

Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Natural Parc of Montseny (Parc Natural del Montseny)

Name of verifier: Fernando Correia

Date of submission of application by protected area: 4 February 2011

Date of verification visit: 2 - 3 May 2011

Date of completion of this report: 11 May 2011

NOTES FOR THE VERIFIER

Where is shown, verifiers are asked to indicate a score, using the following system:

- X** Not relevant
- 0** Not happening
- 1** Weak – little action
- 2** Moderate – action happening in this area, sufficient at present
- 3** Good – significant action, totally satisfactory

A star * may be added to a “3” score to indicate an excellent example of best practice (3*).

Verifiers are asked to comment on individual questions to provide further information or explanation, keeping their answers concise. In particular, the reasons for any score under 2 should be briefly explained, highlighting any particular causes for concern.

The reasons for any score of * awarded should also be explained: what makes this an example of best practice? The star should be used sparingly, and only for outstanding initiatives or actions which can serve as models at the European level.

The format for this verifier's report is linked closely to that of the Application Report completed by the protected area. You should have received the Application Report in electronic format. You may copy information from the Application Report into this report to support particular answers where this is helpful.

If you do this, we would ask you to indicate very clearly (e.g. by use of a different typeface, highlighting, etc.) the text which has been copied from the Application Report.

Your own observations relating to the information provided by the protected area and gained on site are, of course, particularly important – the Committee will have the full Application Report available to refer to as necessary.

Please attach a list of any documents received from the protected area or presented during the visit which were not included in the original application.

Programme of visit, key sites and partners visited:

Please attach a full list of people interviewed and job titles as an appendix

Due to the comprehensive visit programme and large number of people contacted, I am attaching the following at the end of the report as **Annex I**: the full programme, including the sites visited and the corresponding people/organisations contacted at each site.

Overall Impressions

Comments on the application from the protected area and evaluation visit:

The application of the park has followed an extensive period of consultation and involvement of the regional stakeholders on the elaboration of a common tourism strategy. The application territory area is quite vast (83.447 ha overall, the park being 31.064 ha), covering a complex administrative landscape: 2 provinces (Girona and Barcelona), three “comarcas” (Osana, La Selva y el Valles Oriental) and 28 municipalities. In addition, the private sector is equally represented by a diverse and fragmented institutional landscape of professional associations throughout the territory, often overlapping geographically. This complexity, added to the fact that in Catalonia the administrative systems between ‘provinces’ can vary significantly, make the efforts of the park to bridge and involve these different systems and stakeholders in a common approach laudable.

For the purposes of the Charter, the park has created an enlarged dedicated working group where all these stakeholders could be represented, plus a forum opened to the wider community for consultation and validation of the Charter strategy.

During the verification visit I had the opportunity to meet with 8 of the 11 partner organisations of the working group (three presented apologies). This was important, since only through the conversations with the local stakeholders and organisations was I finally able to better understand their remit and how they relate to each other - such is the institutional complexity in the territory. That three organisations could not attend the working group meeting (Tourism Consortium Valles Oriental, Regional Tourism Agency of Barcelona, and Museum Granollers) was unfortunate, but I could verify by indirect methods that they were very active participants in the application and strategy definition process (through minutes of meetings and conversations on site).

A good part of the diagnosis and other documentation included in the application pack of the park is dedicated to try and explain the Charter to all the public and private structures and services in the territory. The documentation and information provided was fairly comprehensive, including extensive contextual information on the regional administrative and regulatory frameworks, natural and cultural heritage, visitor data, tourism services and products, socio-economic context, a SWOT analysis, interviews’ excerpts, etc..

The visit programme was arranged beforehand with the park’s director, and included meetings with the Charter working group, some local mayors (“alcaldes”), local businesses, tourism information structures, tourism and landowners associations, and representatives of the agrifood and forestry sectors. I am satisfied with programme, which I consider was very comprehensive and allowed me to hear a very diverse range of views from local stakeholders, both on the weaknesses and strengths of the territory. I am happy with the fact that most people I talked to were quite open about the local problems, institutionally and otherwise, so I consider that I had the opportunity to get a fairly balanced view of the key local/regional issues.

Verifier's assessment

Overall comment on the sustainable tourism strategy and action of the protected area and how it relates to the European Charter:

This is a very particular park in the Catalanian context. Several aspects make it “special” and help understand the chosen sustainable tourism strategy and overall Charter approach:

- Because of its proximity to Barcelona (1 hours drive) and its metropolitan area (the most densely populated area of Catalonia) it is one of the most popular and most visited protected areas, seen by many almost as a “Barcelona playground” (the type of expression I heard often in my visit in several variations).
- Visitor numbers are between 750.000 and a million annually, mostly day visits at weekends, festivities and special seasons (such as the mushroom season).
- Unlike many rural and mountain areas in Europe, the population in the park and its area of influence (Charter area) has actually been increasing, and at a significant rate. From 2000-2009 it had an increase of 30.000 people, practically the same as in all the 30 years before from 1970-2000. (The Charter area corresponds to 28 municipalities within and surrounding the park, with population of around 117.000; 50.000 of which living inside the park).
- Much of this growth is again linked to its proximity to a vast urban area, which allow people to have a home in the region and work in the city.
- 85% of its territory is private property, and the majority of it is managed woodland, which has also given the area the status of Man and Biosphere reserve for its ancestral man-managed type of landscape.

These key facts explain much of the options, conflicts, history and processes behind the proposed Charter strategy. In many ways it can be said that Montseny has been victim of its own success, both in terms of visitor impacts as much as in terms of the development of its tourism sector. Because it is a popular area with “guaranteed costumers”, there isn’t a tradition of organised professional associativism or collaboration in the tourism sector. Its massive weekend visitor numbers have also led to a decharacterisation of the offer towards a “mass market”, lower quality profile. This has been changing, and there are now several tourism associations on the ground. It was interesting to hear several people during the visit saying that the current economic crisis has forced them to cooperate and look more carefully at quality levels (visitors are not necessarily leaving Montseny, but they are using fewer paid services or wanting more from their money). The fragmentation of organisations is immense now, with at least four tourism business associations and two public-private tourism consortia, each pulling their own way, with their own separate objectives and developing work independently of each other. The most common self-critique and expression repeated in the diagnostic document was “lack of coordination” – for almost every subject.

It is in this context that the Charter collaborative approach appears, and it seems in a timely way. Several people from different sectors have told me during the visit that this was the first time they sat together to talk and discuss joint work in the 30 years of the park’s existence – be it within the tourism and hospitality sectors, between these and the landowners, or between all of these and the park and other administrations. The common theme running through the strategy and action plan is mostly dialogue, collaboration, coordination and harmonisation of approaches. The strategy has no major infrastructure projects, innovative tourism programmes and products, proposals of activities, etc. The territory has plenty of those already – in fact it is one of its strengths. What it hasn’t had so far is a common message and approach that “glues” everything that is going on in a coherent way, separating the good from the bad, and defining what Montseny as a natural destination means and where it wants to go.

What I got from the verification visit and conversations with the local stakeholders involved was not necessarily any clear answers to any of these questions, but that people have realised the merits of dialogue, and of trying to define together what those answers might be in a collaborative journey. The bulk of the strategy focuses on sharing of information, coordination and alignment of approaches (rather than developing new ones), so I would say it relates very well to the spirit and purposes of the Charter.

Main strengths:

Traditions, festivities and cultural offer

I was surprised by the sheer number of cultural activities, events, festivities, etc., happening in the territory. As an example, the diagnostic document contains a table of over 4 pages just listing the local festivities, traditional markets, etc., taking place in the area. There are also thematic cultural or historic routes joining different cultural offers and places in the region and a varied array of other types of cultural offer (including a curious programme of “Poetry in the Park”).

Network of trails & routes

There are dozens of different walking trails - over 100 according to the documentation, and also bike trails (some managed by the park, some managed by the municipalities, others by excursionist groups, etc.). In fact, this is both a strength and a problem, and the park is trying to manage and bring some coherence to this fragmented approach.

Network of information and interpretation centres

Another subject that in this park surprises by its abundance. The park itself has 16 centres and information points, plus an extensive network of other interpretation equipments, including museums, art centres, public and private nature schools and interpretation centres (the diagnosis lists a further 28 different structures and services).

Tourism Quality (“Q”) management system, and other quality systems

Since 2004 the park has been implementing the Spanish Tourism Quality accreditation system in all its equipments and services (the park was involved in the definition of the scheme at its time, being one of its pilot areas). This requires the park to draft a yearly plan of continuous improvement. In the 2009 plan the implementation of the Charter collaborative process and application for Charter status was one of the objectives. Under this scheme the park also uses a comprehensive visitor feedback survey in its public equipments where visitors are consulted on the quality of the offer, services, infrastructure, etc.. Further to this, there is also a strong drive from central administration to raise quality levels of tourism companies and over 78 local companies are currently accredited with the SICTED quality scheme (SICTED-Sistema Integral de Qualitat Turística Espanyola en Destinacions).

Personalized Information System (Dispositivo de Informacion Personalizada)

This is an interesting approach created to help the park to cope with the high numbers of visitors on the weekends and bank holidays. Dedicated information staff go to the areas of highest frequentation to welcome, inform, orient or redirect visitors to alternative routes, and collect information and visitor data. They work from 10am to 3pm and are contracted in partnership with local municipalities.

Composition of the Charter working group and Forum and consultation process

I think the park was quite successful in setting up a working group that represent a good cross section of the key interests and stakeholders in the region relevant to the Charter process. As said above, people often commented on how it was the first time they sat together to talk. They were also very open on how their dialogue gradually evolved from tension and conflict to being able to better appreciate the others’ points of view, and seemed quite satisfied with the participatory working formats of their Charter workshops. In terms of

transparency, it was also a very good practice of the park to put available on its website all the working documents of the consultation process, including minutes of the meetings, agendas, evaluations from attendants, etc.

Initiative to consider payment for ecosystem services

At the moment this is only an idea, but it has two dedicated actions in the action plan and I believe it can be one of the most interesting developments to watch in this park. The initiative was proposed by the Association of Landowners of the park, a relatively recent organisation that is determined to have a say in and a share of the tourism benefits in the area (since landowners usually only get the impacts). Two new actions are included to address this topic. One aims to create partnerships and agreements between the landowners and the tourism companies to develop joint solutions where the tourism sector could contribute to the conservation and management of the trails and natural resources they depend upon. The other is a viability study to assess the potential of a “paying for ecosystem services” approach, where visitors and tourism companies could compensate economically the territory landowners for the use of their resources. This can be a very difficult topic to manage, and a heated debate is certainly expected, as well as some conflict, but the fact that the partners in the Charter have agreed to jointly consider it is laudable. “To be watched...”

Main weaknesses:

High visitor pressure and subsequent impacts

Montseny is one of the most, if not the most, visited area in Catalonia, with estimated numbers of visitors between 750.000 and one million. That is about 20 visitors per inhabitant of the park, and the numbers are set to grow. The people I have contacted all mentioned how clear the changes are in the type of tourism in the park. It is now much more focused on nature-based sports, running, BTT, etc., rather than the more traditional use of the park to escape and relax; with all the subsequent impacts in terms of pressure, litter, erosion of trails, people leaving the trails into natural areas, etc.

Low levels of visitor contribution to local economy

Because the typology of tourism is mainly that of day visits, these high visitor numbers don't translate into equivalent benefits for the local economy. An estimated 80% of people don't stay overnight, and a common comment was that the economic crisis is also making people shy away from spending in the area on other services. Nevertheless, given that this is a highly sought after area it cannot be said that the tourism sector has difficulties, quite the opposite. The concern seems to be mostly with the domination of a “low price/ low quality” form of offer.

Decharacterisation of offer (particularly in agrifood sector)

Despite the varied amount of traditional markets and local primary produce, I was surprised to find that these get very little attention in the commercial activity directed at tourists. There were several comments on how it is only now that people and businesses from Montseny are starting to value what is local and realising that tourists also value it. As an anecdote, one business owner had difficulties coming up with any traditional dish of the area. Not because there aren't any – in fact I had the chance to talk with other business owner who could list endless examples. But both admitted that this was knowledge that was being lost and in need of recovery and promotion, since the majority of the offer in the territory was the standard ordinary food easily found anywhere.

Fragmentation and lack of coordination

This is one of the most common self-critiques made by the local stakeholders and captured in the diagnosis. The organisational landscape of associations and administrations is very complex and prone to a fragmentation of messages, initiatives, etc., that rarely relate or communicate between themselves. For example: different bodies organising initiatives for

the same dates without knowing it, competition rather than collaboration, quality of content of information and promotional material is unsupervised (the park is rarely if ever consulted in its development), etc.. Only with the Charter process did this start to be addressed, but it hasn't yet gone away.

Institutional conflicts and low engagement of some municipalities

As is common with many parks, there is a certain degree of tension between the park authority and other administrations or interest groups, especially in a territory with 28 municipalities (18 of which are in the park). It would be naive to consider that all mayors (alcaldes) have good relations with the park and vice-versa. I only met two mayors in the visit, but it was sufficient to understand some of the arguments from both sides (some of these related to trail management and signposting), although everyone was supportive of the Charters' objectives. One of the common complaints of participants in the Charter forums was that they would like to have seen more mayors involved in the discussions. This was also a complaint from the park since all the mayors were invited. Nevertheless, the Charter was taken to the Park's Council twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the process, where all mayors voted in favour of it, with one abstention (in the final approval). There is also some tension with the association of landowners, but as a new organised body they are keen to be heard and were very active participants in all debates, so the opportunities for conflict resolution are there.

Park staff lack of training in sustainable tourism

This is an observation both of the current and future situations, as they stand in the strategy. Currently the Annual Training Programme for the park staff includes a vast offer of training subjects, but little or none on sustainable tourism. This was also not addressed effectively in the proposed actions.

Lack of options for public transport access

Access by public transport to the park is low and could be much better, especially given its proximity to dense urban areas and the fact that there is a train station close by. The park has an action in the strategy to look at solutions for this, but by the conversations had with the park staff this is expected to be a challenging area.

Conclusions and recommendations for the protected area:

Considering the above, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

Better engagement of visitors in contributing to the area

Given their numbers and impacts, for many issues visitors should be looked at as a potential part of the solution, not just the problem. Very little if anything is done to engage visitors more in understanding their impacts and contributing for their minimisation. For example, partners like the Association of Landowners are lobbying the park, public administrations and the tourism sector for economic compensation for the use and impacts visitors have on their lands, but no one has looked at ways where visitors could contribute themselves (principle of user-payer). For instance: all vehicle parking providing access to trails seems to be free, when it could provide a useful source of economic support. When I asked why parking was free, there was surprise both from the park and landowners. This was not a solution previously considered.

There seems to be a culture installed of expecting administrations to provide (through subsidies or other methods) when with the visitor numbers we are talking about it doesn't make sense not to try to install a culture of visitors contributing. Even if a small percentage does so, a small percentage of a million is significant. I strongly encourage the park and its partners to think outside the box and try to create "visitor payback" solutions and

administrative or partnership setups that allows this to happen. Also to move away from a public subsidies logic (which in the current economic climate are only likely to be reduced). The issue of “payment for ecosystem services” is a fast growing subject at wider policy and operational levels, and if Montseny manages it well it could constitute a learning ground for other areas where the subject is bound to appear, sooner or later.

Reposition with the public what Montseny “is” and that is a natural park with a living community. I had never heard of Montseny before I was given its Charter strategy, but once I started to talk with people it was clear that for the Catalonians is part of their common patrimony, for the urban communities around it is their “playground”, and for the tourism associations it’s a resource for their own programmes and services, etc. All of these are true. But all of these also indicate that there is a common attitude of seeing Montseny as something to be used (and freely), owned by everyone and not as a place and community with a special identity, characteristics, rights, etc. – i.e. as a Host that you “visit” and welcomes you, rather than a site you use.

From my short visit I believe “identity” is the key word here, and the current fragmented institutional landscape of different consortia and associations with different names and goals, different promotional webpages, (plus the 4 comarcas, 28 municipalities, 2 provinces, etc..) really doesn’t help any visitor understand the park as “One Place”. Especially a fragile one with protected area status.

Linked to this is the issue of the lack of attributed value by the local community as to what is “local”, discussed above. This revival of the identity of Montseny and what “local” means for the territory could get a bigger push from Charter strategy and working group. For example, there could be a case for doing some work on recovering traditional recipes with local produce and working with restaurants for their promotion, amongst many other possible ideas.

Maintain momentum with careful management

The consultation and participatory work started with the Charter consultation and strategy definition process was saluted by several people, and everyone was happy to have felt their voices heard and reaching some level of common ground. But that doesn’t mean that many of the tensions have disappeared. It is good to see the amount of actions that are co-shared between organisations, but these will need careful mediation and management on the part of the park. The process has raised expectations that partners will want to see addressed, and it can be hard for all sides (park included) not to see the park in the authority or regulator role, with a controlling approach. I think it would be important for the park to carefully position itself more in a facilitator role to mediate, support or even stimulate other partners to deliver.

However, there are also many actions for which the park is not the direct responsible entity, in some it’s not even a collaborator, and these might end up relying too much on the goodwill of other partners for things to happen. Previous experiences from other parks initiating the Charter journey have led them to conclude that a dedicated “Charter person” is usually the best way to guarantee that all partners are rowing in the same direction. At the moment much of the coordination role is expected to fall on the Head of Public Use with support from the officer from the Association of Tourism Businesses, which of course have many other functions. This aspect of maintaining momentum and keeping partners on track is one that will have to be closely monitored by the park.

Training for staff on sustainable tourism

This recommendation links well with the previous one. One of the ways the park can guarantee higher levels of support for the Charter work is to have more of its staff prepared for it, and knowledgeable on the issues around sustainable tourism and what the Charter addresses, so that they could also actively intervene in the process. For many actions

focused on coordination, communication and promotion, it is just as important for business partners to understand the park as it is for the park to understand the business activity. I would recommend the park should pay more attention to the training of its staff on these issues, since this could be really helpful to support mutual understanding, improve the quality of the outputs of many shared actions, as well as accelerate their implementation.

Recommendation on award of the Charter:

This is a territory that in some aspects already has a lot of what other areas in Europe are still trying to secure: an excellent network of information centres, abundant offer of programmes and activities, lots of cultural activity, and even a guaranteed supply of tourists without needing to move a finger.

What the territory was needing was a serious look at how these high levels of activity, visitor pressure and their impacts could be better managed through a collaborative approach that would move away from the traditionally disjointed, fragmented and non-cooperative attitudes and institutional set up. I'm happy to see that the park has taken significant steps in this direction with the process already started and the strategy it proposes to implement.

General information about the protected area – Section A of Application Report

I. Has full and clear factual information been supplied by the protected area in answer to sections A1 – A14 of the Application Report framework? [3]

Yes. I had the opportunity to go through these questions with the park's director at the end of the verification visit, clarify the answers given, their context and background, etc., and relate them to the overall application and Charter strategy. I had only some questions about additional information for question A12, described below.

II. Additional/amended information not contained in protected area's application:

I had noticed that Question A12 "Annual Visitor Numbers" of the standard application form had information or suggestions of tourism indicators that were not being followed by the park's own report. I have raised the issue with the park before the visit, and asked if such indicators were available, and if not at least to explain the reasons for this. (I should point that the park did submit several visitors' data from their available sources, but these followed a different structure and indicators' from the suggested ones).

During the visit I then came to understand that this additional information request is not present on the Spanish version of the form they had available (hence the reason why the park was not aware of it). However, after the visit the park's technical support team compiled the available information in the format suggested and sent me a copy. I instructed the Park to send a copy to EUROPARC Consulting to add to the application report as annexe.

Some of the information supplied included:

- Visitors/year (700.000 - estimate)
- Staying visitors (80% do not spend the night - estimate)
- Total visitor arrivals per month (on the park's visitor centres)
- Number of bedspaces by accommodation type
- Number of bedspaces per 1000 local population (47,33/1000)
- Ratio of number of tourists to local population (5, 97 visitors / inhabitant)

III. Any information not available, and reasons for this:

The only type of information not available were some of the tourism/visitor data indicators (total nights or occupancy levels in the territory). In the annexe provided by the park (explained above) the reasons for this lack of data are explained for each case. This has mostly to do with the fact that tourism companies either don't collect or don't report this data to their official bodies, and also to the fact that the different provinces of Barcelona and Girona have different data availability or collect different types of data.

Some of the actions on the Charter action plan are directed at addressing this issue.

IV. Are you satisfied that the information supplied is accurate? [3]

Yes. Most of the information supplied was backed up by verifiable official sources and additional extended information was provided in the Diagnostic document.

V. Are there any factual issues that might affect the eligibility of the protected area for award of the Charter?

No.

Meeting the Charter principles - Section B of Application Report

*Note: Areas in **grey shading** indicate particularly important points which are critical for successful evaluation. They correspond to the shaded areas in the Application Report. NEVER type within the shaded area, except the score, please.*

Principle 1 – Partnership with local tourism stakeholders

1.1 Has a forum or other partnership structure been established to enable the protected-area authority to work with others on the development and management of tourism, including implementation and review of the strategy? [3]

Yes, the park followed a two-tiered approach of a Charter working group (WG) and a Forum.

Briefly describe this structure, including size and membership, frequency of meetings, etc.:

Working group (WG)

Structure and roles:

The WG was composed from 11 organisations representing the public and private sectors and was the main structure responsible for the consultation and development of the tourism strategy and action plan. It will also be the structure responsible for the following and implementation of the actions.

Size and Membership of WG:

- Size: 12 organization, 18 people, with an average per meeting of 13.
- Membership:
 - o Natural Park of Montseny
 - o Association of the Friends of Montseny (Associació d'Amics del Montseny), also representing the Park's Consulting Commission (community consultation body of the Park's governance structure)
 - o Museum of Granollers (equally representing the Consulting Commission)
 - o Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (Associació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny)
 - o Association of Land Owners of Montseny (Associació de Propietaris del Montseny)

- Tourism Association “La Selva, Comarca of the Water” (“La Selva, comarca de l’Aigua”)
- Tourism Consortium of Vallès Oriental (Consorti de Turisme del Vallès Oriental)
- Tourism Consortium Portes del Montseny (Consorti de Turisme Portes del Montseny)
- Federation of Tourism Businesses Owners Montseny – Guillerries (Federació d’Empresaris Turístics Montseny – Guillerries)
- Regional Tourism Agency of the Barcelona province (Oficina Tècnica de Turisme de la Diputació de Barcelona)
- Regional Tourism Agency of the Girona Province (Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona)

Frequency of meetings:

The WG has met 7 times, from May 2010 to January 2011.

Others:

Information on future frequency, translated from the report: [“To guarantee the continuity of the working group as well as secure the representativity of all sectors, the Action Plan previews the incorporation of some members of the \(park’s\) Coordinating Council – mayors \(alcaldes\) -, raising its numbers to 20 people. It should be mentioned that the Action Plan contemplates actions to maintain the working group”.](#)

The action plan previews a meeting of the working group every 4 months, plus separate thematic meetings.

Permanent Forum (PF)

Structure and roles:

The PF is an open format structure of meetings open to the general community for review of the progress achieved by the WG and approval of the strategy and actions selected. The different PF meetings happened throughout the Charter area to guarantee widespread participation.

Size and Membership of PF:

PF meetings had an average participation of 40 people. The documentation included the attendance and composition at the PF meetings, which included a good mix of public and private sector. This included not only administrations and associative bodies (a total of 34) but also good participation from the private sector at individual level (29 companies, including restaurants, accommodation, environmental education companies and concessionaries of park or municipal equipments). Total numbers of participants were 123 persons.

Frequency of meetings:

The PF has met 5 times, from December 2009 (first public presentation of the Charter and its goals) to January 2011 (working sessions). The Action Plan previews one yearly meeting of the Forum.

1.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved?

Yes. Local tourism enterprises are represented in the WG through professional associations (see WG composition above) and in the PF through the same associations plus individual business owners.

1.3 Is the local community involved?

Yes, mostly indirectly through representative bodies. In the WG these include the two Tourism Consortia (see WG composition above), which are public-private partnerships between municipalities and the tourism sector; the Association of Land Owners of the park, and the Friend's Association of Montseny.

The park's governance system includes two consultation bodies: the Consulting Commission, with an enlarged composition of local stakeholders representing most socio-economic sectors (composition was presented in Diagnostic document) and the Coordinating Council composed by all public administrations in the territory. Both bodies were consulted on the intention to implement the Charter. The decision to start the Charter process and final approval of its strategy were done through approval of the park's Council, where all municipalities are represented. I was informed that the final Charter strategy was approved by the Council with the votes of all the mayors (alcaldes) except one abstention, in favour.

The PF had several local participants attending at individual level, mostly business owners.

1.4 Are local conservation interests involved?

Yes. From the report: ["Both the WG and PF had the participation of bodies which have the goals of conservation and heritage interpretation, like the museums and interpretation centres of the Charter area, as well as the conservationist associations of the area"](#). Subsequently a list of 10 bodies was presented.

I have noticed how most of these corresponded to cultural rather than natural conservation bodies, and asked the park about it. I was informed that all other nature conservation bodies were contacted and invited to take part in the forums but have not attended. Nevertheless, these same bodies already attend other consultative forums of the park, (like the discussion on its management and conservation plan and are part of the Consulting Commission), so the park considers they are aware of the Charter and will have further opportunities to participate or be updated.

1.5 Are the wider (regional) bodies responsible for tourism, conservation and regional development involved?

Yes. The key regional tourism bodies are part of the WG. At provincial level they are:

- Regional Tourism Agency of the Barcelona province (Oficina Tècnica de Turisme de la Diputació de Barcelona)
- Regional Tourism Agency of the Girona Province (Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona)

At supra-municipal level, these are (all public-private partnerships):

- Tourism Association "La Selva, Comarca of the Water" ("La Selva, comarca de l'Aigua")
- Tourism Consortium of Vallès Oriental (Consorci de Turisme del Vallès Oriental)
- Tourism Consortium Portes del Montseny (Consorci de Turisme Portes del Montseny)

In terms of regional conservation bodies and regional development I was informed that both the Dept. of Environment and Dept. of Agriculture were invited to participate.

The first one has not answered, and the second one declined.

The park considers that, given its governance structure – composed both by the Diputacion de Barcelona and Diputacion of Girona – it also acts as a representative of regional bodies.

1.6 Are other partners involved, such as volunteers?

This question does not exist in the Spanish version of the report the park had access to. Nevertheless, by the documentation provided it can be considered that other partners were involved, including the Association of Friends of Montseny, several museums, an excursionist association, and several professional interpretation centres.

Principle 2 – Sustainable tourism strategy and action plans

Preparation

2.1 Have a tourism strategy and action plan been prepared for the protected area?

Yes. A self-contained document in two parts, including a strategy and an action plan.

2.2 Briefly describe the process(es) and timetable(s) for preparing both the strategy and action plan.

From the report:

- December 2009: information session of the PF on the proposal to adhere to the Charter.
- March – May 2009: meetings of the WG to draft Diagnostic documentation (18.03.2010 y 04.05.2010)
- July 2010: session of the PF in Viladrau (municipality) to work on the Diagnostic draft (13.07.2010)
- September 2010: meeting of the WG to improve Diagnostic and start initial strategy proposal (15.09.2010)
- October 2010: session of the PF in Sant Hilari (municipality) to approve initial strategy and initial proposal of actions (06.10.2010)
- Octubre – November 2010: meetings of the WG to draft Action Plan (20.10.2010 y 23.11.2010)
- December 2010: session of the PF in Sant Antoni de Vilamajor (municipality) to validate Strategy and close Action Plan (15.12.2010)
- January 2011: meeting of WG to finish detailing the actions of the Action Plan (19.01.2011) and of the PF to approve it (26.01.2011)

Question 2.5 below explains in more detail the objectives of the several steps and meetings listed above.

2.3 How does the tourism strategy relate to the protected-area management plan?

In 2008 the park revised and updated its management plan (only the second time since its creation in 1987). The intention to implement the Charter's principles and methodology in the territory was included in the Park's Public Use plan, (an integratal part of the Management Plan), making the Charter officially an objective of the park's management. Apart from the Public Use Plan, the general Management Plan also

includes a Conservation Plan, Information Plan, Environmental Education Plan, and Socio-economic Development Plan, all of these currently being drafted. The park's Charter documentation, strategy and action plan often refer to these documents, so throughout there was a concern to promote direct links and mutual reinforcement between the park's plans and objectives and the Charter tourism strategy.

2.4 Are there any apparent contradictions between tourism and protected-area management objectives and actions?

No. As a IUCN Category 5 park, it includes in its management plan objectives of socioeconomic development, with tourism as a process for this. Given the high tourism pressure on the park, its strategy is of controlling and influencing the type of tourism, rather than actively promoting more of it.

Consultation process

2.5 Comment on the involvement of local stakeholders in drawing up the strategy and action plan, making reference to the forum/partnership structures described under Question 1.1 as appropriate.

As illustrated by the sequence and timetable of meetings on question 2.2, the WG's function was to drive the process, compile and disseminate information, propose and finalise a strategy and action plan. The PF had the function of discussing a diagnostic of the territory, approving a strategy and providing suggestions for actions.

The working methodology of the PF meetings was to break-up the larger group into smaller working groups composed of people from different sectors, to discuss the subjects and provide the information needed to draft the several documents of the application process.

To moderate and supervise the process the park also had the support of a technical secretariat, provided by a contracted external consultancy, with the support of the park staff and the officer from the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (the only of the WG tourism associations with a permanent paid member of staff). The park's application report provided a description of the programme and objectives of each meeting of both WG and PF. Below are listed just some of the most important steps to provide an understanding of the process of stakeholder involvement in the drawing up of the strategy:

July 2010. 2nd meeting of PF. Key issues of a diagnostic draft were presented in a plenary session. After this, participants were separated into 6 working groups of 6/7 people to work on a territorial SWAT analysis following the Charter principles (including cooperation systems, natural and cultural heritage, visitors profiles and tourism products, information and promotion, quality of life and impacts on local economy, and visitor flows). 6 SWAT matrixes were produced and constituted the starting point for the strategy elaboration.

September 2010. 4th meeting of WG. First draft of the strategy.

October 2010. 3rd meeting of PF. Initial approval of strategy and its key strategic lines. 7 working groups of 7 participants were created to propose and consider concrete actions for each strategic line.

October 2010. 5th meeting of WG. 5 subgroups of 3 persons each work on the details of each action, and building of its "fiche" (inc. responsible entity, budget, etc). This discussion and detailing work continued in a further WG meeting and a PF meeting.

January 2010. 5th meeting of PF. Approval of Action Plan.

The technical secretariat provided an agenda and support documentation one week in advance to all participants for all meetings. During the PF meetings it also distributed and collected satisfaction surveys covering the programme, methodology, composition, location, timings, etc. The results of all surveys and minutes of meetings were made available on line on the park's website:

http://www.diba.cat/parcsn/parcs/cets_forumpermanentmontseny.asp?parc=3

This is highly commendable and an example of best practice. An analysis of the satisfaction surveys' results also reveals that participants were in general quite happy with the consultation and its format. However, replies to the question on any missing entities reveal that several participants expected more municipalities to take part, as well as more private companies.

Overall, I consider that the selected options for stakeholder involvement were appropriate and provide several opportunities for genuine participation and input to the overall strategy and action plan. In terms of missing entities, I was told that a much larger number of invitations to participate were sent, including to municipalities, to no avail. Nevertheless, with average numbers of participants of around 40 for each PF, I believe there is no reason to doubt that a good representation of different viewpoints was not secured.

2.6 Was there consultation with local tourism enterprises in preparing the strategy?

Local tourism enterprises were represented in the WG through professional associations (see WG composition above) and in the PF through the same associations plus individual business owners.

2.7 Was there consultation with the local community and other interests/ stakeholders in preparing the strategy?

Yes. See answers to questions 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6.

Assessment of resource needs, constraints and opportunities

2.8 Was there an assessment of the natural and cultural resources, their sensitivities (capacity) and opportunities for tourism?

Yes. There are dedicated chapters and sections on the Diagnostic compiling relevant information on these topics. In addition, in PF meeting a group of local stakeholders did a dedicated SWAT analysis on "natural and cultural heritage" (included in the Diagnostic as annex).

2.9 Was there an assessment of needs of the local community and economy?

Yes. There are dedicated chapters and sections on the Diagnosis compiling relevant information on these topics. In addition, in PF meeting a group of local stakeholders did a dedicated SWOT analysis on "quality of life and impact of tourism in the local economy" (included in the Diagnosis as an annexe).

2.10 Was there an assessment of strengths/weaknesses of tourism infrastructure/ services?

Yes. There are dedicated chapters and sections on the Diagnosis compiling relevant information on these topics. In addition, in PF meeting a group of local stakeholders did a dedicated SWOT analysis on “typology of visitors and tourism products” (included in the Diagnosis as an annexe).

Assessment of existing visitors and their needs (B6)

2.11 Was there an assessment of existing visitor patterns and needs?

Yes, but not comprehensive either in geographic terms or in content.

From the report:

(...) the Charter area of Montseny does not have a generalized and standardized system of data collection on visitor types and numbers. (...) Only the Park and the Tourism Consortium “Portes de Montseny” do studies on the type and numbers of visitors. These analysis are made on an independent way, and their results are treated or evaluated jointly.

Dedicated actions are proposed in the action plan to address this issue.

Identification of future visitor markets

2.12 Was there an assessment to identify future visitor markets offering potential?

No. The park has answered “No” to this question and referred to a dedicated action in the action plan to address this issue.

Implementation

2.13 Does the action plan include an indication of phasing/staging of action over time?

Yes, both in the description of each action and with a final table summarising the phasing for all actions, responsible entities, collaborating entities, and budget.

2.14 Does the action plan indicate which stakeholders or partners are responsible for the delivery of each action?

Yes, as well as the collaborating partners. Descriptions are included in the descriptor of each action and in a final table summarising actions.

2.15 What is the size of the budget that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan per year, excluding staffing costs?

The table below was copied from the park’s application report.

Entidad	Presupuesto					TOTAL	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
Parc Natural Montseny	6.600 €	5.400 €	17.300 €	9.300 €	16.300 €	54.900 €	41,69%
Otras entidades	11.200 €	18.600 €	16.500 €	15.500 €	15.000 €	76.800 €	58,31%
Total	17.800 €	24.000 €	33.800 €	24.800 €	31.300 €	131.700 €	100,00%

What is this as a percentage of its total budget?

If we consider the average of the budget from 2011 to 2015 (i.e. 10.980,00 €) and the budget of the park in 2009 (= 7.024.604,93 €), then the park will spend on the implementation of the Charter strategy around 0.16% of its annual budget, excluding staff costs.

2.16 Have funds been provided (or are they being sought) from other sources?

Yes, as seen in the table at 2.15. The values provided do not include man/hours which were presented separately in the report. Eight other institutions from the WG have committed funding (to different degrees) for several different actions. The park is also expecting a financial contribution from around 25 companies to three different actions (application of Charter II; investment in energy efficiencies and renewable; and contribution to conservation).

Every action descriptor included in the action had a previous process of discussion by the WG partners, and the descriptors contain information on expected budget and number of man/hours required for implementation, together with the names of the partners responsible for the provision of these resources.

2.17 Does the level of funding seem reasonable to deliver the proposed action plan?

Yes. The percentage of funding from the park when compared to its total budget seems very small at first glance (0.16%). I asked for the park's detailed total budget to see what was covered normally within it (summarised in table below), and realised that a significant part of its normal budget is already dedicated to expenses relating to resources included in the strategy (like the network of interpretation centres, animation programmes, trails' recovery and maintenance, etc.).

That means the financial contribution of the park to many of the actions is indeed much greater. The park took the option of only listing in its action plan new expenses that are not already incurred normally. As explained before, this park and Charter strategy do not include any major infrastructure projects, new programmes, etc., but most actions are focused on coordination of parties and resources (hence mostly human resources), so the value presented does seem reasonable for these purposes.

Budget from Diputacion of Barcelona	€
Conservation and physical interventions	591.744,3
Promotion of development and participation (includes subsidies to other organizations, trail's maintenance, etc.)	777.577,15
Public use and environmental education (includes the network of information centres, educational programmes, itineraries, etc)	2.189.164,83
General support activities	141.030,71
<i>Sub-total</i>	6.177.489,31
Budget from Diputacion of Girona	
<i>Sub-total</i>	847.115,62
<i>Actions only listed and not separated by topics, but follow similar type of expenses of the Barcelona budget: subsidies (biggest cost), conservation work, environmental education, etc.</i>	
Total	7.024.604,93

2.18 Describe the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan?

The park has not created or assigned a dedicated position to follow the Charter implementation process, but instead will be relying on existing staff. When asked about it, I was told most of the responsibility would fall on the Head of Public Use Unit (Mr. Lluís Velasco) together with hours from other staff members.

The following information was presented in the application report:

For the execution of the Action Plan the Natural Park of Montseny commits, in addition to the financial commitment, 5.691 hours of human resources specified in each action "fiche" and the overall layout of actions.

On the other hand, and as detailed in action "1.1.6 Definition of responsibilities for the follow-up of the Charter Montseny", the Park is the entity assuming the responsibility of such action dedicating 250 hours annually and 3.000€ for contracting of any necessary support services.

2.19 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

Yes. In several action descriptors information was provided on the numbers of staff hours expected from other collaborating entities in the action plan.

2.20 Do you believe the action proposed can be implemented with this level of staffing?

Yes. Given that the action plan doesn't really contain any major projects or investments (but is based on pulling together existing resources), I believe the staffing levels can be appropriate at this stage. However, many of the actions are dependent on staff commitment from other bodies requiring a significant commitment from the park in terms of coordination work.

I had the opportunity to discuss this issue at length with the park and the Charter working group, looking for reassurance that staff commitment would be maintained and central coordination would be provided. I was informed that much of the central coordination is expected to fall both on the park's Head of Public Use and the officer of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny, working in partnership. For many of the other partners, the actions proposed are part of their objectives, so this brings also a level of confidence in their implementation.

Commitment of partners

2.21 Have any formal arrangements been made with partners (such as a legal agreement, a memorandum of understanding or a letter of commitment) for implementation of the strategy and action plan?

No. No formal commitment was signed. From the report:

During the working process of application to the Charter joint work was done from a basis of a verbal agreement of collaboration. To formalize this collaboration, the Action Plan previews the signing of a Charter participation commitment document: Action 1.1.1. Commitment of Collaboration on the Charter.

2.22 Does the protected area have any other formal arrangements with partners for implementation of the strategy and action plan or other methods for ensuring their commitment?

No. No other forms of formal arrangements are considered at the moment.

Explanation provided by the park in the report:

To secure the commitment of the participating entities in the Action Plan development phase, the descriptors of each action make explicit reference to the entities who will be responsible for its development and the ones who will collaborate in its implementation. The attribution of responsibilities was done by consensus in the Working Group and Forum, making its commitment fully accepted by the entities.

I had the opportunity to ask the park and WG about this issue of formal commitments. I had the impression this was still an issue where the park and its partners were not 100% clear on what routes to follow. At the moment the park is considering the option of bilateral agreements with several bodies separately, rather than a common one with all partners (which is also the option mentioned in Action 1.1.1 referred to above). The reasons for this seem to have more to do with the traditional ways of working and formalisation of partnerships the park has always used than anything else. In fact, when asked about it the park does not exclude the possibility of a general signed commitment at this stage.

Monitoring results

2.23 Have sufficient indicators been identified for the monitoring of the success of the strategy/action plan and can these be practically measured?

Yes. Each action descriptor included simple measurable indicators and a comprehensive indicators' list was presented in a table the application report

Addressing key issues

Specific action that the Charter looks for in the action plan, Principles 3 to 10
Indicate below the level of current activity (A) and planned activity (B).

Principle 3 – Protecting natural and cultural heritage

3.1 Monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations A [2] B [2]

The park has a “Monitoring Plan of Ecological Parameters”, a “Conservation Plan” (currently being revised) and a “Public Use Plan”, that together set out the criteria and management processes for monitoring and controlling impacts from tourism and other pressures. The full Charter area, however, is much wider than the park, so the actions proposed address this by trying level out the level of available information on the whole area.

Their purposes are (from the report):

“on a first stage, to collect information regarding the whole Charter area (currently there are different degrees of information for the park and remaining area), and later on to transmit these values with the purpose of conserve and manage them according to the guidelines of the Conservation Plan currently being developed.”

The high visitor pressure on peak times, however, will always make this issue a difficult one for the park to manage.

3.2 Encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions A [3] B [3]

The park and the wider Charter area have several noteworthy programmes running addressing these purposes, including for example:

- “Programme Live the Park”, a programme of scenic, musical, literary, folklore and activities to disseminate natural and cultural heritage. Takes place in all the Charter area.
- “Programme Poetry in the Park”, cycle of poetry in the park managed by the Diputacion of Barcelona, aimed at the general public.
- A range of activities promoted by several enterprises of environmental and cultural education in the Charter area, aimed at school audiences.
- A range of traditional festivities (of religious and popular culture nature) declared of “national interest” happening in several villages in the territory.
- Traditional markets and gastronomic events.

Considering the amount and diversity of actions happening already on the ground, the actions proposed focus mainly on regulation and coordination between organisations, for the selection, level and format of dissemination of information (e.g. “Action 2.1.2 Establishment of criteria for transmission of heritage values” – involving the park, tourism companies and interpretation centres on working groups for the definition of common information and dissemination criteria).

3.3 Action to control development (including tourism) which would adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise A [2] B [2]

These issues are relatively well addressed within the park territory. Its Management Plan regulates development in the territory through zoning in distinct protection categories, specifying the different types and activities allowed in each area. The Plan also includes a section setting eco-efficiency parameters for all new or reconverted buildings.

Within the Charter area there are 3 monitoring stations for atmospheric pollution and several water quality monitoring stations. Together with the municipality of Brull, the park has established a biomass station. Also, at the moment all the park's new equipments are heated with biomass boilers. There is a waste management and recycling system operating in the territory.

In terms of the action plan, the new actions proposed focus mostly on actions directed at the local tourism companies through their engagement on a Charter Part II process and the integration of environmental management criteria in their running.

3.4 Action to reduce tourism activities which adversely affect the quality of landscapes, air and water; use non-renewable energy; and create unnecessary waste and noise A [2] B [2]

The park considers that the work of its rangers' team in enforcing the management plan addresses part of this issue, by detecting and responding to any irregularities in the territory. In addition, the Tourism Quality system ("Q") implemented in the park includes distribution of surveys to visitors where they have the opportunity to report any incidents observed.

3.5 Encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation (e.g. "visitor payback" schemes) A [0] B [1]

No specific action is happening on this theme at the moment, although in this territory some of the interpretation centres are paid (although the payment doesn't necessarily happen linked to a conservation or visitor payback scheme). Two new actions are included to address this topic. One aims to create partnerships and agreements between the land-owners and the tourism companies to develop joint solutions where the tourism sector could contribute the conservation and management of the trails and natural resources they depend upon. The other is a viability study to assess the potential of a "paying for ecosystem services" approach, where visitors and tourism companies could compensate economically the territory landowners for the use of their resources.

Both actions were proposals from the Association of Landowners, and the study will be commissioned by the park. Although the actions were agreed by all collaborating entities, they also reflect the tension between the landowners and the high visitor pressure (and tourism sector by extension), which was observable and openly commented on during my visit. The intentions are good, but it was clear through the conversations that this an area the partners are still at the stage of continuing the debate around their implications, obtaining greater clarity, and assess possible ways forward, rather than being clear on solutions, hence my score of 1. But this is still a good initiative and interesting change of angle to a common difficult subject in most parks, and that is why I also considered it a strength at the beginning of this report.

Principle 4 – Meeting visitor needs/quality of experience

4.1 Surveys to measure visitor satisfaction A [2] B [3]

Several visitor surveys happen at the moment in the territory, though in a disjointed way:

- The park implements its own satisfaction surveys (as part of its Tourism Quality management and accreditation programme).
- Three destinations (Vallès Oriental, Consorci Portes del Montseny y Sant Hilari Sacalm) implement satisfaction surveys as part of a separate quality scheme promoted by the province of Barcelona (SICTED-Sistema Integral de Qualitat Turística Espanyola en Destinacions), therefore only applicable to part of the territory.
- The Tourism Consortium Portes del Montseny had its own visitor survey in 2009, done with visitors to tourism information centres.

The new plan's proposed action is the creation of a single satisfaction survey and approach for the whole territory to be implemented by all parties.

4.2 Identification of future visitor markets and their needs A [1] B [2]

Existing studies of future visitor markets were done by the provinces (Barcelona and Girona) for the whole of their territories - not for the park or Charter area. Specific actions were included to address this (market study for the Charter area).

4.3 Specific provision of facilities and information for disabled people A [2] B [2]

The park has one dedicated accessible trail ("La Font del Frare") located at its most frequented site, and its associated Centre has specific support equipment to loan (support wheels for wheelchairs and handbikes). There is another specific itinerary ("L'Empedrat de Morou") with information material in Braille that can be requested at the visitor centre.

Special education schools participate in the programme "Know our Parks", and the central body of natural areas of Barcelona is currently drafting its "Plan of Accessibility for Natural Areas".

In terms of the next actions, two were proposed: one to produce an inventory of all accessible structures, services and resources in the wider Charter territory, the other to create dedicated tourism products for the area.

4.4 Provision of facilities for economically disadvantaged people A [2] B [2]

The park has not proposed any specific action on this theme, by considering that most of the visitor centres are free (all the park's and municipal ones are free, but not necessarily some of the private ones). This being mostly a territory used for day visits from the neighbouring cities and with very low levels of night stays, I agree this is not really an issue for this particular territory. Nevertheless, the park points to a link with its action to improve access by public transport for people who don't own cars.

4.5 Action to monitor the quality of facilities and services A [3] B [3]

There is very good action happening in terms of quality monitoring since the park has been implementing since 2004 the Tourism Quality accreditation in all its equipments and services (the park was involved in the definition of the scheme at its time, being one of its pilot areas). This requires the park to draft a yearly plan of continuous improvement. In the 2009 plan the implementation of the Charter collaborative process and application to Charter status was one of the objectives.

In terms of monitoring the quality of tourism companies, there is the quality scheme SICTED (referred above in 4.1) although, as mentioned, it only applies to the territory of the province of Barcelona. Over 78 local companies are currently accredited with this quality scheme.

Proposed actions for this have mostly to do with the intended implementation of the Spanish Charter II methodology in the territory, and facilitate access to information on the existing quality schemes available (through training, information material, etc).

4.6 Action to improve the quality of facilities and services A [3] B [3]

Covered by the actions explained above.

Principle 5 – Communication about the area

5.1 Sensitive promotion of the protected area as a destination using authentic images and reflecting capacity/needs of the area, including times and locations A [2] B [3]

The promotional material of the area follows an adequate line for the characteristics of the territory, and I had the opportunity to observe some of this material on site and also through the internet. The official website of the park has comprehensive information on its resources, activities and programmes: how to get there, trails, galleries of videos and images, etc.

(<http://www.diba.cat/parcsn/parcs/index.asp?parc=3>).

Some of the other partner organisations also have comprehensive and well-thought out promotional websites focusing on the strengths and distinctive characteristics of the area, for example:

<http://www.turisme-montseny.com/>
<http://www.portesdelmontseny.com/>
<http://www.turismevalles.net/>
<http://www.osonaturisme.com/> or
<http://www.laselvaturisme.com/index.php>)

However, this diversity also illustrates how the promotion of Montseny – despite being done in a sensitive way – has mostly happened so far in a fragmented way, with the several territorial administrations working separately. The proposed actions address this problem in several ways, including the creation of a common tourism promotion and communication strategy for the charter territory; sharing of information and material between the public and private partners; creation of a common web portal, agenda of events, etc..

5.2 Influence on the promotional activities of others (region, enterprises, etc.)
A [1] B [3]

As explained before, there has been little cooperation and joint work between the regional partners until the start of the Charter process, so although there is plenty of promotional material (due to the popularity of the region) this was not necessarily created in cooperation between the park, other public bodies and within the tourism sector. The actions listed above plan to address this, as well as other actions aimed at strengthening communication channels (from thematic working groups to a web2.0 platform).

5.3 Provision of clear information material on where to go and what to do when in the area (guides, maps, websites – relevant languages) A [3] B [3]

There is an adequate and diverse offer of information material, including leaflets, maps, audiovisual material, trail guides, thematic guides, etc.; several of these are available in several languages. Also some of the institutional and promotional websites (listed above) have versions in several languages.

5.4 Provision of accessible information centres/points for visitors and local people
A [3] B [3]

The network of information centres is quite extensive. The park itself has six information centres and fourteen information points, with different opening times but covering the whole week. The Tourism Consortium Portes del Montseny has five information centres/offices, and the Tourism Consortium of Vallès Oriental has four information centres/offices. In addition, three municipalities have interactive outdoor information points with 24 hour access.

5.5 Process for ensuring that others (especially tourism enterprises) provide good information A [1] B [2]

As explained in 5.2, this has been poor so far. Following successful examples from other Charter areas, the action plan includes provision to have the park cooperating with local tourism companies as information points for the area. Other actions (implementing a Charter II scheme, training, etc.) will also reinforce this aspect.

5.6 Provision of guiding services and an events programme for visitors and local people, including groups and schools A [3] B [3]

Plenty of activities happening, including some of the programmes already referred (e.g. programmes “Know the Park” and “Live the Park”), seminars, thematic weeks, etc. The park has a guided excursion programme happening every Sunday of the year, which has been quite successful and is usually full. Besides the direct services of the park, there are all the activities of the network of enterprises of environmental and cultural education. Again, the proposed actions address mostly a better coordination and communication of the several services and activities already provided in the territory.

Principle 6 – Tourism products relating to the protected area

6.1 Provision/development of tourism offers (special events, holiday programmes, etc.) involving the discovery and interpretation of natural and cultural heritage A [3] B [3]

Plenty of activity happening here, with several special programmes existing in the territory. Some examples:

- “Els 3 Monts” (The 3 Mountains): a 6 stage walking route joining Montseny to other 2 emblematic mountains (Montserrat and Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac);
- Bosc de bruixes i Bandolers: (“Woods of Witches and Bandits”): programme of thematic routes in historic settings, promoted by municipalities;
- “Els pedals d'en Serrallonga”: bike route;
- “Between Montseny and Guillerics”: joint offer of the local museums;
- Modernism in the Montseny;
- amongst many others.... (an extensive list was provided in the diagnostic).

There is also a varied offer of tourism packages run by the private promotional bodies including local accommodation, restaurants and activities. Given the (perhaps excessive?) offer and variety of tourism products and services the main concern of the organizations in the Charter group was with the often low quality of the offer and finding ways to raise it or differentiate the “good from the bad”. Several proposed actions address this, and one includes the definition by the working group of quality and sustainability criteria should identify a product as “destination Montseny”.

6.2 Effective promotion of these offers A [3] B [3]

The territory has no major issues promoting its offers, given its popularity. Considering all that's explained above (diversity and fragmentation of promotional channels, vast network of information centres, etc.), effectiveness of promotion does not seem to be a problem. Instead, harmonisation, coordination and cooperation seems to be more the issue, which the strategy addresses well.

Principle 7 – Training

7.1 Providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the protected area, in sustainable tourism A [0] B [1]

Currently the annual training of the park staff includes a vast offer of training subjects, but little or nothing on sustainable tourism (some indirectly connected subjects that relate to some of the Charter themes are provided, like promotion of local produce, quality and knowledge of the park, but none on tourism-related subjects).

In terms of proposed actions that could address this, the park includes the participation on the Iberian and European Charter meetings and its Environmental Education Strategy, currently under development. I can see how these can contribute to a better awareness of staff, but it is still poor as a contribution towards the intended goals. On the other hand, by the way the strategy and action plan were developed, what this transmits is that the topic of park staff training was not considered an issue on the debates of the diagnostic phase.

Nevertheless, it would be important that the park would pay more attention to this subject, perhaps by cooperating closer with the training provided for tourism enterprises.

7.2 Providing or supporting training of other organisations and tourism enterprises in sustainable tourism A [2] B [3]

The situation with the private sector in terms of training is much better. The tourism administrations and managing bodies operating in the territory already offer training programmes for the local companies, and these are to be reinforced with the actions proposed in the action plan.

Principle 8 – Community involvement and maintaining local quality of life

8.1 Involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area A [2] B [2]

In a way the local communities have some level of representation in the local/regional planning of tourism, by way of the particular governance set up. The two Tourism Consortiums that are part of the WG are public-private partnerships with representation of the local municipalities, and these are again represented in the park's governance bodies: Council and Consulting Commission (with the former having approved the Charter strategy).

However, the consultation and participatory process for the Charter described before in this report illustrates how in the past year the local community had several other opportunities and channels to get involved more directly in tourism planning. These mechanisms (Forum and working group) are set to continue.

8.2 Communication between the protected area, local people and visitors A [2] B [2]

As explained before, the two consulting governance bodies of the park are the official governance mechanisms for continued communication between the park and local stakeholders. Several other more specific dialogue and cooperative platforms exist, like a collaboration agreement between the park and the Association of Landowners and I was told of several others with local interest groups. In terms of communication with visitors, the several information centres guarantee communication from the park to visitors, and the visitor surveys used under the Tourism Quality programme provide the tools for visitor feedback.

8.3 Mechanisms for identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise A [2] B [2]

Same answer of 8.2 applies here.

Principle 9 – Benefits to the local economy and local community

9.1 Promoting the purchase of local products (food, crafts, local services) by visitors and local tourism businesses A [2] B [3]

Another area where this territory is characterised by its abundance. There is a huge number and diversity of traditional and local produce markets, "ferias", gastronomic weeks, promotional events, tasting events, culinary events, etc. However, somewhat paradoxically, these products are not as used by the tourism businesses as one would expect. During the visit I have met several people who commented on the fact that through time local businesses have moved to a standardised approach and products "for the masses" (indistinguishable from any other popular tourism area) and have gradually neglected the local produces. Not all though, and there are some

meritorious exceptions, but even these recognise they are exceptions. But there is a growing recognition that visitors now appreciate and look for “local”, so the ambition of the participants on the Charter group is to strengthen this element with dedicated actions (e.g. a programme for distribution of local produces in restaurants, and a programme of distribution of local products on visitor centres). The park is also involved in an Interreg Project “Rururbal”, aimed at creating a “local produce” certification and local supply chain networks between rural and urban areas.

9.2 Encouraging the employment of local people in tourism A [2] B [2]

Tourism (including restaurants and accommodation) is already an important area in terms of occupation in the region, either as a first or complementary activity. The public sector through the park administration has several financial programmes of support to local companies (including tourism companies) to help secure their economic viability. A specific action to make these programmes more known was proposed. No other new actions were considered for this apart from other actions already referred to before which have indirect impacts on this issue (e.g. training, improving quality of local companies, and tourism-landowners cooperation).

9.3 Development of tourism in association with traditional economic activity (e.g. agriculture) A [2] B [2]

See answer to 9.1 above.

Principle 10 – Managing visitor flows

10.1 Keeping a record of visitor numbers over time and space, including feedback from local tourism enterprises A [2] B [3]

As mentioned earlier, both the park and some of its partners collect visitor data, but this is happening in a uncoordinated way and not covering the full territory. Currently local tourism enterprises don't participate in this collection. Dedicated actions were included to address these issues (common system of visitor data collection, collection of data from tourism enterprises, and counting of vehicles in the park).

10.2 Creating and implementing a visitor management plan A [3] B [3]

The park has a Public Use Plan, aimed at “planning and regulating the public use within the park” (hence not that dissimilar to a visitor management plan), enforced by the park's team. Given the high visitors numbers on weekends, an interesting aspect of this park is its “Personalized Information Display” (Dispositivo de Informacion Personalizada) “[taking place all weekends and bank holidays with the presence of information personnel hired through agreements with the municipalities. These informers work between 10:00 and 15:00, with the exception of some special displays, covering selected areas and situated in selected spots to attend to the high numbers of visitors](#)”. I haven't had the chance to personally observe this system, since the verification visit took place on a Monday and Tuesday.

10.3 Promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars A [2] B [2]

Not much is happening currently in terms of promotion of public transport. The area is a popular walking and cycling destination, but people usually drive there for these activities. Two specific actions were created to address this, one addressing the public transport issue (which includes working with providers in finding solutions) and

one addressing private vehicle management (including parking solutions outside the park in combination with complementary transport systems).

10.4 Controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

A [2] B [2]

The park Management Plan defines the typologies of infrastructures allowed according to the different zoning areas, and outside the park area the urban plans of the municipalities also have limits on the typology of construction, so no new actions were proposed for this issue at this stage.

Any further comments or observations:

None.

ANNEXE I – Programme of verification visit, key sites, people interviewed and organizations.

Lunes 2.05.2011			
Hora	Actividad	Asistentes	Lugar
09:00-09:45	Collection in Santa Coloma de Farners	REPTE (Consulting company contracted as technical secretariat for the Charter application process: Isabel Junquera and Esther Canal)	
10:00-11:00	Meeting with managing team of the park	Joana Barber (Director PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Head of Public Use PN Montseny) Narcís Vicens (PN Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE)	Museum La Gabella, en Arbúcies
11:30-13:00	Meeting with the Charter working group	Joana Barber (PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (PN Montseny) Narcís Vicens (PN Montseny) Melci Fabrer (Tourism Consortium Portes del Montseny) Pili Sala (Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny) Albert Duch (Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona – Regional Tourism Agency) Joan Campañà (Friends of Montseny) Mar Coll (Tourism Association La Selva, Comarca de l'Aigua) Toni Arrizablaga (Consulting Commission) Roser Vives (Associación of Landowners of the Park) Manel Sala (Federation of Tourism Businesses Owners of Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE)	CCEN (Centre Cultural Europeu de la Natura) en Viladrau
13:00-14:00	Separate conversation with Association of Landowners of Montseny (APM) Visit 1: Interpretation Centre Visit to the European Cultural Centre of Natura (CCEN), municipal infrastructure of cultural, social and economic activities. Information point of the park. Centre of research, environmental education and communication (multimedia based) .	Josep Mataró (President of APM) Albert Bosch (Officer of APM) Xavier Lòpez (CCEN) Team PN Montseny Grupo de Trabajo REPTE	CCEN (Centre Cultural Europeu de la Natura) en Viladrau
14:15-16.00	Lunch and conversation with the mayor of Viladrau	Team PN Montseny Grupo de Trabajo	Xalet La Coromina, en Viladrau

		REPTE Francesc X. Bellvehí i Busquets (Alcalde de Viladrau)	
16:00-17:30	Moving sites		
17:30-18:30	Visit 2: Municipality and accommodation company Meeting with the mayor of El Brull and with David Cano, business owner of a rural tourism accommodation (La Morera), subcontracted by the Diputacion of Barcelona.	Ferran Teixidó (Alcalde de El Brull) David Cano (La Morera) Joana Barber (Team PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Team PN Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE) Pili Sala (Associació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny) Joan Campaña ((Amics del Montseny)	La Morera, en El Brull
18:30-19:15	Moving sites		
19:15-21:00	Visit 3: Information point and private company Visit to a private company of aromatic plants "Parc de les Olors", acting both as nursery and educational farm. Visit to information point of Sant Esteve de Palutordera and meeting with the president and secretary of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny	Roberto Eros (Parc de les Olors) Joan Lluís Rojas (Associació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny) Carme Clopés (Associació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny) Joana Barber (Equipo PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Equipo PN Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE) Joan Campaña (Amics del Montseny)	Sant Esteve de Palautordera
	Dinner	Manel Sala (Federació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Equipo PN Montseny) Auditor REPTE	Masferrer, Gualba

Martes 3.05.2011

Hora	Actividad	Assistentes	Lugar
09:45	Visita 4: Forestry sector Visit to the estate of Can Cuch, with the Cuch family, one of the landowning families of the park managing its woods and forests and discussion of issues of forestry and land management and tourism impacts. Visit to millenary oak tree. Explanation on the butterflies of Montseny by Toni Arrizabalaga	Joana Barber (Equipo PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Equipo PN Montseny) Josep Cuch Teresa Cuch Miquel Cuch Toni Arrizablaga (Comissió Consultiva) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE)	Cànoves i Samalús
13:30:00	Visita 5: Agrifood sector Visit to the wine farm of Serrat de Montsoriu and discussion of the issues around traditional agrifood products.	Josep Trallero (wine producer) Pili Sala (Associació d'Empresaris Turístics del Montseny) Joana Barber (Equipo PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Equipo PN Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE)	Sant Feliu de Buixalleu
15:00-19:00	Visita 6: Hospitality sector Lunch and conversation with Josep Monsant, restaurant owner (traditional foods and recipes) and member of the Forums. Final meeting with the park's Director and Head of Public Use	Josep Montsant (Empresario hosteleria) Joana Barber (Equipo PN Montseny) Lluís Velasco (Equipo PN Montseny) Isabel Junquera (REPTE) Esther Canal (REPTE)	Hostal Bell Lloc, Riells