

# Chairman's Report 2007/08



**EUROPARC**  
**Atlantic Isles**

Conservation Without Frontiers

## 1. Introduction

The second full year for Europarc Atlantic Isles\* (EAI) as a company limited by guarantee and registered charity. This year has seen the successful establishment of the new Development Officer post, together with the establishment of more robust financial systems and processes.

The Development Officer post has begun to secure more regular contact with members as a whole, in particular through regional meetings such as those held in Ireland and Scotland. A stronger and more professional working relationship has also been developed with funding agencies, again through country based meetings.

The Directors and Section have also contributed to the development of the Federation, in particular through inputs to the ongoing governance review.

## 2. Seminar Programme

### **Community Engagement in Protected Areas: what works and what you need to do...**

#### **Life Centre, Newcastle 1& 2 November 2007**

A well attended seminar that focussed on community engagement, which is now a pre-requisite for much forward planning and decision making, although evidence indicates that levels of actual involvement are diminishing.

The seminar included project visits to the Northumberland AONB and National Park explored innovations in this challenging area. It sought to identify what works and what we can learn from our partners on mainland Europe. An insight to experience across EAI, the Netherlands and Norway formed part of the seminar.

A best practice guide resulting from the seminar is in preparation, drawn from the experiences of protected area managers and community groups themselves as well as experts in the field of community engagement

\*Europarc Atlantic Isles (EAI) is a Section of the Europarc Federation, the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe. The Section's membership spans the UK, Ireland and Iceland.

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## **Protected Areas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – What Does the Future Hold ?** **Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 27 & 28 March 2008**

A highly successful seminar which took a look over the horizon. The theme recognised that this is a time of great change for our landscapes. Climate change – its effects and mitigation efforts - brings great challenges. Economic shifts will also alter the way protected areas are enjoyed, used and ultimately understood. Internationally, there is an important review of category guidelines by IUCN and the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, which requires us to protect what we value in urban and post-industrial areas as well.

It sought to question whether we have the right kinds of designations to deal with all of these issues? What other ways of 'doing' protected areas are being tried out elsewhere? What can we learn?

Experience from Germany, Spain and France combined with that of Iceland, Ireland and other Section members helped to explore these issues. The aim of the seminar was to examine and challenge the current system as well as suggest novel alternatives so that protected areas are able to meet the challenges the century will bring.

EAI was able to feed the results of the discussions into IUCN's Protected Areas Task Force meeting in May in the Yorkshire Dales.

### **3. EAI AGM and Member's Day**

**Many People in the Landscape – Cannock Chase AONBs experience of making protected areas safe, healthy and meaningful for all.**  
**Hosted by Cannock Chase AONB, July 2007**

A successful AGM and Members Day hosted by the Cannock Chase AONB at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre at Wolseley Bridge. The first AGM for the new company and registered charity was attended by 22 EAI section members. Formal meetings were followed by a series of site tours to explore different visitor management themes across the AONB.

### **4. Working Groups**

#### **Coastal and Marine Working Group**

The Group has continued its work on making the connection between land and sea. It has monitored the emerging Marine Bill and has promoted the need for formal recognition of the marine dimension of our coastal protected landscapes. In this context it was heartened by the views expressed by the Inspector at the Inquiry into the proposed South Downs National Park. In his report he indicated his acceptance of the case put by the South Downs Campaign that the marine environment in the vicinity of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters merited inclusion in the proposed park. However, he was unable to recommend it as no powers existed for him to do so. Accordingly he recommended that the Government considers taking such powers.

The Group has also been instrumental in initiating a project to prepare advice for coastal protected landscapes on dealing with the connection between land and sea in their

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management plans. With the support of CCW, NE and SNH it has been possible to engage consultants to undertake the work. This will be completed in draft form by July 2008 and will be the subject of a workshop in the autumn.

Four members of the Group have been active in the establishment of a similar working group for the Europarc Federation. The aim of the Group is:

“to raise awareness of and to develop and promote the vital role of Europe’s protected areas in the conservation of the coastal and marine environment and their contribution to its wider planning and management.”

Its plan is to develop a thriving network of people and organisations involved and interested in the development of a system of coastal and marine protected areas; in their planning and management; and in the part they can play in making the connection between land and sea. Such a Group should be of great value to our members and will be supported by EAI.

### **Sustainable Tourism Charter Working Group**

The Sustainable Tourism Charter Network met in Manchester in the summer and planned a new work programme, including the development of an EAI Charter pack. The Network has grown, with three protected areas deciding to work towards Charter status (New Forest National Park, Cornwall AONB and Clywdian Range AONB). Other members spent the year developing their work; it was expected that Yorkshire Dales National Park will achieve Charter status in June 2008.

The Network worked together to draft a common methodology for implementing Part II of the Charter that would fit all administrative regions; this was submitted to the Charter Steering Committee at the end of the year.

### **5. Europarc Conference, Cesky Kromlov, Czech Republic, Europarc 2007: Nature – Bridging Borders, 26 – 30 September 2007**

EAI was well represented at the Europarc 2007 Conference and General Assembly held at Cesky Krumlov, a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in the southern part of the Czech Republic.

319 delegates attended from 26 nations, with the UK sending 54 delegates to the conference.

The conference had the theme ‘Nature – Bridging Borders’ and was officially opened by Martin Bursik, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic. The conference sought to provide opportunities to discuss and explore the;

potential for biodiversity and landscapes to span / bridge borders across Europe,  
identification of best practice in transfrontier co-operation across European protected landscapes,  
strengthening of biodiversity and landscape management and monitoring co-operation between countries,  
new Europarc Federation Strategy 2008 – 2012,  
examples of best practice in the Czech Republic.

The four keynote speeches on the conference theme highlighted the variety of borders to be bridged; international, national, political, social and cultural boundaries, military training

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areas, the needs of flora and fauna and the world wide threats of global warming, which will change much of nature as we know it now.

## **6. Appointment of Development Officer**

Dan Bloomfield took up the new post of Development Officer at the beginning of April 2007. The establishment of this new post has enabled EAI to move forward and look to develop the effectiveness and influence of the Section.

## **7. Treasurer and Book Keeping Services**

The treasurer for 2007/08 has been Pete Winter, one of the EAI Directors. EAI also contracted Stephen Greenfield of GF Associates, Kendal for book keeping services and financial advice for 2007/08.

## **8. Contributing to the Federation**

The Directors have input at various times to the development of the Federation's business plan and governance review, with combined meetings with Council and sections in Berlin in September 2007 and Barcelona in January 2008.

In January the Chairman and Development Officer also met with Roger de Freitas, as part of Roger's fact finding and discussions feeding into his advise to the Federation Council on the governance review.

Richard Blackman, the Federation's Deputy Director attended the Board meeting in February to provide an update on the activity of the Federation and to discuss and seek advice on the future development of the Brussels office.

## **9. Strengthening Resources and Partnership Activity**

During the year the Development Officer has taken forwards initiated and responded to a variety of potential partnerships to apply for INTERREG funding (IVB and IVC) in the areas of sustainable tourism and ELC implementation. Although at an early stage, it is hoped that these efforts will realise new projects and funds from which EAI can benefit in the next financial year.

In addition, the Development Officer has made outline applications to the Heritage Grants scheme and the Esme Fairbairn Foundation. Although both of these were ultimately unsuccessful, the feedback from them has been useful in informing our external funding work and informing the agenda for the future.

## **10. Duncan Mills Scholarship**

The scholarship for 2007/08 was awarded to Steve Mulberry, National Trust Property Manager for North Devon. Steve is using the award to support a 2 month sabbatical to California from mid May to mid July 2008 to study Conservation and Coastal Management in California.

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## **11. EAI Directors in 2007/08**

The EAI Directors were as follows;

John Ablitt, Director, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Wales  
Martin Beaton, South Downs Officer, South Downs Joint Committee, England  
Tony Gates, Chief Executive, Northumberland National Park Authority, England  
Chris Gledhill, Chief Executive, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Wales  
Edward Holdaway, independent member, Wales  
Martin Lane, Director, Cotswolds Conservation Board, England (Chairman)  
Colin Murphy, Director of Wicklow Uplands Council, Ireland  
David O'Neil, Manager, Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Scotland  
Anita Prosser, Head of International Developments, BTCV, England  
Pete Winter, independent member, England (Treasurer)

Board Meetings were held on; 22 May 2007, 10 September 2007, 3 December 2007 and 25 February 2008.

## **12. Main sponsoring agencies**

EAI and its directors wish to acknowledge the strong levels of support from the various agencies across the UK and Ireland. In addition to financial support the following officers also act as key points of contact between EAI and the agencies. Their time and support are very much appreciated.

Richard Partington, Countryside Agency and Natural England  
Pete Rawcliffe, Scottish Natural Heritage  
Howard Davies, Countryside Council for Wales  
Ronan Hession and Paul Connolly, National Parks and Wildlife, Ireland  
Brigid O'Neil and Sandi Howie, Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland

A sincere thank you on behalf of the Directors to everyone who has contributed towards and supported the work of EAI during 2007/08.

**Martin Lane**  
**Chairman**

June 2008

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