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Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas¹

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DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL 07

A Checklist of Wilderness Benefits Identification, Valuation and Usage

The chapter is based on a script kindly provided by Toby Aykroyd, Director, Wild Europe Initiative

Identifying benefits of wilderness and wildland areas

As well as containing an irreplaceable natural heritage for Europe's biodiversity and landscapes, wild areas can offer substantial economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits – for local communities, landholders and society in general, particularly in remoter rural areas where alternative sources of income and employment are scarce.

Nature tourism already contributes substantially to many local economies, and a range of newer ventures associated with such areas is emerging - many of which address important inner urban issues such as youth at risk, rehabilitation and healthcare.

There is also a growing recognition that larger natural areas provide further essential environmental services to society, such as carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, alleviation of soil and water pollution and biodiversity conservation – all of which are important benefits in tackling the issue of climate change.

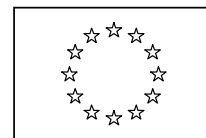
Economic Benefits:

1. **Direct income and employment generation** – in contrast with likely diminution in subsidy for traditional farming in more marginal, particularly upland, areas.
2. **Interest in eco-tourism and other tertiary activities** - including agri-tourism (model farms),

¹ Also known as: Conference on Wild/Nearly Wild Areas in the EU



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cultural and historic tourism, specialist sporting, corporate incentive and leisure fields. There is substantial scope for marketing joint packages, enhancing existing regional attractions.

3. **Ancillary local commercial activities provide additional income:** accommodation, retail, transport, distribution and craft businesses – generating a “multiplier effect” whereby wealth generated is recycled around the local economy.
4. **Use of “Wild” and related brands and logos** in marketing promotions for local and regional agricultural produce, and other goods and services.
5. **Possible increases in land values** of properties within and alongside natural habitat wildland areas, although this can create problems for local communities requiring special address.
6. **Evidence of taxpayers ascribing substantial value to species in wild areas** when questioned about allocation of their incremental levies between alternative uses. This can be used in representations to secure funding for protection or restoration.

Social Benefits:

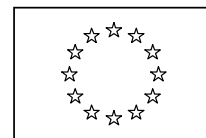
1. **Income and employment gains**, particularly in more remote areas, could provide opportunity to stem the decline of rural communities and bring support to local landholders.
2. **Opportunity for sustainable development** within local communities that can also help articulate and maintain traditional culture and lifestyles.
3. **An effective location for youth development, youth at risk and conflict resolution initiatives**, offering substantial benefit to participants from all backgrounds - particularly inner city areas.
4. **Use of wild areas for physiological, recuperation and trauma therapy** is also increasingly recognized as a cost: effective form of healthcare.
5. **Wildland as a backdrop for corporate activities** involving negotiation, training and team-building by participants from business and other organizations.
6. **Opportunity to accommodate a range of school and adult education programmes** – thus reinforcing the role of conservation and sustainable development in school curricula.
7. **Recreational and spiritual benefits** of being amid landscape-scale wild nature are no less important for being difficult to quantify.

Environmental Benefits:

1. **Enrichment of biodiversity** by providing large scale habitat and enabling eco-systems to function on an integrated basis
2. **Opportunity for species to adapt and migrate** in response to climate change
3. **Substantial potential for carbon sequestration** through large scale restoration of woodland and marsh
4. **Flood mitigation and water storage.** Growing recognition that investment in restoration of natural habitat in water catchment areas and lowland “sink areas” can bring commercial returns in the form of downstream flood mitigation and balancing of water tables in areas of more erratic rainfall.
5. **Enhanced water and soil quality**, mitigating impact of pollution and improving productivity of fisheries
6. **Scope for developing sea defence alignments** with rising sea levels, involving managed coastal retreat and creation of new coastal wildland areas, for which there are also strong economic arguments.

Utilising the Benefits of Wild Areas

There is substantial opportunity to assess and disseminate best practice for translating the identified benefits from wild lands into specific light impact ventures – the aim being to maximize their worth for local communities, landholders and other relevant parties.



Careful attention should be paid to ensure an appropriate balance between benefit-related activities and the need for strict maintenance of “wildland” principles and negligible disturbance for wildlife. For example, only those activities with negligible environmental impact would be suitable in core wilderness areas, whilst a broader range of undertakings could apply to land undergoing substantial restoration.

Relevant sectors for utilizing benefits:

- * Nature tourism
- * Combined packages (agri-tourism, culture, history)
- * Recreational, general sporting
- * Specialist sporting
- * Corporate events, training, incentives and relationship building
- * Healthcare, physiology, eco/psychology
- * Youth development
- * Youth at risk
- * Reconciliation and conflict mitigation
- * Education (child, adult), research
- * Ancillary activities (accommodation, retail, transport, distribution, handicraft and general production).
- * Branding & logo opportunities – specific goods and services, “umbrella effect”

The following assessments can be applied to the above sectors:

- a) Identification and quantification of specific business and/or general opportunities
- b) Analysis of how best to develop ‘markets’ especially for newer opportunities (eg social, probationary, healthcare)
- c) Overview of best practice for development of specific initiatives or ventures: whether private sector, community, NGO and public or local authority

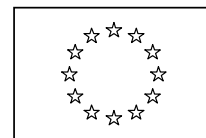
Assessing requirements for venture support

Where relevant, in order to help local communities and landholders secure maximum worth from wilderness benefits, it is important to identify areas of advice, training and other forms of support required for successful establishment and management of appropriate initiatives:

- 1.1 Identify support requirements for start-up businesses/activities
- 1.2 Identify support requirements for established businesses/activities
- 1.3 Tailor to enterprise type: private, community, NGO, public/local authority
- 1.4 Identify best practice in key support areas: enterprise planning, marketing, accounting, law, logistics, property issues, fund-raising
- 1.5 Assess sources of training and funding for capacity building, by type and country
- 1.6 Propose appropriate monitoring and measurement systems
- 1.7 Ensure maximum benefit for local communities from business and related activities.

The above approach mainly applies to utilization of economic and social benefits. However, it is also feasible to collate and implement best practice in identification and usage of ecosystem services –eg:

- Linking carbon markets to landowner ecosystem services – ensuring appropriate compensation for existing landholders, or sufficient funding for buy-outs of land where restoration of natural wild land vegetation (woodland or marshland) has an



appreciable impact on carbon sequestration.

- Engaging utility & insurance funding in flood mitigation – through quantifying the savings that upstream watershed habitat creation with lowland habitat sinks can produce though slowing and diminishing the volume and variance in discharge and thus enabling downstream savings in flood insurance and capital expenditure on flood defences.
- Similarly, through pollution mitigation effects reducing downstream water treatment costs.

Valuing the Benefits of Wild Areas

Many elements of wilderness and wild lands, including their intrinsic spiritual, landscape and biodiversity values, are literally priceless. The quantification approach is thus intended to supplement and not supplant traditional approaches to assessment of wildland.

However it is increasingly feasible and useful to quantify the benefits of wilderness, wildlands and large natural habitat areas, both in monetary terms and for wider societal gain.

It is important to value and quantify the benefits of wildland and wilderness:

- As a cost:benefit argument against threats and alternative land uses
- To advance the case for land purchase for restoration or protection
- For policy formulation, particularly in competition with other sectors
- Fund raising and development of incentives
- Promoting the worth of wild areas to politicians, media, landholders etc

Quantifying the benefits - methodology:

1. Valuation of direct benefits

- * Income flows, cost savings, employment creation
- * Additional benefits from ancillary activities (accommodation and branding opportunities, possible increases in land values. Assess the multiplier effect.
- * Use sensitivity analysis to factor in alternative assumptions about subsidy levels, income and employment potential from benefits etc

2. Valuation of indirect benefits

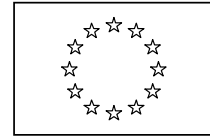
- * Social benefits of wild areas: eg youth at risk – costs saved through reduced re-offence rates or non-custodial sentencing; remedial or palliative healthcare – eg less working days lost from stress or; shorter and thus cheaper psychotherapy courses
- * Environmental benefits – eg flood mitigation: examples of savings in downstream capital expenditure, running costs and insurance claims as the result of natural habitat restoration in catchment areas and lowland flood sinks reducing run-off variability or pollution

3. Opportunity for use of econometric measures

- * Contingent Valuation and Willingness to Pay (WTP) methods can help assess the value of landscape and species conservation benefits as quantified by consumer, taxpayer and general public surveys.

4. Review the overall cost-benefit of restoration:

- * Assessment of the aggregate “net value”. Take into account value, income, employment and costs - including direct land cost, opportunity cost, restoration costs (through natural and assisted regeneration).
- * Comparison of cost:benefits – as against alternative land use: both current and projected



under alternative scenarios. Factor in the subsidy issue and the future impact of CAP and WTO, forestry markets, cost/benefits of existing land uses etc.

- * Draw conclusions on the quantifiable rationale for protecting or restoring a wild area
- * The same process could in theory be applied to protection, but here 'non economic' issues are usually of overwhelming importance and valuation techniques can be a distraction