

Guidance for Candidate Charter Protected areas

Completion and presentation of the Application documents, Strategy and Action Plan

*Please prepare **two complete sets of the application documents listed under points 1-5 below, for dispatch as explained under point 6.***

1 Agreeing to the Charter Principles

All holders of the European Charter must agree to abide by a set of principles for sustainable tourism in protected areas. The principles are set out in document 2. They are based on the full Charter text¹, and present the undertaking of the authority responsible for the protected area in summarised and simplified form.

Please sign and date the principles to signify your acceptance of them, and return with your application.

2 Fulfilling the Charter criteria

The Charter seeks to encourage protected area authorities to implement a process together with local stakeholders towards sustainable tourism development within and around the protected area. It is recognised that protected areas may start on this process from very different levels – as well-developed tourist destinations, or regions which are just starting to think about tourism and its potential benefits. Nevertheless, there are some **basic thresholds which apply to all candidates** and are essential for award of the certificate. The verifiers and Evaluation Committee will be looking for:

- A working, **permanent forum** or similar **partnership structure** for sustainable tourism development in the area; documentation of its work (e.g. minutes, decisions) and evidence that it involves **all relevant stakeholders**
- A live and working **Strategy and Action Plan** which are publicly available; an Action Plan which identifies the relevant stakeholders for each action; a budget for the Action Plan and staffing which correlate to the level of action foreseen
- Evidence that the protected area and its partners are taking **action** to address each of the **key issues** specified in the Charter Principles 3-10, and to progress or maintain high standards in these fields.

3 Completion of Application Report

The application report is a key document, and will be used as the main reference point for assessing your application. It serves as an overview or summary of your activities for both the verifier and Evaluation Committee. Furthermore, it represents an important record of your work which can be referred to again later, e.g. during re-evaluation after 5 years.

¹ As prepared originally by the Fédération des Parcs Naturels Régionaux de France in 1999, and revised and updated by the EUROPARC Federation in 2002

The application report should be submitted in the attached format [3](#), and all questions must be answered. The most essential points, which are critical for successful evaluation (see “basic thresholds” under Point 2 above), are marked with grey shading in the report format [3](#). Although the document may seem long, by asking you these questions now we can be sure that no aspect of the Charter is overlooked in your application. The verifier is able to concentrate on key aspects which emerge from your answers during his/her visit, rather than having to ask you these detailed questions then.

The application report should be submitted in one of the following languages: **English, French, German or Spanish** (see also information on language in section 4 below).

For each question in the application report, you should provide a short summary response which can be clearly understood on its own, plus a cross-reference to the place where further evidence or information can be found. Yes/No answers should be supplemented in each case with a short elaboration.

Much of the evidence required is likely to be contained in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the protected area, and we anticipate that the Application Report will make cross-references to these documents, stating the relevant page and paragraph numbers. This is particularly the case in the report questions relating to Principles 3-10, under “Planned activities”. Similar cross-references may be made to other documents. However, it is important that the report itself provides an overview of how you are fulfilling Charter requirements, and is not just a collection of cross-references.

The application report should be signed and dated. It should be submitted as a hard copy and in electronic format (if possible as a “Word” document).

4 Strategy and Action Plan

The Strategy & Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism should be prepared in accordance with Charter Principle 2 in document [2](#). They should be presented as a separate, self-contained document / documents, i.e. not just included within wider documents such as protected area management plans. This is important for increasing the sense of “ownership” of the final strategy and action plan amongst the protected area’s partners, particularly as they are implicated in the implementation.

Language: The Strategy and Action Plan should ideally be presented in English, French, German or Spanish. If this is not possible, they may also be presented in your country’s language, provided that your Application report (see above) gives good summary responses to each question and clear cross-references to the precise location of details in the Strategy and Action Plan. EUROPARC will try to provide a verifier who speaks your language, however this may not always be possible.

Please submit a copy of your Strategy and Action Plan for the next five years as part of your application documents.

5 Supporting Documentation

We ask you to submit a number of additional supporting documents, whether or not they are referred to in the Application Report.

Please submit the following with your application:

- A map (1/100 000 scale if possible) showing: the boundary of the protected area; any other relevant strategic zoning; indications of any tourism policies and actions that can be shown spatially/ graphically.
- The overall protected area/area management plan (if exists)
- A small selection of key visitor/tourism communication documents relating to the protected area which are of relevance for your protected area's application (maximum of 5 key documents)
- A list of other available documentation on the protected area which can be viewed on site (background analyses and studies, tourist information and leaflets, other relevant literature etc.)

Please do not send additional background studies, analyses or scientific assessments with your application. Any such work undertaken as preparation for your tourism strategy may be viewed by the verifier on site, if necessary.

6 Dispatch of the Application

You are required to prepare **two** complete sets of the application documents listed under points 1-5 above, one for dispatch to EUROPARC Consulting GmbH, and one for dispatch directly to the expert verifier appointed for your protected area.

Please send your completed application (one set of documents) to the following address:

Mr. Wilf Fenten
EUROPARC Consulting GmbH
The Shaws
Selside
Settle
North Yorkshire BD24 0HZ
England

Your application should arrive at the above address by 15 December 2008 at the very latest. Please respect the deadline: applications arriving after this date cannot be considered until a later round of verifications.

On receiving your application, EUROPARC Consulting will check it for completeness and appoint an expert in sustainable tourism in protected areas as the verifier for your protected area. You will be notified of his/ her address and requested to send the second set of application documents directly to the expert.

Please ensure that both sets of application documents are complete, and that the Principles and Application Reports are signed.

Please retain a copy of the full application for your records.

7 Application fee

Administering the Charter - including analysing the application, planning and undertaking the verification visit, and making the final evaluation - carries a cost. It is therefore necessary for protected areas making an application to pay a fee to cover these costs if the process is to be viable.

The standard fee per application is EUR 5000 + VAT². You will also be required to pay the travel expenses and local costs (accommodation, board and local travel) for the verifier's visit to your protected area (these are not included in the fee).

The fee will be paid to EUROPARC Consulting GmbH, which will administer the verification and evaluation process on behalf of the EUROPARC Federation. Upon receipt of your full application, EUROPARC Consulting will send you a contract for the verification in your protected area. This is to be signed and returned, and 50% of the verification fee (EUR 2500 + VAT) transferred to EUROPARC Consulting's bank account prior to the start of the verification visit. The final instalment (EUR 2500 + VAT) plus travel expenses are to be paid upon completion of the verification.

8 Verification visit and report

The expert verifier appointed by EUROPARC will check the application, visit your protected area and make an assessment report. The verification visit will usually take ca. 2 days.

The verifier will conduct interviews with personnel of the protected area responsible for tourism. Arrangements should also be made for him/her to meet a selection of other stakeholders involved in tourism in the area, including representatives of tourism enterprises.

The verifier will be asked to pay particular attention to the processes you have adopted in your protected area, including liaison and consultation with stakeholders, the analysis undertaken, the balance and consistency of your strategy and action programme, how it relates to the Charter principles, and the resources you are applying to insure that proposed action is achievable.

The dates, timing and programme for the visit will be agreed with you in advance.

The verifier will submit a report to the Evaluation Committee in a standardised format. You will receive a copy of this report for your information, to show the strengths and weaknesses which the verifier has identified and possible opportunities for improvement.

The verification visit will take place in April – May 2009.

9 Evaluation Committee meeting

An evaluation committee of experienced experts in protected areas and sustainable tourism has been appointed by the EUROPARC Federation. It will consider your full application together with the verifier's report. It will meet in summer 2009 (applicants will be notified of the date nearer the time).

² Where VAT is due – either in the applicant protected area's country or in the country where EUROPARC Consulting's office is based – will depend upon the tax status of the organisation/authority paying for the evaluation. This must be clarified for your individual case following submission of your Charter application and prior to implementation of the verification visit. VAT will be applied at the relevant national rate.

10 Communication of results

The committee's decision will be communicated to you. This will be either:

- a) To award the Charter
- b) To defer the award subject to specific changes being made, or
- c) To reject the application.

In case of (b) and (c), reasons will be given.

In the case of (b), you will be asked to provide evidence that sufficient steps have been taken to rectify the problems identified, by a time to be agreed with you.

11 Award of the Charter

Protected areas that are awarded the Charter will be identified publicly, and arrangements made with them for an official signing of the Charter certificate. They will be allowed to use the Charter logo and encouraged to promote the principles and obtain as much media coverage of their success as possible.

The Charter is awarded for 5 years. At the end of this period you will be invited to submit an updating application to EUROPARC.

12 After the Award

In signing the Charter certificate, protected areas commit themselves to implementing their strategy and action plan together with their partners over the coming five years. At the same time, it is expected that the new "Charter protected areas" will also participate in the Charter network. Contributions by all Charter protected areas to networking activities – contributing their own experience, sharing ideas or problems, attending networking meetings etc. – are essential to make the network a live one, and to bring real "added value" for all Charter protected areas! At the same time, the network is a basic tool for EUROPARC and Charter protected areas to maintain contact during the 5 years following the award. The commitment to participate in the Charter network is included on the Charter certificate signed by all new Charter protected areas.

CHECKLIST

Documents to be sent as your application for Charter verification

- Charter Principles, signed and dated

Application Report, completed and signed:

- Hard copy
- Electronic version

- Strategy and Action Plan for the next five years

Supporting documentation:

- Map (1/100 000 scale if possible) showing: the boundary of the protected area; any other relevant strategic zoning; indications of any tourism policies and actions that can be shown spatially/ graphically
- Overall protected area/area management plan (if exists)
- Small selection of key visitor/tourism communication documents relating to the protected area which are of relevance for your protected area's application (maximum of **5** key documents)
- List of other available documentation on the protected area which can be viewed on site (background analyses and studies, tourist information and leaflets, other relevant literature etc.)