

## NEWSLETTER

2017/1



# SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE AREAS: PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECO-TOURISM



## **Greetings from the Lead Partner**

I am very pleased to welcome you to this first newsletter of our new project. It has a long title (like many EU-funded projects) but we hope that the short version – SHAPE – will resonate with you and our other readers. We aim to provide knowledge and tools that will help you shape the future of the special places where you live!

The concept of ‘Sustainable Heritage Area’ (SHA) is one that we have created for this project, and we hope that it will be taken up and used. The SHAs in SHAPE are existing and planned biosphere reserves, a regional park, and a cultural World Heritage Site. All are based on a strong sense of local identity and have been initiated and developed by local governments and other stakeholders. In all of these special places, cultural and natural heritage are key elements of this local identity. At the same time, this heritage is a fundamental basis for (eco)tourism businesses. So SHAPE will focus on creating ‘virtuous circles’: tourism needs heritage assets and, if stakeholders work together, tourism can be a key factor in ensuring that the resources to maintain, protect and add value to these assets are available in the long term.

The idea of SHAPE is to explore such relationships in our project areas, providing lessons that – through the e-service we will develop – can be utilised not only in these areas, but across Europe’s Northern Periphery and beyond. We hope that you will find this newsletter interesting and will stay in touch with us during the project, until the final SHAPE conference in North Karelia in early 2020.

## **Professor Martin Price**

Director, Centre for Mountain Studies,  
Perth College, University of the Highlands & Islands  
Chairholder, UNESCOI Chair in Sustainable Mountain  
Development

*You will find detailed information about the SHAPE project on our website: <http://shape.interreg-npa.eu/>*

## Presentation of partners:

### THE LEAD TEAM

**The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)** in Scotland is lead partner of SHAPE with the involvement of two research centres; Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS) and the Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research (CRTR).

**The Centre for Mountain Studies** is a centre of excellence for work in mountain areas. Its director, Professor Martin Price is the holder of the UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Mountain Development and is active in the UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme in Europe. The CMS team comprises a multidisciplinary group of researchers working conducting research and knowledge exchange activities at local and international scales. CMS manages SHAPE and leads WP1 to develop stakeholder networks.

**The Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research** is one of the UK's leading adventure tourism research centres, undertaking knowledge exchange and consultancy projects.

The head of the centre, Dr Steve Taylor, is currently leading the 2015-2018 NPA project 'Slow Adventure in Northern Territories' (SAINT) which works with micro-businesses to capitalise on the current interest in nature-based outdoor experience. CRTR co-leads WP2 to capitalise on assets.

### THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS PARTNERSHIP ENGAGES YOUNG PEOPLE IN SHAPE!

The Southern Uplands Partnership leads on the delivery of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. Covering an area of 5,268 square kilometres the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has been recognised for its special natural qualities but also acknowledges the challenges rural communities now face.

Our UNESCO Biosphere boundary embraces diverse countryside of farmland, forest and the Galloway Hills. The rivers radiating out from the hills provide water as a common theme connecting the cultural identity and natural environment with everyone living and working in the area.

The SHAPE project provides us with an opportunity to work with local communities and businesses to make better use of natural and cultural assets to package or create new economic tourism opportunities. We are particularly keen to try and engage young people in these opportunities.

For more information on the Biosphere go to <http://www.gsabiosphere.org.uk/>



*Threave Castle and River Dee in winter-AWP. Photo: Galloway.*

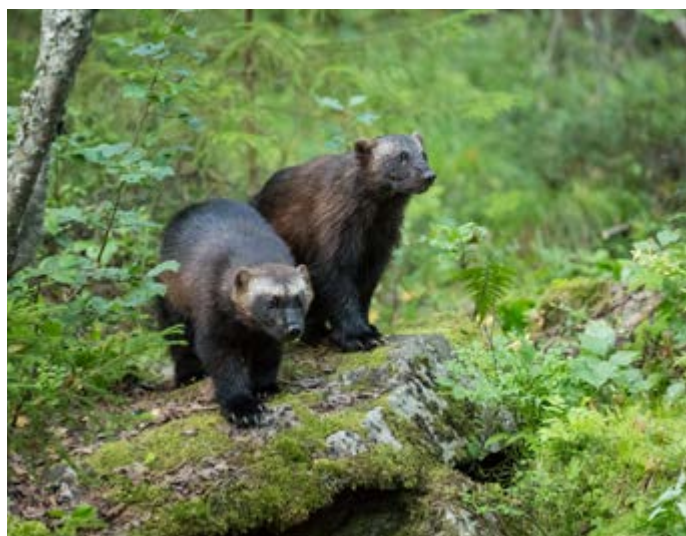
## NORTH KARELIA PROVINCE AND BIOSPHERE RESERVE WELCOMES SHAPE

North Karelia Biosphere Reserve (NKBR) is located in the easternmost corner of continental European Union, at the border between Finland and Russia. NKBR is characterized by a mosaic of forests, mires, lakes and rivers, covering 800 000 ha. The population is only 21 000 inhabitants. The economy is based on forestry, agriculture, services, small & medium size industry and education. Tourism is growing in importance. The two universities located in the area are NKBR's key sustainability partners.

NKBR is happy to show Finland's most loved national landscape at Koli National Park in the core area of NKBR, and to introduce to you to the heroes of National Epic "Kalevala". We also wish you to get acquainted with the sustainable and renewing tradition of building using wood. It is also the best place in the world to see a wolverine (*Gulo gulo L.*) in the wild.

## KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Karelia UAS, located in Joensuu, Finland, provides broad-based, high-level and internationally competitive higher education for the needs of the changing regional and national industry, commerce and other working life. Karelia operates in seven study fields offering 21 programmes



*Wolverine at Era-Eero wildlife lodge. Photo by Pekka Ovaskainen/ North Karelia.*

out of which five are masters. Study areas are health care and social studies, business, engineering, forestry, media and hospitality management. Karelia UAS carries out research and development projects to enhance regional development and also operates actively in various national and international networks. At the Karelia University of Applied Sciences, all students work closely with local companies and with other educational institutions. The Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) Programme co-financed SHAPE project supports these development activities in sustainable tourism.

## IN WESTER ROSS THE SHAPE PROJECT CONTRIBUTE TO A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Wester Ross, in the North West of Scotland is famous for its rugged mountains, majestic lochs and white sandy beaches. Rare and diverse wildlife thrives here both on land and underwater helping to forge the common description of Wester Ross as Europe's 'Last Great Wilderness' area. This contributes to a feeling of remoteness reckoned in our population statistics which demonstrate that just 1.6 people live in each of our 5000 square kilometres.

In spite of, or maybe because of this low population density and sense of remoteness, the people of Wester Ross have a strong sense of determination and a unique connection with the land creating vibrant and caring communities. In 2016 these small communities united to successfully achieve UNESCO Biosphere acclamation; celebrating the relationship between people and their natural environment and affirming their commitment to a bottom up approach to promoting and developing sustainable lifestyles.

The Wester Ross Biosphere as an organisation has since joined the SHAPE project to help develop some of the ideas formed by the communities and captured through the Biosphere nomination process. We are particularly interested in encouraging sustainability, knowledge sharing and conservation, nurturing short local food supply chains; preserving biodiversity; enabling young people to stay in the area; supporting emerging and existing initiatives; reducing grant dependency and diversifying income; bridging lifestyles and expectations of diverse communities and ensuring learning and knowledge exchange locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.



*Traditional dancers in Wester Ross, Scotland. Photo: Wester Ross Biosphere.*

The ‘bottom up’ approach of this project reaches more people who might otherwise not be engaged and builds a solid foundation of awareness and support for the Biosphere. There has already been enthusiasm for this approach, genuinely giving local citizens the opportunity to be involved in shaping their future sustainability.

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN GREENLAND

Kujalleq Municipality in the South of Greenland is the smallest and least-populated municipality in Greenland, with about 7,000 inhabitants in 32,000 square kilometres. Most of the municipality is very mountainous, with many fjords carving deeply into the land, and spectacular glaciers which calve icebergs into the sea. However, Kujalleq also has extensive sheep farms on lower-lying land. In the past, the area was a centre of Viking settlements, and the area includes the newly inscribed Unesco World Heritage site of Kujataa Greenland: Norse and Inuit Farming at the Edge of the Ice Cap. It bears witness to the cultural histories of the Norse hunters-farmers who started arriving from Iceland in the 10th century and the Norse farmers, Inuit hunters and Inuit farming communities that developed from the end of the 18th century.

The inscribed property is made of five component parts which together represents the demographic and administrative core of two diachronic farming cultures; the Norse Greenlanders of the late 10th to mid-15th centuries AD and the Inuit farmers of Kujataa from the 1780s to the



*Sheep grazing along a fjord in Kujataa, Greenland. Photo: Kenneth Høegh.*

present day. Despite their differences, the two cultures, European Norse and Inuit, created a cultural landscape based on farming, grazing and marine mammal hunting. The landscape represents the earliest introduction of farming to the Arctic, and the Norse expansion of settlement beyond Europe.

The area, therefore, is very attractive for tourism, and a growing number of people visit each year. Consequently, the themes of SHAPE are highly relevant to the municipality, in the context of cultural/heritage management, tourism and agricultural development.

## SNÆFELLSNES REGIONAL PARK

In Snæfellsnes, stakeholders are working together across five municipalities on developing more sustainable tourism. There are associations of tourism, agriculture, owners of fishing boats and the trade union in Snæfellsnes.

Our approach includes the following:

- Spirit of place, used in innovation and all work
- Different sectors work together
- Sustainability
- Infrastructure
- One “brand” for Snæfellsnes
- Connect people, projects and communities
- Innovation
- Cooperation



*The volcanic landscape of Snæfellsnes attracts many tourists.  
Photo: Kjersti Isdal.*



*There are great opportunities for tourism based water-activities such as kayaking, on the west coast of Nordhordland, Norway.  
Photo: Eivind Senneset/NUI.*

The five municipalities in Snæfellsnes have been environmentally certified by EarthCheck. For more information go to [www.snaefellsnes.is](http://www.snaefellsnes.is).

Maintaining the certification requires continuous improvements in environmental and community issues. Guests in the area are encouraged to support the municipalities by taking the environment and community into account during their travels in the area.

## **NORDHORDLAND LOOK FORWARD TO CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Nordhordland is a destination in the heart of Fjord Norway. The coastal landscape which is close distance to fjords and mountains is beautiful and invites you to explore. Tourism in our area is not a large industry, but we do have products of high quality that really connect people and nature.

The project partner is the regional development company (NUI). As the administration for the regional board of Nordhordland, NUI is responsible for activities in the region that contribute to increasing common prosperity

socially, culturally and within business development. NUI is leader of Nordhordland Biosphere Candidate, and aims to achieve a Biosphere designation in 2019.

Nordhordland is responsible for the communication activities in the SHAPE project. Within the proposed biosphere area we are looking forward to working together with stakeholders and contributing to the development of sustainable tourism in the region.

## SHAPE Project:

### KICK-OFF IN DUMFRIES

The start-up meeting for the SHAPE project was hosted by the Southern Uplands Partnership in Dumfries, southern Scotland. The Southern Uplands Partnership are a charitable organisation focused on bringing together partners to make more of their natural assets to benefit the local communities and economies. Through this remit they oversee delivery of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere which is one of the focus areas for the SHAPE project.

The international delegation arrived on the Wednesday 10th May, with most making it in time for dinner although our Finnish friends preferred to take a rather more laid back approach on the slow train from Glasgow that involved a scenic rail journey through part of the Biosphere that got them into Dumfries long after the bar had closed!

After the development phase which had involved several smaller meetings between groups of partners and lengthy exchanges of emails day one was the first time the full team of SHAPE partners had met together in the same venue. So we started with a focus on getting to know each

other, the areas everyone was representing and meeting the full project team from University Highlands and Islands who were tasked with guiding and supporting us in the delivery of SHAPE.

Time was also spent going through the individual work packages that make up the SHAPE project and ensuring all partners were clear in what they had to deliver. We were also introduced to the project management reporting and auditing requirements that inevitably go with a €1.5M NPA project.

Day two was the start of the real work with a focus on the different methodologies available for identifying stakeholders who might be involved in promoting and making use of natural and cultural assets in our respective areas. We explored different techniques for identifying the stakeholders, for keeping them engaged and the different forms of communication that might be adopted.

*Ed Forrest 23/10/2017*



*SHAPE partners meeting in Dumfries, May 2017.*

## DEVELOPING SHAPE STAKEHOLDER NETWORKS

Developing effective stakeholder partnerships is a fundamental part of SHAPE. We aim to bring together organisations involved in cultural heritage and natural resource management with local businesses and tourism organisations, to encourage the emergence and development of innovative ecotourism initiatives.

The question of how we should initiate and develop stakeholder networks in sustainable heritage areas has been an important discussion topic for SHAPE partners. Some areas already have well-established networks, but may benefit from including stakeholders who have had a low level of involvement in sustainable development initiatives in the past while others need to start from the beginning to develop new networks. In some cases we must overcome the challenge of stakeholders being dispersed across large sparsely populated areas, where it is simply not possible to get everyone in the same room, as is the case for example in Kujatta, Greenland.

Ensuring that SHAPE can provide way of motivate stakeholders to get involved with local issues is important.

SHAPE partners took part in a workshop to decide what common methods would be most effective to identify and engage stakeholders across the project area. Applying certain common methods will allow us to test how stakeholder engagement methods e.g. participatory mapping workshops, work in different geographic contexts and will form an important part of the eventual SHAPE e-service. However methods will also need to be tailored to fit the unique characteristics of each area.

An important task over the next few months will be to make contact with stakeholders in each area to explain what we aim to achieve in SHAPE and to discuss the ways in which their participation can contribute to community development and heritage protection. Our first regional stakeholder meetings will take place in each sustainable heritage areas in early 2018 where we seek to establish a collective understanding of the cultural and natural value of the area. This will also be an opportunity to learn from stakeholders about the challenges and successes of local ecotourism initiatives.



*SHAPE partners meeting with stakeholders in Snæfellsnes, Iceland. Foto: Timo Hokkanen.*



## PARTNER MEETING IN SNÆFALLSNES, ICELAND

The second partner meeting of our project was hosted by Snæfellsnes Regional Park in Stykkishólmur, Iceland on the 10th and 11th of October.

The partners from Norway, Finland, Scotland, Greenland, and Canada arrived in Reykjavík on the Monday 9th October, and after a short sightseeing tour around the city, the bus headed west to Snæfellsnes. It was great to meet everybody in person after the busy first few months of work to get SHAPE underway.

Work started on the 10th October with catch-up sessions about the work developed in the different work packages and plans for next steps. The next few months will see the start of the regional stakeholder meetings in our Sustainable Heritage Areas, which will be an exciting opportunity for participants to develop maps of local natural and cultural assets. Partners took part in a workshop on methods for

mapping and managing natural and cultural assets on the second day of our meeting in preparation for running the regional workshops.

There was also time for getting a sense of the rich heritage of Snæfellsnes with a boat trip around Breiðafjörður bay including the fabulous taste of just-fished raw scallops, a visit to the eider duck museum in Stykkishólmur, and interesting chats with local stakeholders who shared some of their time, knowledge, and Icelandic stories with us!

Last but not least, we had the pleasure of meeting the President of Iceland, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, at Bessastaðir, his residence near Reykjavik, who showed great interest in SHAPE and engaged us in a discussion about the opportunities and challenges of ecotourism in Iceland.



*SHAPE partners meeting with the President of Iceland, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, at Bessastaðir.*

## CAPITALISING ON ASSETS

SHAPE proposes integrated management of natural and cultural assets that combines social development and conservation goals, to develop tourism while preserving the area's natural and cultural assets for the future. Work-Package 2 focuses on the creation and testing of a methodology to identify, develop and promote natural and cultural heritage assets.

A literature review of mapping and managing natural and cultural assets for ecotourism development was produced at The Centre for Mountain Studies, and presented at the second partner meeting in Iceland. In addition to the discussion of published literature, SHAPE partners were invited to contribute their knowledge and experiences for inclusion in the review. It includes a range of current knowledge and experience on a breadth

of topics concerning mapping and managing natural and cultural assets, and will be made available as part of the SHAPE e-service to help guide decisions on asset mapping approaches and applications.

SHAPE partners participated in an asset mapping workshop at the second partner meeting, to develop methods for mapping and managing assets in their SHA. In this workshop partners agreed on participatory processes for mapping natural and cultural heritage, identifying existing and desirable infrastructure, linking assets, assessing potential climate change impacts in each area, and engaging stakeholders in the process. By the end of the workshop, partners had developed an approach and decided on tools for asset mapping in their SHA.



*Tourists in Snæfellsnes, Iceland, getting a sense of the rich heritage of Snæfellsnes with a boat trip around Breiðafjörður bay, including the fabulous taste of just-fished raw scallops. Photo: Timo Hokkanen.*

## COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN SHAPE

SHAPE on Web <http://shape.interreg-npa.eu/>  
SHAPE on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/The-SHAPE-project>  
SHAPE on Twitter @SHAPE\_Project  
News from SHAPE Biannual newsletter, next edition: April 2018.



Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism

### THE SHAPE LOGO

We are very proud to share our logo! It was launched at our meeting at Iceland to the approval of all partners. The logo represents partnership, which is symbolized by people in a circle. It is colourful which makes it playful, and we will use the colours in a creative way as we communicate about the project using different media.



Northern Periphery and  
Arctic Programme  
2014-2020



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SHAPE

## CONTACT US!

SHAPE

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