



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

6th Session – 2018-2019

APPLICATION FORM

Presentation

The European Landscape Convention aims to promote the protection, management and planning of landscapes and to bring together European co-operation in this field. It is the first international treaty exclusively devoted to all dimensions of European landscape. Taking into account the landscape, natural and cultural values of the territory, it contributes to promoting the quality of life and well-being of Europeans.

The Resolution on the Rules governing the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008 at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, draws attention to the fact that Article 11 of the Convention institutes the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe and that it is in keeping with the work carried out by the Council of Europe concerning human rights, democracy and sustainable development. It effectively promotes the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by acknowledging the importance of measures taken to improve the landscape for people's living conditions.

Opened to the Parties to the Convention, the Award is intended to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, of their role and of changes to them. Its objective is to reward exemplary practical initiatives aimed at successful landscape quality objectives on the territories of the Parties to the Convention. The Award is conferred every two years and the files presenting applications must reach the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe.

At its meeting held in Strasbourg on 28-29 April 2008, the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP) decided that applications should be submitted to the Council of Europe Secretariat through the Permanent Representations of the Parties to the Convention.

*We would be very grateful if you could send no later than **30 January 2019** the following elements of the candidature file (20 pages maximum) established for your country on the basis of the proposals forwarded to you by the Ministries:*

- by E-mail, the Application form completed to: maguelonne.dejeant-pons@coe.int; susan.moller@coe.int;*
- by post, a copy of the Application form completed together with a CD-Rom, DVD or USB key, containing the all the additional material to: Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, Agora (A4-15V), F- 67075 STRASBOURG Cedex.*

*

*** * *

Please note that:

- participation to the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe is only open to local and regional authorities and their groupings and non-governmental organisations, as stated in the Resolution CM/Res (2008)3, Appendix, Article 2;*
- the application form must be completed in all its parts, in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French);*
- the materials submitted must be copyright-free, for use by the Council of Europe in communications aimed at promoting the Award or any other publications or activities relating to the Convention. The Council of Europe undertakes to cite the authors' names;*
- files that are incomplete or fail to comply with the rules will not be taken into consideration.*

For further information please visit the Landscape Award section of the Council of Europe website: www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention

*

I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. State

LATVIA

Represented by

Ms Dace Granta – senior expert, Spatial
Planning Department

Address:

Ministry of Environmental Protection and
Regional Development

Telephone:

+371 7026 553

Dace.granta@varam.gov.lv

E-mail:

2. Applicant

*Name of the local,
regional authority(ies)
or NGO(s)*

KOCĒŅI MUNICIPALITY

Represented by

Mrs Evija Nagle – vice chairman of
municipality

Address:

Alejas iela 8, Kocēni, Kocēnu pagasts,
Kocēnu novads, LV-4220

Telephone:

+371 26141003

E-mail:

info@kocenunovads.lv

II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJÉT

3. Name of the Project

THE ORIGIN OF THE LATVIAN
CULTURAL TRADITIONS.
DİKĻI – THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE
LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL

4. Location of the Project

DİKĻI, DİKĻU PAGASTS, KOCĒNU
NOVADS, LV – 4223 (57°35'39.7"N
25°04'58.2"E 57.594363, 25.082836)

5. Summary of the Project (10-12 lines)

Dikļi as a geographical place in Latvia was first mentioned in historical sources in 1436. Historically, this territory was inhabited by the Livonians who chose mounds Grebu and Bļodas as their settlement. Dikļi is a well-known place in the cultural history of Latvia. In 1818, the Latvian theatre traditions began in Dikļi.

In 1864, Juris Neikens, a clergyman and a writer, organized the first ever joint singing or the Song Festival in the park of Dikļi Vicarage (now Mound Neikenkalns), thus laying the foundations for the beautiful Latvian tradition which is included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Dikli is the place not only of nature concrete hall but also is place of objects:

- a Song Festival Promenade ([See Picture 1](#)) and the
- Mound Neikenkalns Nature Concert Hall nominated for the “Landscape Award of the European Council” ([See Pictures 2 – 4](#)) are built, as well as a permanent exhibition of the Song Festival is set up in Dikļi. The Nature Concert Hall Neikenkalns is complemented by
- Dikļi Evangelic Lutheran Church ([See picture 5](#)) and first dated with year 1630. The first Song Festival parade began in this church.
- Dikļi Manor owned by Paul von Wolf from 1860, and in 1896 the present Dikļi Palace (neo-baroque style) was built. Now it houses a hotel and a restaurant.

Dikli is the place where nature and culture heritage meet each other. Dikļi is one of the few places in Latvia where all the above historical recordings on both the most important cultural events and historical facts of Latvia are preserved, and which are still being restored, maintained and improved even today.

It cares for landscape values with the value of historical and archeological monuments of national importance, it tells stories of previous generations and passes them on to the next generations, therefore now we are liable for the way cultural and historical environment, and landscape are today and how they will be in future. Referring to opinion of culture experts in the broadcast of the Latvian National Television ‘Addresses’: *‘Interaction between architecture and nature in Dikļi is really magic’*.

6. Photo representing the Project



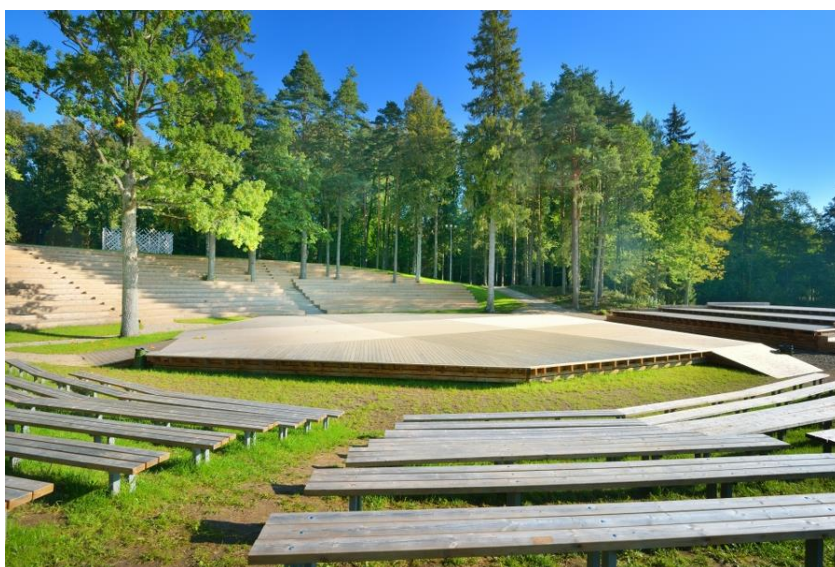
Picture Nr. 1 – Dikli Promenade (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 2 – Nature Concerte Hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 3 – Nature Concerte Hall. Water body is similar to shape of Latvia. (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 4 – Nature Concerte Hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 5 – Dikļi Evangelic Lutheran Church (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 6 – Events in Neikenkalns Nature concrete hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 7 – Dikli Palace (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 8 – Wooden sculpture park in Dikli (Author: Koceni Municipality)

7. Website of the Project *(if exists)*

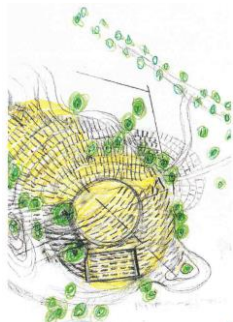
Koceni Municipality official web page : www.koceni.lv

Koceni Municipality official tourism web page :
www.visit.kocenunovads.lv/

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

8. **Start of the Project** September month 2013 year
The project must have been completed at least three years previously

9. **Partners**



sketch of the project

Architect Uģis Šēnbergs; Consultant, experienced All-Latvian Song and Dance Festival festivals director Uģis Brikmanis; Contractor Uldis Bošs (SIA “Ekers”); All-Latvian Song and Dance Festivals Designer Ivars Mailītis; construction supervisor Raimonds Rodiņš.

10. **Financing bodies**

Koceni Municipality Council

11. **Central aims of the Project**

The task of the Nature concert hall, respecting landscape preservation principles, is to highlight its attractiveness, at the same time ensuring a possibility for run large-scale events, in the way it has been in Dikļi in the very beginnings of the Song Festival.

The challenge of the Project by establishing the Nature concert hall of Neikenkalns to ensure this place as a single complex of environment, art, education and recreation at the place of the national historical event – the venue of the First Song Festival, is to highlight the European cultural and historical heritage, especially the meaning of song and dance culture. The Nature concert hall should serve as a uniting element in relation with the Landscape attractiveness, the cultural and historical heritage of Dikļi and surrounding protected historical and archeological cultural monuments of national importance.

Traditions of the Song Festival originated in 1864 when in the park of the Dikļi rectory (now Neikenkalns) the priest of the parish and writer Juris Neikens organised the first festival of joint singing, thus laying the foundations for the Latvian tradition that today is included in the UNESCO list of intangible heritage. To honour this event and thank the two inhabitants obsessed with art before 45 years, celebrating the centenary of the Song Festival, a small open-air stage, typical of the Soviet era, was built (*watch video*), the being of which in

the Dikļi public was very protected, irrespective of it being severely affected over the time. Situation to the opposite at the public consultation with citizens was changed by the daughter of the construction enthusiast of the old open-air stage (now a popular poet) who had the casting vote for the destiny of the old open-air stage, for everybody expected that she would defend the contribution of her father, however, Daina Sirmā told: ‘You know what: my father would be the first one to say ‘hey, let’s demolish this old shed if we have a chance to get a better one’.

Consequently, based on proposals of citizens and actions of developers of the territory planning and development programme (Ilma Valdmāne and Pauls Grants) in the municipal development planning document (2014 – 2020), ‘Priority: Sustainable management of natural and cultural, and historical capital’, Action directions ‘Preservation of landscape, natural and cultural and historical values’, ‘Improvement of the public space’, and ‘Development of business infrastructure and resources’, the municipality:

1) In the initial stage of the project implementation organises a clean-up to demolish the old open-air stage where the public together with the architect Uģis Šēnbergs and the event director Uģis Brikmanis presented future plans. The event involved not only the local community but also popular persons and amateur groups.

2) Started implementation of the project ‘Preservation of the Landscape Environment of Neikēnkals, the Cradle of the Song Festival’ (design, technical project, construction process, artistic part – display of environmental objects and highlight of existing values *Emphasising that a Landscape with natural and cultural heritage is the value of Latvia and Europe!*

3) Provided a set of carefully and soundly arranged offer ‘Dikļi as a single complex of cultural and historical heritage, art, education and recreation’: strengthening the Nature concert hall as an added value and a mutually supplementing element in highlighting the importance of existing protected historical and archeological cultural monuments of national importance. By developing a joint tourism offer route ‘Neikēnkals and the Nature concert hall of Neikēnkals – Singing Festival Promenade – Permanent exposition of the Song Festival – Dikļi Palace Complex (palace, barn house, terrace garden, park garden) – Viks Fairy Tale Park – Dikļi Church – Grebu Bowl Hill’, emphasising that no matter how important and special is each historical object and cultural monument as a landscape element separately, they obtain their true value only in the context of a joint offer.

According to the project goal, it was planned to build the Mound Neikēnkals Nature Concert Hall differently from the usual open-air stages of this type in rural areas – by friendly, ecological construction using natural, renewable elements and materials such as water, earths, and trees. A versatile team of professionals was involved in the development of the project, including Uģis Brikmanis, the main director of the All-Latvian Song and XV Dance Festival, who, due to his experience, helped plan the layout of stages and seats for the audience. The following was built:

- Three-zone dance stages;
- Orchestra stage-terrace;
- Amphitheatre – 2000 seats;
- Viewers’ areas near the stage and on the other side of the river

(with numbered seats);

- New pedestrian pathway and access road;
- Pontoon bridge over the Mazbriede River;
- Internal power supply;
- Wind chimes.

During the construction, extensive earthwork was carried out, the Mazbriede River was cleaned and deepened. During the implementation of the project, instructions and terms of the competent institutions were adhered to, as well as environmental peculiarities – a monument of the national significance “The Venue of the First Latvian Song Festival”, the composition of the park, the relief, and existing flora were taken into account.

The Project ‘The Nature Concert Hall of Neikenkalns’ ensures meeting objectives of the competition ‘European Landscape Convention, Landscape Award of the Council of Europe’ and is in compliance with the objective of the Latvian national selection for the competition: ‘to facilitate public awareness of landscape value and changeability, as well as the role of public in landscape development by showing the best experience in landscape protection, maintenance and management that is ensured by implementing practical measures in landscape management and in planning their development.

12. Outcome

Characteristics of the object:

- total area under construction – 5643.7 m²;
- total area of the open-air stage – 787.3 m²; total area of the pavements – 278.0 m²;
- carriageways – 517.7 m²;
- lawn ~ 3500,0 m²;
- engineering communications – 382 m.

As a result of the project, an open-air stage fully integrated into the landscape was built providing functionally-appropriate capacity for both participants and visitors of the events. The cultural and historical location of the open-air stage and the development and improvement of the surrounding area of Mound Neikenkalns provide for an opportunity to enjoy and experience the beginning of the Latvian Song Festival traditions by any visitor. There is a rational balance ensured between good visibility, natural acoustics, the physical size of the open-air stage constructions, architectural solutions and the scale of the surrounding landscape in the cultural and historical context of the park. The Nature Concert Hall is built as an amphitheatre with the multifunctional objects – transformable stages for both small events and an impressive amount of singers of up to 5,000 participants and viewers (2000 places for singers, dancers and 3000 places for spectators).

Intangible contribution of the Nature concert hall in maintaining the Song Festival tradition and raising patriotism of the public deserves particular appreciation. The result achieved is worth being proud of: the beautiful landscape with precisely and accordingly ‘seated’ infrastructure, made of nature materials, nature-inclusive, can attract thousands of singers, dancers, musicians, actors and spectators! Even Uģis Brikmanis, the director of the All-Latvian Song

and Dance festivals before the grand concert dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the Singing Festival regarding the meaning of the Nature concert hall of Neikēnkālns says the following: ‘Reborns! Not we remember, honour, but reborns, and we feel that this tradition, this, in fact, the most important part of our lifestyle, will live! Everybody who comes here says one word ‘How beautiful it is here!’ And this beauty will definitely run through song, dance and music, and it is the most crucial thing to realise that our folk song is endlessly beautiful and that the ancestral heritage is very simple, sincere and will live from generation to generation!’”

The attractiveness of the Nature concert hall has been appreciated also by professionals – landscape architects, the head of the Latvian Builders Association, contractors who during the visit of the evaluation commission of the competition ‘Building of the Year’, even on a rainy autumn day, were positively surprised that it is pleasant to be in the Nature hall as in winter, as in summer. (P.S. The Nature concert hall in the competition, in the nomination ‘Landscape’ received the main award ‘Building of the Year in Latvia 2014’). Daina Veinberga, landscape architect, member of the competition panel, says: *‘I have studied many beautiful open-air stages, I have studied what kind of open-air stages have been created over the last decade, and many of them could be called special, however, exactly such harmony among the historical environment, architecture and nature I have not seen yet!’* Similar assessment has been received also from tourism groups, individual visitors and families who are enchanted by feelings being in the Nature concert hall even with the closest family members only, for, irrespective of the scale and spectator capacity, in everyday life you can find here cosiness, enjoyable warmth, aesthetics and attractiveness, not characteristic of such open-air stages. This is evidenced by assessment of people who are popular in the public:

Quoting Ieva Akurātere, the most soulful and symbolic songwriter of the Latvian Awakening era, ‘You know how I like to be here – to go so timidly, so sacredly...like...in a Sacred place’ Why you feel like in a Sacred place? ‘Because here is such a feeling, I mean, all developers have taken care of it, including the God and the nature! Here there is something over-secular, paid tribute to ancient times and also something cosmic – covered by Heavens’.

The created Nature concert hall gives an indispensable value added in preservation and promotion of cultural and historical values and protected historical and archeological monuments that provide an indispensable contribution not only to promotion of public activity of citizens, maintaining cultural traditions, but also facilitation of economic activity of the territory.

IV. RESPECT OF THE CRITERIA OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE AWARD

13. Sustainable territorial development

Is the project part of a sustainable development policy?

Does it contribute to the enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural or aesthetic values of the landscape? How?

Has it successfully countered or posed a remedy to any pre-existing environmental damage or urban blight? How?

The open-air stage of Dikļi as a cultural and historical object is mentioned in the Sustainable Development Strategy of Kocēni municipality as one of the specializations of the municipality in tourism and culture.

Restoration of the open-air stage of the first Song festival in Dikļi is based on municipal and national sustainable development policy, namely, improvement of the surrounding landscape and construction of a multifunctional open-air stage – Nature concert hall to serve as venue for cultural events of various scales in the long-term.

In January 2014, the Kocēni Municipal Council, based on the municipality's long-term Development Strategy 2030, took a decision to mark construction of the Dikļi Nature concert hall as a priority investment project of the Kocēni Municipality.

The Nature concert hall is included in the national and regional tourism network, as well as it is a part of the Latvian tourism development strategy. The Dikļi Nature concert hall as an important tourism route is included in International tourism routes 'VIA Hanseatica', 'Livonian Culinary Route'. The Nature concert hall is included as a stop in the European Green Railways network. In 2019, the European Green Roads award ceremonies and conferences will take place in Latvia, Vidzeme, including as a venue also the Nature concert hall of Neikenkalns.

The Latvian National Centre for Culture supports the Nature concert hall by including it in national strategic plans for cultural events.

There is no separate landscape planning document for the territory, however, the project as a part of sustainable development policy is supported by the fact that the venue of the First Latvian Song Festival - Neikenkalns in Dikļi, since 1998 by the decision of the State Inspection for Protection of Cultural Monuments has been included in the list of state protected cultural monuments, respecting instructions of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection regarding the planning of the existing Landscape, taking into account natural materials and the status of the cultural monument of State significance. The project 'Effective Use and Improvement of Nature and Culture Potential at Neikenkalns in Dikļi!' has a status of a national project.

During the process of designing and construction of the Nature Concert Hall, the focus was on the preservation of the existing landscape and environment, the use of natural materials, for example:

- The floor of the stage is in the valley, emphasizing Mound Neikenkalns as the cultural monument of State significance "The Venue of the First

Latvian Song Festival”;

- An important place in the scenic plan is given to the centennial oak – there is a giant centennial oak opposite to the open-air stage as a gesture of appreciation to the folk song;
- Sand, gravel-clay-crushed stone mixture, timber are used;
- Landscape relief is made of earthwork and naturally grown lawns.
- A water mirror serves as an acoustic sound amplifier. A hundred-meter wide water mirror between singers and viewers serves as an acoustic sound amplifier, taking into account the impact of prevailing winds, terraces and slopes.

The sun. There is a daily theatre of the sunrise and sunset in the water mirror. A sunset at the top of Mound Neikenkalns is as a part of the nature stage design for the evening concert. A sunrise over the mill pond – for the morning concert.

The project has a direct environmental, social, cultural and visual impact, as the above landscape has, first of all, a status of cultural monument providing for the possibilities of protection and sustainable development, namely, the site may not be subjected to change without retaining its significance.

Mound Neikenkalns is the first venue of the Latvian Song Festival. Landscaping, preserving and improving of the environment ensure its existence and transfer of values to the next generations. The project was awarded as the “Best Building of the Year in Latvia in 2014” in the category “LANDSCAPE”, acknowledging not only its cultural significance, but also the excellent result of reconstruction. Publications “Latvijas arhitektūra” No. 115 (5/14) (October/November 2014), “Būvinženieris” August 2014 No. 39. (Attached as an annex to the application).

The awards received, the role of cultural history, and geography of the site are the basis for a long-term existence and development. It is also an obligation to preserve and develop the site as a destination for travellers, interested parties and professionals of various sectors (culture, history, construction). The Nature Concert Hall is complemented by the integral parts of Dikļi Manor – a church, a Landlord’s house, a palace, a school, a manor park, and a mill.

The Nature concert hall of Neikenkalns is a tool by which, given the remarkable number of tourists and large-scale events, one prevents the potential negative impact of the visitor flow on the protected historical monument of national importance – Neikenkalns.

The Nature-friendly construction approach and the achieved result call to explore visit and enjoy the cultural and historical place, at the same time unobtrusively routing the visitor flow and diverting it from trampling and damaging the protected cultural and historical monument of national importance. The Singing Festival Promenade next to the Nature concert hall has a similar function.

A unique approach where the mound visually demarks the historically significant Neikenkalns from the venue of cultural events – the open-air stage, ensuring that spectators have a possibility to enjoy the historical breath smoothly, however, moving up the slope of the mound, there is a view of the beautiful Nature concert hall, leaving many visitors breathless by surprise.

The nature frame of the river Mazbriede has let to ‘seat’ in the nature a frame

called amphitheatre. The challenge of the architect were landscape changing works where by mounds and entrenchments by changing, cleaning up the overgrown river bed and banks (before the works started the river was not visible), one achieved a merger of nature with the amphitheatre so that the old bank of the river would be made in a way as if the transformation had taken place before thousand years.

Improvement of the territory of the concert hall with the aim to maximally mitigate the impact of visitors on the environment and on the cultural and historical monument of national importance – Neikēnkalns, to organise and diversify movement and location of spectators, to improve amenities of all the stakeholders – spectators, artists, technical staff. Construction and upgrading of additional terraces for better quality organisation of singer flows, to ensure sustainable management of the nature capital upon increased load on the object.

The results achieved within the framework of the Project are a tool for improvement of the landscape environment, values:

- Built an acoustic Nature concert hall with adjacent recreation territories by taking maximum use of the nature environment, respecting the authenticity of the unique historical culture environment and in compliance with artistic quality requirements and entitlement of citizens to quality life and recreation environment.
- Established a safe, comfortable and aesthetic environment. Implemented an environment complex allowing the local community to maintain quality and dynamic cultural and social life in the region, as well as organise significant national and international events by offering a quality place for open-air events.
- At public places – better kept and maintained surfaces for passage in compliance with environmental access requirements for all population groups.
- Improved recreation area: set up benches and rubbish bins for the needs of event participants, local community and tourists
- Facilitated presence of good architecture, design and art – a quality life space for all the citizens. Established a complex of art and nature objects – ‘Skaņu birzs’ (‘Sound Grove’). The object is dedicated to the unique diversity of nature where visitors may reach a common denominator of harmony between the nature and humans – a place for action, exploration, development in open-air. Man-made sound instruments will be placed in the sound grove and available for guided action, exploration and music-making.
- Established an organised and improved environment as a supplement and support to already improved and restored places – Singing Festival Promenade, Dikļi Palace, Exposition of the Song Festival, Viks Fairy Tale Park, Grebu Mound.
- Diverse use of strategic tourism resources – cultural heritage and nature rich in landscapes. In cultural tourism: unhurried, authentic experience based on ethics and aesthetics.
- Well-kept and creative environment attracts new initiatives and serves as an important basis for infrastructure improvement and further development of the territory.

The Nature concert hall is a venue for national and regional (Vidzeme)

events; Singing festivals, regional events of the International Folklore Festival 'Baltica' and 'Vidzeme Song Festival'.

The Nature concert hall every year hosts the traditional festival 'Spēlmaņu svētki' ('Actors' Festival') gathering Latvian amateur theatre groups with the aim to honour anniversary of the first theatre performance in Latvian that took place in Dikļi in 1818.

Started negotiations with directors on establishing Latvian folk song traditional festivals during summer solstice in Dikļi with competitions and a gala concert with performers of classical music, opera singers, choir singers, instrumentalists, folk music groups.

In 2019, Laima Jansone, the internationally recognised Latvian artist, will organise at Neikenkalns already for the third time the World Lute Camp. Neikenkalns was also the venue for the Dance grand performance 'No Zobena Saule lēca' ('Sun Rose from the Sword') with participation of ~1500 dancers, several hundreds of choir singers, and the event was attended by 3000 spectators.

This is proven by the newly established microenterprises, increase in business turnover, increased tourism flows and increased business of accommodations at tourism companies in the nearest region.

In the territory of the municipality just started operating a new company SIA 'Kocēnu korti' that opened a newly-built budget hotel.

As a result of the Project implementation, there has been a rapid increase in the number of tourist visits and interest to the place Dikli. Increased activity of homeworkers, for example, processing of quince, an apple farm with setting up a point of sale, a dried fruit production, souvenir items and items made by folklore craftsmen. The number of visitors to the restaurant of the Dikļi Palace restaurant has gone up, an opportunity has arisen for event catering, there has been an increase in retail sales of food etc.

Environmental functionality, design and aesthetics and subsequent sense of value of the place, is a basis for raising the territorial potential in the field of culture, education, environmental protection, tourism and economics.

14. Exemplary value

Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?

Which are the good practices that it implemented?

The project may be used as an example of good practice. The historic venue of the event was rebuilt, while preserving the existing environmental constructions and elements, as well as its functional significance. As a result, we have managed to create not only a neat architectural look, but also a positive aura which could be experienced at the venue of the first Song Festival. Such an olden times “flavour” is created not only by a stage, but also by a nearby park with a description and monuments set up to honour historical events, by a nearby Dikļi Church, whose clergyman Juris Neikens gathered singers to the Song Festival in 1864. All the objects related to the venue and the event are taken into consideration while planning and improving the site in order to create a united path, a road, a network of objects. The project serves as an example of how to incorporate historical elements into a new reconstruction and how to incorporate the object into landscaping, balancing a possibility to organize equally comfortably both local and large national events.

The Nature concert hall of Neikenkalns in Dikļi, the venue of the First Latvian Song Festival, 1864, the historical monument of national importance under protection No 98, it is supplemented by:

Dikļi Evangelic Lutheran Church with its altar, 1698, II q. of 18th cnt., the art monument of national importance under protection number 4499 and the pulpit, 1699, II q. of 18th cent., the art monument of national importance under protection No 4500;

- Singing Festival Promenade, established in 2005;
- Exposition of the Song Festival;
- Viks Fairy Tale Park, made in the writer's place of residence on the river bank, in a landscape park, 2006;
- The historical complex of the Dikļi manor (15th cnt.) that belonged to Paul von Wolff since 1860, and 18th cnt. the current Dikļi Palace (in neo-baroque style) that currently has a hotel, restaurant and a SPA complex. An architectural monument of national importance, protection No 8537.

The second important component of the ensemble of the Dikļi manor is the **barn house** that is older than the palace and was built **in the end of XVIII century in the shapes of the late classicism**, with majestic portico, not typical of Vidzeme barn houses.

Buildings of the Dikļi manor are organically supplemented by the park in the area of 20 ha. To the South of the palace there is a pond, it is being told that it had an oak floor. Behind the pond, starts a landscape park or Mežaparks (Forest Park), made in the steep ravines of Mazbriede (formerly called also Pāle and Dikļi river). In the sixties of XX century upon inspection of the Dikļi manor park it was found that there can be found about **20 exotic trees**, including *Abies balsamea* (BALSAM FIR), *Juglans cineres* (BUTTERNUT), *Populus beroliensis* (BERLIN POPLAR), *Pseudotsuga meziensis* (OREGON PINE) and others the age of which, as it was determined at that time, is mostly 30-40 years.

The palace of the Dikļi manor is one of the few manor palaces in Vidzeme and houses of lords that despite further use that remarkably differed from the initially intended, has relatively many original interiors, especially on the ground floor – the hall with a fireplace and a couple of tile stoves, the central stairs, parquet,

wall panels and other elements.

- Grebu – Bowl Hill – an archeological monument of national importance. Archeological monument of national importance, protection number 2426

The Project ‘The Nature Concert Hall of Neikenkalns’ is a unique example of how with earth, soil and the existing landscape the architect worked like a sculptor, emphasising that stronger than any typical building design is the nature itself, the landscape design developed by the nature itself. Therefore, use of nature materials in the Project is self-evident:

There are many ways how to use the Nature concert hall, namely, spectators sit on the stage and choir singers in the amphitheatre or vice versa (World Lute Camp in Dikļi). In the same way orchestra plays on the terrace stage, spectators are in the amphitheatre or on the dance floor. At the Song Festival concerts, about 2000 singers and dancers are in the amphitheatre and on the dance floor, spectators on the terrace stage, on spectator benches and on the riverbank on carpets. At events gathering several thousands of visitors, spectators sit in the amphitheatre and the performance is on the dance floor, for example, the large-scale Dance grand performance ‘No Zobena Saule lēca’, the International Folklore Festival ‘Baltica’.

15. Public participation

Does the project actively encourage the public’s participation in the decision-making process? How?

Is the project in line with the wider policies implemented by national, regional or local authorities?

There are many ways how to use the Nature concert hall, namely, spectators sit on the stage and choir singers in the amphitheatre or vice versa (World Lute Camp in Dikļi). In the same way orchestra plays on the terrace stage, spectators are in the amphitheatre or on the dance floor. At the Song Festival concerts, about 2000 singers and dancers are in the amphitheatre and on the dance floor, spectators on the terrace stage, on spectator benches and on the riverbank on carpets. At events gathering several thousands of visitors, spectators sit in the amphitheatre and the performance is on the dance floor, for example, the large-scale Dance grand performance ‘No Zobena Saule lēca’, the International Folklore Festival ‘Baltica’. On 26 April 2014, within the framework of the Big Clean-Up, employees of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development together with their families, altogether vast in numbers, clean up the surroundings of the Dikļi Nature concert hall. Also Romāns Naudiņš, the Minister, participates in the Clean-Up.

By highlighting the importance of public engagement in preservation of the landscape and facilitation of value awareness, dialogue with the public and public engagement in the decision-taking process regarding implementation of the Project have been ensured in several stages:

- 1) Before starting the Project.
- 2) During the Project implementation.
- 3) During the Project result maintenance.

Before the decision on commencement of construction of the Nature concert hall and setting it as a priority municipal project, the public engaged on several levels:

– Expert panels were set up (culture experts, directors, the National Centre for Culture, leaders of amateur groups, architects, contractors, businesses of the municipality, tourism experts) with the aim to specify needs, possibilities and impact of maximum benefits of the developed infrastructure on various target audiences.

– Public discussion organised – meetings of citizens.

In the beginning of the Project implementation there were arranged clean-ups to demolish the old open-air stage, this involved industry experts, project experts (the architect, event directors, popular persons and local public).

Continuous publicity on mass media (Television, press, social networks), information was disseminated on local, regional and national level.

The society took part in all project implementation stages. First of all by making a decision to build a new open-air stage – next public discussions and meetings were organized about open air stage plan. There has been used also suggestions that have been expressed during public meetings and were fulfilled during construction and project design prepare. Finally local people took part in the demolition of the old open air stage constructions as well as event planning and provide hospitality for any visitor.

The society is being involved also now to maintain and improve the object.

Taking into account the fact that funds of Kocēni Municipality Council – which is the tax money of all citizens – were used to build the object, the accomplishments are to be considered as the involvement of the whole society. Besides, the environment created as a result of the project provides for an opportunity for people to visit the Nature Concert Hall, for the organizers to organize events, and for all of us together to use it for its intended purpose.

The Nature Concert Hall is considered to be one of the attractions of Dikļi, motivating local population and Kocēni Municipality Council to continue, promote and improve preservation, strengthening and renovation of the cultural and historical values of the site.

Our goal is to strengthen the traditions of cultural history, ensuring succession for the next generations by fulfilling them today.

The indispensable benefit of the Project is that the developed infrastructure, marking Neikenkalns as the cradle of the unique Song Festival movement, the UNESCO heritage in Latvia, has served as a stimulus for initiatives of the public to supplement and improve the territory of the Nature concert hall and surroundings not only for organising events (Concerts, gastronomic events (one day PopUp restaurants), theatre performances, sports competitions and activities, events and performances for school children etc.), but also for projects implemented by non-governmental organisations and businesses:

- The non-governmental organisation attracts financing and implements a project of the Environmental Protection Fund ‘150 Years since at Neikenkalns the Song has been Calling Latvians together’, ensuring environmental protection and education aspects – by installing, expanding choir singer terraces with the aim to route spectators and maximally reduce the visitor impact on the protected historical monument of national importance – Neikenkalns.
- As a result of public initiative, there has been installed an environmental object – a well-kept recreation place with installed benches, tables, rubbish bins and flower holders.

- By public activities of the non-governmental organisation there has been installed an environmental object 'Sidraba birzs vainags' ('Crown of the Silver Grove' (a symbolic environmental object of the All-Latvian Song Festival).
- As a result of public initiative, citizens together with school children made a bird alley, installing several tens of birdhouses.
- Employees of a leading Latvian bank arranged a clean-up for making new tree and bush plantings. The Nature concert hall has become an activity place for local seniors for recreation, as well as for the territory clean-ups.

The Project is in line with development priority planning documents of the local municipality, the Vidzeme Planning Region and Latvia.

The Project is supplemented with activities of the Latvian Environmental Investment Fund to reduce the anthropic pressure and to implement environmental education events.

The Project is incorporated in the Vidzeme Tourism Association Strategy and the event plan of the Latvian State Tourism Development Agency.

The Project is included in international cultural and tourism networks 'VIA Hanseatica', the Taste of Livonia, the European Green Railways, the tourism strategy section of the Gauja National Park 'EnterGauja'.

In 2018, the Nature concert hall ranked among the 10 most important cultural objects 'Latvian Culture Signs 2019', including such widely known Latvian tourism objects as the Rundāle Palace and the Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre. Additionally, wider public has access to the wall calendar for 2019 'Latvian Culture Signs' (30 000 copies) calling the public to study cultural values, 'Latvian culture signs are created in the environment and space that make our land more beautiful. Look at this beauty with the eyes of a photographer and see how in Latvian regions they maintain and improve the cultural space!'

The Project is in line with the municipal planning document Kocēni Regional Development Programme 2014 - 2020 and its priority 'Sustainable development of natural and cultural, and historical capital', the Action direction 'Preservation of landscape, nature and cultural, and historical values', 'Improvement of the public space' and 'Development of business infrastructure and resources'.

The Nature concert hall facilitates reaching national, regional and local priorities 'Human cooperation, culture and civic participation as a basis for belonging to Latvia' and 'Facilitation of economic activity in regions – use of the territory potential'.

16. Awareness-raising

Is the project effectively increasing public awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of human development, consolidation of European identity, or individual and collective well-being? How?

The construction of the Nature Concert Hall at the venue of the first Song Festival is particularly characteristic to the situation of Latvia. It is a symbol of traditions and international recognition of Latvia obtaining also a slogan “The Land that Sings!”. Nowadays, the Song Festival (<https://dziesmusvetki.lv/>) has become an event of international importance, as representatives of other countries also apply for the participation in order other people who want to sing could celebrate the Festival choosing Latvia as the venue of the festival.

The Project ‘Nature Concert Hall of Neikēnkalns’ may serve as an example in development of the public awareness of Landscape and values, that Landscape is not only a space, that it is important to observe diverse interests in development of infrastructure where merges landscape and the cultural and historical heritage.

The Nature Concert Hall is constructed by means of a friendly ecological construction using natural, renewable elements and materials. The unique acoustic features of the site are achieved by help of a water mirror, wooden constructions, existing greenery of the park, terraces and slopes. The stage and amphitheatre embrace an idea of multifunctionality – the stage may be set up in two ways – for the provision of extensive Song Festivals and for organizing routine cultural events – transformable tribunes for large shows, a horizontal floor with a portal and a screen for the open-air performances and concerts. The Project is important for strengthening the Latvian and the European identity; it strongly marks the cradle of the UNESCO intangible heritage – the unique Song Festival movement in Latvia.

The Project also provides an impact in terms of public welfare: a joint tourism offer route has been set up (Neikēnkalns and the Nature concert hall of Neikēnkalns – Singing Festival Promenade, Permanent exposition of the Song Festival – Dikļi Palace Complex (palace, barn house, terrace garden, park garden) – Viks Fairy Tale Park, Dikļi Church, Grebu Bowl Hill), emphasising that no matter how important and special is each historical object and cultural monument as a landscape element separately, they obtain their true value only in the context of a joint offer.

The established Nature concert hall ensures public awareness of the impact of a targeted and carefully developed landscape on development of the territory and facilitation of public welfare, for establishment of the concert hall has provided an indispensable contribution not only to promotion of public activity of citizens but also facilitation of economic development of the territory. Increased activity of homeworkers (in events participate about 70 producers), increased and improved retail sales, especially demanded are public catering services (Dikļi Palace Restaurant (among Latvian Restaurant Top 10), event catering provided by popular restaurants with highly rated chefs and cooking shows, Mārtiņš Sirmāis, a popular Latvian TV show chef organises a one-day PopUp restaurant, gathering about 60 visitors per day. Business activity has increased also for local and surrounding hotel service providers, also local artisans and producers have found opportunities for sales. Large-scale summer festivals are organised by the local hospitality business ‘Dikļu Pils’ (‘Dikļi

Palace’).

In response to the demand, the municipality for the needs of businesses has purchased a single design foldable and mobile trade shelters with the aim to promote a single style and integration of business activities in the overall landscape environment.

The positive impact of the Project on the public is evidenced not only by public appreciation, the wide range of events, attendance but the fact that the Project serves as a stimulus for voluntary initiatives of the public to supplement and improve the offer of the Nature concert hall:

Event organisation (Concerts, gastronomic events (one day PopUP restaurants), theatre performances, Sports competitions and activities, events and performances for school children etc.);

Infrastructure development projects implemented by non-governmental organisations and businesses and installation of environmental objects in the territory of the Nature concert hall.

V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

3 photos and videos DVD-Rom.



Picture Nr. 9 – Neikenkalns Nature concert hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 10 – Neikenkalns Nature concert hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)



Picture Nr. 11 – Neikenkalns Nature concert hall (Author: Koceni Municipality)