



Visit Britain Sustainable Tourism Entry Level Consultation

Response from EUROPARC Atlantic Isles European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas Network

Background

- 1 EUROPARC Atlantic Isles (EAI) is a non-profit organisation that supports National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other designated protected landscapes in the UK, Ireland and Iceland. In turn it is part of the EUROPARC Federation, with a membership of over 500 parks and other areas in 38 nations.
- 2 EAI members represent most of the major rural tourism destination areas in Britain, and, through their partnership work with many hundreds of tourism businesses through existing accreditation schemes such as GTBS and Green Dragon, as well as park authorities' own schemes, are working hard to help deliver a sustainable tourism sector in this country.
- 3 EAI promotes the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, and is working to market this accredited scheme with partners across Europe. The Charter requires authorities to build partnerships with tourism businesses and employ accreditation schemes. A new entry-level scheme is therefore likely to impact greatly on our work.

Our response to the proposed 'Stepping Stone' entry level scheme

1. Do you agree that a "Stepping Stone" entry-level process is desirable to accelerate uptake of sustainable tourism practice and assist tourism managers to take action on sustainability?

No. We are not convinced that the need for this scheme has been proven in the market. There is considerable encouragement and incentive (if only in the market place) for businesses to enter into an established scheme.

2. Do you agree that such a scheme should be designed to lead to accreditation by an established sustainable service organisation (e.g. Bellamy, GTBS, or Green Dragon)?

Yes (notwithstanding our answer to question 1). However, Green Dragon and GTBS are about helping people along a process; they are already entry level schemes. David Bellamy Awards are a completely different process. EAI has experience of working with different schemes, and supports the idea of reviewing the variety of schemes and selecting those that are suitable. We would be happy to be involved in that

Development Officer
Dan Bloomfield
Flat 2 Bishops Hill, New Polzeath, WADEBRIDGE, Cornwall PL27 6UF

T 01208 869797 M 07918 697193
E dan.bloomfield@europarc-ai.org
W www.europarc-ai.org Skype danabloomfield

Company No. 5750588
Charity Reg No: 1114189

3. If so (see 2 above), should participation in this entry-level stage be time-limited (e.g. 3 years)?	process. It should be limited, but three years is too long a period. The lead-in to the senior schemes must come more quickly to (perhaps 12 months at most), or goodwill and enthusiasm will be lost.
4. Do you believe participants in the entry-level scheme should be recognised by some symbol, albeit one which clearly distinguishes them from accreditation in a fully-fledged sustainable scheme?	No. We strongly feel that there should not be any proposal that the scheme will have a logo of any kind. It would devalue the efforts of those that have already worked hard to gain marketable symbols.
5. Do you believe participation in the entry-level scheme should be free of charge, and as such, necessarily a self-assessment process covered by a regulatory light touch?	No. Self-assessment has very little credibility in this sector.

Other points

- 4 We are concerned that the processes required to take businesses from Green start to the senior scheme have not been fully planned. It is very unclear what resources will be made available by VB or others to enable businesses to move on to these schemes. If these resources have to be committed anyway then why have a scheme to delay that expenditure? Indeed it could endanger the viability of those senior schemes which have to exist in the private sector until the businesses come out of their 3 year period.
- 5 We feel that it is important, if the scheme does go ahead, that after the end of the period businesses will be taken off the scheme if they have not progressed to the higher level and that VB will commit resources to ensuring that they no longer use the wording.
- 6 We feel that the experience of GBTS and GD should be brought to bear on the subject, and that those directly active in the field are the key people to bring in at this stage. Many EAI members are far down the road in terms of encouraging businesses and securing their involvement; we would be very happy to be consulted further and to share our knowledge of best practice.

30 November 2007

Development Officer
 Dan Bloomfield
 Flat 2 Bishops Hill, New Polzeath, WADEBRIDGE, Cornwall PL27 6UF

T 01208 869797 M 07918 697193
 E dan.bloomfield@europarc-ai.org
 W www.europarc-ai.org Skype danabloomfield

Company No. 5750588
 Charity Reg No: 1114189