

## **Future Directions for the Development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea Building on its World Heritage status**

**Discussion paper by EUROPARC Consulting, December 2011**

**The purpose of this discussion paper is for members of the Task Group – Sustainable Tourism Strategy Project to consider in more detail the emerging ideas from the ‘Future Directions’ section 7 of the Baseline Inventory and Analysis**

### 1. Core principles

- i. The World Heritage status of the site should be the central consideration for the development of tourism in the Wadden Sea.
- ii. The protection and enhancement of the site’s Outstanding Universal Value should be paramount.
- iii. Tourism should be designed to give effective and authentic presentation to the area’s Outstanding Universal Value.
- iv. Tourism that simply exploits heritage sites should be replaced by tourism that is an active contributor to conservation.
- v. The private and public tourism sectors should work together to provide infrastructure that meets both the needs of local communities and tourism demand.
- vi. Public, private and community interests need to work together in partnership in the tourism sector – and respect each other’s perspectives.
- vii. Planning and management for tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage site should be set in a wider context and consider such contextual issues as buffer zones, broader social, cultural, political and economic considerations and the tourism supply chain.

## 2. Using the World Heritage brand

- i. The Wadden Sea should use its World Heritage status as a 'brand' to appeal to discriminating tourists who seek places of high natural and cultural value.
- ii. Both public agencies and private providers should be encouraged to use the brand.
- iii. Local communities should be encouraged to identify with the brand as well.
- iv. A tourism marketing strategy should be drawn up which complements and reinforces the management of the site itself.
- v. The potential to create a market in "virtual tourism" to the Wadden Sea World Heritage site should be explored.

## 3. Raising the profile and strengthening the identity of the Wadden Sea

- i. World Heritage status of the Wadden Sea should be used as a platform upon which to base a programme designed to raise the identity of the area.
- ii. This programme should aim to co-ordinate the efforts of the public, private and community sectors so as to create a strong, positive image of the area based upon the appeal of its Outstanding Universal Value.
- iii. This will require that priority is given to promoting sustainable forms of tourism that are based upon the area's identity and help to reinforce it; and discouraging those that are not.

## 4. Building pride in the area

- i. Tourism promotion in the Wadden Sea should not be only outward-facing to tourists: it should also be designed to build understanding among the local community of the significance of World Heritage status, pride in its existence and a determination to protect its qualities.
- ii. The significance of the Wadden Sea's World Heritage status should be used as a theme in education in the area.
- iii. Economic and related benefits must be delivered to the local community through successful sustainable tourism.
- iv. A significant proportion of funds generated through tourism should be invested back in the conservation of the heritage assets of the Wadden Sea.

## 5. Adopting the highest standards

- i. The planning and management of tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage site must meet the highest standards expected of such areas.
- ii. Tourist provision that fail to do this, should be improved, or if necessary removed.
- iii. Management should have sufficient skills, capacities and resources to ensure the protection and presentation of the area's heritage values and respect for local communities.
- iv. The managers of the Wadden Sea site should welcome international scrutiny of their record.

## 6. Working across national boundaries

- i. The transboundary World Heritage status of the Wadden Sea should be used to develop a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of tourism across the whole site, in both countries.
- ii. While individual places within the Wadden Sea should maximise the distinctiveness of their tourism "offer", they should do so within a co-ordinated approach to tourism planning, management and marketing.
- iii. There should be an overall, integrated service for visitors to the Wadden Sea as a whole, covering such issues as information, interpretation, transport, products and accommodation.

## Playing a part at the international level

- i. The Wadden Sea World Heritage site should play an active role on the international stage through the World Heritage system. It should:
  - a. consider such issues as 'twinning' with other wetland areas (involving staff exchanges and community-to-community partnerships);
  - b. examine what support it might offer for conservation efforts in developing countries;
  - c. consider how it might play a full part in the policy and advisory work of UNESCO and IUCN on tourism in World Heritage sites;
  - d. make use of the wealth of knowledge and advice available in the World Heritage network, in terms of staff training, best practice guidance, and case study material.