

## RE-EVALUATION Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

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**Name of protected area:** Parc Natural del Montseny,

**Name of verifier:** Amanda Guzmán

**Date of submission of re-evaluation application by protected area:**

**Date of verification visit:** 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> May 2016

**Date of completion of this report:** 24<sup>th</sup> July 2016

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### 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***

During the whole visit I was accompanied at every moment by the technical team of the Park, and I have the opportunity to visit various interest sites of the Park and to meet several private and public stakeholders. Since I was not the verifier five years ago, the visit was very useful to understand the reality of the Park and the progress towards sustainable tourism of the territory.

I attach at the end of the report the full programme, including the sites visited and the corresponding people/organisations contacted at each site (Annex 1).

## **Overall Impressions**

The Parc Natural del Montseny is located in the Provinces of Barcelona and Gerona, in Catalonia, Spain. It is the oldest natural Park in Catalonia and one of the most known of the region.

The Montseny massif was declared Natural Park in 1987, but it was protected by a management urban plan since 1977-78 (Pla Especial), which was revised in 2008. It is an IUCN category 5 Park.

The Park has 31,063.90 ha, from which 8% is the reserve area and 20% is an area of special ecological and landscape interest. 85% of the Park is privately owned. Montseny was designated as Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1978 and extended in 2014 to cover an area of 50,573.00 ha.

Montseny is the largest and highest massif of the pre-littoral mountain range, its relief starts with elevations of under 200 metres to just over 1,700 m. The differences in humidity and temperature of the diverse environments, makes it a natural area with extraordinarily rich vegetation. In the lower areas we can find typically Mediterranean formations of vegetation; in the rainy mid-mountain area, mountain holm oak forests and oak woods; in the areas above 1,000 metres, beech woods and fir trees and on the peaks, scrubland and alpine meadows.

The Park is home to a wide variety of fauna from Mediterranean to alpine. The wooded nature of Montseny largely determines the wildlife that inhabits the area. The most unique species is the Montseny brook newt, the only endemic vertebrate of the massif, listed as "critically endangered".

The presence of human activity from the Palaeolithic in the Montseny has given the territory an important historical, cultural and ethnographic heritage. In the Montseny, like in many other forest areas, forests have been the driving force of the rural economy over the centuries.

The Park limit is 40 kilometres from Barcelona and 20 kilometres from the sea. The central municipality of the Park – Montseny – is less than one hour from the city of Barcelona (1.6 million inhabitants) and its metropolitan area (1.6 million inhabitants). As a result, the Park has a high number of visitors estimated from 75,000 to 1 million per year. In 2014 the Park received in its facilities 178,593 visitors, 94% from Catalonia, 4% from the rest of Spain and 1% from abroad. The average length of the visit is 4 hours, and they have a high level of repetition.

Tourism is an important sector of the area, but according to the kind of visitors, most part of tourism businesses are restaurants.

## Comments on the application from the Charter area and re-evaluation visit:

The area of implementation of the sustainable tourism Strategy and Action Plan – the Charter Area - is much larger than the Park with 82,076.56 ha., where the Park represents the 28%. The Charter Area have 27 municipalities, 9 of which are completely outside the Park but they have a traditional link to the massif of Montseny and regarding tourism they act as gates to the Park, so it is very positive that those municipalities are incorporated into the Strategy and the participation structures.

The population of the 18 municipalities of the Park is 51,157 inhabitants of which 1,328 live inside the Park (2.6%). The Charter Area has a total population of 113,435 inhabitants and the different municipalities have varied population from 200 to 17,000 habitants.

The Park is managed with a comprehensive technical team and has an average annual budget of 5 million €, contributed by the two Provincial Councils (*Diputaciones de Gerona y Barcelona*).

However, the Charter Area has a very complex administrative landscape: 2 provinces (Gerona and Barcelona), three “comarcas” (Osana, La Selva y el Valles Oriental) and 27 municipalities. As a result, there are different public entities with competence in tourism planning, development and promotion: the Regional Government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*), the Provincial Councils of Barcelona and Gerona (*Diputacions*), the County Councils (*Consells Comarcals*) and the Town Councils themselves. The private sector and local community is equally fragmented.

Therefore, the great challenge of the territory and where the efforts have been focused during the previous period is to ensure proper coordination and cooperation between the different private and public entities to work together towards sustainability. A significant progress has been made in this issue due to the proper composition and functioning of the participation structures: the Permanent Forum, the Working Group and the thematic working groups.

During the last five years the Park provided enough dedication of its technical team to the Charter and hired an external consultant company (REPTE) for the Charter Secretariat. This combination had good results and has been considered positive to have an external and expert view during the process. It was very important the work of coordination, enhancement and monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan performed by the Park and the Charter Secretariat to achieve the main progress mentioned below. Although, due to the economic crisis and the municipal elections, there were some difficulties to fully implement the Action Plan 2011-2015.

The review of the Strategy and the definition of the Action Plan 2016-2020 were carried out through an intense participatory process in the framework of the mentioned structures. There has been a self-critical analysis made by the territory and measures have been taken to address the main weaknesses identified: lack of involvement of municipalities, too broad actions (not specific enough), not clear methodologies for the coordination of the involve entities in some actions, etc.

The new Action Plan consists of 42 actions and focus mostly on coordination and collaboration activities and most actions will be developed by the own staff of the partner entities. Therefore - excluding an action with an investment of € 1.3 million and the staff costs - the budget of the Action Plan for the next 5 years is € 154.436. It is quite low.

However, the Action Plan addresses the main sustainability issues for the Park and if the actions are implemented as planned, its implementation will mean a significant improvement in coordination, the offer of sustainable and accessible tourism products, the information provided to visitors, infrastructures and walking trails in less visited areas, environmental management of public entities and tourism businesses, the use of public transport instead of private cars, quality of tourist offer, better knowledge of visitors, promotion of local products, etc.

The Park has elaborated a very complete dossier of documents for the application, although, it would have been helpful finding in the section “Addressing key issues” (Principles 3 to 10) a brief overview of the specific progress in these areas, and not just the list of actions with cross reference to some general results.

During the visit I had the opportunity to meet and interview different local stakeholders involved in the process, which allowed me to better understand the current situation and the progress made during the last 5 years. It has been essential to understand the functions and the degree of involvement of the key entities. Unfortunately, I couldn't finally meet the representative of the Tourism Board of the Provincial Council of Barcelona, which would have been interesting.

## Verifier's assessment

### **Overall comment on the progress of the Charter area and its partners over the past five years:**

The Park was already developing a good work in terms of planning and management nature conservation and public use (visitors) and there was already an extensive network of facilities and information points, a wide range of activities for visitors, inhabitants, groups and schools and a good set of information materials about the Park. During these years the Park has maintained and even improved these infrastructures, materials and activities.

In the last five years, the main progress towards sustainable tourism has been the improvement of relationships, communication and collaboration among the different entities (public and private). This achievement has been possible thanks to their participation in the Permanent Forum, the Working Group and the thematic working groups. As mentioned before, this is major issue in a territory with such a complex institutional landscape.

The participation structures have consolidated in the last years and there is a high involvement of the main stakeholders. This new period begins with a clear commitment of the Town Councils to be more involved, except from Sant Pere de Vilamajor who did not want to participate in this period.

There is also a high involvement of the tourism businesses and through the implementation of the Charter Part II - with participated and demanding criteria – 10 tourism businesses became finally Charter Partners and therefore are deeply and directly committed with the implementation of the sustainable tourism principles. The Park is really distinguishing them among the others, based on their collaboration agreement.

Regarding the rest of the sustainability issues, there has been very interesting initiatives to promote the purchase of local products by companies and visitors and to identify walking routes near town centres and public transport in order to relieve the most crowded areas of the Park.

In terms of visitor pressure in the Park, the situation has not change significantly. There is still a large number of visitors, mostly day-visitors and many of them concentrated in certain times and locations. There is not a significant change in the type of visitors, according to the Park's data, but there has not been any global and deep assessment including data from tourist administrations and businesses, to take into account also the visitors that do not pass by the Park's facilities.

During the last 5 years the efforts were focussed on improving coordination and due to some difficulties mentioned in question 2.3, finally several interesting actions of the previous Action Plan couldn't be implemented, especially those aimed at establishing common strategies, analysis and criteria covering the whole Charter Area: define the criteria to identify sustainable tourist products, inventory of accessible facilities and resources, try to homogenize the system to collect and analysis of information about visitors, define a common satisfaction survey, define solutions to promote public transport and reduce the use of private cars, define a common communication and promotion strategy, etc.

Some of these actions have been included in the Action Plan 2016-2020 to be implemented during the next five years, the others have been rejected for considering them as not viable.

### **Main strengths: (relating to the Charter process and related tourism activities in this Charter area)**

#### Participation, communication and collaboration

The Charter Area has now several participation structures: the Permanent Forum, the Working Group and thematic working groups. Their representativeness and good functioning allow to strengthen relationships and communication between local stakeholders, not only in the field of tourism but also in many others.

Worthy of note is the involvement of local tourism enterprises and the County Councils, that have also included in their management plans the sustainable tourism principles and the actions they are responsible of. The Tourism Board of the Provincial Council (*Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava*) is also highly involved and considers Montseny and other Charter Parks in its promotional Strategy. It is also very positive the commitment of participation that the Town Councils have recently assumed, which will facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan in the following years.

Finally, it highlights also the close collaboration between the Charter Tourism Businesses and the Park, formalized by the collaboration agreements of Charter Part II.

All this is possible thanks to the good work of leadership and coordination made by the Park and its Charter Technical Secretariat, who made a major effort to disseminate information to Forum members and applied a successful methodology for the meetings (before, during and after).

In a territory with such an institutional complexity, proper participation, communication and collaboration are the essential tools to enable progress towards sustainable tourism.

#### Facilities, materials and activities to discover the Park values

The Park has an extensive network of facilities that allow visitors to discover the natural and cultural values of the Park, such as walking trails, interpretive centres, environmental education centres, etc. During the last five years the stakeholders made an effort to identify several walking trails in less visited areas, close to town centres and public transport, which enhance discovering the values of the whole Charter Area and also help to relieve the most crowded areas.

The Park has also a large number and variety of materials about the Park, where to go and what to do, including web pages, leaflets, maps, audiovisual material, trail guides, thematic guides, etc. As well as a wide offer of activities offered by Park staff or by concessionaires aimed at visitors, residents, groups and schools - some of them adapted for people with disabilities - that promote knowledge, respect and preservation of biodiversity and local culture.

There is also a good supply of facilities, information materials and activities offered by the other entities of the territory.

#### Network of information points

One of the main tools to manage visitor flows and their behaviour is to have a good network of facilities and enough staff to provide good information.

The Park has an extensive network of information points with 6 information centres and 15 information points. In addition, the Park has the Personalized Information Service - during weekends and holidays - consisting of several information agents located in points of higher

influx of visitors. This information service is offered directly by the Park staff or through partnerships with several municipalities.

### Quality Management System

The Park has a Quality Management System for the public use area since 2004, certified yearly by the Institute Tourism Quality of Spain (ICTE) in accordance to the norm UNE-ISO 18065:2016 "Tourism and related services -- Tourist services for public use provided by Natural Protected Areas Authorities – Requirements".

This means that:

- The Park has defined and documented the proper way of operating and appropriate maintenance of the Park's public services and facilities, taking into account quality standards.
- The Park ensures a good quality of its facilities and services.
- All the Park staff related to public use department is involved in the definition, implementation and maintenance of the quality management System.
- There is permanent control of operation and quality of Park services and facilities.
- The Park takes permanent control of visitor flows and visitor satisfaction.
- Depending on the results, the Park defines an Annual Quality Improvement Plan with specific goals and actions.
- The quality management system is audited every year by an authorised certifier.

Therefore, this certification confirms that the Park has an effective mechanism to monitor and improve the quality of its facilities and services for visitors.

### Wide offer of activities and products related to local culture and traditions

In the Charter Area there is a wide range of cultural activities, events, conferences, fairs, and tourist products that promote local culture, traditions, cuisine, food products and artisan products. These activities are offered by different entities and represent an important tool to support the maintenance of local culture and traditions.

In addition, there are very good examples of restaurants offering local products and local gastronomy, and several interesting initiatives to spread this good examples to other local businesses. (See question 9.1)

### Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny

In a highly fragmented territory by the administrative boundaries, the work of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny is very important because it brings together about 70 tourist companies in the whole Charter Area to work together for the tourism development and promotion. It is the only entity who really works with the scope of the Charter Area.

Furthermore, the Association has adopted the sustainable tourism principles and has included in its own annual planning the commitments assumed in the Charter Action Plan. The association is highly involved in the Working Group and the Forum and it has a close collaboration with the Park to encourage tourism businesses to participate in the Charter Process and in the implementation of the Charter Part II. In these years the association has developed several interesting actions to improve knowledge of businesses about the values and resources of the Charter Area, to link restaurants and local producers and to promote tourism offers to discover the Park. The Association distinguish in its promotional materials the businesses adhered to different quality and sustainability schemes, including the Charter.

All this activity is possible because the association has a good technical staff hired, , which is also supported by the board of the association.

## The Charter Technical Secretariat

Part of the Park's technical team has been involved in the process of driving, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan: the Director of the Park, the Head of Public Use and a Technical of Public Use. In addition, the Park has hired the services of an external consultant company highly experienced in the Charter methodology that has helped with all these tasks of the Charter Secretariat. It was valued positively by different stakeholders to have an external view during the process.

The involvement of the highest authority of the Park and the allocation of adequate human and economic resources for the Charter coordination has made that the participatory process and its results finally met the expectations created during the application process five years ago, and allowed to consolidate the participation and collaboration mentioned above.

## **Main weaknesses: (relating to the Charter process and related tourism activities in this Charter area)**

### High pressure of visitors

Montseny receives a large number of visitors estimated approximately from 750,000 to 1 million per year, which means between 15 and 20 visitors per inhabitant. The main motivation of the visit is to enjoy outdoor activities (hiking, short walks, mountain bike routes, etc.) and most of the visitors arrive to the Park by private cars. It should be added that most of the visits are often concentrated on weekends and holidays, with higher concentration problems in autumn and spring. This reality, besides affecting the quality of the visit, generates a series of environmental impacts: litter, erosion of trails, people leaving the trails into the natural areas, etc. The high pressure of visitors also generates conflicts with landowners.

Despite the efforts of the Park and the partner entities, this problem is difficult to solve, given that the Park is less than an hour far from a population of more than 3 million people and that Montseny is one of the most known protected area in Catalonia.

### Low impact of visitors in local economy

Most visitors spend less than one day visiting the Park. According to the data collected in the Park facilities, the average stay is only 4 hours and very few visitors stay overnight.

This implies that the impact on the local economy through the purchase of local products and services is very low and not proportional at all to the high pressure of visitors.

In addition, the use and promotion of local products is not generalized in the high number of restaurants located in Montseny.

### Institutional complexity

The Charter Area covers 27 municipalities, belonging to 3 different counties and 2 provinces. Therefore there is a high number of public and private entities involved in conservation, tourism and local development. As a result, there is a great difficulty in establishing common strategies and actions throughout the Charter Area, which is not managed as a tourist destination but as a part and a resource for several different destinations, in most cases.

However, a significant progress has been made increasing collaboration among the different stakeholders and several actions address this issue in the coming years.

While the participation of the Tourism Board of the Regional Government (Generalitat de Catalunya) it is still an outstanding issue.



### Lack of knowledge of current and future markets

Regarding the current markets, the Park has tried to compile the results of several analysis and information from different partner entities, but it seems that the information compiled was not finally useful. There has been also an attempt to collect and analyze information about visitors in the whole Charter Area in coordination with different entities, but this action couldn't be completed either.

Therefore, no tools have been created to better know the number, characteristics and distribution of tourists in the whole Charter Area, and not only in the Park and those that pass by the Park's facilities.

Until now there has not been either an analysis of potential markets that would be interesting for the territory to attract tourist with longer stays and higher impact on local economy, as well as with higher environmental awareness.

To create sustainable and accessible tourist products and effectively promote them, a better knowledge of current and potential markets is essential.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for the Charter area:**

Regarding all the information given in this report, some recommendations can be proposed:

#### 1. - Definition of main objectives and their indicators

A significant work has been done to define a Strategy and Action Plan, in which various lines of work and many actions have been identified to progress towards sustainable tourism. It is also planned to monitor the implementation of those actions and to inform the partner entities about the results.

However, it would be advisable to define briefly in the Strategy what kind of tourism is sought primarily for the Charter Area (kind of tourists, kind of activities, etc.) and the main objectives to be achieved with the implementation of the Action Plan (nor many), as well as their monitoring indicators to analyse the actual evolution. For example, an objective could be to increase the length of stay of visitors or to increase the percentage of foreign visitors or achieve a higher impact on local economy. Measuring the evolution of those main indicators would allow the partners to communicate more effectively the benefits and results to public administrations, tourism businesses and the general public.

It is also recommended to make an assessment of the evolution of the number, type and distribution of visitors and private tourist businesses (accommodation, restaurants, activities, etc.) at the end of the 5 year period, to see also the impact of the Action Plan and the current situation of the tourism sector.

#### 2. - Identification and selection of potential markets to create tourism products

It is recommended to develop an assessment and an identification of potential markets of special interest for the Charter Area. The kind of tourists that would help the territory to progress towards sustainable tourism: more responsible, with longer stays and with higher impact in local economy. It would be advisable to analyse their needs to adapt consequently the destination (information materials, facilities, training) and to design specific tourist products and make a properly targeted promotion.



### 3. - Visitor contribution to conservation

The high number of visitors and their emotional link to Montseny make the Charter Area a very suitable territory to implement mechanisms by which visitors can contribute to nature conservation and the maintenance of facilities (visitor's payback schemes). This would allow the Park to convert one of the main problems in part of the solution. There is a pilot activity planned in the Action Plan.

### 4. – Training on sustainable tourism for the Park staff

The Park staff in charge of the Carter are improving their knowledge on tourism and its sustainability through the meetings of the participation structures, the collaboration with tourism entities, the Charter seminars and the implementation of Charter Part II. However, it would be recommended to provide the Park staff with specific training programs on sustainable tourism issues, for example, they could attend to the courses aimed at tourism businesses or tourism administrations.

### 5. - Raise awareness of visitors about private property and forestry sector in the Park

One of the existing conflicts is the one between the visitors and private landowners, since 85% of the Park is privately owned and there is a high pressure of visitors in the Park. Therefore, it would be advisable to raise awareness of visitor about the high percentage of private land and about the important role that the traditional and current forestry sector has played to maintain the forests in the Park. Information materials, interpretation materials and specific guided activities to know more about the forestry sector could be developed.

### 6. – Improve dissemination of the Charter process, the entities involved and the results

The Park is doing a good job promoting the Charter, the process, the entities involved (e.g. Charter Partner Businesses) and the monitoring results.

It would be advisable that not only the Park but also the partner entities and businesses disseminate - with simple, clear and attractive messages - their commitment to sustainability, their collaboration with the Park and the accreditation with the Charter, in order to distinguish the territory for its commitment to sustainability and take advantage of it. Every partner entity could at least have a link in their web pages to the web site of the Park and the specific site of sustainable tourism.

When talking about public administrations as the County Councils, the tourism boards of the Provincial Councils (Diputaciones) and the Regional Government (Generalitat), it would be advisable that they also support the actions and distinguish the Charter Partner Businesses in their promotional materials and activities.

The improvement on the dissemination of the benefits and the results of the implementation of the Action Plan would be also helpful to increase involvement and support of public administrations, private businesses and local population. After all, these are companies with guaranteed legality and quality, with a firm commitment to sustainability and with a signed collaboration agreement with the Park.

### **Recommendation on re-award of the Charter:**

Attending to all that was said above, the application of the Park meets the Charter principles and requirements, the Strategy and Action Plan has been revised and drawn up in cooperation with main stakeholders and its implementation will encourage a sustainable tourism development in the Charter Area.

***Please check one box***

**I recommend that the protected area be re-awarded the Charter.**

**I do not recommend that the protected area be re-awarded the Charter.**

*In order to put a cross in the relevant box, please double click on the box you want to mark. A dialogue box "Check Box Form Field Option" should open. Click under "Default Value" where it says "Checked", then OK, and the proper box should have a cross in it.*

## General information about the Charter area - Section A of questionnaire

- I. **Has full and clear factual information been supplied by the Charter area in answer to sections A1 – A14 of the Application Report framework? 2**

Yes. Just some more information about tourism structure (history and type of tourism in the area) and private tourism businesses (number, type, distribution and evolution) would have been helpful.

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

No

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

No.

- IV. **Are you satisfied that the information supplied is accurate? 2**

Yes

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

No

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## Meeting the Charter principles - Section B of questionnaire

*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**, please.*

## Principle 1 – Partnership with local tourism stakeholders

### 1.1 Briefly describe the current structure of the forum (or equivalent arrangement) through which the protected-area authority works with others on the development and management of tourism, including current size and membership, frequency of meetings, etc.:

**3**

The **Permanent Forum** (PF) is an open and wide participation body where appear as adherents 56 entities and 65 tourism businesses:

- 2 Environmental departments of the Provincial Council (Barcelona and Gerona).  
The Park's managers
- 2 Tourism Boards of the Provincial Councils (Gerona and Barcelona)
- 21 Town Councils
- 3 County Councils (Area of tourism)
- 5 Tourism associations (guides, entrepreneurs, etc.)
- 2 Environmental associations
- 4 Environmental centres and museums
- 4 Information points and tourism offices
- 2 Hiking associations
- 1 Landowners association
- 1 Neighbour association
- 1 Hunting association
- 1 Fishing association
- 1 Agroforestry agent
- 1 Huts Association of Montseny
- 65 tourism businesses (10 Charter Partner Businesses)

The PF usually meets 2 times per year with an average of 2 hours per meeting. The Park coordinates the meetings and adapts the methodology to the contents and objectives. The Park evaluates the satisfaction of the participants with a survey at the end of each meeting. The results show that the participants are quite satisfied.

The degree of attendance to the meetings is variable. There are 30 to 50 participants in every meeting, although the participation has increased in the last years. Around 30 entities participated in 60% of the meetings and the average level of attendance of the tourism businesses is 50%.

There is another smaller participation structure – the **Working Group** - that performs the technical work of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan, as well as defining a new one after 5 years. The WG meets 3 or 4 times per year and it's formed by:

- The Park
- 2 Tourism Boards of the Provincial Councils (Barcelona and Gerona)
- 3 County Councils (Area of Tourism)
- The Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny
- The Association of Landowners of Montseny
- 5 representatives of Town Councils
- A local agrifood producer
- 2 members of the Advisory Committee of the Park

These two structures have a good representation of the main local stakeholders and a good functioning. It is remarkable the work of coordination made by the Park.

The participants themselves have identified a lack of involvement of the Town Councils but several agreements and actions have been planned to solve it in the next five years.

## **How has this forum developed or changed over the past five years (in terms of its work, membership and the partnerships within it)?**

Due to changes of representatives, the disappearance of the Tourism Consortiums because of the economic crisis and the municipal elections in 2015, it can be said that it is recently that the Forum and the Working Group are really consolidated.

The members and their participation have been increasing during the last five years.

The forum has met more frequently than planned, thanks to the involvement and interest of the members.

### **1.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved?**

**3**

Yes, tourism businesses are involved in both structures.

In the PF they are represented by several associations and 65 businesses are direct members with varying degrees of attendance to the meetings.

In the WG they are represented by the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny that covers the whole Charter Area. The technician of the Association is the one that usually participates in the meetings.

### **Please describe how the Charter area has progressed and strengthened relationships with local businesses:**

The Park has closer links with tourism businesses thanks to the participation structures mentioned and the thematic working groups. And especially thanks to the implementation of the Charter Part II because the Park has signed collaboration agreements with 10 tourism businesses, all of them highly involved in the Charter and committed to sustainability.

### **Have any schemes been set up to link businesses more closely with the Charter area/Charter implementation?**

*Such schemes are not obligatory for re-award of the Charter*

Yes, the Charter Part II. 10 businesses are actually adhered to the Charter.

The Park and its partners have defined quite interesting minimum requirements of involvement and participation in the Forum for tourism businesses to obtain and maintain the distinction of Charter Partner Business.

### **1.3 Has involvement of the following key groups progressed satisfactorily over the past five years?**

#### **1.3.1 The local community?**

**2**

Yes. The local community has been represented by the Town Councils and several associations (neighbourhood associations, hunters, fishermen, hiking centres, etc.) that have participated in the PF.

There has been an active participation of the Landowners Association and the Association of Friends of Montseny.

#### **1.3.2 Conservation interests?**

**3**

Yes. Besides the Park, the conservationist association of "Friends of Montseny" and the Natural Science Museum of Granollers have been highly involved. Other

associations and environmental centres and museums with the aim of conservation have participated in the PF meetings.

### 1.3.3 Wider (regional) bodies responsible for tourism, conservation and regional development?

**2**

Yes, there has been a high involvement of the County Councils (*Consells Comarcals*) and the tourism boards of the Provincial Councils of Barcelona and Gerona (*Diputaciones Provinciales*).

However, there has been no involvement of the Tourism Board of the Regional Government of Catalonia, with important competence on tourism planning, development and promotion. The Park has invited this entity to participate and maintains them informed about the process.

### 1.3.4 Any other key groups (please state which), either within or outside the formal partnership structure described above, which have been actively involved? **2**

Noteworthy is the involvement of the Association of Landowners of Montseny, considering that 85% of the Park is private.

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## Principle 2 – Sustainable tourism Strategy and Action Plans

### Implementation over the past 5 years

#### 2.1 Overall comment on the progress of the Charter area towards excellence in sustainable tourism, bearing in mind where it started from five years ago

The Park states that the main progress achieved in these five years has been improving trust and collaboration between the various entities of the territory, and that most of them have incorporated into their own plans and daily work the sustainable tourism principles and their responsibilities in the Charter Action Plan. This has been possible thanks to the composition, consolidation and proper functioning of the participation structures.

It is also stressed the more direct involvement of tourism businesses in moving towards sustainable tourism thanks to the implementation of Charter Part II as well as the main public tourism entities clearly opting for a model of sustainable tourism.

I give an overall comment on the progress of the Charter Area in page 4 (*Overall comment on the progress of the Charter area and its partners over the past five years*).

#### 2.2 Could all of the planned actions be implemented? If not, how much of the Action Plan was implemented (estimate)?

Not all the actions could be implemented: 46% have been fully developed, 28% partially developed and 26% have not been even initiated.

It is a degree of implementation a bit low, considering that the Action Plan 2011-2015 had 50 actions and a budget of €131,700. The budget was considerably low because the Action Plan focused mainly on coordination work and dedication of staff of the various entities involved.

### **2.3 Main reason for the Charter area not being able to complete the full programme (if applicable)?**

The main reasons have been:

- Delay in the beginning of the implementation of the Action plan (almost a year).
- Change of representatives in the participation structures due to the disappearance of the Tourism Consortiums in 2013 and the municipal elections. So the WG was not consolidated until 2014.
- Economic crisis that affected the provision of staff of several entities and some investments.
- Low involvement of some local entities. As a result, several surveys, analysis and inventories covering the whole Charter Area couldn't be completed.
- Difficulty of coordination in actions requiring the involvement of the wide and complex network of entities of the territory.

### **2.4 What are the most positive achievements in your view?**

The main achievements in my view are the improvement in participation and involvement of the different entities of the Charter Area and the good relationships and collaboration between the Park and the rest of the public and private stakeholders, given the institutional complexity of the territory. This has been possible thanks to the Park efforts to enhance and coordinate the Charter process and thanks to the consolidation of the participation structures.

Other outstanding achievement is the successful implementation of the Charter Part II, defining in cooperation clear and demanding requirements for the tourism businesses as well as clear commitments of the Park to support and promote the Charter Partner Businesses. Charter Part II has enabled the Park to distinguish really committed companies and strengthen cooperation with them, which has been highly satisfying for both sides.

It is also worth mentioning the identification of new walking trails close to town centres in collaboration with local entities to promote less visited sites of the Charter Area and the interesting initiatives to promote the purchase of local products by tourism businesses and visitors

### **2.5 What are the main challenges still faced?**

The main issue for tourism sustainability in the Park is the large number of visitors and their temporal and spatial concentration with the subsequent impacts, followed by the short stays and the little impact of most part of visitors on the local economy.

Therefore, the main challenge is to manage the visitor flows to reduce the concentration in some areas of the Park and the use of private vehicles. As well as attracting tourists with longer stays, coming out of season and with higher impact on local economy. In this regard it is still a pending issue to identify those potential markets and their needs, in order to adapt the destination, create specific tourist products and finally make a targeted promotion.

It remains a challenge to achieve the coordination of the different stakeholder to collect and analyse information about resources, tourist offer and tourist demand in the Charter Area as a whole. As well as defining common criteria and a strategy for sustainable promotion.

It is also a challenge that not only the Park but also the partner entities and businesses disseminate - with simple, clear and attractive messages - their commitment to sustainability, their collaboration with the Park and the accreditation



with the Charter, in order to distinguish the territory for its commitment to sustainability and take advantage of it.

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### Monitoring results

#### 2.6 Has the Charter area monitored the results of its Action Plan over the past five years? **3**

The Park and its Charter Secretariat have developed an excellent monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan. There are annual monitoring reports (*Memorias del Plan de Acción*) offering detailed information about the tasks developed, the degree of compliance with the objectives, the results of the monitoring indicators, the cost of the implementation, etc. Proper dissemination of these reports has been done in the PF and WG meetings and these are available in the Park's web page.

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### Recommendations from the verifier and Evaluation Committee

#### 2.7 Have the specific recommendations made by the verifier and Evaluation Committee at original evaluation 5 years ago been addressed? **2**

Please list the recommendations and give a score for each:

1.- Better engagement of visitors in contributing to the area. **0** It was not studied or implemented any scheme that allows the large number of visitors to contribute to conservation. There were two actions planned that have not been developed.

2.- Reposition with the public what Montseny "is" and that is a natural Park with a living community. **2** A fair called "Window to Montseny" was held and some interesting initiatives to promote local products have been developed.

3.- Maintain momentum with careful management (coordination, mediation, a dedicated "Charter person"..) **3** The Park provided enough staff and the Charter Secretariat enabled to maintain and increase the involvement and satisfaction of local entities with the Charter process..

4.- Training for staff on sustainable tourism **2** Park staff have attended various seminars of the Charter, meetings with tourism entities and has received specific training for the implementation of the Charter Part II.

5.- The Park needs to have 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. **3** The composition and good current operation of the PF and the WG is allowing local entities to improve their collaboration and to assume the model of sustainable tourism and the aim of reducing the pressure and impacts of visitors in the Park.

6.- The Park should network with other protected areas near urban centres in other countries, such as Italy or the United Kingdom. **0** There has not been any specific action or project in collaboration with other Parks with similar problems.

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### *Resources for implementation*

**2.8 How did the budget available for implementation of the Action Plan develop over the past five years?**

The economic crisis and the changes in the entities responsible for the actions have led to a diminution of the financial and available human resources for the Action Plan.

**2.9 Were the financial resources available for implementation more, less or the same as originally planned?**

Less than originally planned. Approximately 50% of both the estimated budget and the human resources were finally provided. Although the initial budget was already low (131,700 €).

**2.10 Were they sufficient for implementation of the plan?**

No. The provision of human resources couldn't be as expected due to the reasons given above (2.8).

**2.11 Have there been changes in staffing levels, both in the Charter area generally and in the staff dealing with tourism issues, over the past five years?**

The Park staff dedicated to the Charter and the Public Use has not suffered any reduction, but the person covering the position of the Technician of Public Use of the Park changed in 2014.

However, there have been substantial changes in some partner entities as the disappearance of the Tourism Consortiums. Their responsibilities in the Action Plan were assumed by the County Councils where there was less staff available for the Charter.

**2.12 Has the level of staffing affected implementation of the Action Plan?**

Yes, it affected the implementation of the Action Plan as it was focused on collaboration and coordination actions to be developed by their own staff.

## Plans for the next five years

### Revision of Strategy, new Action Plan

#### 2.13 Has the tourism Strategy been revised for the next five years?

3

Yes.

#### 2.14 Has a new Action Plan been prepared for the Charter area and its partners?

3

Yes

#### 2.15 How are the Strategy and new Action Plan presented (in terms of documents)?

Two documents, the Strategy and the Action Plan 2016-2020.

#### 2.16 Briefly describe the process(es) and timetable(s) for both reviewing/revising the Strategy and developing the new Action Plan with the partners, making reference to the forum or partnership structures described under question B1 above and the involvement of local stakeholders.

From the report:

Date	Meeting	Contents and methodology	Nº participants
04/03/2015	Working Group	Schedules and topics for the re-evaluation. Explanatory session.	10
20/05/2015	Forum	Assessment of the Action Plan 2011-2015 (decision to maintain, amend or discard the actions). Identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of participation. Participatory session.	38
30/06/2015	Working Group	Work in groups to assess the period 2011-2015. Participatory session.	13
15/07/2015	Forum	Work on the description of the actions 2016-2020. Participatory session.	43
14/10/2015	Working Group	Work in groups to define in detail the Action Plan. Participatory session	15
12/11/2015	Forum	Approval of the new area of the implementation of the Charter. Work in groups to specify certain aspects of the Action Plan. Approval of the Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020. Participatory session	44
24/11/2015	Coordination Committee (Park)	Approval of the re-evaluation Dossier	-
16/12/2015	Forum	Approval of the Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020. Signing of the Charter Principle	53

An excellent participation process was developed to revise the sustainable tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

**2.17 How does the tourism Strategy relate to the protected-area management plan?**

The Park has various management plans (Special Plan, Conservation Plan, Plan for Monitoring the Ecological Parameters, Public Use Plan, Environmental Education Plan, etc.). The objectives of the tourism Strategy are compatible with this particular planning and in particular, the principles and methodology of the Charter are part of the Public Use Plan.

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

No

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*Assessment (see notes in self-assessment questionnaire)*

**2.19 Has there been any further assessment of natural and cultural resources, their sensitivities (capacity) and opportunities for tourism? 2**

The Park has an inventory of natural and cultural heritage, and there is an ongoing action to inventory the resources of the municipalities outside the Park (Action 2.1.1). While it is not known to what extent there is an evaluation of the fragility and opportunity for tourism.

**2.20 Has there been any further assessment of visitor patterns and needs? 1**

The Park monitors the characteristics of the visitor that go to the Park's visitor centres and information points. But there is not a broader assessment for the whole Charter Area.

**2.21 Has there been any further assessment of future visitor markets offering potential? 0**

A specific studio about potential markets was planned but it couldn't be developed.

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*Implementation*

**2.22 Does the new Action Plan include an indication of phasing/staging of action over time?**

**3**

Yes

**2.23 Does the Action Plan indicate the relevant stakeholders or partners for each action?**

**3**

Yes, it is specified in every action the description, the timetable, the responsible entities and collaboration entities, the monitoring indicators, the estimated budget and human resources needed and the source of funding.

**2.24 What is the size of the budget that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the new Action Plan per year, excluding staff costs?**

The total budget of the Park for the implementation of the Action Plan is €109,126, representing an annual budget of €21,825.

**What is this as a percentage of its total budget?**

This is equivalent to 0.41% of the budget Park in 2014.

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

Yes.

The Town Council of Santa Maria de Palau Tordera has included in the Action Plan the restoration project of the train station and the staff needed to provide services and activities there. This action is € 1,290,000 (97% of the total budget). If this action is excluded, the total budget of the Action Plan excluding staff costs is €154,436 €. The Park provides 70% and the rest of entities €45,310 (30%), most of it provided by other two municipalities.

**2.26 Do you judge the level of funding already secured/applied for to be sufficient to meet the action proposed?**

**2**

Yes, it is considered sufficient. In general, the Action Plan doesn't require large investments. Most of the actions are developed by the staff of the partner entities.

**2.27 What is the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the Action Plan?**

The Park Director, the Head of Public Use and the Technician of Public Use will participate in the Action Plan implementation, and other Park staff will be involved in several actions.

**2.28 Is staffing being provided from other sources?**

Yes, the partner entities identified as responsible or collaborating agents in the actions will provide their own staff.

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

Yes

## Commitment of partners

### 2.30 Is there a good indication of commitment from other partners to implementing the new Action Plan? **3**

Yes. There is a strong commitment of the entities involved in the Action Plan.

There has been an official approval of the Action Plan by the Coordination Council of the Park and a public event for signing the Charter Principles and presenting the Action Plan.

Moreover, a special effort has been made to get a commitment signed by the Town Councils, which had a low involvement in the previous period. There is also a specific action to monitor their involvement.

### 2.31 Does the Charter area have any formal arrangements with partners for implementation of this Action Plan?

No, there is not a formal agreement.

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## Monitoring results

### 2.32 Have indicators been identified for monitoring the results of the Strategy/new Action Plan? **2**

Yes, monitoring indicators have been established for every action. The indicators mainly show if the action has been implemented or not.

However, there are not defined indicators to measure the impact of the Action Plan in the evolution of the tourism sector (average stay, origin of visitors, etc) or indicator for a set of main objectives of the Strategy.

### 2.33 Comment briefly on the planned level and methodology of monitoring.

The Park and its Charter Secretariat will perform the annual monitoring reports of the Action Plan, as it was successfully done in the previous period.

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## Addressing key issues

Specific action that the Charter looks for in the Action Plan, Principles 3 to 10

A: *Progress over the past five years*

B: *Level of implementation of Action Plan*

C: *Planned activity in new plan*

## Principle 3 – Protecting natural and cultural heritage

### 3.1 Monitoring impact on flora and fauna and controlling tourism in sensitive locations **A 2 B 1 C 2**

The Park has a “Monitoring Plan of Ecological Parameters” (1993), a “Conservation Plan” (revised in 2011) and a “Public Use Plan” (revised in 2007), that together set

out the criteria and management processes for monitoring and controlling impacts of tourism and other pressures in most sensible locations.

There was an action to make an inventory of natural and cultural resources of the whole Charter Area, but it has only been achieved to prepare the form to collect data and collect the information of 8 out of 28 Town Councils.

### **3.2 Encouraging activities, including tourism uses, which support the maintenance of historic heritage, culture and traditions A 3 B 2 C 3**

The Charter Area offers a wide range of activities, events and fairs to support culture, traditions and historical heritage of the territory.

In this regard, the efforts during these 5 years have focused on:

- improving coordination between institutions,
- better dissemination of the activities organised in the Charter Area,
- increase knowledge about the resources, itineraries and existing tourism products,
- enhance walking trails near town centres to discover the natural and cultural heritage,
- and enhance the promotion and purchase of local products.

Noteworthy is the completion of an inventory of intangible cultural heritage of Montseny, which methodology has been recognized as best practice by the UNESCO.

On the other hand, some interesting actions have not been developed, such as "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.

In the coming years it is expected to maintain the same programs of activities and improve coordination in their dissemination through a joint agenda of activities of Charter Area, publicize the new walking trails close to town centres and spread the ethnological heritage included in the Inventory.

It could be interesting to develop activities to make known and valued the traditional and current forestry sector. An economic sector that has helped Montseny to maintain the extensive forest that makes it valuable now.

### **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 C 2**

The Park and the territory have legislation and planning that establishes types of activities allowed in each area based on their level of protection. There are also regulations on energy efficiency for new and reconverted buildings and there is a waste management and recycling system operating in the territory.

In the last years there has been an improvement of energy efficiency in some Park's facilities and the environmental management of tourism businesses has been addressed with the implementation of the Charter Part II.

In the new Action Plan it is planned to improve environmental management of Town Councils and to create two working groups in the frame of the Biosphere Reserve, one related to energy efficiency and the other one to improve sustainable mobility.



### 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** C **2**

One of the main issues of the Park is the high visitor pressure in certain locations and times and that most of the visitors use private vehicles to get to the Park.

Some specific actions to improve the use of public transport have been defined, but not implemented yet.

To influence in the private sector, several training programs took place in the territory and the Park implemented the Charter Part II.

The Park developed in cooperation with local hiking associations and other stakeholders a guide of best practise to organise hiking and sportive activities with a high number of participants in the Park.

The new Action Plan include actions to enhance the use of public transport, to promote less visited areas, to maintain the Charter Part II and to edit information material about the environmental impacts of tourism in order to influence the behaviour of visitors and businesses.

### 3.5 Encouraging visitors and the tourism industry to contribute to conservation (e.g. “visitor payback” schemes) A **0** B **0** C **1**

The two actions planned to address this issue has not been developed:

- One aimed 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*. It has not been developed because it has been established bilateral contact between the entities involved.
- The other was 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*.

The Action Plan includes just one action to address this issue consisting on a pilot initiative with the Charter Partner Businesses (10) to sponsor specific projects.

However, given the potential of this Park to develop such tools for visitor contribution to conservation - because of the high number of visitors and their emotional link to the Park - it would be possible to be a little more ambitious in this regard.

Experiences of other protected areas could be analyzed to reach the biggest part of visitors.

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## Principle 4 – Meeting visitor needs/quality of experience

### 4.1 Surveys to measure visitor satisfaction A **2** B **1** C **3**

Different entities carry out various surveys to evaluate visitor satisfaction, but there is neither coordination nor a joint analysis of the results. In the previous Action Plan the goal was to have a common survey the whole Charter Area but it could not be achieved.

The Park made some progress in standardizing the collection of some data of visitors and their satisfaction by the Charter Partner Businesses and the private businesses managing Park's facilities.

For the next years, it is planned to conduct a survey of tourist demand for the whole Charter Area.

#### **4.2 Assessment of future visitor markets and their needs**

**A 1 B 1 C 1**

The Park has compiled existing information of tourist demand from different partner entities but the results have not been as expected and the information was not really useful for the Charter Area.

The survey on tourist demand that is planned may give some useful information to identify future markets.

#### **4.3 Specific provision of facilities and information for disabled people**

**A 2 B 1 C 3**

The Park has two accessible walking trails, a program of inclusive activities for schools and an inclusive new guided activity ("Aigua. A viatge pels sentits"). The inclusive activities are aimed at all audiences but people with disabilities can fully participate as they are given specific support (guide using sign language, Braille materials, tools to facilitate mobility, etc.). The Park also offers a free lending service of materials that facilitate mobility for people with disabilities (joilettes, third wheel, etc.). These activities are included in the "Plan of Accessibility for Natural Areas" of the Provincial Council of Barcelona.

However, it was planned to make an inventory of accessible tourist resources and facilities in the Charter Area but Town Councils have not provided the necessary information. As a result, a related action to create specific accessible tourist products couldn't be developed.

In the new Action Plan this issue is well addressed with three interesting actions: the inventory of accessible facilities and accessibility of Charter Partner Businesses, the inventory of current tourist products that are accessible to people with disabilities and the creation of new accessible tourism products.

#### **4.4 Provision of facilities for economically disadvantaged people**

**A 2 B 2 C 2**

Most of the facilities and services offered by the Park are free and most of the visitors spend less than one day in the Park, with few overnight stays. Therefore, this issue is somehow covered. While there is interest in promoting public transport and that will benefit people who do not own a car.

#### **4.5 Action to monitor the quality of facilities and services**

**A 3 B 3 C 3**

#### **4.6 Action to improve the quality of facilities and services**

**A 3 B 3 C 3**

#### Answers to questions 4.5 and 4.6:

The Park has a Quality Management System for the public use area since 2004, certified by the Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality (ICTE) according to the norm UNE-ISO 18065:2016 “Tourism and related services -- Tourist services for public use provided by Natural Protected Areas Authorities – Requirements”.

This certification means that the Park has a good system to monitor and improve quality of its facilities and services for visitors every year. In fact, the Park has to define and implement a quality improvement plan every year.

The Park has also implemented the Charter Part II. This action allowed the Park to evaluate services and facilities of tourism businesses and to enhance their improvement.

In the province of Barcelona it has been also implanted the Quality System for destinations and businesses SICTED, managed by the County Councils. There is an important number of businesses already adhered to SICTED in the Charter Area. The Park and the County Councils made an effort to coordinate implementation of SICTED and Charter Part II.

It is planned to continue implementing and developing these activities in the next years.

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### Principle 5 – Communication about the area

#### 5.1 Sensitive promotion of the Charter area as a destination using authentic images and reflecting capacity/needs of the area, including times and locations

A **2** B **1** C **2**

There have been no major changes in this regard. The Park continues offering comprehensive information in its web site about the Park and what to do, highlighting its main values. In addition a mobile application has been developed with all the information.

As a result of a working group about “communication”, the Park has created a specific site on sustainable tourism, which gives information about the Charter process and the Charter Partner Businesses. The Park has also edited a brochure to promote the Charter Partner businesses

However, the Promotion of Montseny is still done by the different entities in a fragmented way and the most interesting actions in this regard could not be developed: the creation of a common tourism promotion and communication strategy for the Charter Area; sharing of information and materials among public and private partners; creation of a common web portal and a common agenda of events, etc.

The Park will maintain its web site with all the information on the Park and the web on sustainable tourism in Moteseny.

#### 5.2 Influence on the promotional activities of others (region, enterprises, etc.)

A **2** B **1** C **1**

The participation process through the PF, the WG and thematic working groups, helped to improve the knowledge about the Park and its needs by the partner entities. As well as the Business Encounters to discover resources and facilities of the territory organised by the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny.

The Park also addressed this issue with the implementation of the Charter Part II.

Although, as it was mentioned above, the most significant action planned to influence promotional activities of others was a common strategy for communication and promotion, that could not be developed.

For the next few years, the actions developed will be maintained, but it is not taken up again the idea of a joint Strategy on communication and promotion. Maybe it could be replaced by a document with a few recommendations or best practices for responsible promotion.

### **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 2 B 2 C 2**

The Park has a large number and variety of materials about the Park, where to go and what to do, including leaflets, maps, audiovisual material, trail guides, thematic guides, etc. Some of them are in Spanish and other languages, but most of them are in Catalan, given that 94% of the visitors come from Catalonia.

The County Councils and the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (AETM) also provide information about the area and do offer part of the contents of their websites in Spanish, English and French. Some of them - but not all - include links to the Park website.

It is intended to improve the information in the coming years with a common agenda of activities in the Charter Area and promoting the new walking trails close to town centres.

If the Charter Area wants to attract tourists from more distant markets, it would be interesting having more information and interpretative materials in different languages.

### **5.4 Provision of accessible information centres/points for visitors and local people**

**A 3 B 3 C 3**

#### Remarkable

The network of information centres is quite extensive, and it has been increased in the last years. The Park itself or through partnerships with several municipalities has six information centres and fifteen information points, opening mainly during weekends and holidays, except from certain points opening the whole week during the whole year.

In addition the Park has the Personalized Information Service - during weekends and holidays - consisting of several information agents located in points of higher influx of visitors.

The County Councils and some Municipalities has several tourist Offices in the Charter Area.

### **5.5 Process for ensuring others (especially tourism enterprises) provide good information A 2 B 2 C 2**

Several actions have been developed to improve knowledge about the Park and information provided by others: implementation of Charter part II, training activities and the Businesses Encounters mentioned above (AETM).

It is planned to continue these activities in the coming years.

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

The situation of the Park and the Charter Area in this regard remains very good, with a remarkable wide range of activities.

The Park continues offering plenty of activities aimed at visitor and local people, groups and schools (e.g. programs "Know the Park" and "Live the Park"), and a guided excursion program happening every Sunday of the year, which is quite successful.

Besides, there is an extensive offer of activities provided by the network of enterprises of environmental and cultural education.

The actions developed these years and planned for the next years are focused on the improvement of the coordination and the dissemination of the activities.

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**Principle 6 – Tourism products relating to the Charter area**

**6.1 Provision/development of tourism offers (special events, holiday programmes, etc.) involving the discovery and interpretation of natural and cultural heritage A 2 B 1 C 3**

The different local stakeholders - public and private - offer a wide range of programs, special events and tourist products, and they are working to develop new ones (Els tres Monts, Ruta de la Tourdera, Ennatura't, etc.).

During the last years, the Park has done a partial inventory of the tourism offers, but two of the most interesting actions in this regard have not been carried out: the definition of quality and sustainability criteria to identify a product as "destination Montseny" and the creation of new ecotourism products and accessible products.

These actions are included in the next Action Plan, the issue will be addressed by the implementation of Charter Part II and some basis has been set out as the Charter Partner Businesses fulfil some requirements of quality and sustainability.

**6.2 Effective promotion of these offers A 2 B 1 C 3**

The various entities promote the offers mentioned.

It was planned to improve the harmonization, coordination and cooperation of promotion with a common strategy, but finally this action could not be implemented.

It seems that this objective of coordination and harmonization is not considered achievable, so the Action Plan includes actions to promote the new sustainable and accessible product that will be created in the next years with the Charter Partner Businesses, as well as is planned to implement the Charter Part III.

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## Principle 7 – Training

### 7.1 Providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the Charter area, in sustainable tourism A **2** B **2** C **1**

The Park's staff have attended various seminars of the Charter (organised by EUROPARC-Spain) and meetings with tourism entities. They have also received specific training for the implementation of Charter Part II. This has allowed the Park staff to improve their knowledge about the tourism sector and the sustainable tourism issues.

It is planned to continue these activities in the coming years. However, specific training activities on sustainable tourism for Park's staff have not been developed nor planned for the next years.

It would be important that the Park would pay more attention to this subject, perhaps attending to the training activities about sustainable tourism provided for tourism enterprises.

### 7.2 Providing or supporting training of other organisations and tourism enterprises in sustainable tourism A **2** B **2** C **2**

The training offer on tourism (visits, conferences, workshops, courses) aimed at tourism businesses is extensive. During the last years it has been improved the coordination on the dissemination of the training activities to the Forum members.

The implementation of Charter Part II implies very specific training and assessment on sustainable tourism for a small group of tourism businesses.

It is expected to further develop these activities with the new Action plan.

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## 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** C **2**

In 2013 the Tourism Consortiums that were public-private partnerships disappeared and their functions were assumed directly by the County Councils (entirely public entities). Therefore a less direct representation of the private sector exists now at a local level to deal with tourism planning and development.

Nevertheless, the local community have several ways of participating in the tourism planning and the Park's management. There are two Park's governance bodies where local community is represented (Coordination Council and Consulting Commission).

In particular, the composition and well functioning of the Forum, the Working Group and the thematic working groups have facilitated the involvement of local community in the definition and monitoring of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

It is planned to maintain and enhance all these participation bodies.

## 8.2 Communication between the Charter area, local people and visitors

A **2** B **2** C **2**

In addition to the participation structures mentioned above, which are the main mechanisms of communication; the Park maintains close relationship with certain groups, such as businesses of environmental and cultural education or the Charter Partner Businesses.

There are several tools of the Quality Management System that visitors and local community can use to communicate with Park managers: visitor satisfaction surveys, visitors complaints or suggestion mailbox.

The Park also uses the social network Facebook to communicate with local community and visitors with almost 9.000 followers.

## 8.3 Mechanisms for identifying and seeking to reduce any conflicts that may arise

A **2** B **2** C **2**

Same tools mentioned in 8.1 and 8.2 apply here.

One of the remaining conflicts in the Park is between visitors and landowners, as 85% of the Park area is private. In this regard it would be advisable to develop information and interpretation materials and activities to increase awareness about the private property in the Park and about the forestry sector, which has allowed to have the forests that visitors currently enjoy.

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## Principle 9 – Benefits to the local community

### 9.1 Promoting the purchase of local products (food, crafts, local services) by visitors and local tourism businesses A **3** B **3** C **3**

The Park, the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny, the County Councils, the producers and the tourism businesses have cooperated to develop several interesting initiatives addressing this issue:

- The implementation of the Charter Part II with requirements of providing local products and recipes.
- The program “Parc a Taula”, a program to promote natural products developed and produced by restaurants, wineries and artisan producers of the villages within the Park.
- The distribution of artisan and local products in Park’s visitor centres
- Inventory of local products of the Park, workshop of local producers and a program for distribution of local products in restaurants.
- An on-line shop for local products although there is only one producer participating.

There is also a huge number and diversity of traditional and local products markets, “ferias”, gastronomic weeks, promotional events, tasting events, culinary events, etc.

However, it is not generalized yet the use and promotion of local products in the high number of restaurants of the territory.

The Action plan include several actions to continue developing these activities, and it is planned to implement the label “Biosphere Reserve” for local products and services fulfilling certain requirements of quality and sustainability.



## 9.2 Encouraging the employment of local people in tourism

A **2** B **2** C **2**

The Provincial Councils, the Park, the County Councils and the Town Councils try to encourage local employment and economic development in every activity they develop. Tourism is one of the economic sectors that they try to encourage.

## 9.3 Development of tourism in association with traditional economic activity (e.g. agriculture) A **3** B **3** C **3**

The initiatives mentioned in question 9.1 are also aimed to support traditional economy activity through tourism.

There is here an opportunity to develop tourism products in cooperation with the landowners to discover the forestry sector in Montseny (history, tradition, products, tools and machinery, types of exploitation, etc.).

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## 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 **1** C **2**

The quality management system of the Park enables keeping a very detailed record of visitor numbers over time and space. Both the Park and some of its partners collect visitor data, but this is happening in an uncoordinated way and not covering the whole Charter Area.

Several actions were planned to address this issue that finally couldn't be developed: common system of visitor data collection, collection of data from tourism enterprises and communication of the tourist accommodation occupancy.

The main progress is that the 10 Charter Partner Businesses now provide information about their clients (number, origin, etc.) to the Park.

The Park has an action to improve collection of data about the visitors through visitor counters, data from Parking areas and information in the "Walking Trail Plans" of the County Councils. The Park will continue collecting data from the Charter Partner Businesses and tourism businesses managing Park's facilities.

But it is not expected to agree on a system to jointly collect and analyze information about visitors and tourists in the whole Charter Area by public and private entities.

### 10.2 Creating and implementing a visitor management plan

A **3** B **3** C **3**

The Park has the Public Use Plan that regulates public uses in terms of visitor flows and leisure activities linked to social use of the Park, enforced by the Park's staff.

The Quality Management System also contributes to an appropriate monitoring and evaluation of visitor flows.

However, there are still problems resulting from a high pressure of visitors and their concentration in certain times and locations.

### 10.3 Promoting use of public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to private cars A 2 B 1 C 3

No significant progress has been made in this regard. The private car remains the main mean of transport to arrive to the Park.

During the past five years it was created a working group on sustainable mobility in the framework of the Biosphere Reserve. This working group decided to start a pilot project in a municipality (Gualba) and there is a major project taking place in another municipality (Santa Maria de Palautordera) to restore a train station and use it as centre of activities, since it would be linked to several walking and bike trails.

The Park also coordinated a working group to identify circular walking trails starting and ending at public transport stops (train or bus).

However, an interesting action couldn't be developed that aimed to analyze the use of private transport and to reduce the number of vehicles in the Park.

For the next few years it is planned to address this issue through a working group of "public transport and mobility" within the framework of the Biosphere Reserve. The working group will coordinate and monitor the development of two actions: one addressing the public transport issue (analyze and disseminate the offer of public transport and take it into account on every activity organized) and one addressing the use of private vehicles (surveys on the opinion of visitors and inhabitants and about the cost of private vehicles). It is also planned to identify new walking trails close to public transport and publicize them.

### 10.4 Controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development A 2 B 2 C 2

The Park Management Plan and urban planning enable controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

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## The Wider Picture – Section C of questionnaire

### C1 Examples of excellence and best practice

**Please mention briefly the best examples of excellence or best practice you have seen in this Charter area (by cross-reference to the above questions if appropriate)**

Activities undertaken to encourage the participation of local stakeholders with excellent results:

- Involvement of the main authorities of the Park: Park Director and the Head of Public Use.
- Enough human and economic resources provided for the Charter coordination (Park staff and Charter Secretariat).
- Proper composition and functioning of the participation structures.
- Creation of thematic working groups to address specific issues: public transport and mobility, communication, walking trails, local producers, Charter Partner Businesses...
- Methodology of the Forum meetings: previous sending of information, maximum duration of two hours and a half, participatory methodology,

sending the minutes after the meeting, rotate Forum meetings throughout the territory, evaluation of the participant's satisfaction at the end of every meeting...

- Require the tourism businesses a minimum participation of one year in the Forum to be able to become a Charter Partner Business and an active participation afterwards to maintain the distinction.
- Require the Town Councils a signed commitment of participation and the action included in the Action Plan to monitor their involvement.
- Make available in the web site of the Park all the relevant documents of the Charter process: Strategy, Action Plan, application report, minutes of the Forum meetings, etc.
- Proper monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan and giving information about the results in the meetings.

Wide network of information points. Explained in page 5 (main strengths) and question 5.4.

Good offer of facilities, materials and activities to discover the Park values. Explained in page 5 (main strengths) and questions 3.2, 5.3 and 5.6.

Quality Management System. Mentioned in page 6 (main strengths) and questions 4.5. and 4.6.

Initiative to enhance purchase of local products. Mentioned in question 9.1.

Best practice to organise hiking and sportive activities in the Park with high number of participants. The Park developed in cooperation with local hiking associations and other stakeholders a guide of best practise to organise hiking and sportive activities with a high number of participants in the Park, in order to reduce environmental impacts.

## **C2 Marketing and promotion of the Charter**

**Is the protected area helping to promote the Charter, e.g. in its publications, website, etc.?**

The Park has done a good job of promoting the Charter through the following means:

- Use of the Charter logo on brochures, web pages and presentations.
- Specific site of sustainable tourism in the official webpage of the Nature Parks Network of the Province of Barcelona, where there is information about the Charter and about the process in Montseny (<http://parcs.diba.cat/es/web/turisme-sostenible-als-espais-naturals>):
  - o Charter Partner Businesses
  - o Commitment of the protected area
  - o Documents: Strategy and Action Plan, Monitoring Reports of the implementation of the Action Plan, application report, minutes of the Forum meetings, etc.
- Brochure to promote Charter Partner Businesses, explaining what the Charter is (<http://goo.gl/OtVIGS> )
- Dissemination of the Charter process in presentations, events, fam trips, press trips, press releases, etc.

The Park also participates in the Charter Network attending to the Permanent Seminar of the Charter in Spain organized by EUROPARC-Spain and writing articles for the Charter Newsletter.

However, it is advisable that the Charter Partner businesses and the other partner entities also disseminate the Charter, the participation process and their commitment with sustainable tourism in their webs.

### **C3 Experience of working with the Charter – final comments**

The Park mentions the following benefits of working with the Charter methodology (from the report):

- Establishing regular contact "with" and "between" local stakeholders in relation to tourism - development of activities, planning, promotion, etc. - even beyond the implementations of the actions of the Action Plan.
- Meeting other Charter Parks and their mechanisms of solving similar situations and problems to those of Parc Natural del Montseny.

**ANNEX 1: PROGRAMM OF THE VISIT  
Parc Natural del Montseny**

WEDNESDAY, 11 <sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016			
Time	Activity	Participants	Place
8:45	Transfer to Parc Natural del Montseny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joana Barber, Director of Park.</li> <li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li> </ul>	
10:00	Meeting with the managers of the municipality of El Figaró-Montmany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maria Teresa Carrillo Garcia, Mayor of El Figaró-Montmany.</li> <li>- Ramon Garcia, assessor of Mayor of El Figaró-Montmany.</li> <li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li> <li>- Lluís Velasco Batlle, Head of Public Use of the Park.</li> <li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li> <li>- Maria Barrachina, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li> </ul>	El Figaró-Montmany
10:30	Meeting with the managers of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li> <li>- Lluís Velasco Batlle, Head of Public Use of the Park.</li> </ul>	Rectoria de Vallcàrquera (El Figaró)
11:45	Visit to the facilities of Rectoria Vallcàrquera. Centre for Environmental Education of the Park managed by APREN (Charter Partner Businesses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li> <li>- Maria Barrachina, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li> </ul> <p><i>Henceforth referred as <b>Technical Team of the Park</b></i></p>	
12:30	Meeting with the Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical Team of the Park.</li> <li>- Silvia Arau, Technical Assistant of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (AETM).</li> <li>- Rafel Catafal, representative of Landowners Association of Montseny (APM).</li> <li>- Carme Rodríguez. Technician of tourism, Consell Comarcal Vallès Oriental.</li> <li>- Clara Torra, Technician of tourism, Consell Comarcal de La Selva.</li> <li>- Sandra Fumanya, Technician of tourism, Consell Comarcal d'Osona – Osona Turisme.</li> <li>- Albert Duch, Technician of Marketing, Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Pirineu de Girona.</li> <li>- Ignasi Martínez, mayor of Tagamanent and director de El Bellver.</li> <li>- Ferran Teixidó, mayor of El Brull.</li> <li>- Isabel Junquera, REPTE – Technical Secretariat of the Charter.</li> <li>- Esther Canal, REPTE – Technical Secretariat of the Charter.</li> </ul>	El Bellver Restaurant (Tagamanent)

WEDNESDAY, 11 <sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016			
Time	Activity	Participants	Place
		<p>The following members couldn't attend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alba Caballé, Diputació de Barcelona, Oficina Tècnica de Turisme.</li> <li>- Josep Companyà, Associació d' Amics del Montseny.</li> <li>- Ignasi Arrizabalaga, Museu de Ciències Naturals de Granollers.</li> <li>- Representative of the local food producers.</li> <li>- Representatives of other two Town Councils.</li> </ul>	
14:00	Interview with the representative of the Tourism Board of the Provincial Council of Girona	- Albert Duch, Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Pirineu de Girona.	El Bellver Restaurant (Tagamanent)
14:30	Lunch with the Working Group in El Bellver (Charter Partner Business)	- Working Group	El Bellver Restaurant (Tagamanent)
16:00	Visit to the ethnographic museum l'Agusti, managed by the Business El Bellver	- Ignasi Martínez, director of El Bellver and the Ethnographic Park La Calma (Museum l'Agusti). - Working Group.	Museum l'Agusti- La Calma Ethnologic Park (Tagamanent)
18:00	Visit to EcoSalgot (agrifood industry, Charter Partner Business) and interview with the manager	- Dolors Salgot, EcoSalgot. - Technical Team of the Park.	Aiguafreda
19:30	Transfer to Montseny, via various municipality and interest points of the Park.	- Lluís Velasco Batlle, Head of Public Use of the Park. - Maria Barrachina, Technician of Public Use of the Park.	Aiguafreda – Montseny
21:00	Dinner in Fonda Montseny (Charter Partner Business)	- Lluís Velasco Batlle, Head of Public Use of the Park. - Maria Barrachina, Technician of Public Use of the Park . - Joan Lluís Rojas, President of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny and owner of the Restaurant Fonda Montseny and the Apartments Cal Ferrer.	Montseny
22:00	Accommodation in Cal Ferrer Apartments (Charter Partner Business)		Montseny

**THURSDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Place</b>
9:00	Interview with the company ADEMC (Environmental education activities, Charter Partner Business) and visit to one of its activities with scholars taking place that day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Carme Clopés, ADEMC.</li><li>- Joan Lluís Rojas, President of the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (AETM).</li><li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li><li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li></ul>	Montseny
10:30	Meeting with the Association of Tourism Businesses of Montseny (AETM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Silvia Arau, Technical Assistant of the Association (AETM).</li><li>- Joan Lluís Rojas, President of the Tourism Businesses Association of Montseny (AETM).</li><li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li><li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li></ul>	Montseny
12:30	Meeting with the Tourism Technician of the Town Council of Santa Maria de Palautordera about the projects related to the train station, the cycle path and the Tourdera Route.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Xavi Muntasell, Tourism Technician of the Town Council of Santa Maria de Palautordera.</li><li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li><li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li></ul>	Santa Maria de Palautordera
13:00	Meeting with the representatives of the project Tourdera Route and visit to part of the itinerary. Visit to the Gastronomic Centre and Tourism Office ("Domus Sent Soví", el centro gastronómico de Hostalric.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Marc Coromines, technical Consell Comarcal La Selva.</li><li>- Josep Antoni Frias Molina, Mayor of Hostalric.</li><li>- Joana Barber, Director of the Park.</li><li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li><li>- Isabel Junquera, REPTE – Technical Secretariat of the Charter.</li></ul>	Hostalric
15:00	Lunch and final meeting with the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Joana Barber, Director of PN Monsteny.</li><li>- Lluís Velasco Batlle, Head of Public Use of the Park.</li><li>- Elisabet Ros, Technician of Public Use of the Park.</li><li>- Isabel Junquera, REPTE – Technical Secretariat of the Charter.</li></ul>	El Romaní de Breda Restaurant (Breda)
17:00	Interview with the owner of El Romaní de Breda Restaurant (Charter Partner Business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sam Torres, El Romaní de Breda Restaurant.</li></ul>	El Romaní de Breda Restaurant (Breda)