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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS - EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS
26 MARCH 2013 STRASBOURG
ROOM G.04, AGORA

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**Annual Reports from the places holding the European Diploma
for Protected Areas**

Document prepared by Michael B Usher

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Introduction

I have for a while considered that the annual reporting from the sites holding the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA) is rather time consuming for the managers, difficult for staff in Strasbourg to handle, and also difficult for the Group of Experts to consider. I have therefore given reporting some consideration and wish to engender a discussion and suggest a way forward which would be simpler for everyone involved.

The Present Situation

There is a Committee of Ministers resolution governing the EDPA, i.e. Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1. This has a particular Article with provisions regarding the annual reports, which states:

Article 7 – Annual reports

1. The authorities directly responsible for managing the area awarded the Diploma shall submit an annual report to the Committee or its Bureau. The report must be based on the model reproduced in Appendix 5 to these regulations. The report must be forwarded to the Secretariat in full by the central authorities of the state concerned, with any comments they may wish to make. It must, *inter alia*, state what measures have been taken to comply with the conditions and/or recommendations mentioned when the Diploma was awarded or renewed. The first annual report must be submitted in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe by 30 November of the year following that in which the Committee of Ministers awarded the Diploma. Every annual report reflects the previous period from 1 September to 31 August.
2. The Group of Specialists shall examine the annual reports and may submit an opinion or recommendations to the Committee or its Bureau, which shall be forwarded, through the Committee of Ministers and the central authorities of the state concerned, to the authorities responsible for managing the area awarded the Diploma. The Group may also identify some problems encountered in one Diploma site or common to several Diploma areas and make proposals aimed at remedying them.
3. In the event of failure to comply with the foregoing provisions, the Secretary General may, via the government concerned, invite the persons responsible for managing the Diploma-holding area to provide an adequate explanation.

Clause 7.1 indicates the contents of the annual report, and clause 7.2 places obligations of the Group of Experts. I do not think that clause 7.3 need concern us. Attached to the Resolution is an annex providing a model for the annual reports. This annex is attached below as Appendix A to this paper.

A Possible Revised method of Reporting

The present system appears to have at least three drawbacks. First, it takes the managers of the EDPA sites a considerable length of time to complete these reports as the model requires reporting on so many topics. In each EDPA site there are administrative layers to deal with before the report is finally sent to Strasbourg. Because of these difficulties, very often reports are submitted late, often in fact very late, and sometimes not at all. The question which I asked myself is “Is it possible to make the compilation of these reports much simpler and hence much less time consuming?”

Second, because there is no clear *pro forma* for the report, it is very difficult for the staff in Strasbourg to assess a collection of 70 or so disparate reports. Each report is very different to all other reports, and although the request is for them to be limited to 6 pages, I have seen some reports which are 4 or 5 times this length. Also there is considerable duplication of material from year to year, and this is not required. Hence, the question which I asked myself is “Can we agree a *pro forma* which focuses on the requirements of clause 7.1 in Article 7 and which will simplify the analysis of the reports by the staff in Strasbourg?”

Third, Clause 7.2 of Article 7 places an obligation on the Group of Experts to examine the annual reports and to make recommendations where appropriate. It proved to be an impossible task for members of the Group of Experts to review all of the annual reports; a compilation of them was prepared a few years ago, but it ran into several hundred pages. More recently, members of the Group of Experts have been asked to review the reports from their own country, but this means that no-one on the Group of Experts has seen more than a very few reports and also that the reports from many countries are not seen by a member of the Group of Experts. So the question which I asked myself is “is there a way which would make it possible for the Group of Experts to undertake more satisfactorily its clause 7.2 obligation?”

A Proposal

With a view to streamlining the reporting and assessment processes, I have focussed on the three questions above which I posed to myself. The answer which I consider might be appropriate is to request annual reports on a *pro forma* so that there is much greater consistency of reporting across all EDPA sites. A draft of such a *pro forma* is attached below as Appendix B.

The short form of reporting in Appendix B could be used every year except for the year prior to a decision being made about the renewal of the Diploma. In that one year the full report form would need to be completed and submitted to Strasbourg. The Group of Experts would have access to that full report (as in Appendix A) in order to inform its discussion about whether or not to recommend a renewal.

The Group of Experts

The Group of Specialists is asked to discuss the problems associated with annual reports and reporting, consider the benefits of simplifying the process, consider the proposed *pro forma* in Appendix B, and agree a way forward.

Michael B Usher
13 March 2013

APPENDIX A**RESOLUTION ResDip (2008) 1****ON THE REGULATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
OF PROTECTED AREAS**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

APPENDIX 5**MODEL PLAN FOR ANNUAL REPORTS**

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. They should not, without justification, exceed six pages. The report of the year preceding the one in which the validity of the European Diploma of Protected Areas is to be renewed should be more detailed. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State:

Name of the area:

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

I. General information

1. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

- 1.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 1.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 1.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

2. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 2.1. Cultural heritage
 - 2.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 2.2. Socio-economic context
 - 2.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

3. Education and scientific interest

- 3.1. Visitors — Information policy
 - 3.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 3.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 3.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 3.2. Scientific research
 - 3.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 3.2.2. Scientific publications

4. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 4.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 4.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 4.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

5. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 5.1. Improvements made
 - 5.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 5.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 5.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 5.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 5.1.5. Waste management
 - 5.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 5.2. Management

- 5.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
- 5.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
- 5.2.3. Internal policing measures
- 5.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

II. Influence of the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas

III. Conditions and/or recommendations for award or renewal

Progress with measures taken in order to meet the conditions and/or recommendations defined during the award or renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

APPENDIX B**MODEL PLAN FOR SHORT ANNUAL REPORTS**

A full report will be required in the year prior to consideration being given to the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA). However, this short report form can be used in other years (i.e. either years 1 to 3 after the award of the EDPA or its renewal for 5 years, or years 1 to 8 after a renewal for 10 years). The short report focuses attention on progress towards achieving the condition and recommendations which were agreed at the time of the award of the EDPA or its renewal.

State:

Name of the area:

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the EDPA:

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Conditions: List here all conditions which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or progress in complying with the conditions.

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Recommendations: List here all recommendation which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain how each one of these recommendations is being actioned.

Site Management: List here any changes to site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe.

Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report.

Other Information: List here any other information about the European Diploma site which you consider should be given to the Council of Europe.