

Note of  
EUROPARC Federation  
Health & Protected Areas Working Group Meeting

Offices of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Edinburgh, 20-21 June 2013

**Participants:**

Eric Baird (EUROPARC Federation Council)  
Richard Blackman (EUROPARC Atlantic Isles)  
Hannah Buck (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park)  
Bridget Finton (SNH)  
David O'Neill (Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park) – Friday morning only  
Pete Rawcliffe (SNH) – Thursday afternoon only  
Carol Ritchie (EUROPARC Federation) – Thursday only  
Nele Sober (EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic)  
Matti Tapaninen (Metsähallitus)  
Jan Woollhead (Region Zealand)

**Morning Session, Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June**

**Introductions**

JW: demonstrated his 'walking packet', which had been funded partly through the Interreg IVa programme which fostered small business links, outlined a walking festival with social aspects, and highlighted the webpage [friluftsguiden.dk](http://friluftsguiden.dk).

BF: one of SNH's roles is to promote enjoyment of the outdoors and it had set out a policy statement on Health and the natural heritage in 2009. Along with the National Health Service (NHS) and Forestry Commission, SNH is part of the Green Exercise Partnership. A key workstream is greening the NHS estate. Influencing regional health boards, briefings for politicians and developing contacts with the health sector are continuing and being expanded. Green exercise case studies. Mental health aspects are becoming more significant. A draft for a Green Health toolkit was presented and would be ready in the autumn.

RB: This is a priority area for EAI, but we want to develop work in tandem with the working group and contribute to working at European level. The area of health is a positive story for environmentalists; also positive as it is 'salutogenic' – concentrating on positive contributions to health/well-being rather than looking at causes of disease.

NS: Emphasised the Section's role in communication to Section members given the significance of the health and protected areas theme.

HB: Introduced the 'walkability' programme. She also stressed the importance of the social inclusion agenda, and the position statement that had been developed by National Parks Wales. The sustainability of communities and their health forms another significant element.

PCNPA has an internal working group on health. It has also been considering the New Economics Foundation's "Five ways to well-being". It is also working with the Health and Social Well-being Board of the NHS to increase confidence and understanding of the park as a therapeutic space and of green exercise. There is also a wish to get people outdoors more, for which increased understanding of the park is needed. The idea of 'herd immunity' of communities was also raised.

EB reminded participants of the lecture by Sir Harry Burns (Scotland's Chief Medical Officer), which he'd circulated a link to at <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/news/pages/autumn-lecture-sir-harry-burns>. In terms of policy in Scotland he cited Burns: 'we're very good at chipping away at the iceberg of ill health: we need to get better at 'warming the water''; we need to identify the health assets - this is exactly where we come in: protected area as are a major health asset. The Cairngorms National Park's 'Park for All' concept was highlighted. He outlined the work of the Access Forum, which seeks to remove barriers, and Inclusive Cairngorms which promotes information and training in this field. He felt that the working group needs to move from (sharing) good practice to (developing) principles, with robust standards. It would be useful to demonstrate some specifics, such as biochemical pathways. Exporting the work of protected areas to beyond their boundaries is also something for the group to think about.

MT explained that Metsahallitus has an important management role in Finland, and that it recognised the importance of the health theme some 5-6 years ago. They were particularly interested in the Australian example of Healthy Parks Healthy People and translating it into a programme for Finland. He also highlighted the importance of the evidence base in this field and on developing strategic partnerships with the health sector. He stated that he was a member of the IUCN/WCPA task force on health. The idea of health as part of ecosystem services was also raised and it was noted that this is often missed.

CR provided an overview from the Federation's perspective, outlining the governance review and the role of working groups, as well as the general working group guidelines and the specific remit for this group as defined by the Council. Health will be included in a new strategy for the Federation, once things have become clearer regarding the merger with Eurosite. Delivering the goals set out is important!

## **Background**

Participants considered MT's presentation reviewing activities since the seminar in Maribo in May 2008 and including the first meeting of the working group in Siggen. (See powerpoint presentation for details).

## **Expectations**

Key **outcomes** that the group is aiming for have been listed in the working group's brief:

1. Share good practice within EUROPARC.
  - Good practice would be disseminated throughout the membership. Learning would come from members themselves, and also from outside the organisation.
  - This would ensure that EUROPARC has a soundly-based reputation for facilitating the encounter between people and nature, and thus enhance our ability to promote our second outcome-
2. Position EUROPARC as a key agency within the 'health and well being' debate, at a European (and wider?) scale.

It was agreed that **recognition** of the Federation's work and that of its members in this field is immensely important.

This may eventually be translated into successful funding applications, although health and protected areas does not fit easily into EU policy fields. Some creativity will thus be required, looking at areas including vocational education, business and economic development etc. There will also be a need to look at charities and third sector organisations.

It was also noted that recognition could come from working with others, including the medical profession, many of whom will have European or international associations. In this regard, HB agreed to find out more about the European activities of the British Association of Occupational Therapists and also the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. Connections could also be sought with private health companies.

Potential **outputs** were discussed.

Further information on health should be made available on the websites of the Federation, the Nordic-Baltic and Atlantic Isles Sections.

The need to move from discussion to focus on tangible outcomes was emphasised. This could initially take the form of collecting case studies and making them available for sharing, and then developing guidelines and principles.

There is also a wealth of experience from urban parks, which can be useful. However the distinctive experience and role of protected areas needs to be emphasised and this group needs to develop that, especially if the EUROPARC Federation is to become the voice of Europe on this issue.

It was further agreed that it would be useful for the working group to have a **strategy**, and for the Federation to have a health strategy. It was up to the working group to prepare this and contribute to the strategy consultation process when this begins in 2014. The document was given a provisional title of “Green Health and Protected Areas Strategy” and will be looked at in Siggen.

It was further noted that the strategy needs to be of use to the wider EUROPARC membership, and as a “product” for the Federation will help to ensure that the issue becomes mainstreamed. This work should begin and not await the development of the new Federation strategy.

### **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) task force**

MT reported that the group had been inactive over the past six months, but is being re-activated. The terms of reference of the task force were circulated.

Two questions were to be discussed:

- i. Membership. This could be Matti and one other.
- ii. Should the Europarc develop its own platform or work with others, in the context of Healthy Parks, Healthy People (HPPH).

It was agreed that:

- EUROPARC’s working group should be engaging in the IUCN process and influencing the evolving HPPH guidelines;
- MT should be a member of the IUCN task force;
- An additional member from this group would be good (especially to contribute to the drafting of HPPH Guidelines) and was in principle agreed – BF and HB to check with their respective employers.

### **Thursday afternoon session**

PR gave an introduction of his recent work in this area. He noted that Scottish ministers understand the value of the outdoor and the health agenda. He also introduced Scotland’s new biodiversity strategy -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5538>, which includes information

on the benefits to people, and includes a new element on building up partnerships with the health sector. He also explained his thoughts that the current model of health and economics would have to change because of the increasingly elderly population and the accompanying increase in poor health and disease amongst the elderly.

### **2014 HPHP Congress, Atlanta, 8-12 June 2014**

A call for proposals in varying session formats has been issued by the HPHP Congress organisers in advance of the event in 2014. A request for suggested plenary speakers has also been made.

It was noted that Finland (MT) would be attending the HPHP event, and that there was potentially a good case to present policy and practice from Scotland, possibly representing the wider working group.

It was also noted that there are a number of large scale representations coming up in 2014, notably the World Parks Congress in Australia. CR explained that costs would have to be rationalised as a result and would be discussing representation with the EUROPARC President in September.

It was agreed that Metsahallitus and SNH put together a proposal for a European session at HPHP; we should consider offering a plenary speaker as well as a “panel discussion” or “Share Fair”. The need to identify who is going and who could contribute to a session was raised; the EUROPARC Federation agreed to trawl the membership to find out how many people will be going.

It was further noted that there are already significant resources and experience in this working group – from Denmark, Finland, Cairngorms NP, Pembrokeshire Coast NP and SNH. We should begin the process of gathering case studies from the membership of the working group; see Sharing good practice below. RB said that he would go back through Dan Bloomfield’s records of the previous congress in 2010.

The possibility for the health working group to take advantage of the Siggen workshop to meet on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September was also raised, although this comes after the deadline for submitting proposals to HPHP (4<sup>th</sup> Sept).

### **Other future events**

CR highlighted the work of the Federation in Brussels, and outlined the plans for the following lobbying events:

- End October 2013 – climate change and protected areas;
- November 2013 – European Charter awards in the European Parliament;

In 2014 there could be a health and protected areas event.

From 27-28 November 2013, a seminar would take place in Oulu, Finland, for the Metsahallitus project, which could also be combined with a working group meeting.

A seminar organised jointly by the Atlantic Isles and Nordic Baltic Sections could be held in spring 2014 (not too close to HPHP Atlanta dates), including health sector input, and possibly held in Denmark.

At the 2013 General Assembly it was agreed that RB and NS make a joint presentation on the activities of the working group. It was noted that slots for side meetings would be available on the afternoon of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October.

Work plan for the next two years

- Sharing good practice within the EUROPARC Federation;
- Outputs over the two years of the working group (not just at the end!);
- What is the benefit to the wider European membership?
- Communications platforms are in existence – need for more interesting information – possibility of a blog as a way to share information.

### **Friday morning session**

DO introduced the work of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, including the 'Branching Out' project in the area of mental health, the Green Gym and as a place of recreation.

### **Development of work programme**

The group considered the unique selling point of protected areas vis-à-vis health. Ideas work both ways. In Spain, the apparent primacy of peri-urban areas was noted. Protected areas are though green spaces par excellence, where natural principles are at their best, and where there is enhanced experience. There are opportunities to "take the park to town", promoting links between town and country.

### **Sharing good practice**

BF stated that to collect case studies, SNH could be prepared to buy in additional staff time and would follow this up after the meeting. A basis (of information) exists but there is a need for a wider European perspective. A template format could be produced, by which information could be collected and made easily digestible, and including e.g. client group, policy, delivery, evidence etc. BF and RB to draft template; working group members to draft their own case studies before Siggen meeting.

A searchable database to help internal and external partners identify and research projects with a 'green health' agenda, would be a step towards developing the evidence base for 'green health', and as such the group agreed that it would be useful, but maybe for a later stage, and that it would require both funding and 'future proofing' to ensure it was regularly updated etc.

The possibility of a "Loving them to death" style report, with both recommendations and examples, was raised. The theme could also include working with the disabled, first aid and safety.

Funding could be easier to acquire if specific groups / work are targeted, e.g. disabled, mental health.

Go beyond sharing good practice and case studies and move towards guidelines. Strategy / mainstreaming of this work in the EUROPARC Federation work programme. A statement of what all are doing could serve as a basis to demonstrate what the group is doing.

Acquiring evidence on the economics of health and protected areas. The World Health Organisation's Health Economic Assessment Tool is useful for building evidence, although more difficult for showing impact upon visitors. The view was also expressed that a value can't be placed on everything.

It was agreed that the case studies work should happen, using an agreed template. AI and NB Sections can work together.

### **Engaging with nature**

EB gave a presentation on life pathways. Children are not engaging with natural places. Play in natural settings is important. Reducing CRP (C – Reactive protein) and cortisol in the blood. More information is available in the study by the University of Essex "Nature, Childhood, Health & Life Pathways". EB agreed to circulate his presentation.

DO also cited an example of a study undertaken in his park relating to kids in institutions and the police, and using natural places for rehabilitation.

## **Model for EUROPARC Tool Kit on Health**

Based on the work being done by SNH, BF outlined a possible structure:

<b><u>EUROPARC Tool Kit</u></b>	Generic National
<b>Central policy</b>	European Union EUROPARC health strategy Healthy Parks Healthy People
Health inequalities Social inclusion	
<b>Key messages</b>	Salutogenesis Ecosystems services Physical Inactivity Mental health and well-being USP – protected areas Preventative spend
<b>Evidence base</b>	for health treatment and recovery; for health promotion / prevention;
<b>Ways to encourage use of protected areas</b>	Not new work Partnerships HPHP: People – Parks; Parks – People
<i>Annexes</i>	Case studies etc

Do we need one set of guidelines aimed at the health sector and one aimed at the environmental sector?

Initial work on this toolkit could be taken further and shared in advance of the Siggen meeting in September 2013. BF agreed to circulate a draft framework.

### **Future funding**

Possibilities include the EU health programme, the Interreg C programme and Erasmus for all. JW agreed to investigate these further and liaise with health contact in Brussels. The possibility of Nordic Council funding was raised; MT to follow up. EB would look at possibilities with foundations. All agreed to scan for funding possibilities. EUROPARC Federation can support applications.

The idea of bringing HPHP to Europe in 2018 was raised. MT would ask through the IUCN task force. DO said he would make an initial enquiry with a contact at the Glasgow conference centre.



For the 2014 joint Sections seminar maybe there could be funding from the Nordic Council? NS to investigate.

This report would also be sent to the Federation directorate to make use of.

## ANNEX

### **Action points resulting from the meeting**

- HB agreed to find out more about the European activities of the British Association of Occupational Therapists;
- All: working group to prepare EUROPARC green health strategy and contribute to the strategy consultation process when this begins in 2014.
- BF and HB to check with their respective employers regarding joining the IUCN task force.
- Metsahallitus and SNH put together a proposal for a European session at HPHP;
- EUROPARC Federation to trawl the membership to find out how many people will be going to HPHP.
- RB to go back through Dan Bloomfield's records of the previous HPHP congress in 2010.
- At the 2013 General Assembly it was agreed that RB and NS make a joint presentation on the activities of the working group.
- BF stated that to collect case studies, SNH could be prepared to buy in additional staff time and would follow this up after the meeting.
- BF and RB to draft template; working group members to draft their own case studies before Siggen meeting.
- EB agreed to circulate his powerpoint presentation.
- JW agreed to investigate EU funding possibilities further and liaise with health contact in Brussels.
- The possibility of Nordic Council funding was raised; MT to follow up.
- NS to investigate Nordic Council funding for joint Sections seminar in 2014.
- EB would look at funding possibilities with foundations.
- All agreed to scan for funding possibilities
- MT would ask through the IUCN task force about bringing HPHP to Europe in 2018. DO to make an initial enquiry with a contact at the Glasgow conference centre.