



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

7th Session – 2020-2021

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 2021** 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.*

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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
www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award*

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I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

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II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

3. Name of the Project

Bothnian Bay Coastal Meadows Management Project

4. Location of the Project

The Bothnian Bay, the northernmost part of the Baltic Sea

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

In the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project, the objective has been to restore and maintain the landscape and habitats of the uniquely extensive coastal meadows. The meadows have resulted from traditional agriculture and degraded because of changes in agricultural practices. Now over 4,000 hectares of meadows have been restored.

An operating model for the management of the coastal areas was developed in the beginning of the project. The operating model involves identifying valuable coastal meadow sites, finding suitable measures for restoring them to the target state, and finding a local farmer to implement these measures with funding via agri-environmental support. With the help of the pilot sites, the use of the operating model has been extended to the entire project area.

The success of the project means that the traditional, expansive coastal meadows in the Bothnian Bay have been restored to their former glory. The successful management of the landscape in the Bothnian Bay is the result of long-term and extensive cooperation.

6. Photo representing the Project (high definition – JPEG 350 dpi) and name of the author of the photo please



Author: Mika Kastell

7. Website of the Project (if exists)

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III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

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

9. **Partners**
- Private landowners, real estate units, farmers, agricultural authorities, ProAgria Oulu (Rural Women's Advisory Organisation), Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, various organisations (hunting clubs, BirdLife, member associations of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation)

10. **Financing bodies**
- Ministry of the Environment, EU Agricultural Fund, national agricultural subsidies

11. **Central aims of the Project**

The main objectives of the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project have been:

- 1) Restore and maintain the landscape and habitats of Finland's most extensive coastal meadows, which are unique in their biodiversity. The core of the coastal meadow chain are the meadows of Bay of Liminganlahti and Hailuoto Island, which are recognised as nationally valuable landscapes*. The cessation of mowing and grazing resulting from the structural change in agriculture, together with the eutrophication of coastal waters, resulted in large areas of coastal meadows becoming overgrown with reeds and other vegetation.
- 2) Create an operating model which will enable the management of coastal meadows to be expanded to the entire project area and which can be applied elsewhere as well.
- 3) Establish as wide a range of coastal pastures as possible throughout the coastal area in order to serve as attractive examples and to encourage farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs to set up new pastures.
- 4) Plan the management of the areas according to their characteristics to ensure the best outcome.
- 5) Monitor the impacts of the management on the landscape, habitat types and species and, where necessary, make changes to the management plans and methods to better meet the purpose.

- 6) Implement landscape management and planning through broad-based cooperation between nature conservation and agricultural authorities, landowners, farmers and organisations.
- 7) Implement the EU Natura 2000 conservation objectives.
- 8) Systematically increase the area of coastal meadows under management. At the start of the 2000s, the national target was to triple the area covered by traditional rural biotopes. For the North Ostrobothnia ELY Centre, this meant a target of approximately 2,000 hectares.
- 9) Increase the awareness of private landowners, farmers and other citizens about the landscape of the project area and its management as well as the value and significance of these landscapes.
- 10) Secure the commitment and motivation of farmers to manage the contract areas.
- 11) Plan and implement management also in areas where this cannot be supported by agri-environmental payments.
- 12) Implement the planning of the coastal meadows management in parallel with the planning of protected areas.
- 13) Secure the ecological functioning of the area as a whole.
- 14) Enrich the landscape with the help of grazing animals.

*The nationally valuable landscapes were confirmed by a government resolution in 1995. These are Finland's most typical cultural landscapes, whose value is based on their diverse, culturally-shaped nature, managed agricultural landscape and traditional building stock. The identification of nationally valuable landscapes is used to secure the preservation of typical and vibrant rural landscapes and to attract interest in landscape management. The national land use targets laid down in the Land Use and Building Act require that valuable landscapes be taken into account in land use decisions for these areas.

12. Outcome

The central aims of the project have been achieved brilliantly. Through the project, the quantity of coastal meadows under management has increased from approximately 200 hectares to its current total of over 4,000 hectares. This management has covered the landscape itself, the vulnerable habitat types and the area's species. The successful management of the landscape and nature of coastal meadows in the Bothnian Bay is the result of long-term and extensive cooperation and a shared will. Similar measures and procedures can also be applied elsewhere in Finland and Europe.

Key results:

- 1) Over 4,000 hectares of the traditional, expansive, and uniquely extensive coastal meadows have been restored to their former glory. The different sites in the project

area have become significant functional and diverse entities which are formed from various pasture and mowing areas and which feature multifaceted traditional landscapes, different habitat types and diverse wetland biota.

- 2) An operating model was developed to identify valuable coastal meadow sites, find suitable measures for returning them to the target state, and locate a local farmer for implementing these measures. The management measures are primarily implemented by local farmers in their own or their leased coastal areas in return for agri-environmental support.
- 3) Pilot sites were established at the beginning of the project. The pilot sites played a key role in the success and expansion of the project. With the help of these pilots, new farmers were able to familiarise themselves with and become interested in the management of coastal meadows through the positive experiences of others.
- 4) Management is planned for each meadow site individually. In the management planning process, the starting point is that the management measures must promote the objectives of landscape and nature management at the site. In most of the areas, the land management plans are prepared either by the farmers themselves or by consultants contracted by the farmers. The ELY Centres evaluate the management plans and, where necessary, put forward recommendations regarding the proposed management measures and practices. This procedure ensures that landscape and biodiversity aspects are taken into account in the decision.
- 5) Management contracts are renewed at regular intervals (5 years). This makes it possible to assess the regular management methods and quality of management and, if necessary, to update the plans and management practices to better meet the purpose.
- 6) The management of coastal meadows has been carried out through broad-based cooperation and networks right from the beginning of the project. The parties involved have included nature conservation authorities, rural authorities, landowners, farmers and a number of different organisations. In the core areas, where extensive management area entities were formed, management objectives have been defined in broad-based cooperation collectives.
- 7) The coastal meadows of the Bothnian Bay are included in the European Union Habitats Directive under the habitat type 'Boreal Baltic coastal meadows', which is one of the key conservation types for Natura 2000 areas within the project area. Thanks to the purposeful, long-term management measures, the status of the habitat type has been upgraded from unfavourable-bad to unfavourable-inadequate. Coastal meadows are also of central importance for wetland birds and for unique plant communities which have benefited from the management.
- 8) The target set at the beginning of the project for the area covered by landscape management has been reached and exceeded. At the beginning of the project, two grazing areas with a total area of 170 hectares were established. By the early 2000s, there were already more than 1,000 hectares of coastal pastures in the core areas of the Bothnian Bay. Currently, there are over 4,000 hectares of managed coastal meadows.

- 9) Awareness has increased among private landowners, farmers and other citizens regarding the landscape and its management as well as the value and significance of these landscapes. Citizens' awareness has been increased by participation in the project, by information on the project and familiarisation with the project area, for example through visits to the Liminganlahti Visitor Centre. Extensive marketing was carried out during the early stages of the project and information and advisory events for farmers have been organised from the beginning of the project. This kind of information sharing with farmers has been continued throughout the project in different forms.
- 10) The coastal meadows within the area are being managed by around 50 farmers, all of whom are very committed and motivated to manage their contract areas. Special support for agriculture and later agri-environmental payments constitute an attractive and functional compensation system, and this is a prerequisite for the management of landscapes and biodiversity.
- 11) In specific areas in which management has not been possible through agri-environmental support, the management is instead carried out by local environmental organisations, hunting associations or the environmental authorities.
- 12) The planning of the coastal areas management is being carried out alongside the establishment of protected areas. The majority of managed coastal meadows are located in nature conservation areas. The decisions to establish protected areas have directly included the possibility of grazing and mowing the areas, as well as carrying out the necessary basic restoration measures in accordance with the approved plan.
- 13) The different habitat types and wetland biota within the project area form a range of unique ecological combinations. Both the regional coverage and connectivity between the project areas have simultaneously increased significantly during the project.
- 14) Grazing animals revitalise the landscape and are an enriching element in the landscape. It is easy for citizens to familiarise themselves with the impacts of grazing, especially through visits to the Liminganlahti Visitor Centre, which is located in the project area. Learning about grazing animals also increases positive attitudes towards agriculture and rural areas.

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 operating model and associated measures developed in the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project is part of a sustainable development policy and implemented in harmony with the operations of the regional organisation. The areas making up Hailuoto Island and the Liminka plains, which are located within the project area, are nationally valuable landscapes. In fact, Hailuoto has also been categorised as one of Finland's national landscapes. The project has contributed to the enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural and aesthetic values of the landscape in the following ways:

Environmental sustainability:

The coastal meadows located in the project area are the largest in Finland and unique in terms of their landscape and biodiversity. The largest of the managed coastal meadows are all included in the Natura 2000 network, and most of the areas are located in nature conservation areas. The majority of managed coastal meadows are located in private nature conservation areas or as habitat types within wider protected areas. Numerous decisions made by the ELY Centre on the delimitation of this habitat type have ensured the preservation of coastal meadows located outside protected areas.

Almost every vegetation type of coastal meadow can be found in the large pasture meadows included in the project area, with many of the upland sites transforming into wooded coastal forests, dominated by deciduous tree species. Coastal meadows are of central importance for wetland birds, and the unique plant communities reflect the unique combination of ecological conditions in the Bothnian Bay: land uplift, ice cover during the winter season and low-salt brackish water. When drawing up the management plans, the important plants and animals found in the area have been taken into account. Management covers the landscape itself, the vulnerable habitat types, and the area's species.

The coastal meadows of the Bothnian Bay are included in the European Union Habitats Directive under the habitat type 'Boreal Baltic coastal meadows', which is one of the key conservation types for Natura 2000 areas within the project area. The project area contains nearly one fifth of the total area covered by this habitat type in the Baltic Sea region and 60% of the total area within Finland itself. The restoration and management measures carried out in the project area have been central to the conservation of coastal meadows and the preservation of this habitat type as a whole. Thanks to these purposeful, long-term management measures, the status of the habitat type has been upgraded from unfavourable-bad to unfavourable-inadequate.

The extensive coastal pastures are very important for wetland birds. More than 100 bird species use the shallow coastal waters, shallow areas connected to the coastal meadows, and the surrounding waters as breeding, feeding and migratory resting areas. For several wetland

bird species, many of which are endangered, the project area is Finland's most important breeding or migratory resting area. The enormous number of migratory birds in the project area is based on the unique combination of large coastal meadows, shallow and highly productive bird waters and seamlessly integrated, expansive farming areas. The unique nature of the area and its significance for the bird population can be seen especially in the landscape of the Liminka plains. Thanks to the active conservation and management measures, the significance of the project area for bird life has further increased. Hundreds of thousands of migratory birds benefit from the coastal meadows in the Bothnian Bay over the course of each year. The core parts of the project area, stretching from municipality of Siikajoki to Hailuoto Island and through Bay of Liminganlahti to the archipelago area of the former municipality Haukipudas, have been identified as one of Finland's internationally important bird areas (IBA, Birdlife International). The key parts of the project area are connected to the Natura 2000 network as special protected areas (SPA) under the EU Birds Directive. These sites play a very important role in promoting the conservation objectives of the Birds Directive in Finland and, more broadly, in the European Union as a whole. The populations of many protected bird species in these areas are significant for the Natura 2000 network.

Plant species found on the shores of the Arctic Ocean and the White Sea, native plants in the Gulf of Bothnia, and rarities found in salt marshes continue to be species typical to the coastal meadows of the Bothnian Bay. Many of these species are endangered and would not survive in the area without the management measures in place. Of the strictly protected species in Annexes II and IV to the EU Habitats Directive, the species found in coastal meadows and other associated coastal wetlands and shallow coastal waters are Siberian primrose, a small true grass called *Puccinellia phryganodes*, fourleaf mare's tail and Baltic water-plantain. The conservation and management of the habitats of these species will contribute towards the objectives of the Natura 2000 network.

Coastal grazing is also a cost-effective way to clean water systems, and the management of coastal meadows thus also supports the protection of the Baltic Sea. The vegetation along the coastline collects large amounts of nutrients from the water and sediment. When the livestock eats the plants along the coastline and within the water, the nutrients are transported back to dry land.

Erosion is controlled by planning the correct grazing load for each coastal area, taking into account the conditions of the growing season. In addition to cows, sheep are also used in landscape management, as these are particularly suitable for pasture rearing on beaches, heaths and dunes which produce low yields and are sensitive to erosion. In addition to grazing, sheep increase the openness of the landscape by maintaining, for example, the movement of sand, which is a prerequisite for the preservation of beaches and dunes. Where necessary, coastal meadows are also managed mechanically by mowing, which is an effective way to remove dense areas of common reeds and other vegetation.

Grazing increases animal welfare, as it provides them with living conditions that are natural for their species.

The Bay of Liminganlahti Visitor Centre is located in the project area and provides visitors with environmental education. In its exhibitions and tutorials, the Visitor Centre presents the landscape and nature of the project area. The Bay of Liminganlahti Visitor Centre is also an attractive domestic – and thus ecological – tourist destination.

Cultural sustainability:

The expansive coastal meadows with low vegetation are a characteristic of the coastal landscapes of the Bothnian Bay. The key landscape values and natural values of the project area are linked to centuries of coastal peasant settlements and traditional agriculture. In traditional agriculture, the hay of natural meadows was used as animal feed through mowing and grazing. The continuous use of the land in this way over several centuries led to the formation of the largest and most well-known coastal meadows in the Bothnian Bay, and the field plains and local building culture developed in connection with these. These features are best represented in the nationally valuable landscapes of Hailuoto Island and the Liminka plains.

The cessation of mowing and grazing resulting from the structural change in agriculture, together with the eutrophication of coastal waters, resulted in large areas of coastal meadows becoming overgrown with reeds and other vegetation. As a result of the overgrowing process, the traditional, open plains, which had extended in places for as far as the eye can see, began to close up.

The success of the project means that the traditional, expansive, and uniquely extensive coastal meadows have been restored across large areas. Thanks to the management of traditional landscapes, the current generations will be able to familiarise themselves with how traditional agriculture has influenced the Finnish landscape and what the landscape has looked like. Understanding local cultural history helps towards better understanding the roots that affect the present. The management of the landscapes of the project area is part of the maintenance of a diverse historical and cultural heritage.

The managed coastal landscapes have also been opened up in new ways to culture lovers. For example, the Hailuoto Theatre Festival has used the Pöllä sheep pasture as a stage for its July events.

In addition to the management of traditional landscapes and the maintenance of diverse species, grazing revitalises the rural landscape and increases positive attitudes towards agriculture and rural areas.

Economic sustainability:

The coastal meadows are managed by local farmers with funding via agri-environmental support. Agri-environmental support for nature and landscape management is economically important to the agricultural entrepreneurs involved in the project and has a positive knock-on effect on the rest of the regional economy.

Not all sites are managed with agri-environmental support, as in some cases the measures are not used as part of agriculture. In these cases, the measures have been financed through separate funding granted by the Ministry of the Environment or by discretionary government transfer. The management and restoration work itself is carried out by contractors as purchased services. The total number of such special areas during the span of the project has only been around 400 hectares.

The management of landscapes in the project area has increased the attractiveness of the area and thus also made the area an even more attractive tourist destination. Tens of thousands Finns visit the area every year and more than 5,000 foreign visitors come to the Bay of

Liminganlahti Visitor Centre every year. Every year, nature tourism entrepreneurs bring dozens of foreign tourist groups to the area and offer, among other things, programme services for bird photography for hundreds of domestic and foreign nature photographers.

Social sustainability:

The management of the coastal meadows has been carried out through broad-based cooperation and networks right from the beginning of the project. The parties involved have included nature conservation authorities, rural authorities, landowners, farmers and a number of different organisations, including participation later in the project by an organisation providing expert rural advisory services. Planning has been carried out in broad-based cooperation collectives in some of the key areas in which extensive management sites were established.

Seven local working groups were key to the Bay of Liminganlahti LIFE project, which was carried out at the start of the coastal meadows management project. These local working groups, led by the North Ostrobothnia Environment Centre, participated in activities such as the planning of the protection, management and use and the setting of objectives for the southern parts of Bay of Liminganlahti and Hailuoto Island. During the three years, the working groups met many times and contributed to the setting of targets and selection of locations, bringing local expertise into areas such as the identification of suitable sites for management. Local working groups also included representatives from the largest landowners (real estate units), who ensured that the site could be taken as a management area.

At the information and advisory events for farmers, more experienced farmers have been given the opportunity to share with others their experience in the management of coastal meadows. This kind of peer support between farmers has been important.

The measures of the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project have increased the attractiveness and value of the area as a recreational area, which increases the well-being of the residents and all visitors to the area while also supporting social sustainability.

Aesthetic sustainability:

The Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project has significantly increased the aesthetic value of the area. Thanks to the project, the coastal meadows and pastures that had become overgrown have been restored to their former glory and are once again open and uniquely expansive.

The Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project has also repaired and prevented damage to the landscape and the environment and enriched the landscape. As a result of the structural change in agriculture, the traditional grazing of coastal meadows had almost ceased entirely by the end of the 60s, and the majority of coastal meadows became overgrown because of the lack of management. At the start of the project, less than 200 hectares of coastal meadows were under management. Thanks to the project, traditional open coastal meadows have been restored to large areas, with more than 4,000 hectares currently under management. The landscape has become richer and more diverse thanks to the management, and the grazing animals are in themselves an element that enriches the landscape.

14. Exemplary value

Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?

Which are the good practices that it implemented?

The project can be considered of exemplary value. The landscape has been managed, protected and developed in an exemplary, long-term, purposeful and cost-effective manner. In addition to the benefits for the landscape, the activities have benefited local authorities, local farmers, landowners and citizens living or travelling within the area.

At the beginning of the project, work was carried out to develop an operating model for nature management and landscape management in the coastal areas. The use of the operating model has been extended to the entire project area with the help of the pilot areas. The operating model involves identifying valuable coastal meadow sites, finding suitable measures for returning them to the target state, and locating a farmer for implementing these measures. The operating model developed and the measures taken can serve as an example of compliance with good practices and can be applied elsewhere in Finland and Europe.

Policies and measures that can serve as an example of good practice for others:

- 1) By creating an operating model for the management of coastal meadows, the tried and tested practices have been effectively expanded to the entire project area. In this way, it has been possible to systematically increase the area of coastal meadows under management.
- 2) At the beginning of the project, an ambitious target was set for how much the total area of managed coastal meadows. At the start of the 2000s, the national target was to triple the area covered by managed traditional rural biotopes. For the North Ostrobothnia ELY Centre, this meant a target of approximately 2,000 hectares. By pursuing this goal with a determined and long-term approach, the target has been achieved and even exceeded. Currently, there are over 4,000 hectares of managed coastal meadows. The project serves as an example of how objectives that appear at first to be unattainable are indeed possible.
- 3) Landscape management and planning have been implemented through broad-based cooperation between nature conservation authorities, landowners, farmers and organisations. The success of the project is the result of long-term and extensive cooperation and shared will.
- 4) The management measures are primarily implemented by local farmers in their own or their leased coastal areas in return for agri-environmental support. Agri-environmental support for landscape management is economically important to the agricultural entrepreneurs involved in the project and has a positive knock-on effect on the rest of the regional economy.
- 5) Farmers have become committed and motivated in the management of their contract areas thanks to the attractive and effective compensation system, and their motivation has also been boosted by information of the importance and significance of landscape and nature management.

- 6) The planning of the management of coastal meadows has been carried out in parallel with the planning of protected areas. The majority of managed coastal meadows are located in private nature conservation areas or as habitat types within wider protected areas. The decisions to establish protected areas have directly included the possibility of grazing and mowing the areas, as well as carrying out the necessary basic restoration measures in accordance with the approved plan. Solving management and protection issues in the same context has often made it easier to make potentially difficult conservation decisions.
- 7) The ELY Centre has made numerous decisions on the delimitation of this habitat type. This has ensured the preservation of coastal meadows located outside protected areas, thus helping maintain the coverage and interconnected nature of the different areas.
- 8) Citizens' awareness of the value, significance and transformation of the landscape has been increased. Citizens have been involved in the project and information has been offered to them through channels such as news bulletins and the activities of the Liminganlahti Visitor Centre.
- 9) In addition to being a good means of managing coastal meadows, the grazing animals used have also enriched the landscape.

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?

The project actively encourages the public's participation in the decision-making process. In the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project, private landowners and farmers have played a key role in the planning and implementation of the project. A large proportion of land owners in the neighbouring areas have been reached by means of the different real estate units. The management of the coastal meadows has been carried out through broad-based cooperation and networks right from the beginning of the project. The parties involved have included nature conservation authorities, rural authorities, landowners, farmers and a number of different organisations. The setting of management objectives has been carried out in broad-based cooperation collectives in some of the key areas in which extensive management sites have been formed.

Seven local working groups were central to activities of the LIFE project in Bay of Liminganlahti. These local working groups, led by the North Ostrobothnia Environment Centre, participated in activities such as the planning of the protection, management and use and the setting of objectives for the southern parts of Bay of Liminganlahti and Hailuoto Island. During the three years, the working groups met many times and contributed to the setting of targets and selection of locations, bringing local expertise into

areas such as the identification of suitable sites for management. The groups also included representatives of the largest landowners (real estate units).

Management plans have been drawn up for large nature conservation and Natura 2000 areas, and these have included objectives for areas for the management of coastal meadows. Furthermore, the management and use plans have been prepared in cooperation with various stakeholders.

In most of the areas, the actual management plans are prepared either by the farmers themselves or by consultants contracted by the farmers.

The Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project has been implemented in keeping with the landscape policy of national, regional and local authorities, including the European Landscape Convention, the Finnish Land Use and Building Act, Finnish environmental legislation and the Cultural Environment Strategy. The areas making up Hailuoto Island and the Liminka plains, which are located within the project area, are nationally valuable landscapes. In fact, Hailuoto Island has also been categorised as one of Finland's national landscapes. Protected nature reserves ensure that the special values of the area are safeguarded.

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 extensive management of coastal meadows and provision of information on this has increased the public awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of human development, consolidation of European identity, and individual and collective well-being.

The Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project is strongly linked to local cultural history and the restoration and safeguarding of its associated values. As part of the project, the special values of the area have been brought to the attention of the local citizens in order to increase their understanding of the multidimensional significance of the landscape. Project has increased the awareness of the value, importance and transformation of the landscapes of the region.

Through the project's activities, awareness has increased among private landowners, farmers and other citizens regarding the landscape and its management as well as the value and significance of these landscapes. This has increased the public awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of individual and collective well-being.

Open, grazed coastal meadows have been an important part of traditional agriculture and thus the landscape of the area. Thanks to the management of traditional landscapes, the current generations will be able to familiarise themselves with how traditional agriculture has influenced the Finnish landscape and what the landscape has looked like. Through its focus on cultural history, the Bothnian Bay coastal meadows management project increases understanding of the impact of the landscape on European and local identity.

Because traditional agriculture mainly ceased with the previous generation of farmers, coastal grazing was an unfamiliar prospect for many livestock farmers at the start of the

project. Through the example of the pilot areas, new farmers have been able to familiarise themselves with the management and grazing of coastal meadows.

Extensive marketing was carried out during the early stages of the project in cooperation with the North Ostrobothnia ELY Centre, rural authorities, and the rural advisory organization. In addition, events for farmers have been organised at the municipal and sub-regional level. This kind of information sharing with farmers has been continued throughout the project in different forms.

Over the years, information on the project has been provided at information events, which at the beginning of the project were held 10 times a year. Information on the project was also provided in connection with numerous other events. For example, more than 30 planning and information events were organised during the LIFE project (in practice between 1996 and 1998) for key actors in the region. At the same time, regional training and information and advisory events focusing on agri-environmental support were initiated in cooperation with the agricultural authorities and held on an annual basis. At a later stage, ProAgria presented the management of coastal meadows in dozens of advisory events aimed broadly at farmers throughout the project area. Training and advisory events have been organised every few years for farmers who are committed to agri-environmental agreements.

In addition, the management of coastal meadows has been presented in several press articles and radio interviews, and information on the project and its activities has been distributed online and through brochures and other publications throughout the project's lifespan. The project has been presented in several European countries and also at the EU level for the sharing of best practices.

Citizens' awareness has increased through participation in the project, by information on the project and familiarisation with the project area and its management, for example through visits to the Bay of Liminganlahti Visitor Centre. Liminka Municipality, Metsähallitus and the European Regional Development Fund have made it easy for all visitors to familiarise themselves with the unique landscapes and nature by visiting the Visitor Centre and its surroundings.

The guides explain about the management of traditional landscapes, and thus also the local cultural history, as part of the guided walks provided to large groups of visitors every year. The nature and importance of landscape management that makes use of grazing animals is also presented on the website of the Visitor Centre. The landscape and nature of the area are presented at the Visitor Centre through multifaceted and impressive exhibitions.

The Bay of Liminganlahti Visitor Centre and bird towers are located in the nationally valuable landscape area of the Liminka plains and at the heart of the managed coastal meadows. There are twenty bird towers in active use in the project area. Through the activities of the Visitor Centre, a wide range of Finnish and foreign visitor groups (more than 50,000 visitors per year) have access to the landscape of the Bay of Liminganlahti and the nature found in the pasture areas. The wide expanses of managed coastal landscapes and wetland nature are on display to every visitor. The Visitor Centre is located at the heart of the management area, and in front of it is Pitkänokka, one of the largest coastal meadows in the Baltic Sea area. The grazing animals are right there for all the visitors to see.

Through their visits to the Visitor Centre, the project area is also introduced to groups of children from kindergartens and schools, who get the chance to familiarise themselves with the landscape, landscape management and nature in the area. Accessibility has also been taken into account in the activities of the Visitor Centre, so it is possible, for example, for those with wheelchairs or prams to familiarise themselves with the landscape and landscape management of the project area.

Grazing animals are a popular target for photos, and visitors to the project area share their images of the landscape and grazing animals on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook and also through their own blogs. The grazing animals are also a big source of interest for younger visitors.

The coastal landscapes managed in Hailuoto Island have also been concretely brought to the attention of culture lovers through their use as a stage for a midsummer theatre festival.

The interaction and dialogue continues with landowners, farmers and other citizens within the project area.

V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Together with the printed version of the Application form, additional material in digital format should be included in one CD-Rom, DVD or USB key, and returned by post or courier to:

Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons

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Tel: +33 (0) 3 88 41 23 98

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- Text (20 pages max.): *PDF format*
- Photos (10 max.): *JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Posters (2 max.): *PDF format high definition or JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Video (15 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*

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