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**COMMITTEE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY**

**(CO-DBP)**

**Group of Specialists– European Diploma for Protected Areas**

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Room 15, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve  
(Germany)**

**RENEWAL**

Expert report by  
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the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

The European Diploma for Protected Areas (category B) was awarded to the Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve in 1967 and has been renewed regularly since then.

The expert was not accompanied by any members of the secretariat on his visit to the park.

Resolution (97) 13, which was adopted for the previous renewal of the Diploma, appears in Appendix I. Appendix II contains a draft resolution drawn up by the secretariat with a view to extending the validity of the Diploma for a further five-year period.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 GENERAL

The Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve (LHNR) was established in 1922. It is exceptional, as the responsible Verein Naturschutzpark e.V. (VNP) is a private organisation with about 4,400 members.

The LHRN comprises a large coherent area of appr. 23,400 ha., roughly between Schneverdingen and the brooks Seeve and Schmale Aue, including the former British tank training grounds near Schneverdingen (the so-called Red Zones). The whole area comprises about 13,700 ha of forest, 5,000 ha of heathland, almost 3,000 ha of agricultural land, 500 of ha of peatland, a length of appr. 70 km brooks, more than 100 stagnant waters, and 300 ha (1.5%) "urban area", that is small hamlets. The forest in the LHNR is one of the largest "Waldnaturschutzgebiete" (forest protection areas) of Germany.

A distinction should be made between the LHNR and the property of the VNP *within* the LHNR. The LHRN is more of a national park, while the land owned by the VNP – above all heathland – is nature reserve in the traditional strict sense. Practically all heathlands are owned by the VNP. The VNP manages and keeps about 7,200 ha, almost a third, of the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve.

### 1.2 EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

In 1967 the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve was awarded the European Diploma for the Conservation of Nature, category B<sup>1</sup>. The Diploma was subsequently renewed every five years, the last time in 1997. The objective of an appraisal is to describe the state and development of the reserve since the previous renewal of the Diploma. This should taken into account the recommendations attached to the renewal of the Diploma in 1997, and recommend, if possible and necessary, measurements for the coming period; for the recommendations attached to the renewal of the Diploma in 1997, § 3.13.

### 1.3 PRESENT ON-THE-SPOT APPRAISAL

In view of the renewal of the diploma in 2002, I was invited by the General Secretariat of the Council to carry out a new on-the-spot appraisal in May 2001. Following an introductory meeting in the morning of May 10 with the enlarged Steering Group Lüneburger Heide ("Steuerungsgruppe für das Naturschutzgebiet Lüneburger Heide", plus additional representatives of e.g. tourism associations), I visited the LNR in the afternoon and the following day. In the evening of May 10 there was a meeting with representatives of the regional government (Bezirksregierung Lüneburg) and of the councils of the municipalities concerned (Landkreis Harburg and Landkreis Soltau-Fallingb. c.s.).

I was not accompanied by a representative of the Secretariat.

## 2 EUROPEAN INTEREST

### 2.1 GENERAL

The general objective of the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve is: Protection and development of an extensive part of the landscape of the central Lüneburger Heide with its historical formed heathland landscape and adjacent forests<sup>2</sup>. This is worked out in 12 more specific objectives.

The European interest of the Nature Reserve, as summarized in the Information sheet for European Diploma Holding Areas DE940003, can be confirmed.

<sup>1</sup> See also Council of Europe, European Nature Conservation Diploma Series No. 4. Lüneburger Heath. Strasbourg, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Verordnung der Bezirksregierung Lüneburg über das Naturschutzgebiet 'Lüneburger Heide' in den Landkreisen Harburg und Soltau-Fallingb. von 17. Juni 1993, § 3 Schutzzweck

A comprehensive and detailed survey of the history, ecology and nature conservation and management of the LHNR was published in 1977<sup>3</sup>, followed by a study of the avifauna of the LHNR in 2000<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2 FLORA AND FAUNA

The main and characteristic semi-natural ecosystems in the LHNR are dry and wet heathlands, peatlands, oligotrophic grasslands, forests, brook and brook valleys. The LHNR is one of the very few areas in the northwest European lowland where peatland, i.e. living raised bog and "spring bogs" still continue to thrive.

Following the extensive inventories done for the book published in 1997<sup>3</sup>, the flora and fauna are monitored as indicated in the following table:

<b>Monitoring</b>		
	Method	Scale
Flora	Study of permanent squares	Local site
Fauna: invertebrates*	Study of permanent squares	Local site
Fauna: vertebrates	Overall census	Landscape type

\* *Carabidae, Arachnidae*

As a whole, the flora and fauna in the LHNR seems to be stable. At least 700 species of higher plants (phanerogams and ferns) are recorded to occur in the LHNR. Of these, 140 are on the Red List of Lower Saxony. As regards mosses, the number of characteristic and rare species is over 120, of which 64 species are on the Red List for the lowland in Lower Saxony.

The native mammal fauna counts 35 species, including e.g. 8 species of bats. Of the bird species regularly breeding in the LHNR, 28 are on the Red List of the Federal Republic and 27 on the Red List of Lower Saxony. This includes species such as White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*), Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), Wood Lark (*Lullula arborea*), Great Gray Shrike (*Lanius exubitor*). As regards the Black Grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*), the population seems to be stabilizing, following a serious drop of the in the early 90's (see following table). However, it should be noted that the success of reproduction is unknown.

<b>Recent development in the Black Grouse population</b>					
Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Cocks + hens	11 + 17	9 + 18	8 + 15	11 + 14	14 + 18
Total	28	27	23	25	32

The herpetofauna counts 6 species of reptiles, including e.g. sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and viper (*Vipera borus*), and 12 species of amphibians. The ichthyofauna of running waters amounts to 13 species. The fauna of invertebrates is rich in species and counts many species of the Red List of Lower Saxony. For instance, the LHNR harbours 41 species of dragonflies and 313 of spiders. Among the latter group, 51 species are on the federal Red List and another 78 of the red Lists of federal countries.

<sup>3</sup> Cordes, H., T. Kaiser, H. von der Lancken, M. Lütkepohl & J. Prüter (eds). 1997. Naturschutzgebiet Lüneburger Heide. Geschichte – Ökologie – Naturschutz. Verlag H.M. Hauschild GmbH, Bremen. 367 p.

<sup>4</sup> Lütkepohl, M. & J. Prüter. 2000. Die Vögel im Naturschutzgebiet Lüneburger Heide. Verlag H.M. Hauschild GmbH, Bremen. 199 p.

### 3 MERITS AND PROTECTION SYSTEM

#### 3.1 GENERAL

The body responsible for the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve is the Verein Naturschutzpark e.V. This is a private organisation. This exceptional status of the Nature Reserve requires special legal provisions for planning, management and public financial support.

Private initiatives started already in 1906, when the "heath pastor" Wilhelm Bode bought the Totengrund for nature conservation with financial support from Prof. Andreas Thomsen. In 1907, these two and the teacher Bernhard Dageförde established the Heathland Museum in Wilsede. The Verein Naturschutzpark e.V. (Nature Parks Association), established in 1909 in München, became engaged when it bought the Wilseder Berg in 1910. Finally, the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve was established in 1922.

The following two tables present a survey of general data of the LHNR.

<b>Administration and management of the Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve</b>	
Body responsible	Verein Naturschutzpark e.V. (VNP), est. 1909
Supervision	Regional supervisory authority of the government regional government (Bezirksregierung Lüneburg) and of the local governments (Landkreis Harburg, Landkreis Soltau-Fallingb.).
Advisory Board	Steering group Lüneburger Heide*. This "Steuerungsgruppe für das Naturschutzgebiet Lüneburger Heide" has a platform function, it is not a regular advisory committee. In addition, there is a larger team**. For actual problems, ad hoc advisory groups of specialists and otherwise involved parties are formed.
Attributions and powers	The VNP has a central role in the planning and management of the LNR and is responsible for the planning and management of its properties in the LNR.
Protection system	The amendment of the 1921 statute for the LHNR came into force in 1990. New regulations providing the necessary legal provisions were published in 1993 (i.e. the " <i>Verordnung der Bezirksregierung Lüneburg über das Naturschutzgebiet "Lüneburger Heide" in den Landkreisen Harburg and Soltau-Fallingb.</i> "). These regulations also specify the boundaries of the nature reserve, and provide a framework for implementation of the management and development plan.
Budget and financial sources	The annual budget is 3,5 million DM. It is supplied by the members of the VNP and - largely - by the federal state of Lower Saxony.
Human resources	The VNP has a limited full-time staff of almost two dozen employees, mostly engaged in public tasks, planning and management, which is supported by part-timers and volunteers leading excursions and the like.
Scientific co-operation	Alfred Toepfer Akademie für Naturschutz (formerly the Norddeutsche Naturschutzakademie) in Schneverdingen.

\* Bezirksregierung Lüneburg, Verein Naturschutzpark, Niedersächsische Forstamt Sellhorn, Alfred Toepfer Akademie für Naturschutz (NNA), Landkreis Harburg and Landkreis Soltau-Fallingb.

\*\* I.e. the "Steuerungsgruppe", plus Niedersächsische Landesamt für Ökologie, private forests, Niedersächsische Landvolk and nature protection organizations and tourism associations.

<b>Ownership Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve</b>		
Owner	Primo 1997	Medio 2001
Verein Naturschutzpark e.V.	7.000 ha	7.200 ha
Bundesland Lower Saxony (federal country)	5.000 ha	5.000 ha
Klosterkammer Hannover (convent)	3.000 ha	3.000 ha
Private ownership	8.000 ha	7.800 ha
Total area	23.400 ha	23.400 ha

The funds obtained from the project "Establishing and safeguarding Natural Sites and Landscapes deemed worthy of protection and of representational importance nation-wide" (part of the Federal Promotion Programme) amount to 26,9 million DM for the period 1991 – 2002. Most of that budget, 22 million DM, are allocated to purchase land. The federal state of Lower Saxony contributes 15%, and the VNP 10%. Up to now, this resulted in the acquisition by the VNP of 1295 hectares. In addition, 656 hectares are leased for 30 years.

The next table gives a summary of the ownership and a breakdown of the land purchased by the VNP as part of the federal project.

Breakdown of the land purchased by the VNP as part of the federal project							
	Forests (ha)	Meadows (ha)	Heathlands, peat bogs (ha)	Fields (ha)	Tracks (ha)	Other s (ha)	Total (ha)
1996	110	8	-	-	-	-	118
1997	35	9	14	-	-	-	58
1998	44	14	22	29	4	-	113
1999	26	7	68	-14	-	-	87
2000	15	7	-	-	-	-	22

### 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING PROTECTIVE REGULATIONS

#### a. Internal threats

- *Expansion of purple moor grass*

The expansion of purple moor grass (*Deschampsia [Avenella] flexuosa*), taking over the dominance in dry *Calluna* heathlands is effectively combated by various management measures (sod cutting, chopping, grazing). In addition, juniper (*Juniperus communis*) is locally growing so densely that it replaces the heather and has to be thinned. In practise, the main problem is the threat of insufficient financial resources, see sub b.

- *The neglect of the grounds in the Red Zones owned by the federal government*

A part of the grounds in the Red Zones, formerly used for British Army tank manoeuvres, is owned by the federal government. In spite of the inclusion of these Red Zones in the LHNR and the rehabilitation and management measures undertaken by the VNP, these grounds are not managed. They are left to themselves. Their development affects the nature objectives set for these areas and the overall result of the rehabilitation and management measures. See also § 3.8.

- *The isolation of the biotopes*

The connection between the heathlands in the LHNR is by and large sufficient, both from an ecological point of view as well as regards the scenery. The main exception is the interruption between the large heathlands east and west of Wilsede. The scenic importance of creating a wide corridor here is stressed by the concentration of visitors at Wilsede due to the presence of the Heathland museum *Dat ole Huus*.

The discontinuous and denaturated state of brooks and associated wet valley biotopes (wet brook valley grassland) should also be noticed. It is given active attention. Local restoration of these biotopes is currently in progress (Schmaler Aue, Sprengbach).

#### b. External threats

- *The plan to build a railway line between Hamburg and Hannover*

The plan offered two alternatives. The eastern route caused great concern for the LHNR. Recently, the political choice was made for the western route. This route is unlikely to affect

the biodiversity and the landscape LHNR. An impact study in order to assess the effects on the NR is no longer required.

- *The question of water pumping by the city of Hamburg (Hamburger Wasserwerke).*

The extraction of groundwater in the northern part of the diploma area continues and remains a cause of concern. The company has permission to withdraw  $25 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}^3$  annually. However, the actually pumped up quantity is  $15 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}^3$  per annum. The current concession expires in 2004 but the company desires continuation. The policy of the LHNR/VNP is that the extraction in the nature reserve be stopped completely, be reduced or, at least, be maintained at the present level. As extraction is likely to affect sensitive areas, possible effects are under study hydrogeologically and phytosociologically.

In this context it should be noted that legal provisions for the LHNR aim at protection of the natural hydrology, and prohibits the extraction of water from surface waters and ground water<sup>5</sup>.

- *Effects of agriculture, industry, etc.*

Possible negative effects of agriculture, industry, urban development, road building, tourism, hunting, fishing, etc. are legally prevented or curbed by the "*Verordnung der Bezirksregierung Lüneburg über das Naturschutzgebiet 'Lüneburger heide' etc.*". Agriculture in the LHNR is regulated in that "*Verordnung*" as well. There is a general will to respect this act and to co-operate among the municipalities and other bodies concerned. Hunting e.g. is not of great importance, and in the parts owned by the VNP there is none at all. In the state forests hunting is limited to red deer, roe deer and wild boar, and done by officials. The other parts are mainly community hunting areas.

- *Insufficient financial resources available for heathland maintenance activities*

The availability of sufficient financial resources remains a matter of continuous concern. Being a private organisation, the VNP depends for its financial resources largely on funding by the federal state of Lower Saxony; the members provide only a minor contribution<sup>6</sup>. Although the concept and content of the LHNR correspond to those of the federal nature parks, it is in a financially less secure position than those federal nature parks.

Most funds obtained from the project "Establishing and safeguarding Natural Sites and Landscapes Deemed Worthy of Protection and of Representational Importance Nation-wide" (part of the Federal Promotion Programme) is allocated to purchase land (see § 3.1). This expansion of property of the VNP means an extra burden for the management budget.

- *Possible need for supplementary protective actions.*

There is no direct need for supplementary protective actions.

It should be mentioned here that the local communities show a growing awareness of the merits and consequences of tourism and recreational activities. The municipality of Schneverdingen is deliberating the future function of the heathland that it owns near the village, close to the LHNR. Among others, it considers to ascribe 80 ha heathland a function as a "positive bufferzone" for the LHNR and a educational attraction for the public. Both to relieve the pressure on the LHNR as well as to create a better understanding and appreciation among the visitors to the LHNR and – of course – to favour the local tourism business. The question is how the status of these heathlands can be linked to the LHNR.

<sup>5</sup> Verordnung der Bezirksregierung Lüneburg über das Naturschutzgebiet 'Lüneburger Heide' in den Landkreisen Harburg and Solttau-Fallingb. (1993), § 3 (Schutzzweck), sub (2), and § 4, sub (3).

<sup>6</sup> That is almost 3%. The individual annual membership costs Dm 60, a family one costs DM 100.

### 3.3 ZONING

The zoning to prevent a too high pressure of visitors on vulnerable sites is effectively curbed by the system of circular trails for visitors, limitation of access by carriages to specific routes, and the creation of a quietness area in the Red Zones for Curlews (*Numenius arquata*) and Cranes (*Grus grus*).

### 3.4 OWNERSHIP TITLE

There has been no expropriation during the past five years.

### 3.5 LAND-USE PLANS

There are no land-use plans that may affect the area. Apart from that, there are small-scale plans to reorganise farming on an individual basis.

### 3.6 DEVELOPMENT WORK LAUNCHED, UNDER WAY, OR TO BE LAUNCHED

Restoration of the Red Zones is in full progress; see § 3.8. So is the local renaturation of brooks and associated wetland biotopes (wet brook valley grassland; Schmalter Aue and Sprengbach).

### 3.7 THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE AREA

The "Management and Development Plan" (*Pflege- und Entwicklungsplan Lüneburger Heide*) was finished in 1995 with federal support of the project "Establishing and safeguarding Natural Sites and Landscapes Deemed Worthy of Protection and of Representational Importance Nation-wide". This plan was approved by the Federal Nature Conservation Institute and the supervisory authority in the same year. The implementation is in full progress.

A major part of the plan deals with an analysis of the - than - present state of the flora, vegetation and fauna, and the main types of environment (watercourses and valleys, still water, peat bogs, heaths, forests, etc.). This is documented with a number of existing and newly made inventories and maps. The planning section compares the current situation with the ideal situation for each type of environment or habitat. On this basis, proposals are put forward for nature management and development. These proposals are also based on the experience gained from grazing, reaping, sod-cutting and deliberate burning operations carried out in experimental plots in different types of heathland in various locations. Special attention is being given to improving ecological gradients connected to the forest – heathland boundaries. This requires a sustained effort by the foresters. Actually, the state-owned parts of the forest are administered with the same concern for ecological management as the diploma area. A third section of the forest has been given full reserve status.

### 3.8 THE RED ZONES

In the south/south-west of the Nature Reserve, near Schneverdingen, are the former British tank training grounds of the, the so-called Red Zones.

The red zones nos. 1 and 2 cover 2178 hectares, of which 1641 belong to the VNP. In 1994 a map was made of the state of the grounds, their development goals, and their reclamation and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation measures (landscaping, clearing, sowing, etc.) are being carried out by specialised staff. It is paid for by the British authorities. The heathland area has now been enlarged by almost 32 %, with a greater diversity of habitats. This expansion made it possible to set aside a quite area and to leave certain sites to natural succession.

The 1993 regulations (see survey in § 3.1) also include in the LHRN 940 hectares situated in the southern part of the Red Zones (Red Zone no. 3). Most of this area will be rehabilitated as heathland. Up to date, the VNP has acquired 266 hectares in this area.

### 3.9 THE MANNER OF PUBLIC ACCESS, RECEPTION FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES

The LHNR is open to the public. Owing to its central location, that is in the immediate vicinity of Hamburg, Bremen and Hannover, a large number of people come to the LHNR every year, both from Germany as well as from abroad. The annual number of visitors is estimated at about three millions. The number of overnight stays in the area amounts to  $5.4 \cdot 10^6$ . The tourist season is short, visits concentrate on the period July-August-September, especially on the weeks when the heather (*Calluna*) is in full bloom.

The LHNR is accessible by a number of public paved roads, with various parking lots, and a network of paths and trails. It offers the visitor 700 km paths and trails and 300 km bridle paths. There are minor information facilities at Wilsede, Niederhaverbeck, Döhle and Underloh<sup>7</sup>. Guided tours are available on request. In addition, the VNP provides a youth hostel and three hostels for older walkers. The VNP also owns several inns and boarding houses, in addition to which there are many inns and boarding houses in the villages within and around the boundaries of the LHRN. There is a topographic map (1 : 40,000) available, accompanied by a booklet with information and tips. See further § 3.3 and 3.13 (sub Training and education).

### 3.10 SCIENTIFIC STUDIES NEEDED AND ACTIVITIES OF RESEARCH BODIES

Scientific studies others than the ones currently in progress or planned are not directly needed.

The VNP has a close relation with the Alfred Töpfer Akademie für Naturschutz (formerly the Norddeutsche Naturschutzakademie), established in 1981 and accommodated at Hof Möhr near Schneverdingen, just inside the LHNR limits. The Akademie is a member of the "Steuerungsgruppe" (Steering Group) of the LHRN.

Annually, the Akademie carries out appr. 20 projects in the LHRN. Recent or current projects concern e.g. the effect of management on nutrients in heathland and oligotrophen grassland systems, controlled burning of heathland, public acceptance of management measures, the Offenlandprojekt, development of a GIS system. It co-operates with the VNP in the landscape maintenance farm (*Landschaftspflegehof*) Tütsberg (see § 3.13). The Akademie co-operates with Lüneburg University and participates internationally in e.g. the Heathland Network, TOPAS (Training of Protected Areas Staff, approved by EU). It also organises a great variety of seminars, workshops and training courses.

### 3.11 POSSIBLE MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

None.

### 3.12 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AREA, LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, OFFICIALS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPHERE AND ASSOCIATIONS

The relationship between the body responsible for the area and local elected representatives, officials in the socio-economic sphere and associations is one of increasing mutual understanding and co-operation. There are regular formal and informal contacts and consultations. The local municipalities show their concern by financial support, though limited of course, maintenance of roads and efforts as regards e.g. sewage treatment. They and the population are well aware of the regional socio-economic importance of the LHNR. Tourism associations are represented in the enlarged Steering Group.

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<sup>7</sup> Wilsede: *Heidemuseum Dat ole Huus*. Museum, showing the way life and work in heathland hamlets before WW I; also prehistoric and early historic collections. Niederhaverbeck: *Hans-Pforte-Haus*. Posters, models etc. giving information about the LHNR, including bee-keeping. Döhle: *Haus der Natur*. Exhibition (dioramas) of wildlife in various types of landscapes and seasons. Underloh: *Seume-Haus*. Models and dioramas explaining the relation between nature, landscape and history.

### 3.13 THE TÜTSBERG LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE FARM

The VNP's Tütsberg landscape maintenance farm or "Landschaftspflegehof" in the LHNR is established for the conservation, management and development of biotopes characteristic for the historical semi-autartie heathland farming system.

The farmland includes not only heathland for sheep grazing, but also extensively exploited arable (260 ha) and grassland (25 ha). Tütsberg not only maintains or restores historic buildings, crop rotation systems and crop combination systems, fertilisation practices and the like, but also preserves old cereal races and arable weed communities. Tütsberg is thus a experimental research farm, and a object for education and demonstration of an ecologically sound way of farming oriented at the objectives of nature conservation and landscape maintenance. It appears to be quite successful.

To provide a legal and financial basis for the "Landschaftspflegehof", an exploitation agreement was drawn up between the VNP and the federal state of Lower Saxony in 1988. Research started at the same time. Since 1993, the farming by the VNP is part of a more extensive public-legal agreement regulating the landscape maintenance on the VNP grounds as a matter of principle.

## 4 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE 1997 RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

### 4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations attached to the renewal of the Diploma Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1997 (Resolution (97) 13) are as follows:

1. the effective implementation of the management and development plan be encouraged by making the necessary financial means available to those responsible for management;
2. the implementation of the federal project "Lüneburger Heide" be continued;
3. the "red zone" rehabilitation measures be extended to the 960 hectares situated in the southern part (zone no. 3);
4. the current boundaries of the award-winning area be extended to include the red zones;
5. training and education work be expanded, and in particular that the establishment of a corps of "rangers" be made a priority;
6. the objective of developing an additional nature information centre in Wilsede in the heart of the nature reserve be maintained;
7. the ecological management of the forests be continued;
8. the level in the water table be close monitored and an attempt be made to establish a link between an observed drop in the water table level and the extraction of ground water.

The Group of Specialists on European Diploma for Protected Areas (PE-S-DE (2001)15) requested that particular attention be paid to:

- the insufficient financial resources available for certain heathland maintenance activities (cf. recommendation 1);
- the plan to build a railway line between Hamburg and Hannover, likely to affect the reserve;
- the question of water pumping (cf. Recommendation 8).

### 4.2 STATE OF AFFAIRS

• *The plan to build a railway line, the question of water pumping, availability of sufficient financial resources:* See § 3.2 sub b

• *Continuation of the implementation of the federal project "Lüneburger Heide"*

The implementation of the project "Establishing and safeguarding Natural Sites and Landscapes deemed worthy of protection and of representational importance nation-wide" in the

form of the so-called federal project "Lüneburger Heide" is continued with vigour. Part of the financial means are used to draw up the management plan for the LHNR, most of it is employed to purchase land. The project is expected to expire ultimo 2002.

- *Extension of the "red zone" rehabilitation measures to zone no. 3, extension of the award-winning area to include the red zones*

The so-called Red Zones are included in the award-winning area and the rehabilitation measures are extended to zone no. 3. However, the management of the state-owned grounds in the Red Zones is a matter of growing concern. They are left over to spontaneous forest development instead of being incorporated in the preferable overall rehabilitation of divers heathland. The VNP should be supported in pursuing the assignment of the ownership or the management of these state-owned grounds in the Red Zones.

- *Training and education: expansion of training and education work, establishment of a corps of "rangers", additional central nature information centre*

The development of a ranger service ("Naturwacht") is still on planning, but it is detained by continuing lack of financial means. Support from the federal state of Lower Saxony is not to be expected. The local municipalities applaud the plan, but do not have the money. Meanwhile, there is since 1999 a dozen "Gästeführerinnen" or trained hostesses which are available on demand for educational tours etc.

The information facilities at Niederhaverbeck, Wilsede, Döhle and Underloh continue to function. The development of a central information centre in Wilsede is questioned as the VNP will not be able to realize such a project without financial support. However, neither the government of Lower Saxony nor the tourism industry feel that they are responsible.

Since the conversion of the existing building envisaged for the visitor centre in Wilsede could not be financed, it was sold by the NVP's board of management. Besides, the location at Wilsede is considered to be problematic as it cannot be reached by car. The nearest parking lot or bus station is four km away. It is now considered to improve and enlarge the information facilities in the neighbourhood of the large parking lots (at Niederhaverbeck, Döhle and Underloh).

In 1999, an information system for visitors was acquired. Professional and attractive information tables are set up on all larger parking places, along circle paths and near to many of the hot spots for sightseeing. The roads running into the Nature Reserve are signed by entrance tables, displaying the new logo.

- *Continuation of ecological management of the forests*

Ecological management of the forests in state and associated ownership is assured. The responsible forestry authorities are represented in the Steering Group for the LHRN by the head of the Staatliche Forstamt Sellhorn. See also § 3.7.

For the appr. 4,000 ha private forest ecological management can only be guaranteed within the constraints of "orderly forest management". However, in 1997 a law suit by a private forest owner against the ordinance of 1993 forbidding the planting of trees of non-local origins was won. The court honoured his arguments by stating that in effect the economic use of land took priority over land conservation. The Federal Court did not admit an appeal against this decision. The possible implications of the judgement are alarming, but so far had little consequences in practice.

#### 4.3 CONCLUDING REMARK ON THE ANNUAL REPORTS

The CO-DBP Group of Specialists – European Diploma on Protected Areas recently reminded all managers of the requirement to adhere to the model plan for annual reports, as set out in the appendix to the regulations (Resolution (8)29, Appendix 5; March 1999), and to give a very clear indication of progress in complying with the conditions and/or recommendations attached to the award or re-award of the Diploma (PE-S-DE (2001) 15). However, the recent annual reports on the LHNR do not meet this requirement yet. In particular, the managers might be asked to pay special attention to the report

preceding the re-award appraisal, so that the expert has easily accessible and sufficient back-ground information and clear terms of reference beforehand.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of my findings as presented in the preceding, and considering the dedication and professional skill of the managers, I propose that the European Diploma be renewed. I suggest attaching the following recommendations to the renewal:

- To pursue assignment of the ownership or the management of the state-owned grounds in the Red Zones to the Verein Naturschutzpark e.V.
- To pursue complete termination of ground water extraction; if this proves futile, to pursue reduction or, at least, limitation of the concession to the quantity *de facto* extracted so far.
- To pursue political recognition of the NVP's Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve as deserving the same provisions for public financial funding as the Federal Nature Parks do have.
- To create a corridor between the large heathlands east and west of Wilsede.
- To continue the restoration of the Red Zones and of brooks and associated wetland biotopes (wet brook valley grassland).
- To adhere to the model plan for annual reports.

## **Appendix I**

RESOLUTION (97) 13  
**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA  
AWARDED TO THE LUNEBOURG HEATH NATURE RESERVE  
(GERMANY)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 September 1997  
at the 602<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

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

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

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Lunebourg Heath Nature Reserve,

Renews the European Diploma awarded to Lunebourg Heath Nature Reserve in category B, until 25 October 2002;

Renews the condition attached to the previous renewal (1992): that all oil or gas exploitation continue to be prohibited within the nature reserve;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations, that:

1. the effective implementation of the management and development plan be encouraged by making the necessary financial means available to those responsible for management;
2. the implementation of the federal project "Lunebourger Heide" be continued;
3. the "red zone" rehabilitation measures be extended to the 960 ha situated in the southern part (zone No. 3);
4. the current boundaries of the award-winning area be extended to include the red zones;
5. training and education work be expanded, and in particular that the establishment of a corps of "rangers" be made a priority;
6. the objective of developing an additional information centre in Wilsede in the heart of the nature reserve be maintained;
7. the ecological management of the forests be continued;
8. the level in the water table continue to be closely monitored and an attempt be made to establish a link between an observed drop and the extraction of ground water.

## **Appendix II**

### **Draft Resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve (Germany)**

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 for Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve (Germany)

Taking into consideration the expert's report submitted to the Group of Specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas at its meeting on 28 and 29 January 2002;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve (Germany) until 25 October 2007;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendation:

- To pursue assignment of the ownership or the management of the state-owned grounds in the Red Zones to the Verein Naturschutzpark e.V.
- To pursue complete termination of ground water extraction; if this proves futile, to pursue reduction or, at least, limitation of the concession to the quantity *de facto* extracted so far.
- To pursue political recognition of the NVP's Lüneburger Heide Nature Reserve as deserving the same provisions for public financial funding as the Federal Nature Parks do have.
- To create a corridor between the large heathlands east and west of Wilsede.
- To continue the restoration of the Red Zones and of brooks and associated wetland biotopes (wet brook valley grassland).
- To adhere to the model plan for annual reports.