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

Group of specialists - Protected areas

**Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves
(Sweden)**

Renewal of the European Diploma

Expert report

by

Mr Pierre HUNKELER

A representative of the Secretariat accompanied the expert during his visit. Her comments are included in paragraph 6.

Appendix I comprises Resolution (88) 12 adopted when the European Diploma was awarded to these nature reserves; Appendix II is a draft resolution for possible renewal of the Diploma in 1993, presented by the Secretariat.

Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves
(Sweden)

On-the-spot appraisal

by

Pierre HUNKELER
(Switzerland)

1. Introduction

The European Diploma, Category B, was awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves in June 1988.

A decision on the renewal of the Diploma must be taken in 1993. The visit described here, which took place on 27 and 28 July 1992, was organised with a view to that decision.

The expert was accompanied by Mrs Marie-Aude l'Hyver from the Council of Europe Secretariat.

Mr Curt Matzon, from the Swedish National Environment Protection Board, Mr John Ahlbom, of the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation and Mr Hans Englund, from the Stockholm County Administration organised and took part in the entire visit.

After a general introduction at the Foundation's headquarters, an old, tastefully modernised building in Stockholm, the Foundation's own boat enabled us to tour the sites and to meet local management and security officials on various islands. However, extremely unfavourable weather conditions forced us to limit our trip and prevented us from visiting the sanctuaries for colonies of sea birds.

The visit was perfectly organised and we sincerely thank all those who played their part in making it smooth and pleasant, particularly by always patiently answering our many questions and enabling us to make maximum use of the limited time available.

2. Site and value of the reserves

The Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves are part of the Stockholm archipelago of some 24,000 islands, barely 150 of which are permanently inhabited. This is a heavily used recreational area, above all by the population of Stockholm. There are some 40,000 weekend cottages in the area and over 50,000 boats with sleeping facilities.

The Bullerö and Långviksskär reserves were formerly very large private properties, which have retained their natural state, with very few buildings or facilities. This is a rich and unique landscape of exceptional quality.

The reserve, which is 8,200 ha in area, includes some 1,200 islands of all sizes, consisting of gneiss bedrock, mostly covered with birches, heather and some pines. There are also several small peat bogs as well as wetland areas with rushes and reeds. 400 species of vascular plants have been recorded.

On the whole, the forests are young, since most of the islands were largely cleared to provide land for farming or for the collection of firewood.

The area is a nesting site for some 100 bird species, including the white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla) and large numbers of eiders (Somateria mollissima). The aquatic fauna include both freshwater species such as the pike (Esox lucius) and saltwater species such as the herring (Clupea harengus).

The Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves are almost entirely the property of the Stockholm Archipelago Foundation and are subject to the usual reserve regulations.

3. Management

There is a detailed management plan for each of the reserves. The chief management activities are as follows:

3.1 Visitor reception facilities and surveillance

Like the rest of the Stockholm archipelago, the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves attract a great many visitors. Some 500,000 persons/nights have been recorded in the archipelago (a figure arrived at by counting the number of boats moored in the evening and multiplying this figure by 3.5), from 12,000 to 20,000 on Bullerö and from 17,000 to 25,500 on Långviksskär. The figures fluctuate widely from one year to another depending on weather conditions. Added to this are the day-visitors, who come here mainly on package tours (their sole destination being Bullerö). It is too far for return trips by private boat to be worthwhile (in one day).

To cope with this influx of visitors, the Foundation actively informs the public, by means of press campaigns, various leaflets, etc. It also organises simple but efficient toilet and rubbish collection points on a few easily accessible islands. The wardens make regular rounds to check up.

Self-discipline also plays quite an active role. Most visitors come regularly and attach great importance to the sites being left clean and tidy. Pressure on the land remains limited owing to the nature of the site; visitors instinctively walk on the bare rock rather than on the vegetation, thus reducing the amount of trampling.

3.2 Restoration and maintenance of buildings

Major efforts to restore and maintain existing buildings in the reserves, respecting the original style and materials, are continuing. Houses which are not occupied by the wardens or the few people resident on the islands are rented out to visitors or offered as short-term accommodation in exchange for maintenance work. No new buildings are planned.

3.3 Maintenance of certain farming activities

Several islands were regularly inhabited until the 1940s. The residents raised livestock and farmed a number of meadows and pastures reclaimed from the forest (at that time in a very poor state owing to the collection of firewood). These grassed areas made for excellent diversification of the landscape and environment.

Some cattle are still regularly kept in the summer season on two islands, which means that the pastures are maintained. A few areas of hay meadow have been reclaimed and are maintained on the islands of Bullerö and Långviksskär, the aim being both to demonstrate the traditional use to which these areas were put and to promote fauna or flora associated with this type of environment.

A project being studied aims to replace the modern cattle with traditional breeds similar to the animals found in the islands a few decades ago.

3.4 Protection of fauna

It is above all birds which are the focus of attention here. Protection activities include regular counts, with monitoring of colonies or nesting areas. Movements are observed and also, in the case of the eider, changes in breeding habits, which appear to be an adjustment to severe pressure from mink. Campaigns to destroy this carnivore, which escaped from mink farms a long time ago, have been organised, but with limited success. Regrettably, there are no effective ways of eradicating it.

The white-tailed eagle has been the focus of careful monitoring and a feeding programme which, among other things is intended to provide it with food low in pesticides.

The Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves form part of the area covered by the project entitled "A living archipelago - fauna protection and management in the Stockholm archipelago". Operated by the Foundation, this project continues the activities already initiated with respect to the white-tailed eagle and extends the studies to include the Caspian tern, the alcidæ - the guillemot (Uria aalge), the black guillemot (Cepphus grylle), the razorbill (Alca torda) - and also the grey seal (which is found in the islands on the seaward side of the archipelago). This project, started in

1991, makes a positive contribution to management of the sensitive species in the archipelago.

3.5 Miscellaneous

It should be noted that, in the reserves, management is principally concerned with the terrestrial parts of the reserves. Birds apart, the maritime aspects are apparently not perceived as possible topics for research projects to be encouraged by the officials in charge of managing the protected areas. Fish and invertebrates for example do not seem to be specially monitored.

Also, for historical reasons, the two reserves seem to be managed more or less independently.

A project for a national park including the Bullerö and Långviksskär reserves is under discussion. One of the consequences of this would be a better overall view; another would be a guarantee that the management of these reserves faithfully reflected the general protection and management policy pursued in Swedish nature reserves awarded diplomas in the long term.

4. Follow-up of conditions and recommendations

4.1 Monitoring

The area has three part-time wardens. One lives on Bullerö throughout the year (but does not work for the Foundation in winter), the two others being permanently resident in close proximity to the reserves.

This represents an improvement in relation to the situation which existed when the Diploma was awarded. In view of the number of visitors and the area which has to be covered, it seems to us that there is still room for improvement. For example, at least one warden should be engaged for the whole year, even if on a part-time basis during the winter season.

4.2 Controlling visitor numbers

The figures registered from 1988 to 1991 show a slight increase in 1989, followed by a fall of some 10% from 1990 to 1991. This trend is likely to continue for two reasons, the economic recession and improvement in boats, making it possible to cover greater distances. However, a further consequence of this improvement is a clear increase in the length of the visiting season, yet without reducing the exceptional peaks in visitor numbers during certain periods of good weather.

The favourite with visitors is the island of Bullerö, which has been equipped to receive excursion boats bringing visitors for the day. Here too, the nature of the terrain,

particularly along the nature walk which has been laid out, considerably limits possible damage from trampling.

In both reserves, areas out of bounds during the nesting period are well signposted and monitored. The only problem is the sudden arrival of large numbers of anglers on the day when these areas are opened for fishing, at the end of the nesting period. This aspect deserves further study in order to determine whether it could pose a problem.

Overall, it seems that the birds (the white-tailed eagle excepted) have become quite well accustomed to routine boat traffic, but may be particularly startled by the arrival of visitors in small, silent craft such as canoes or kayaks, or by the sudden appearance of a skater in winter. Monitoring of visitor trends and of changes in their behaviour must be continued as must campaigns to increase public awareness.

4.3 Extension of educational facilities and other maintenance measures

Improvement of the public reception facilities is continuing on Bullerö, currently the only place catering for such activities in the reserves. Information is provided in several languages. At the information centre (Naturum), more information on nature and the landscape might perhaps be provided, while the actual emphasis is on the historical aspects of the site.

More general information on nature reserves might perhaps be provided in the vicinity of the toilets and litter bins, which are regularly visited.

The idea of organising youth camps is not easy to implement owing to accommodation and supervision problems.

The restoration and maintenance of former meadows is continuing on a small scale, the consequences of which on the development of the flora and fauna it is important to closely monitor. Also, it seems wise to avoid disproportionate investment in the rehabilitation of certain areas which have already become totally reafforested naturally.

4.4 Water pollution control measures

Pollution in the Baltic Sea is a general problem. The officials who manage the Bullerö and Långviksskär nature reserves can only encourage the studies made by the Swedish authorities, as well as co-operation between the states concerned.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we recommend that the European Diploma, Category B, be renewed for Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves.

This renewal should be subject to the following recommendations, whose chief purpose is to encourage the continuation of the efforts made by the managing officials to improve visitor reception facilities and the management of the islands.

1. That monitoring of the number of visitors and of trends in their behaviour should continue in order to enable appropriate measures to be taken, if need be and in time, to adjust the impact of tourism to the sensitivity of the environment and to increase the number of wardens;
2. That a sound balance should be maintained between information on the historical aspects of the reserves and that relating to nature aspects, and that more general information on the reserves should be provided at places most frequented by visitors;
3. That management of and information about Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves should be organised with greater emphasis on the two protected areas as parts of a whole.

6. Comments by the Secretariat

The Secretariat fully shares the views expressed above by the expert and joins him in thanking the Swedish authorities for their very warm welcome and in congratulating them on the perfect organisation of the visit in sometimes rather severe weather conditions. There are a few points additional to the expert's report which need to be emphasised here.

1. **The impact of tourism:** the expert's terms of reference explicitly included a study of this point. It should be noted that the number of visitors to the archipelago does not appear to have undergone any appreciable increase in recent years; it is the calculation method which has changed, the number of visitors spending a night in the archipelago now being assessed on the basis of the number of boats. On the other hand, no record is kept of the number of daily visitors who come on a ferry from Stockholm for a very short visit to Bullerö. However, these visitors do not directly pose a threat to the reserve; rather, they constitute an asset as regards educating the public about the environment.

The expert report makes it clear that the impact of tourism is being satisfactorily controlled overall owing to the extremely respectful attitude of visitors to the islands, the measures taken at the reception points (refuse bins, toilets) for boats, the apparently virtual absence of visitors to the islands in the archipelago outside these reception points, the monitoring by the Bullerö warden (within the limits of the time available to him) of the number of boats and the length of their stay, cordoning-off (strictly out-of-bounds) of sensitive areas during periods crucial for the bird population.

2. Report PE-S-ZP (92) 49 also mentions the construction of a jetty on Bullerö. This is a rudimentary wooden jetty blending in perfectly with the site and facilitating the controlled disembarkation of groups of day visitors to the main island.

3. The expert report corroborated the fact that the area in question continued to meet all the criteria demanded of a Category B reserve.

A P P E N D I X I

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Committee of Ministers

RESOLUTION (88) 12

**ON THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
TO THE BULLERÖ AND LÅNGVIKSSKÄR NATURE RESERVES (SWEDEN)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988
at the 418th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

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

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

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

Having noted the agreement of the Government of Sweden;

After having deliberated,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma, Category B, in accordance with the regulations for the European Diploma, to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves;

Places the aforesaid reserves under the patronage of the Council of Europe until 12 June 1993;

Attaches the following condition to the award:

The staff and resources of the monitoring bodies need to be geared to deal with the influx of visitors, and in particular their mobility must be improved. For the monitoring work, it is essential for wardens to be maintained in the high season, and if possible throughout the year, at the two existing support points. A seasonal increase in their strength during the nesting season and the summer would improve supervision and environmental education;

Makes the following recommendations:

1. Controlling visitor numbers

Transit flows in summer have probably reached saturation point and their impact must therefore be monitored constantly with a view to channelling their movements appropriately, making improvements and eliminating any adverse effect occasioned by the infrastructure. The boundaries of the bird sanctuaries must be altered as necessary, the effects of camping and angling monitored and the use of buildings clearly regulated;

2. Extension of educational facilities and other maintenance measures

The creation of the new *Naturum* information centre and the marked nature trail on Bullerö island has been a success, and any improvement to these facilities will be welcome. It is suggested that a leaflet be published in English, German and other languages if necessary. It might prove useful to organise youth camps to do maintenance work and to safeguard features typical of the islands. The decision to carry out maintenance work in several sectors of the three largest islands so as to maintain the traditional hay meadows was a welcome one;

3. Water-pollution control measures

Pollution by the states bordering the Baltic Sea is causing severe damage to the marine ecosystem because poisonous substances build up in what is virtually a closed inland sea whose waters hardly replenish. An effort must be made to reduce this threat with the help of international agreements.

A P P E N D I X II

Draft Resolution (93) ...

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO BULLERÖ AND LÅNGVIKSSKÅR NATURE RESERVES

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

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

Having regard to Resolution (88) 12 awarding the European Diploma to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves;

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

Renews until 12 June 1998 the European Diploma, Category B, awarded to the Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. Monitoring of the number of visitors and trends in their behaviour should continue in order to enable appropriate measures to be taken, if need be and in time, to adjust the impact of tourism to the sensitivity of the environment and to increase the number of wardens;
2. a sound balance should be maintained between information on the historical aspects of the reserves and that relating to nature aspects, and also that more general information on the reserves should be provided at places most frequented by visitors;
3. efforts should be made to consider globally management and information on both neighbouring nature reserves of Bullerö and Långviksskär.