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STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS

Group of Specialists on Protected Areas
(PE-S-ZP)

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Krimml Waterfalls Natural Site
(Austria)

Renewal of the European Diploma

Expert report
by
Dr Claude STAUFFER

1. The European Diploma, category C, was awarded to the Krimml Waterfalls Natural Site in 1967. It was last renewed on 25 June 1987.

2. The Secretariat accompanied the expert on his visit to the Krimml Waterfalls. It agrees with the information contained in the report and its conclusions.

3. Appendix I contains Resolution (87) 9 adopted at the time of the last renewal; in Appendix II, the Secretariat submits a draft Resolution with a view to a possible renewal in 1992.

KRIMML WATERFALLS

1. GENERAL

The European Diploma, category C, was awarded to the Krimml Waterfalls in 1967. Since then, it has been regularly renewed every 5 years.

As the diploma is due for renewal for a further 5 years (1992-1997), the Council of Europe's Directorate of Environment and Local Authorities asked me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal in order to determine whether the recommendations to which the last renewal was subject have been implemented, namely:

1. that, as stipulated in Resolution (82) 1, motor traffic on the Krimmler Tauernweg be restricted to owners of land in the Krimmler Achental and that no public transport (bus, taxi, etc) be introduced between Krimml and Schönangerl;
2. that the electricity and telephone cables between Krimml and Schonangerl be laid below ground,
3. that no forestry work be undertaken, except near paths for safety reasons;
4. that the protected area of the Krimml Falls be extended within 5 years to include the surrounding woodland and the Krimmler Achental;
5. that the owner of the Schonangerl restaurant be encouraged in his efforts to improve the restaurant's sanitation; that the owner of the Krimmler Tauernhaus be encouraged to renovate the restaurant annex to blend with the main building.; these projects should be completed for the next renewal.

2. CONDUCT OF THE APPRAISAL

The visit took place on 21 and 22 August 1991. Mr RIBAUT of the Council of Europe participated in the appraisal.

The whole of the protected area and its immediate environs were visited on 21 August.

We were received by MM FISCHER-COLBRIE and HINTERSTOISSER of the nature conservation department. The following also took part in the visit:

- Mr LONSKI, engineer in the Federal Forestry Administration,
- MM HASLACHER and HERZOG of the Austrian Alpine Club (OAV),
- Mr SIEBER, engineer in the ZELL AM SEE forest section,
- MM LAINER and LECH of the administration of the HOHE TAUERN National Park.

I should like to express my gratitude here to all these people for their helpfulness, for the accuracy of the information supplied and for the objectivity which they displayed throughout the two days.

22 August was devoted to the problem of the hydro-electric plant, whose inlet channel and reservoir are situated approximately 500 metres from the foot of the falls. We were able to take stock of the two days at a meeting held at KRIMML town hall on the afternoon of 22 August.

In addition to MM LECH, HINTERSTOISSER and FISCHER-COLBRIE, the following were present on the second day:

- MM WOLF and STEINER of SAFE (energy production),
- Mr HODLMOSSER, director of environmental services.

3. MAIN FEATURES OF THE PROTECTED AREA

The falls are situated in the OBERPINZGAU district of the Land of SALZBURG in Austria. They are in three stages with a total height of 400m. The site is located in the municipality of KRIMML. The boundaries of the protected area were initially set at 200 metres on either side of the waterfall, and at 100 metres upstream from the falls and 100 metres downstream from the foot of the falls.

In terms of land ownership, the area covered may be divided into the following categories:

- wooded areas belonging to the Austrian Confederation,
- privately owned woodlands,
- land owned by the Alpine Club, here again consisting mainly of woodlands,
- lastly, the SCHONANGERL restaurant, located entirely within the boundaries of the site.

Woodland is the main feature of the protected area's environment.

It has been clear for many years that the boundaries drawn when the site was awarded the diploma form too narrow a setting for a jewel of this quality. It is sufficient to look at the waterfall from the village of KRIMML in order to be convinced of this.

The federal woodlands are subject to a number of rights of use, such as grazing rights, the right to cut a certain amount of firewood, and lastly a hunting lease.

Federal forestry policy sets quotas on the amount of timber harvested each year in federal woodlands. Private owners are not advised by the same officials as the managers responsible for federal woodlands. This leads to a dual system, which is not

necessarily constructive. When intensive felling is carried out in the federal woodlands, the private owners have no hesitation in using this as an argument for carrying out clear felling on their land. The entire landscape then bears the scars.

It is in this context that the interested parties have been reflecting upon ways of finding a solution to the boundary problem.

4. SUBJECTS DISCUSSED DURING THE VISIT

A number of souvenir shops and restaurants stand beside the path leading to the falls. Although these are well integrated into the site, there are already quite enough of them: any further buildings would be likely to disfigure this transitional zone between the village and the natural area of the falls.

The last building belongs to the OAV, which charges for entrance to the foot of the falls. The revenue goes towards the upkeep of the paths and refuse collection. The OAV has also used some of the revenue to purchase a property located at the foot of the falls. This will make it much easier for it to do its work and carry out the necessary improvements.

This section was badly affected by the flood of August 1987. Repairs had to be carried out. In particular, the river bed had to be reconstituted and consolidated by means of a dyke, which is currently used by visitors as a vantagepoint.

Further improvements are planned in this area, such as the rehabilitation of an old branch of the river to oblige tourists to remain within a well-defined area. This seems a very elegant and effective solution. On the other hand, the construction of a wooden viewing platform seems to us to be of doubtful taste. The plan should be abandoned because it would detract from the site's natural appearance. On the other hand, the plan to facilitate access for the disabled by providing gently sloping ramps should be pursued as these people can only rarely reach the upper part.

Another project concerns the area in front of the cashier's cabin. Information panels produced in association with the officers of the national park are to be installed on this grassy area of 150 m².

The wooden panels and stone ornamentation will be perfectly integrated with the environment. The panels will also perform an educational and awareness-raising function, which is fully in line with the aims pursued through the award of the European Diploma.

The old road leading to the KRIMMLER ACHENTAL lies on the left bank of the river. It provides access to the intermediate and upper stages of the waterfall. There are no particular observations to be made on this road or on its upkeep, and still less on the question of cleanliness.

The woodlands bordering this road consist mainly of spruce standing in clumps, some of which are artificial, as is confirmed by their regular appearance. Recommendation 3 of the last renewal seems to have been complied with. I feel that, despite this recommendation, some selective action is needed to modify the excessively regular appearance of some stands and encourage natural regeneration locally, thus giving the forest a virtually unchanging appearance.

SCHÖNANGERL

The Schönangerl restaurant, which is situated in the upper third, was damaged by the floods in August 1987. The annex was destroyed and has been rebuilt in a style blending with that of the other buildings, which have been enlarged. In accordance with the undertakings given, advantage was taken of this construction project to provide lavatories for visitors and install septic tanks. We feel that the estimates used for determining the size of the tanks were overcautious. Because the tanks are overloaded, they cannot function properly, and this in turn leads to the emission of highly unpleasant smells. The problem was raised at the meeting held on 22 August at KRIMML town hall. The Mayor proposes laying a pipe as far as the village. This would also make it possible to treat the sewage.

The problem of the telephone line has been solved by means of a radio link. Nevertheless, the wires of the abandoned line are still in place. We were assured that their removal was imminent.

After the floods already referred to, the restaurant's car park had to be restored. Its design and, in particular, its size detract from the site. This area would need to be partly redesigned and measures taken to ensure that parked vehicles do not disfigure the landscape, both by making use of the existing garages and by limiting the number of vehicles.

Recommendation 1 of the above-mentioned Resolution referred to the fear of considerable traffic developing between the village and Schönangerl. This danger remains, although measures have been taken to limit its extent.

There remains the question of the electricity cable, which, after crossing the river beside the restaurant, runs through the woodland on the left bank of the falls.

The Mayor of Krimml thinks that it would be advisable to take advantage of the digging of a trench to lay the electricity cable alongside the sewage pipe.

Considering how the new access road to the Krimmler Achental blends in perfectly with the landscape, one can be confident in the local determination to carry out this work in a manner consistent with the aims of the diploma.

The area upstream of the restaurant comprises the bridge known as Schettbrücke, which was also damaged by the storm in 1987. It is very gratifying to see that its design blends in perfectly with the site.

The upstream boundary of the protected area includes the beginning of the Krimmler Achenal. Recommendation 4 of the Resolution referred to the problem of the extension of the protected area and the inclusion of this valley, which is 20 km long. An initial stage in the extension of the protected area is currently in progress. It consists in basing the boundaries of the protected area on natural features such as avalanche corridors or ridges. As a result of this, it will be necessary to look for an administrative solution to all the problems of land ownership, rights of use, easements, revenue etc. The existence of the Hohe Tauern National Park militates in favour of the inclusion of this valley in a European diploma, but with additional constraints. It might be a good thing to suggest to the Federal Government that it apply for the award of a diploma to the national park, probably in category B, which would make it possible to adapt the constraints according to the protection required. As of now, I believe that it is important for extensive farming to be maintained in this valley in order to keep it open and prevent the forest from colonising the whole area.

THE LANDSCAPE SEEN FROM SCHÖNANGERL

One cannot visit the KRIMML falls without stopping to contemplate the landscape which spreads out at the foot of the waterfall. Three elements spoil the view: the reservoir of the hydro-electric plant, the shiny sheetmetal roof of the sawmill and the huge car park built to accommodate the many visitors.

There is no doubt in my mind that if the local authority covers the cost of painting the roof of the sawmill, the owner will not stand in the way of this move to improve the view.

The problem of the car park was raised at the meeting at the town hall. The car park was laid out according to a specific design, and trees have already been planted, but the overall layout will have to be looked at again in order to reduce as far as possible the negative impression created by lines of parked car.

The reservoir for the hydro-electric plant would have been less conspicuous if the storm in August 1987 had not uprooted a number of adult trees which largely concealed it.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE AREA AROUND THE POWER STATION

On 22 August, with the kind permission of the management of SAFE, we made a detailed inspection of the work done outside the perimeter of the protected area to offset to some extent the effects of the long standing scheme for using the water of the Krimmler Ache to produce energy.

We found that, after five seasons of vegetation, the area around the installations is turning green again. The designers' major concern was to plant indigenous tree varieties. In particular, extensive use has been made of alder owing to its resilience in areas subject to flooding. Indeed, the photos taken on completion of the work, before the flood of 25 August 1987, show that it was present on the river banks.

In the present situation there is not a great deal that can be done. With time, the damage caused by a natural phenomenon will be repaired.

I should like to mention one further detail: there is a works hut nearby which seems to have been forgotten for some time. It would not take much to rehabilitate this area.

I wish to thank the representatives of SAFE for their very clear decision to involve children in the planning of this area and for the steps taken to ensure that fish are able to pass through to the foot of the waterfall.

CONCLUSION

It is gratifying to be able to reach the conclusion that there is at present no major element which could call into question the validity of the category C diploma awarded to the KRIMML WATERFALLS.

The recommendations contained in Resolution (82) 1 have all been taken into account, admittedly with varying degrees of success. They have not all been fully implemented. As we have seen above, others have been imperfectly implemented, to the designers' great regret.

The Austrians' fierce determination to retain by all possible means what is their only European diploma leads me to propose its renewal for a period of five years.

The recommendations to which this renewal will be subject will be based partly on the recommendations contained in Resolution (82) 1 which have not been fully implemented.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

1. Formalise the current plan for extension of the protected area.
2. Complete sanitation work at the Schönangerl restaurant in the coming two years and, at the same time, lay the electricity cable below ground.
3. Submit a plan for inclusion of the Krimmler Ache valley in a protected unit, probably in category B.

COLMAR, 16 December 1991
Charles STAUFFER

Secretariat's comments:

The Secretariat has nothing in particular to add and agrees with all the expert's comments and conclusions.

It is important to underline the great efforts made by all the interested parties to improve the situation constantly, as they are all very proud of their diploma! In fact, the press and television were both present, and together they conveyed a very good image of the European diploma and its requirements.

We were also pleased to see that, as in other on the spot appraisals, this renewal provided an opportunity to bring together all the various interested parties (Land and local officials, nature conservation and forestry officials, the Alpine Club, political decision makers etc). This made it easier to solve certain problems.

The only question concerns the nuisance caused by the Schönangerl restaurant. Should it be the subject of a recommendation or a condition since the problem is a serious one and has been going on for some time?

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

RESOLUTION (87) 9

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE KRIMML FALLS NATURAL FEATURE**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 June 1987
at the 409th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Krimml Falls Natural Feature;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, category C, awarded to the Krimml Falls Natural Feature, until 26 October 1992, subject to the following recommendations:

1. that, as stipulated in Resolution (82) 1, motor traffic on the Krimmler Tauernweg be restricted to owners of land in the Krimmler Achenal and that no public transport (bus, taxi, etc.) be introduced between Krimml and Schönangerl;
2. that the electricity and telephone cables between Krimml and Schönangerl be laid below ground;
3. that no forestry work be undertaken, except near paths for safety reasons;
4. that the protected area of the Krimml falls be extended within five years to include the surrounding woodland and the Krimmler Achenal;
5. that the owner of the Schönangerl restaurant be encouraged in his efforts to improve the restaurant's sanitation; that the owner of the Krimmler Tauernhaus be encouraged to renovate the restaurant annex to blend with the main building; these projects should be completed before the next renewal.

APPENDIX II

Draft Resolution (92) ...

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA AWARDED
TO THE KRIMML WATERFALLS NATURAL SITE
(Austria)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Krimml Waterfalls Natural Site;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Krimml Waterfalls Natural Site, in category C until 1997;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. that the current plan for extension of the protected area be formalised;
2. that consideration be given to the possibility of incorporating the Krimmler Ache Valley into the current protected area and the CDPE be informed of any further action taken on this proposal;
3. that sanitation work at the Schönangerl Restaurant be completed within the next two years and that the electricity cable be laid below ground at the same time;
4. that all possible steps be taken to ensure that developments around the falls (reservoir of the hydro-electric plant, roof of the sawmill, car park) have as little impact as possible on the beauty of the landscape;
5. that efforts to keep motor traffic to a minimum, especially between the village and Schönangerl, be continued.