pay special attention to the increased flow of traffic and to monitor and manage its impact on the areas infrastructure and special qualities
- Visitor satisfaction information and information on future visitor markets is poor and no further activities are planned. Good information is required to enable the tourism offer to be improved or at least to know and understand what the visitor needs are and what market potential there is. Qualified results and subsequent actions need to be planned with data available at Charter re-evaluation
- Through the Partnership Agreements, a simple 'Maribo Visitor Giving Scheme' could be developed with progress reported by the Charter re-evaluation.
- Modular training packages about the fauna, flora, visitor facilities, welcome host, local food and supply chain could be developed for park partners and staff to increase knowledge about Maribo being passed onto visitors. Study visits should also be considered to other Charter parks.
- The story of energy conservation and the use of local and seasonal food should be told and made use of as a commercial advantage. Efforts to explain to the visitor the conservation connections makes good economic sense, and perhaps through the work of the User Group and the Partnership Agreements some pilot work could be developed to be demonstrated by the time of the Charter re-evaluation.

Recommendation on award of the Charter:

Please check one box

I recommend that the protected area receive the award of the Charter.

I do not recommend that the protected area receive the award of the Charter.

In order to put a cross in the relevant box, please double click on the box you want to mark. A dialogue box "Check Box Form Field Option" should open. Click under "Default Value" where it says "Checked", then OK, and the proper box should have a cross in it.

General information about the protected area – Section A of Application Report

- I. **Has full and clear factual information been supplied by the protected area in answer to sections A1 – A14 of the Application Report framework?** **3**
- Yes, good and concise information clearly linked to the Charter Principles
- II. **Additional/amended information not contained in protected area’s application:**
- None.
- III. **Any information not available, and reasons for this:**
- None.
- IV. **Are you satisfied that the information supplied is accurate?** **3**
- Yes, perfectly.
- V. **Are there any factual issues that might affect the eligibility of the protected area for award of the Charter?**
- None as far as I could ascertain.
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Meeting the Charter principles - Section B of Application Report

*Note: Areas in **grey shading** indicate particularly important points which are critical for successful evaluation. They correspond to the shaded areas in the Application Report. **NEVER** type within the shaded area, please.*

Principle 1 – Partnership with local tourism stakeholders

- 1.1 **Has a forum or other partnership structure been established to enable the Park Authority to work with others on the development and management of tourism, including implementation and review of the strategy?** **3**

Briefly describe this structure, including size and membership, frequency of meetings, etc.:

Yes, the Forum is referred to as the User Group. It has a terms of reference, a membership of approximately 25 and has been in its current form since a local government reorganisation in 2007. It meets between 4-6 times a year and has business owners, land owners and representatives from the two public authorities (Lolland and Guldborgsund Kommunes) who Chair the User Group on a two year rota. Its purpose is very focused on the development, delivery and review of the Maribo Lakes sustainable tourism strategy and action plan.

1.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved? **3**

Yes, the User Group contains members from one hotel, the camping site, the hostel, a private nature centre, horse sports centre, sailing organisations, angling association, the open air museum and the tourist information office

1.3 Is the local community involved? **3**

Yes, both municipalities (Lolland kommune & Guldborgsund kommune) each have two members and Chair the User Group on a two year rotation. The current Chair is Frederik Cordes from Guldborgsund municipality.

There are also other local organisations represented including local sports and outdoor recreational interests.

1.4 Are local conservation interests involved? **3**

Yes, active and positive members of the local group of the Danish Nature Conservation Society each representing the two municipalities of Lolland & Guldborgsund

1.5 Are the wider (regional) bodies responsible for tourism, conservation and regional development involved? **3**

Yes, the Lolland Falster Business organisation, the regional body for the development of tourism (since 2011) and the regional department of Nature Agency are members.

Principle 2 – Sustainable tourism strategy and action plans

Preparation

2.1 Have a tourism strategy and action plan been prepared for the protected area?

Yes – one document (but additionally a shorter English translation) the “[Maribo Lakes Nature Park Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2012-2016](#)”.

The strategy is based on the results of a thorough analysis of the nature park. This analysis has led to the formulation of a vision and a strategy comprising of seven objectives. The strategy and action plan aims to meet the ten principles of the EUROPARC Charter in any future development of the Maribo Lakes Nature Park. This vision defines **seven objectives** (listed below) to be pursued, and the actions necessary to accomplish these. The relationship to the Charter principles is also made.

Objective 1. Strengthen cooperation and local involvement in development and management

All relevant stakeholders should be involved in park management and planning, development and management of tourism. Nature Park users should be able to influence management and tourism development through an efficient User Council. This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principles No. 1 and No.2.

Objective 2. Monitor and protect natural and cultural values

The Nature Park's landscape qualities and high natural and cultural values should be maintained environmental management and nature conservation, based on systematic monitoring, and should ensure that all stakeholders in the Nature Park are involved in supporting the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principles No. 3 and No. 10.

Objective 3. Ensure quality of activities and services

Efforts should be made to maximize the quality of the activities and services offered to visitors.

This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principle No. 4.

Objective 4. Strengthen information and communication

Efforts should be made to ensure that the park visitors gain a maximum of knowledge and benefit from their visit, improving their understanding and appreciation of the great natural and cultural values of the area while at the same time respecting protective zoning and private property.

This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principle No. 5.

Objective 5. Strengthen local initiatives and community involvement

Efforts should be made to ensure that local communities gain maximum benefit from the Nature Park and that local stakeholders are mutually supporting each other, including through the development of sustainable local tourism initiatives.

This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principles No. 6, No. 7 and No. 8.

Objective 6. Marketing

Efforts should be made to raise awareness of the Maribo Lakes Nature Park and the opportunities in and around the park throughout the year.

This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principle No. 9.

Objective 7. Regulate the flow of visitors

Visitors must be directed to areas and locations where they can gain the best experience of the natural and cultural heritage without threatening the natural and cultural values.

This objective relates to EUROPARC Charter Principles No. 3 and No. 10.

2.2 Briefly describe the process and timetable for preparing both the strategy and action plan.

Maribo Lakes was part of the Nordic Baltic PARKS & BENEFITS project during 2009-2011. The project, in part, was to help an number of protected areas in the Baltic Sea region to develop sustainable tourism and the Maribo strategy & action plan was created during the projects life. The strategy was completed in summer 2010 and the action plan in summer 2011. The combined published document is valid between 2012 and 2016.

2.3 How does the tourism strategy relate to the protected-area management plan?

During my visit I discussed the relationship between the tourism strategy and the areas management plan as this was an area in which I was not, initially clear. In discussions I was advised that the key document for assessing the areas special qualities and values is the Maribo Lakes Vulnerability Plan. This document, published in 2005 sets out what is special and how management should develop. The Tourism Strategy document, in effect, sets out the delivery of this future management.

2.4 Are there any apparent contradictions between tourism and protected-area management objectives and actions?

No, I am satisfied that the Tourism Strategy and Vulnerability Plan combine to drive the management objectives of the area and the action plan demonstrates delivery.

Consultation process

2.5 Comment on the involvement of local stakeholders in drawing up the strategy and action plan, making reference to the forum/partnership structures described under Question 1.1 as appropriate.

A straightforward and conventional approach to Stakeholder involvement took place. The strategy and action plan was jointly prepared by Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities, with the assistance of Nordeco (Nordic Agency for Development and Ecology) using a participatory process.

2.6 Was there consultation with local tourism enterprises in preparing the strategy? 3

Yes, this was a key aspect – see answer to 2.7

2.7 Was there consultation with the local community and other interests/ stakeholders in preparing the strategy? 3

Landowners, local tourism businesses, NGOs, the Nature Park Ranger and municipal staff and politicians were consulted at various stages of the process: initially through individual interviews with members of the Nature Park's User Group, and later through a series of workshops discussing the SWOT, the draft strategy, the vision and the suggested action plan. A draft version of the action plan was reviewed and improved by the User Group members.

Assessment of resource needs, constraints and opportunities

2.8 Was there an assessment of the natural and cultural resources, their sensitivities (capacity) and opportunities for tourism? 3

Yes, it is very obvious in Maribo that conservation of nature and culture are both very important. I would say that that nature (species and natural processes) is weighted with a slightly higher priority, and that any opportunities for tourism are seriously considered but must not damage or threaten conservation. To support this an evidenced base approach is used for discussion and acceptance by the stakeholders. This is a correct approach and in essence one of the key elements of sustainable tourism.

As mentioned in 2.3 the key document that sets out the areas special qualities is the comprehensive Vulnerability Plan. Additionally there were appropriate discussions

with the Ministry of Environment and the Nature Agency, Storstrøm about Natura 2000 sites to ensure that the Maribo sustainable tourism plans were not in conflict.

One of the main challenges for the development of sustainable tourism in protected areas is to balance the flow and behaviour of visitors with the areas protection goals against the expectations amongst the visitors. Maribo, in partnership through the PARKS & BENEFITS programme, undertook study on the management of the areas 'carrying capacity' e.g. how many visitors can visit without threatening natural resources, spoil the visitor experience etc.? This is evidence of their serious intent to understand and manage the effect of visitors on the environment with the main results being the protection of certain core areas and regulation of visitor traffic.

2.9 Was there an assessment of needs of the local community and economy? 3

Yes, through the development of the tourism strategy and action plan there were interviews with local entrepreneurs which offered insight and ideas. This was part of the wider discussions and consultations between Lolland & Guldborgsund municipalities who have the responsibility (and democratic mandate) for community and economic needs.

2.10 Was there an assessment of strengths/weaknesses of tourism infrastructure/ services? 3

Yes

The main strengths are:

- Good location
- Beautiful landscape
- Birdlife,
- Room for more activities

The main weaknesses are:

- Unknown
- Limited area
- Lack of formal information centre

The main opportunities are:

- The Fehmarm Belt tunnel connection
- Space for more activities

The main threats are:

- Conflicts between private owners and users
- lack of financial resources

Assessment of existing visitors and their needs (B6)

2.11 Was there an assessment of existing visitor patterns and needs? 2

Yes, monitoring began in late summer 2011 and the results are being compiled.

Assessment of future visitor markets

2.12 Was there an assessment of future visitor markets offering potential? **2**

Yes, this was done as part of the development of the strategy & action plan with the potential for visitors coming from northern Germany and Copenhagen – mainly seen because of the new tunnel between the two countries. It does offer opportunity and also, I believe, a threat. It will be essential for all interests to pay special attention to the increased flow of traffic and monitor and manage its impact on the areas infrastructure and special qualities. Handled well it could be a big economic boost but handled poorly the area could be swamped.

Implementation

2.13 Does the action plan include an indication of phasing/staging of action over time? **2**

Yes, the strategy and action plan will guide the nature park's operations for the period 2012 to 2016. The action plan sets out 26 different activities to deliver each of the strategy's seven objectives over the five year period. Some of the activities are already well under way.

The individual measures have been prioritised after discussions between the municipalities and the User Group members. The highest priority is given to those actions that are a prerequisite for the park's development and the second level of priority actions are considered less urgent or important and may depend on availability of funds and labour.

2.14 Does the action plan include the relevant stakeholders or partners for each action? **2**

Yes, Lolland and Guldborgsund municipalities are responsible for the overall coordination of actions and activities. The municipalities will not, necessarily, carry out all the activities. However, it is important that they take the lead to identify, support and initiate the actions or activities. Primary responsibility for implementation of the action plan will rotate between the two municipalities, which will in turn hold the chairmanship of the User Group every two years.

Within the municipalities, overall responsibility for implementing the action plan lies with the Department of Development and Business of the Lolland Municipality and with the Department of Nature, Environment & Planning of Guldborgsund Municipality.

When the municipalities are listed under the heading 'Responsible authority, potential partners and /or financial supporters', this may include nature interpreters, tourist offices, Business LF (which is funded by municipal grants, development funds, memberships) or the different municipal departments.

The municipalities will need to work together with a number of other institutions and organizations to ensure implementation of the various action plan activities. This applies above all to landowners, the Nature Protection Agency and the Nature Agency, Storstrøm, who own or have management responsibility for the Nature Park areas. All organizations represented on the User Council are potential partners in the various action plan activities.

2.15 What is the size of the budget that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action programme per year, excluding staffing costs?

The two municipalities have allocated 110,000 DKK (Lolland: 40.000 DKK, Guldborgsund 70.000 DDK) . Other financial support will be required and potential sources identified in the strategy & action plan

What is this as a percentage of its total budget?

Approximately 10%

2.16 Have funds been provided (or are they being sought) from other sources?

Yes, they intend to source funding for infrastructure improvements and facilities for visitors. New visitor welcome facilities are being planned and money for a feasibility study has been identified. Also they have secured 115,000DKK for improving facilities for people with disabilities.

2.17 Does the level of funding seem reasonable to meet action proposed? **2**

Yes, but with the normal caveats especially around the bigger European financial crisis and the uncertainty this adds to governmental budgeting.

2.18 What is the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action programme?

There are approximately nine staff from either Lolland or Guldborgsund municipalities who have some greater or lesser responsibility for managing or delivering the action plan. Additionally the members of the User group (circa 25) are a further resource which will be implementing actions.

2.19 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

No

2.20 Does the level of staffing seem reasonable to meet action proposed? **2**

Yes, but with the normal caveats especially around the bigger European financial crisis and the uncertainty this adds to governmental budgeting and staffing.

Commitment of partners

2.21 Is there a good indication of commitment from other partners to the implementation of the action plan? **3***

Yes. I found relationships with all partners to be very positive and quotes I heard from partners and stakeholders, around the process of developing the strategy & action plan, during the verification visit were:

- 'The user group has united us'
- '..connected us together'
- 'A lot more focus'

- 'What can we all do to protect the area'
- 'It was an us and them situation'

2.22 Does the protected area have any formal arrangements with partners for implementation of the action programme or other methods for ensuring their commitment?

Yes, this is being developed through a formal Partnership Agreement with currently approximately 12 partners. There is potential in the Maribo Lakes area for up to 30 Partnership Agreements. The essence of the agreement covers:

- Partners to the nature park demonstrate responsibility towards the landscape and nature
- Helping to preserve and develop the values of nature for the present and future generations
- The beauty of nature landscape is being promoted with guests and customers
- Partners act in agreement with the vision of the nature park in their daily work and when in contact with other business associates.

The Partnership Agreement lists what the Business will do and what the Municipalities will do and is a good practice example - the English translation is at Annexe A.

Monitoring results

2.23 Have sufficient indicators been identified for the monitoring of the success of the strategy/action plan and can these be practically measured? 2

Yes, they are clearly set out in the action plan within the seven objectives.

Addressing key issues

Specific action that the Charter looks for in the action plan, Principles 3 to 10
Indicate below the level of current activity (A) and planned activity (B).

Principle 3 – Protecting natural and cultural heritage

3.1 Monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations A 2 B 2

The Naturstyrelsen Storstrøm (Nature Conservation Agency, under the Ministry of Environment), currently undertakes monitoring and control as it is their responsibility in Denmark and by volunteers, i.e. the Nature Conservation Organisation. Monitoring of this kind in Denmark is the responsibility of the Ministry, not the municipalities.

However it is planned in the strategy & action plan to additionally have some local, voluntary monitoring undertaken. Also a yearly report to the User Group is planned.

3.2 Encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions A 2 B 3

There are a number of activities and opportunities to support this activity. For example there is an excellent 'Open Air Museum' (part of Lolland Falster Museums Service) within the Maribo Lakes Nature Park. It offers traditional buildings, outdoor skills and crafts as well as stories about traditional ways of life. It is pleasant place to visit and popular with the public. There is on-going discussion with Lolland Falster Museums, as well as with others, to the best location of a new visitor welcome facility for the park. The Museum is a key partner with the park.

Other specific activities on this topic are offered by the three Ranger staff from both municipalities. Rangers cover a broad set of duties but a key aspect of their work is 'environmental education' through a series of Ranger Tours most of which are offered free. They are advertised in a regional events and activities programme which is moving from (last year) to a web based system.

3.3 Action to control development (including tourism) which would adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise A 2 B 3

The Natura 2000 plans largely regulate and control development as a large part of the Maribo Nature Park is designated as Natura 2000 sites this overrules other regulations.

The local planning responsibility of the municipalities "kommuneplaner" also has a positive focus on sustainable development as well as zoning the areas status and use.

The Partnership Agreements (see 2.22) provide focus on this subject and currently the twelve partner agreements will be expanded in the future

3.4 Action to reduce tourism activities which adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise A 2 B 2

The main action here has been the restriction on activities on the lakes, particularly sailing and angling. Use zoning operates and in future effort will concentrate on anglers who disregard the rules and regulations through information material and signage.

3.5 Encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation (e.g. "visitor payback" schemes) A 2 B 2

Giving extra money to support conservation is not part of Danish culture, and contributing time to conservation volunteering is a new idea and at an experimental phase but some new initiatives are taking place which may develop this concept further. For example the Nature School has created a 'Maribo Friends' email data base with some 2-300 names. This provides advance information on what is happening, what species can be seen at certain times of year and contributes to visitors seeing Maribo as a whole entity.

Through the 'friends' initiative, the parks homepage, Ranger tours and other information provision together with future planned activities, there is through the Partnership Agreements an opportunity to develop a simple 'Maribo Visitor Giving Scheme'. I would encourage this and would expect to see progress at the time of re-evaluation of the Charter.

Principle 4 – Meeting visitor needs / quality of experience

4.1 Surveys to measure visitor satisfaction A 1 B 0

A survey was made within the PARKS & BENEFITS project by the University of Greifswald, but it did not provide useful information to the managers at Maribo. As a result there is poor information on visitor satisfaction and no further activities are yet planned. This needs to be rectified as good information will be required to enable the tourism offer to be improved or at least to know and understand what the visitor needs are. I would expect to see progress made soon with qualified results and subsequent actions at the time of re-evaluation of the Charter.

4.2 Assessment of future visitor markets and their needs A 1 B 0

The tourism organisations in Lolland and Falster has been undergoing great changes and reorganisation over the last few years, making work in this field rather difficult . LF Business is a new organisation, established by the two municipalities and their goal is to develop knowledge and new development in the tourism industry on Lolland and Falster.

LF Business is part of the Maribo User Group (the Charter Forum) and, although too early to make a judgement on their commitment it is hoped they will provide the much needed information on future visitor markets. I would expect to see progress made soon.

4.3 Specific provision of facilities and information for disabled people A 2 B 2

This is an area of good progress and activity. In the past it has not been possible for people with disabilities to get close to the lake edge in wheel chairs, etc. In Guldborgsund municipality there has been an upgrade of sightseeing and picnic sites with provision for parking, toilet, path, ramp and platform. At Rogbolle lake I was able to meet with the local landowner who was very supportive of this initiative.

In Lolland municipality the Nature School has been a popular destination for visitors, but has not been accessible for physically disabled people. Access has been improved at the Nature School with a new toilet and view point with benches and tables.

Also planning is underway to enable wheelchair access onto the Lolland municipality owned Maribo Lakes tour boat, Anemonen.

4.4 Provision of facilities for economically disadvantaged people A 2 B 2

Routes for bicycling and walking, public transport, ranger tours, recreational opportunities for local people within short distance from their homes. Nature based activities will help to provide better self-esteem and better health for local people. These planned activities will take place in coordination with the local Health Centre.

4.5 Action to check the quality of facilities and services A 2 B 2

Regular joint municipality 'Co-ordination Group' meetings are held every two months to liaise and manage facilities and services around Maribo. Staff from the two

municipalities include biologists, planners, archaeologists, Rangers, workers etc.) User Group meetings also help to raise any facility and service issues.

4.6 Action to improve the quality of facilities and services A 2 B 2

There is a comprehensive plan for infrastructure improvements which is regularly updated and actioned. Future activity will focus on obtaining funding for facility upgrades.

Principle 5 – Communication about the area

5.1 Sensitive promotion of the protected area as a destination using authentic images and reflecting capacity/needs of the area, including times and locations A 2 B 2

This is done through a range of activities including website homepage, brochures, booklets, maps, information boards and signs, press releases. It is planned to update these as necessary. The local tourism brochure 'Rundt om Maribo' displays the Maribo Nature Park White Tailed Eagle logo and also provides some information in English and German

5.2 Influence on the promotional activities of others (region, enterprises, etc.) A 2 B 2

Local entrepreneurs are already using their position in or near the nature park in their promotional activities. The Lolland-Falster tourism promotion brochure is available in several foreign languages and promotes the regions facilities including Maribo. It is planned to work with local businesses to improve their knowledge about the park and the sustainable tourism Charter.

5.3 Provision of clear information material on where to go and what to do when in the area (guides, maps, websites – relevant languages) A 2 B 3

Again this is achieved through a range of activities including website homepage, brochures, booklets, maps, information boards and signs. In the future there are ambitions to develop (i) GPS information on each of the two municipalities websites about the nature trails (friluftsguiden), (ii) blue tooth information (some experimentation is already taking place in Guldborgsund Municipality) (iii) a yearly day of parks event and (iv) all on the spot information to be in Danish, English and German.

5.4 Provision of accessible information centres/points for visitors A 3 B 3

During the Verification I visited the local tourist information office in Maribo and the Maribo Nature School. Also the site visits provided opportunities to see new information boards around the park, picnic, resting and bird watching places. It is clear to see that over the past few years progress on visitor facilities and information for visitors about the special qualities of Maribo and their orientation around the area has improved. Boundary markers have been erected incorporating 'QR' codes and free information and maps are readily available. Good road, cycle and walking signage is provided and more information boards and signs are planned. Perhaps

more interpretation of the landscape, its cultural heritage and time depth would be helpful in informing the visitor's understanding and sense of place.

Discussion about a new information centre for the nature park took place during the visit and consideration about its location and type will be subject to a feasibility study. The User Group (Forum) is supportive and the municipalities, in coordination with 'LF Business' is responsible to start planning this potential project. Where and what type of facility is openly spoken about and the Lolland Falster Museums have an existing building which they would be keen to use/refurbish. Similarly the Nature School could be the focus of such a facility as would be placing it in the town centre, motorway rest place or at the railway/bus station. Alternatively, the provision of information could be made in new or different ways and my view is that a thorough and unbiased feasibility study is necessary.

5.5 Process for ensuring others (especially tourism enterprises) provide good information A 2 B 2

Through User Group meetings, ranger tours, nature school activities, personal contact with local entrepreneurs and it is planned to increase the involvement of more people through developing new Partnership Agreements and activities.

I would see benefit in developing a training package of modular courses available to park partners to increase their knowledge about Maribo so they can pass on information to visitors. Modules about the fauna, flora, visitor facilities, welcome host, local food and supply chain

5.6 Provision of guiding services and an events programme for visitors and local people, including groups and schools A 3 B 3

At Maribo Lakes there is a comprehensive range of activities for visitors, schools and groups etc. through Ranger tours, tour boat tours, education programmes at the nature school and at the private nature centre. Also events at the open air museum, yearly Day of Nature Park Maribo Lakes.

The Nature School has been an important facility at Maribo since it started operation in 1981 and annually receives about 1000 children through school groups plus around 600 from other groups. This is a mix of day visits and residential stays (the 36 beds equals 2500 overnights). The Ranger/nature interpreter works with teachers to provide environmental education.

Also the municipalities, through their three Rangers (and other staff including on the tour-boat Anemonen) provide tours (mostly free guided walks and events, charges on the tour-boat) and, in past years, have marketed/advertised these in a comprehensive printed visitor guide. This is changing in 2012 to a new calendar module on the parks webpage listing all activities going on in and around the park

Principle 6 – Tourism products relating to the protected area

6.1 Provision/development of tourism offers (special events, holiday programmes, etc.) involving the discovery and interpretation of natural and cultural heritage A 2 B 2

Similar to 5.6 above there are Ranger tours and events at the Open Air Museum for tourists. It is planned that through discussions at the User Group there will be new ideas and new sustainable tourism offers and packages. It is planned to provide information about what is happening within Maribo and also beyond the area.

During the Verification I visited local artist and culinary expert, Kis Nellman at her premises at Godstedlund. In an old school, closed in 1960, she has developed over the past 26 years an interesting example of a visitor facility combining B&B accommodation, café/tea room, art & craft studio and seminar & learning space. This concept encourages discovery and the ability to stay and spend money locally. Kis has also been involved with previous Lolland-Falster Art Trails that, in part, interpret Maribo' special qualities.

6.2 Effective promotion of these offers A 2 B 2

As mentioned in 5.3 offers and information about the area are publicised via regional and local publications and websites. The Ranger tours are well known and are offered via the parks homepage. The events at the Open Air Museum are announced via their homepage, pamphlets and in advertisement in tourism media. The new calendar module on the parks webpage will help collate all activities going on in and around the park.

Over the last few years the local and regional tourism media, including the Tourist Information Centres have been undergoing changes and no clear strategy and direction has yet emerged. The work of the User Group should help provide focus and a clear and effective promotional route for Maribo offers.

Principle 7 – Training

7.1 Providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the protected area, in sustainable tourism A 2 B 1

The employees of the two municipality have access to a variety of lectures, courses and conferences on the subject.

7.2 Providing or supporting training of other organisations and tourism enterprises in sustainable tourism A 2 B 2

The NGO members of the User Group have access to a variety of lectures, courses and conferences on the subject. *Planned* Offering lectures and workshops on the subject to members of the User Group and entrepreneurs with which we have partnership agreements

Both 7.1. and 7.2 are probably adequate but at face value the answers do not inspire. During the visit we discussed this aspect, talking about modular training packages for park partners (see 5.5) this could equally apply to staff as well, increasing their knowledge about Maribo so they can pass on information to visitors. Modules about the fauna, flora, visitor facilities, welcome host, waste management, local food and supply chain could be developed. We also discussed the idea that study visits with set learning goals and objectives could be valuable and that the EUROPARC ethos of sharing expertise and knowledge could be helpful in this area of work. A particularly good example I offered from a previous verification was of composting food waste

from a hotel in The Mountains of Mourne AONB in Northern Ireland and could be useful for the Hotel Maribo Søpark.

Principle 8 – Maintaining local quality of life

8.1 Involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area

A **2** B **2**

During the Parks & Benefits project Maribo ran three open workshops on the development of the park and plan to continue, through the User Group, similar ones for local people, businesses and for politicians.

8.2 Communication between the protected area, local people and visitors

A **2** B **2**

The local rangers and the User Group are the main routes of communication and the local paper is active in commenting on both positive and negative aspects of the park.

Planned: more focus on communication via the partnership agreements; a yearly Day of Nature Park Maribo Lakes; the possibility of commenting on things through the website, e.g. maintenance, ideas of development etc.; nature trails under development in the two municipalities (friluftsguiden) – the web page on visitor infrastructure (paths trails etc.)

8.3 Mechanisms for identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise

A **2** B **2**

Discussions in the User Group and continuous dialogue with land owners

Planned: more direct contact with land owners and entrepreneurs; the possibility of commenting on things through the website, e.g. maintenance, ideas of development etc.; nature trails under development in the two municipalities (friluftsguiden) – the web page on visitor infrastructure (paths trails etc.)

Principle 9 – Benefits to the local community

9.1 Promoting the purchase of local products (food, crafts, local services) by visitors and local tourism businesses A **2** B **2**

The opportunity of buying local products is highlighted in the tourist media, especially what fruit and vegetable products are available. There is a yearly event promoting local foodstuffs and traditional handicrafts at the open Air Museum.

Planned: encourage local entrepreneurs to produce and sell local products in the park and on markets/events in the region through the work in the User Group and the partnership agreements.

During the visit I was able to discuss whether the 'story' of energy conservation and the use of local and seasonal food was told and made use of as a commercial advantage. It appears that more could be made of this to explain to the visitor the

connection and benefits of using local and seasonal food and how their behaviour in the laundering of towels and linen, room temperatures etc. all contribute to energy conservation. Evidence from other Charter areas suggests that visitors will choose destinations which tell a positive conservation story and also explain about where their food comes from. Making conservation connections for visitors makes good economic sense and perhaps through the work of the User Group and the Partnership Agreements some pilot work could be developed to be demonstrated at the time of the Charter re-evaluation.

9.2 Encouraging the employment of local people in tourism A 2 B 2

During the visit we were able to discuss around this point. In Denmark all jobs are open to everyone and discrimination is illegal. Jobs are advertised in the local media and usually applicants are required to speak Danish, German and English. Most staff employed locally are locally resident.

9.3 Development of tourism in association with traditional economic activity (e.g. agriculture) A 2 B 2

Just outside the park area a large estate has developed a tourism industry based on organic food, esp. goats cheese. It is hoped that their success will inspire others to do likewise. The farmers in and around the park are mainly focused on traditional agriculture. (N.B. traditional agriculture in DK is rather large scale and uses large machinery)

Planned: to contact the big estate owners in the park and ask them to offer some public events. In coordination with land owners, the Danish Outdoor Council and the agriculture organisations, nature trails (footpaths) are being planned throughout the country. Through the work in the User Group we hope that such trails will also be made in the park area, the NGO's will be active in planning this.

Principle 10 – Managing visitor flows

10.1 Keeping a record of visitor numbers over time and space, including feedback from local tourism enterprises A 2 B 2

Reporting of visitors at the Nature School, the tour boat Anemonen, the Open Air Museum. Reporting of tourist in the hotels, camping site and hostel. The counting of visitors at five different spots in the nature park has begun.

10.2 Creating and implementing a visitor management plan A 2 B 2

The existing Vulnerable Plan (management plan) has a plan for regulation of the tourist traffic and protection of the most vulnerable areas. Necessary activities following the Natura 2000 Plans (not yet adopted by the Danish government).

10.3 Promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars A 2 B 3

Rental of bicycles available from the tourist information office in Maribo and promotion the use of public transport in the tourist media. It is a political issue to keep the local trains and buses running but the Park will stress the opportunities to use public transport in promotional material. That being said, it is no secret, that the

Fehmarn Belt connection will mean more traffic by car. The Fehmarn Belt tunnel connection between the two countries offers both an opportunity and a threat. There is a need to pay special attention to the increased flow of traffic and to monitor and manage its impact on the areas infrastructure and special qualities.

Also the park will encourage walking, cycling and riding activities by promoting the trails in the park. Furthermore, we plan selling package tours in connection with the new international bicycle route “Munkevejen” (the friars road) that passes through Nature Park Maribo Lakes.

I was impressed with the range of activities around trail development and differing trail types: Cycling 40km; Horses 70/80km; Walking 80km; Water trails 20km; There is a Maribo circular route of approximately 20km and the Berlin to Copenhagen ‘E’ route comes close to Maribo. An excellent amount of free and saleable material about the trail routes is available.

10.4 Controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

A 2 B 2

The new tourist organisation LF Business has been developed to do just that.

Again, this is a political issue on which the park has little influence. But any tourist development inside the nature park will be discussed between the two municipalities and the User Group, as well as it has to fit in with the existing rules and regulations, such as Natura 2000 and the regional and municipal planning.

Any further comments or observations:

Annex A **(see 2.21 & 2.22)**

Partnership Agreement with Nature Park Maribo Lakes

- As partner to the nature park you show responsibility towards the landscape and nature in general
- You help to preserve and develop the values of nature for present and the coming generations
- The beauty of the landscape is being underlined when guests and customers are there
- As a partner you act in agreement with the vision of the nature park in your daily work and when in contact with other business associates

Vision for Nature Park Maribo:

- continue to be characterised by its great natural values and cultural heritage
- be an attraction that provides a high-quality experience for the visitor
- develop a unified nature park 'brand' to increase park visibility and perception
- provide a framework for sustainable tourism development
- become a positive asset for the local economy
- continue to create good conditions for outdoor recreation
- be recognised locally, regionally and internationally for its natural and cultural values and tourism qualities
- contribute to strengthening the positive image of Lolland-Falster
- be characterised by a strong local commitment
- be further developed in dialogue with landowners, interest groups and the business sector
- continue to be a national pioneering example of a regional nature park

The Municipalities Contribution:

- A certificate with the partners name, confirming that a partnership is agreed upon
- Permission to use the park logo (eagle logo) on the partners' products and in marketing
- Presentation of the partner on the park website
- On-going information about new developments in the park, i.e. through the parks news mails and direct mails.
- Invitation to a yearly event for the partners, suggested as a meeting followed by an excursion

The Partners Contribution:

- Commitment to work in coordination with the strategy and action plan for sustainable development of the nature park
- Commitment to use the park logo and to mention the park in all material concerning information and marketing of the partners' products.
- To work for achieving good quality in products and service offered
- To develop and pursue one new activity each year that benefits nature and the park environment
- To pay a yearly fee of DDK 500,- that will be used in connection with the yearly event for partners.

Form to be filled out by partners:

Information about the partner, the connection to the nature park, quality development, cooperation and awareness of environmental issues

- In which areas are the partners activities?
- Which activities does the partner perform?
- How will you inform your guests/customers about the use and protection of the nature park?
- Do you use local products, or do you intend to do so in the future, and if so, which products
- How will you use the nature park in your marketing material?

Answer yes/no/not relevant

- Do you have a quality/environmental/sustainability label?
- Do you work with other partners in or around the nature park?
- Do you sort your garbage, and do you work to reduce the amount of your garbage?
- In your accommodation do you give the guests the possibility of re-using bed linen, and do you have soap and shampoo dispensers?
- Do you use eco-friendly cleaning articles and recycled paper?
- Have you any energy saving devices/activities ?
- Do you work with public transport and other means of environmentally friendly transport?
- Do you minimise the use of or refrain from using insecticides/pesticides?
- Do you minimise the use of or refrain from using fertiliser?
- If you plant, do you do it with local species?
- If you sell or give away souvenirs, is they local products or eco-friendly products?
- Do you have any initiatives that benefits the nature park and/or the local environment?
- Do you have any events for employees that goes on in the nature park, i.e. bicycle tours or the like?