

Summary Note of Organisational Development Committee meeting 11 January 2013

Participating: Henkjan Kievit, Thomas Hansson, Marian Jager, Eric Baird, Yves Verilhac, Andrew Bachell, Harry Koenders, Anita Prosser, Carol Ritchie & Neil McIntosh.

Items 1 & 2

Following a round of introductions, the agenda circulated in advance of the meeting was approved.

Item 3: Feedback from AGMs

The decisions voted by members at the AGMs were discussed by the group. Differing interpretations were raised, however it was noted that:

The EUROPARC Federation GA voted for:

- 1. Transformation of the two organisations into one network organisation by using the legal structure of EUROPARC.*
- 2. To create an organisation development committee, reporting to the general assemblies on the creation of the network organisation.*

The Eurosite GA voted:

- 1. To support the joint transformation of the two organisations as a practical way to create one **new** network organisation;*
- 2. To agree in principle to using the legal structure of EUROPARC as a basis for the new organisation, subject to defined and necessary changes being mutually agreed during transformation, and the transparent conclusion of the due diligence development process.*
- 3. To create the joint ODC as soon as possible following the AGMs, with a mandate to lead the joint transformation process;*
- 4. To maintain both organisations, with due reference to existing governance arrangements, so that key decisions can be taken internally prior to or during the AGMs in 2013.*

Whilst noting these decisions, the main outcome agreed from both AGMs is to establish a single network that can be operational from 1 January 2014.

Legal advice offer from France

YV confirmed that the French Ministry has approved €12,000 for a study of legal options. Subject to the views of the ODC, this funding is to be made available to support this group's work in developing a new network organisation: the funding is not given to either Eurosite or EUROPARC. He confirmed that the funds can be used in other countries and can be used to

research possible organisational models appropriate for the new network. He would explore whether it would also be possible to use some of the funds to cover items other than external legal advice (if that advice should prove to be less than €12,000).

A spotlight needs to be shone on the legal structures of both networks, but there is also now an opportunity to consider other options identified in the legal advice.

From the discussions that followed, it was suggested that legal advice would be useful to:

- Review the current status and legal basis of both networks;
- Research possible options for the future structure of the new organisation. (It was noted that some additional work would be required to further define the new organisation, using Networking for Natura as an agreed starting point, prior to proceeding with this);
- Taking this into account, determine what the best legal structure would be for the new organisation. (This is likely to involve producing a limited number of different options).
- Once this is determined, also take legal advice about the best way to implement the best legal structure, taking into account matters such as staffing, finance and governance.

The ODC noted that legal structure is only one component of the new organisation, but it is not the only area requiring attention from the ODC. The most important aspect of work in the coming months is to focus on the future.

Work of the ODC

In discussing anticipated actions for the ODC, it was suggested that it would be useful:

- To clarify the work of the ODC and the work of the membership (for example, in relation to development of the strategy, new network functions and proposed activities);
- To flesh out the goals, purpose and ambitions of the, expressed in Networking for Nature in high level, which will help to define the form of the new organisation.
- To enable members to see more clearly what they are being asked to sign up to - most members are going to be most concerned about what the new organisation will be and do, so they can find out what they will gain or lose.
- To look at what EUROPARC and Eurosite do now and to identify where the gaps are. This would be a good point and basis for consultation with members.

Item 4: Draft Terms of Reference proposed for the ODC.

Before looking at the draft ToR in detail, the ODC was noted as being a working group, established to focus on the future and to work on developing the new organisation, with the involvement of members from both organisations. It involves joint working by people working with a focus on the new network rather than each individual, separate organisation. The main objective is to be able to present realistic, well thought through options to the General Assemblies in 2013.

(HK left the meeting and TH took over as Chair at this point)

The draft terms of reference (v2) were discussed in detail and it was **agreed that AP would produce an updated version and discuss initially with EB before sharing with the ODC (ACTION 1: AP/EB)**. At the same time, AP agreed to start writing a project plan when re-drafting the ToR. It was noted that it would be important to seek feedback and approval from the Eurosite Board & EUROPARC Council.

Item 5: Forward planning

The ODC discussed the process of taking forward Networking for Nature. It was agreed that the strategic discussion / feedback from members should be held early and continuously throughout the process.

Item 5: Dates

The following key dates were identified:

- The deadline for papers for the EUROPARC AGM is 15th August.
- A EUROPARC Council meeting is scheduled for 9th to 12th May in Latvia (Riga) – this would be a good opportunity to meet with the Eurosite Board;
- There is a EUROPARC Council meeting on 9th October and the EUROPARC AGM is on the 10th in Hungary – this would be a good opportunity to have Eurosite Board and the ODC represented.

(ACTION 2: NM to inform & invite Eurosite Board)

- Subject to discussions with Eurosite's Board regarding an offer to host the Eurosite AGM, there could be a further opportunity for a joint Eurosite Board and EUROPARC Council meeting in late September, in Poland.
- Two meetings were scheduled for the ODC – on Wednesday 24th April and Wednesday 5th June, from 10.00 til 17.00, in the same location: Staatsbosbeheer's Region West Offices, Amsterdam Sloterdijk.

ODC tasks

Referring to the outline timetable in Doc 9 (previously circulated), the following tasks were identified and allocated between ODC members:

1. AB with support from EB will lead on further development of the strategy outlined in Networking for Nature. It was noted that this would need some input from staff.
2. MJ and H Koenders will draw up outline models for staffing and finances. It was noted that input from staff would be necessary, especially in terms of clarifying what is available/ could be useful.
3. AP will work with MJ and H Koenders on governance models.
4. YV supported by AP will develop a new version of the brief for joint legal advice. He noted that it is possible the funder would want to have a French version.

In addition, it was noted that it would be useful to have a gantt chart drawn up and shared, especially as several tasks would be developing in parallel: also, the ODC was expected to produce a plan of activities for discussion by the EUROPARC Council and Eurosite Board. It would be necessary to integrate the legal advice in the plan, as this will inform choices.

The ODC said it would be necessary to seek secretarial support for future ODC meetings, including minute taking. The ODC estimated this would require about 10 days input.

ACTION 3 – NM/ MJ to ask Natuurmonumenten/ Staatsbosbeheer for secretarial support for meetings or find some alternative if necessary.

Item 6: communication & consultation with members

The ODC discussed the project plan and key moments when feedback from members would be useful. The ODC will reconsider the communication, consultation, reporting and feedback processes as their work further develops.

ACTION 4 – it was agreed that a joint communiqué to members about this meeting would be drafted by AB.

Brainstorming

In the afternoon, time was used to have a brief brainstorming session – this gave rise to various points in relation to the creation of a new network, including the following remarks:

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- Starting with a blank piece of paper, what would be a good ideal for a new network? Why would anyone join?
- Yearly themed technical meetings may provide a very good model and basis for network discussions, leading to publication of results – this is particularly useful for site managers.
- Capacity building, information exchange, and lobbying work were mentioned as potentially valuable services to offer.
- The new network should be very visible in Europe.
- Things that people value – opportunities to get together, share, learn and get to know other places; learn about and apply project models; input to advocacy and influencing activities; gaining benefit from having the weight of a European membership, which can be useful at local, national & European levels.
- Sharing management experiences; sourcing expertise in other areas can be achieved efficiently through being part of a network; there are new, more and greater communication, information gathering and outreach chances as a network member.
- A new organisation could be well-placed to organise knowledge networks and sections could be a basis for functioning.
- Knowledge can be technical & practical, but mainly it is about getting beyond barriers – networking is a vehicle for curiosity.
- Twinning is also important, and useful to have some one to connect.
- Good websites, good information/ guidance etc are key.
- Networking is about raising professionalism and equipping people with skills necessary to do their work better/ more efficiently. It is also fun, motivating and enjoyable, as well as offering valuable ways to solve daily problems.
- People should be adaptive - networking encourages that. It also removes isolation/ provides a sparring partner.
- Democratic process is important – a way of involving members and giving them a say.
- Networking increases access to inspiring examples, and fosters openness to new approaches – being part of a network enables members to be innovative.
- If members pay fees, they want services they cannot get themselves. Networks can help to provide access to information say, from the EC, for example – a network can help signpost/ alert to information announced via a website which may otherwise be missed.
- There is a balance required in terms of the network's own funds – there is a need to depend on fees.
- Also, be careful about lobbying – although a dream to speak with one voice, there are various voices. There can be strength in diversity, which may make advocacy more appropriate.
- The majority of these ideas are currently being done – there is a need to think through how activities can be delivered differently and better.
- What members actually want is to feel that they are contributing/ making a difference – this is as important as learning from others and incorporates giving.

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- Be more professional (in comparison with others)
- Useful to ask - in what ways is the current structure inhibiting our work?
And, how can it be possible to use the resources of a central team more effectively?

Closing Remarks

Meeting participants felt that there had been good progress and positive initiatives taken.

ACTION 5 – NM to write a note of thanks to Staatsbosbeheer from both Presidents.