

Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Parc del Garraf, Parc d'Olèrdola and Parc del Foix

Name of verifier: Amanda Guzmán

Date of submission of application by protected area: 15th December 2016

Date of verification visit: 3rd - 4th April 2017

Date of completion of this report: 30th July 2017

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:

I visited the three parks and main interest sites in the area and I had the opportunity to interview the protected area's managers and a large number of local stakeholders who participated in the preparation of the strategy and action plan. (See attached the list of places visited and people interviewed)

Brief details of the PA and overall impressions

The Charter application is submitted jointly by three protected areas:

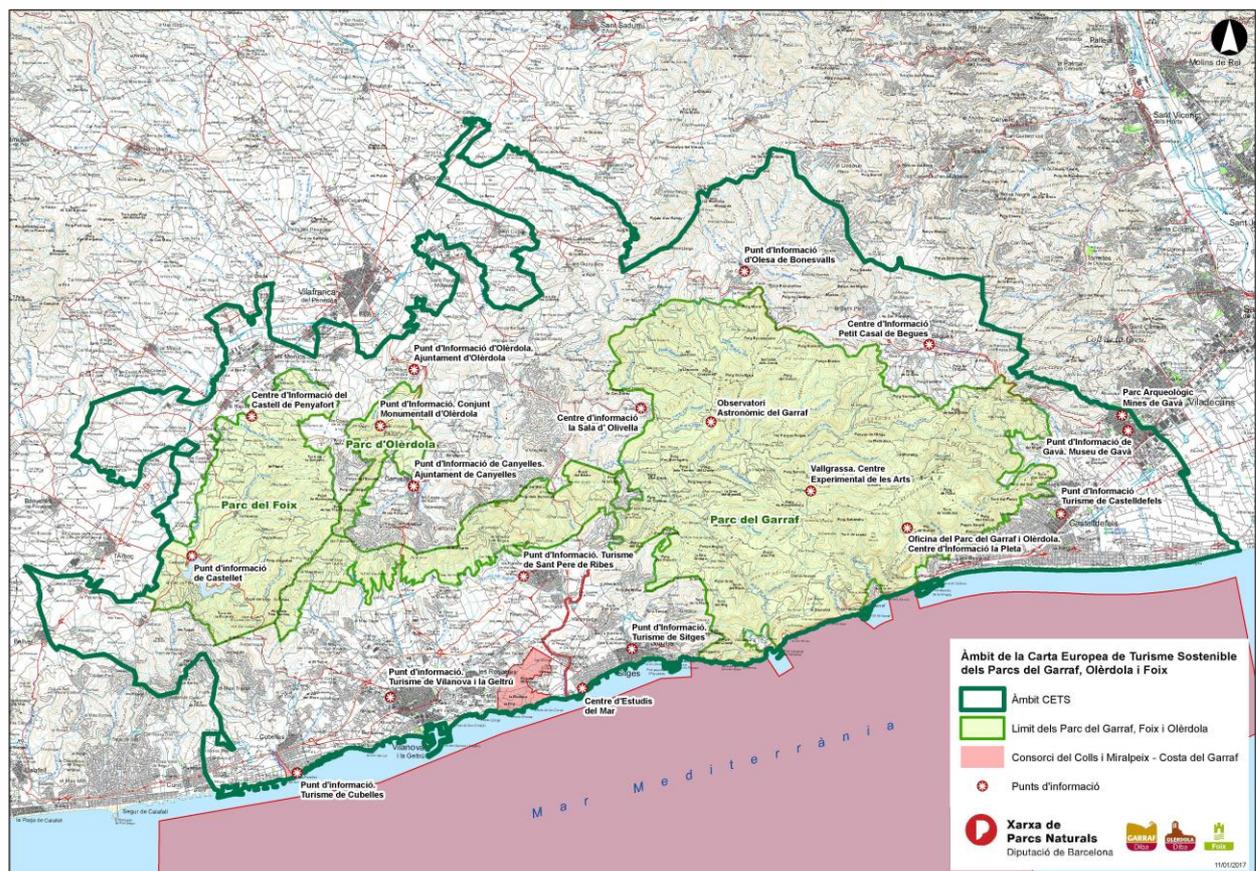
- Parc del Garraf (12,376.50 hectares), declared in 1986.
- Parc d'Olerdola (608.23 hectares), declared in 1992.
- Parc del Foix (3,098 hectares), declared in 1993.

The three parks:

- Are IUCN Category VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources.
- Have territorial continuity.
- Are managed by the same public administration: the Provincial Council of Barcelona.
- Have joint management plans:
 - o The Conservation Plan (2016-2026)
 - o The Public Use Management Plan (2009-2014, currently under revision)
- Share the same Technician for Public Use and Environmental Education, who deals with tourism issues and is the responsible for the Charter.

Furthermore the Parks of Garraf and Olerdola share the same Director.

Therefore, and given the low extension of the parks, it makes sense that a joint application for the Charter Award is submitted.



The area of implementation of the Charter also includes other protected areas:

- “*Colls i Miralpeix*”: land area belonging to a wider Natura 2000 site declared as Special Protection Area (SPA), the “Sierras del Litoral”, which also includes the three parks.
- “*Costes del Garraf*”: marine protected area declared as Special Protection Area (SPA) with 26,473.78 hectares. Natura 2000 site.
- “*Espai Marí del Baix Llobregat – Garraf*”: marine protected area declared as Special Protection Area (SPA) with 38,682 ha. Natura 2000 site.

The Consorci dels Colls i Miralpeix - Costa del Garraf, manages the first two protected areas and is actively involved in the Charter Process.

Therefore, the area of implementation of the Charter is a maritime-land zone of 108,534.78 hectares of which 60% is a maritime protected area and 40% is the terrestrial zone (43,400 ha.) that covers the 14 municipalities of the Parks. The three parks have an area of 16,082.73 ha (37% of the terrestrial zone) with very high proportion of privately own land (77% in Garraf and 99% in Foix).

The Charter Area is located in the northeast of the Iberian peninsula, in the Province of Barcelona, and 30km south of the city of Barcelona that have 9 million inhabitants.

The Parks are part of the Catalan pre-coastal mountain range, with arid landscapes and low reliefs (maximum height does not exceed 600 m) where it prevails the calcareous stone with numerous karstic elements as subterranean cavities, abysses and dolines. It is a rocky and rugged landscape, with typical vegetation of the Mediterranean forest (shrubs, Aleppo pine, some oaks, etc.). A large proportion of the forests have been affected by fires and are undergoing natural regeneration.

The Park of Foix is named after the river that crosses it, with a torrential regime, an important subterranean circulation and a reservoir inside the limits of the Park. The presence of wetlands makes this Park has a high diversity of fauna. There are also cultivated landscapes with special importance of vine. Unfortunately, the water quality of the river and its reservoir is very affected by the agricultural and industrial activities of the area.

In the marine protected area predominate the sandy soils and there are *Posidonia* grasslands, although quite damaged and in a clear regression.

This diversity of environments of the protected areas makes that the whole Charter area host a high biodiversity and a wide range of attractive landscapes.

The Area has a long history of human settlements that also gives the territory a relevant cultural heritage, with special attractive sites as castles and archaeological ensembles.

It is a highly populated area with 269,834 inhabitants in 2015, of which only 383 live inside the Parks. The coastal municipalities are the most populated, two of them with more than 60,000 inhabitants (Catselldefels and Vilanova i the Geltrú), three others between 25,000 and 50,000 hab. (Gavà, Sitges, Sant Pere de Ribes), and most of the rest of the municipalities have below 10,000 inhabitants.

Administratively, The Charter Area is divided in three different counties:

- The whole Garraf County: 6 municipalities, 79% of the economy in the service sector and with important weight of tourism.
- Small part of the Alt Penedes County: 5 municipalities (out of 27), the least populated county of the province, with some more importance of industry and agriculture and famous for its vineyards and internationally recognize wine and cava production.
- Small part of the Baix Llobregat County: 3 municipalities (out of 30), the most populated county of the province with a high weight of the service sector (75%) as it has part of the surrounding metropolitan area of Barcelona but also with some important industrial sites.

Therefore, the Charter Area is a very diverse territory with different tourist realities and different rhythms of development that cannot be considered as a single tourist destination. On the one hand you can find the municipality of Sitges, a tourist destination nationally and internationally recognized, in fact, it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the gay community. Sitges offers relevant tourism facilities and services mainly oriented to sun and beach, nautical and cultural tourism. On the other hand, there are small and inland municipalities dedicated to agricultural or industrial activity, without any tourist infrastructure.

Coastal municipalities account for 90% of the tourist accommodation of the Charter Area and had an important tourist development related to the “sun and beach” tourism. Those now considered mature destinations are now diversifying their offer and starting to implement quality and sustainability schemes.

In the Charter Area there has been also an interesting development of wine-tourism, cultural tourism and nautical tourism.

In this territory, the protected areas have emerged to protect the natural areas from urban pressure - by popular demand in some cases – and from the impacts of many infrastructures located there (dumps, power lines, quarries, etc.). These infrastructures were included inside the boundaries of the protected areas with the aim of not only conserving existing biodiversity, but also trying to recover the degraded environment, what is gradually being achieved.

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

Please raise any points and issues relating to the process

The Parks Authority have submitted a complete application that was prepared in partnership with a significant number of stakeholders during 2016.

The diagnosis is based on how the Charter Key Topics have been addressed by the different stakeholders in the territory so it tackles the main sustainability issues. In my opinion, it would have been useful to make a deeper analysis of the tourism activity - offer and demand - and an evaluation of main strengths and weaknesses regarding sustainable tourism in the territory. However, the Charter Area include different tourism realities and tourism managers that already elaborate those analysis.

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is a separate document that establishes the main objectives for the next five years which are focused on preserving the resources, reducing negative impacts of the tourism activity and improving tourism management in the Charter Area.

The Action Plan 2016-2021 is very detailed and it is formed by 32 actions structured according the Charter Key Topics, so every key topic is addressed to a greater or lesser extent. The budget of the Action Plan is quite low (€242,500 for the 5 years), mainly because it is based on working in partnership to better coordinate the activities of the different stakeholders. Most of the action will be developed by current staff of the entities involved.

The application report was also very complete and useful for the verification and the Parks Authority provided me with any further information I needed before, during and after my visit.

During the visit I met many of the stakeholders that participated in the preparation of the Strategy and the Action Plan, and I could visit the three parks and some other hot spots of the Charter Area. It helped me to realize how diverse is the territory. I was accompanied during the whole visit by the staff and managers of the Parks.

Verifier's assessment

Please provide your overall assessment of the management of sustainable tourism and the content and delivery of the strategy and action plan in the protected area, in relation to the European Charter:

The area of implementation of the Charter is not a tourist destination itself, but rather a territory that shares several protected areas formed by municipalities with very different tourism development. It is also part of the higher destination "Barcelona Coast".

In the coastal areas there has been a higher tourism development initially based on the "Sun and Beach" tourism, so quite backwards to the protected areas and their values. On the other hand there are small inland municipalities where there is hardly any tourism activity.

In the most mature tourist municipalities there has recently emerged a greater concern for diversifying tourism products and for improving the quality and sustainability of tourism, so several certification schemes have started to be implemented. The process of applying to the Charter Award has helped the local stakeholders to put the protected areas and their values at the heart of the debate.

The area of implementation of the Charter is highly populated and rather complex, so there are many different entities involved in conservation, local development and tourism activity: town councils, county councils, regional administration, tourism businesses, associations, conservation entities, research groups, local producers, etc. The participation process and structures (Forum and Working Group) achieved to involve a good part of them and helped them to know each other's initiatives. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting a higher involvement of tourism businesses and their professional associations.

The implementation of the Action Plan 2017-2021 will allow the territory to move towards:

- A better coordination and collaboration between local stakeholders, both public and private entities, with the common goal of moving towards sustainable tourism. In particular, a closer collaboration between the manager entities of the different protected areas will be very positive.
- A better knowledge of the local stakeholders about the protected areas, their natural and cultural values, the activities offered to discover them and the possible ways of contributing to their conservation.
- Better knowledge of the visitors and the flow of vehicles in the parks.
- A reduction of the negative impacts generated by the organized sport activities within the Parks and by the access with motorized vehicles to the protected areas.
- A better information on the protected areas provided to the visitors by different means and stakeholders (tourism web sites, tourism businesses, information points, etc.)
- A more sustainable mobility in the territory by enhancing the information on public transport provided to visitors and by improving the bicycle paths.

In general, the Action Plan will enable the stakeholders to work in partnership on several key issues for the protected areas while every entity will continue implementing its own tourism development and marketing strategies (municipalities, county councils, provincial government).

Main strengths (relating to the Charter process and sustainable tourism management):

- Involvement of local stakeholders

In such a complex territory the main strength is having achieved the participation and involvement of so many local stakeholders during the preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan. The process helped the local entities to know each other technicians and initiatives. It is also foreseen in the Action Plan to make relevant efforts to improve coordination and participation during the next five years and to consolidate the Forum and the Working Group as the main participative structures to deal with sustainable tourism in the territory. Collaboration will make a difference in the territory.

- Many entities working on conservation of natural and cultural resources

There is a wide range of entities in the territory working on the conservation of its natural and cultural values: Parks Garraf, Olerdola and Foix Authority, Consorci els Colls – Miralpeix, Centre for Sea Studies, other environmental and Cultural Departments of the Provincial Government, conservationists NGO's, hiking associations, research groups, etc.

All these entities develop interesting initiatives to move towards sustainability and are key partners that can significantly contribute to the sustainable tourism strategy.

- Good common planning for conservation and public use of the three Parks

The three Parks have common plans to manage nature conservation and public use:

- "Plan for the conservation of the natural heritage and biodiversity of the Parks of Garraf, Olerdola and Foix" (2016-2026). A tool to coordinate and ensure the preservation of biodiversity in the three parks. It consists of a diagnosis and a program of monitoring and research to improve knowledge and identify possible changes or disturbances over time.
- "Public Use Plan for the Parks of Garraf, Olèrdola and Foix ".(2009-2014). Already implemented and under revision. A tool to order all leisure activities that take place in the parks, as well as a tool for the socioeconomic development of the municipalities. It establishes a zoning of the Parka and the type of activities allowed in each of these areas, as well as the proposal of actions to be carried out to improve public use.

- Great diversity of resources and tourist attractions in the territory

It is not a very large territory but it concentrates a great variety of different resources, values and tourist attractions:

- Nature: There are various protected areas both terrestrial and marine, with different landscapes, flora, fauna, geology, etc.
- Culture: The area has been populated since ancient times so it has outstanding cultural, archaeological and historical values and tourist attractions.
- Traditional economy still alive with good links with tourism (vineyards, wine cellars, fishery, orchards, etc.).
- Numerous activities offered to discover all these values, including museums, monuments and interpretation centres.
- Wide range of possibilities for sportive activities both inland and water activities.

- Tourism linked to local products and traditional economy

There are interesting initiatives to integrate quality local products and local traditional economy in the tourism activity:

- Parc a Taula (“the park on the table”)
- “Xarxa de Productes de la Terra” (Local Products Network)
- “Slow Food del Garraf i Penedes”,
- Wine tourism (visit to the Vineyards and wine cellers)
- Visits to the port and the fish market.
- Study about possibilities for tourist-fishing.
- Markets, events and fairs to discover local products and gastronomy.

Main weaknesses (relating to the Charter process and sustainable tourism management) :

- Lack of a manager entity of the marine protected areas

The 60% of the area of implementation of the Charter is a marine area protected as a Natura 2000 site but without a proper manager team not specific budget for management activities. This situation limits the enforcement of the existing regulations, the development of further planning and the implementation of needed actions to preserve and monitor the threaten biodiversity and to enhance sustainable activities – including tourism - in the marine area.

- Urban pressure

Urban development outside the protected areas is more difficult to control. The urban pressure is high, especially in coastal and tourist areas where there has been already a high urban development. Even if there are some urban regulations, it really depends on the good will and sustainability commitment of the policy makers of the local governments, who also change constantly.

- Some access problems to the Parks

The main transport used by visitors is the private car, in fact, it is not possible to access the heart of the Parks in public transport. As a result, in certain times of high affluence there are some traffic problems and security problems for other users, mainly cyclists. Furthermore it has been identified a problem of illegal access with motorized vehicles to paths were it is forbidden. Some measures are included in the action plan to reduce these problems.

- Low participation and involvement of tourism businesses

Despite the good level of participation of the local stakeholders, the tourism businesses had low participation and involvement during the process. There are more than 130 accommodations, but just 15 tourism businesses (including restaurants and outdoor activities companies) participated in the meetings. There are several tourism associations that were consulted before the process started but that finally weren't actively involved.

- High diversity of certifications schemes and awards.

It is positive that public and private entities implement sustainability and quality certification schemes, but a high diversity of certification tools and brands can

generate confusion and discouragement among the tourism businesses and difficulties to communicate them to the visitors. In fact, when the public entities promote different schemes the tourism businesses can suffer duplicity of administrative procedures, costs, etc.

There is also uncertainty about the implementation of the quality scheme SICTED, that have been supported by the Provincial Council for a long time and has already adhered a high number of facilities, services and entities: the 3 parks, 5 tourist offices, 5 interpretation and information centres, 20 beaches, 1 marina, 29 tourism businesses, etc. It seems that it is going to be replaced by a different scheme, the sustainable tourism certification “Biosphere”, but it is not clear yet how it will work and if the quality procedures and standards already implemented will be maintained.

- Lack of actions to provide facilities, services and information for people with special needs.

There are some facilities, services and materials provided by the Parks for people with special needs. However, there are no further actions included in the Action Plan to make some progress in this regard in the whole territory.

- Uncertainty about the replacement of the Technician of Public Use and Environmental Education of the Parks.

The person in charge of the Charter implementation is the Technician of Public Use and Environmental Education of the three Parks, Sofia Paricio. She has recently achieved a promotion, but the job has not been yet offered for replacement. The administrative procedures in this regard are very slow and without the needed coordinator staff the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan is quite difficult.

Conclusions and recommendations for the protected area:

Please set out briefly your main conclusions and recommendations that you wish to draw to the attention of the protected area

Considering everything mentioned in this report, it can be said that the application meets the Charter principles and the implementation of the Action Plan will allow the territory to make progress towards sustainable tourism. However, taking into account the weaknesses identified, the following may be recommended:

- Management of marine protected areas

It would be desirable to have proper staff and budget for the management of the marine protected areas, but it depends on budget availability of the public administrations and it seems difficult to achieve. Meanwhile, it is recommended to make a special efforts to raise awareness about the values and the conservation problems of the marine area, and to try to reduce the negative impacts of tourism. For that purpose, all actions developed to improve information, training and contribution to conservation should always pay attention to the marine area. It may be necessary to involve – for certain issues - some other entities related to the marine area management, as for example, the regional department of coasts, the marinas, the “*estación náutica*”, etc.

- Encourage participation of tourism businesses

Given the amount of tourism businesses in the territory and the existence of some tourist associations, it would be important to develop actions that increase the participation and

involvement of private tourism businesses. Their point of view and collaboration are essential to move towards sustainability.

- Coordination of awards and certification systems

It is recommended to make efforts to coordinate the different awards and certification systems, especially the ones promoted by public entities which should try to achieve mutual recognition and joint promotion.

It is also recommended to include in the Communication Plan of the Charter a common, simple and effective message for visitors to differentiate awarded businesses and services from the others. This message would be used by the different stakeholders involved.

Special attention should be paid to take advantage and maintain the progress made with the SICTED program in the territory (quality standards and procedures).

- Actions to improve accessibility

It is recommended to include in the Action Plan and therefore monitor the initiatives that different public and private entities will develop to improve facilities, services and information for people with special needs. Some progress has been done by the Parks and it is important to continue progressing this way.

- Ensure staff replacement

It is recommended to solve the replacement of the Technician of Public Use and Environmental Education of the Parks, as it is the person responsible for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. With so many different entities involved, the coordination and steering role of the Parks is essential in order to properly implement and monitor the Action Plan.

Recommendation on award of the Charter:

You are asked below to give your recommendation on the award of the Charter. Please indicate here any clarification or qualification that you may wish to make concerning your recommendation, including any suggested conditions relating to the award.

Please check one box

I recommend that the protected area receive the award of the Charter.

I do not recommend that the protected area receive the award of the Charter.

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

A.1 Has full and clear factual information been supplied by the protected area in answer to sections A1 – A15 of the Application Report framework? 2

Yes

A.2 Additional/amended information not contained in protected area's application:

No

A.3 Any information not available, and reasons for this:

No

A.4 Are you satisfied that the information supplied is accurate? 2

Yes. Although some further information about the tourism offer and demand (restaurants, businesses of activities, kind of visitors, etc.) would have been interesting.

A.5 Are there any factual issues that might affect the eligibility of the protected area for award of the Charter?

No

SECTION B – Sustainable Tourism FORUM

- B.1** Is there a permanent stakeholder structure, with a defined membership, that enables the protected-area authority to work with others on the development and management of tourism, including in taking decisions and implementing and reviewing the strategy?

3

Briefly describe this structure, including size and membership, frequency of meetings, responsibility, functions etc. Please identify, and distinguish between:

- *Any Executive Committee/Working Group – e.g. responsible for delivery of the action plan*
- *Any wider structure – e.g. enabling wider stakeholder engagement and communication*

Yes, there are two main structures:

- **The Working Group (WG):** A technical steering committee in charge of preparing the Strategy and the Action Plan according to the proposals of the Forum. It is foreseen to maintain this committee who will be in charge of implementing and monitoring the Action Plan during the next five years. In 2016 the WG met 5 times and they plan to meet 3 times a year in the future. It is formed by the main public and private entities involved in conservation and tourism development. During the application process there were a lot of participants (39 people from 29 entities) with very different level of attendance to the meetings (e.g. 19 members attended 1 or 2 meetings). The composition will be reviewed to make it more operational and efficient.
- **The Permanent Forum (PF):** An open space for participation without any membership process or commitment. A wide range of local stakeholders have been invited to the 5 PF meetings that took place during the preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan. Finally 76 people have participated at least once, with an average of 30 people per meeting. The PF was in charge of discussing and approving the documents and proposals elaborated by the Working Group. The role of the PF will be to follow up the Action Plan implementation and to make final approvals of the new documents and decisions prepared by the WG. It is planned that the PF meet twice a year.

Both structures have been advised and coordinated by the **Technical Secretariat of the Charter**, formed by two technicians of the parks and a consultant company with experience on the Charter (REPTE TERRITORIAL S.L.) hired to assist the territory during the process. This team prepared all the documents and coordinated the meetings.

B.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved? 1

Tourism businesses have been invited to participate during the process. Finally 15 businesses have participated in some of the PF meetings and 6 businesses have participated in 1 or 2 WG meetings.

There is no active involvement in the process of any private business association.

There is an interesting eco-gastronomic association that has participated in some Forum and WG meetings, Slowfood Garraf-Penedés, although their attendance has not be very high.

Taking into account the importance of the tourism activity in certain areas of the territory and the existence of 130 establishments (hotels, camp sites, rural tourism, etc.) with more than 19.000 accommodation places, this participation seems quite low.

It has to be also said that it is not easy to involve the mature tourism sector in the project, but it is needed to enhance businesses involvement.

B.3 Is local government involved? 2

Yes, representatives of most of the town councils have participated, with different level of attendance, and the main county administration (NODE Garraf) is highly involved.

B.4 Is the local community involved (e.g. civil society bodies, interest groups etc.)? 2

Yes, apart from the local authorities, some local interest groups participated in the Forum and WG meetings such as hiking associations and local groups of research and studies.

B.5 Are local conservation interests involved? 3

Yes. The steering entity of the whole process is the manager of the three Parks. The Manager of the protected area Colls del Miralpeix – Costes del Garraf is also highly involved (PF and WG) and SEO/Birdlife Catalonia (Spanish Ornithological Society) participated in some meetings of the Forum and the WG.

Several entities that also have some conservationist aims participated in some Forum meetings as for example hiking associations and local groups of research and study (environment, archaeology, etc.).

It has been very positive the active participation of the representatives of the Pars' Rangers during the process.

B.6 Are the wider (regional) bodies responsible for tourism, conservation and regional development involved?

2

Yes, the main regional administration is the public administration of the Barcelona Province (Diputació de Barcelona), and their departments of Tourism and Environment are highly involved.

There are other county entities that manage tourism development and promotion who also participate.

However, there is weak collaboration with the Regional Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya), that is foreseen to be improved thanks to the Charter Network of Catalonia.

B.7 Are other partners involved (e.g. volunteers)?

x

No

SECTION C - SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Preparation, consultation and assessment

C.1 Has a tourism strategy and action plan been prepared for the protected area? Please comment briefly on the strategy/plan documentation (e.g. level of detail etc.)

Yes. There are two separate documents that have been prepared:

- The Strategy of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for the Parks Garraf, Olerdola and Foix 2017-2021. The Strategy establishes the main objectives for the next 5 years: to conserve the resources, reduce the negative environmental impact of tourism and improve the management of tourism in the territory. It includes the list of actions foreseen in the Action Plan according to these objectives.
- The Action Plan of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism of the Parks Garraf, Olerdola and Foix 2017-2021. It includes 32 well-detailed actions structured according to the Charter Key Topics.

However, it would have been interesting to refer in these documents to the area of implementation of the strategy and action plan, as it is wider than the three parks. The Charter area was described in the diagnosis but this is a separate document.

C.2 How does the tourism strategy relate to the protected-area management plan?

The Strategy and Action Plan are coherent with the main objectives of the Management Plans of the Parks.

C.3 Are there any apparent contradictions between tourism and protected-area management objectives and actions?

No.

C.4 How has the strategy and action plan been prepared and how have local stakeholders been involved?

An intense participative process has been developed to prepare the Strategy and Action Plan:

Date	Meeting	Preparation of the strategy and action plan
11/03/2015	Permanent Forum	Presentation of the Charter methodology.
10/06/2015	Working Group	Presentation of the Charter methodology. Definition of the role of the PF and the WG. Proposal of the implementation area. Gathering information for the diagnosis.
27/01/2016	Working Group	Definition of the WG composition. Working on the diagnosis.
17/02/2016	Permanent Forum	Approval of the implementation area. Working on the Diagnosis.
16/03/2016	Working Group	Results of the Forum meeting (17/02/2016). Working on the Strategy.
21/04/2016	Permanent Forum	Information about the work of the WG. Discussion and approval of the Strategy. Workshops to prepare the Action Plan.
25/05/2016	Working Group	Results of the Forum meeting (21/04/2016). Presentation of the Strategy approved by the Forum. Start working on the Action Plan.
29/06/2016	Permanent Forum	Information about the work of the WG. Presentation of the draft Action Plan. Workshops to prepare the Action Plan.
19/10/2016	Working Group	Results of the Forum meeting (29/06/2017). Presentation of the actions approved by the Forum. Definition of responsibilities of the actions. Presentation of the technical proposal about communication and participation.
28/11/2016	Permanent Forum	Presentation and approval of the Action Plan. Formal signing of the Application.

Translated from different answers of the Application Report.

The Parks manager authority, the one leading the process, had the support of an consultant company with high experience in the Charter implementation in Catalonia. (see B.1).

C.5 Was there wider consultation with local tourism enterprises in preparing the strategy?

1

There was an initial questionnaire about the key topics to prepare the diagnosis. It was sent to local stakeholders, including tourism businesses, but finally only three tourism businesses answered.

There was an initial meeting with the tourism association of the two main municipalities (Sitges and Vilanova i La Geltrù) but they didn't answer the questionnaire and had a low participation during the process.

C.6 Was there wider consultation with the local community and other interests/stakeholders in preparing the strategy?

2

The initial questionnaire was sent to a wide range of local stakeholders. Some town councils, conservation entities and research groups answered.

C.7 Was there an assessment of the natural and cultural resources, their sensitivities (capacity) and opportunities for tourism?

2

No specific assessment has been developed during the process, but there were some interesting studies already done that have been analysed. The main one was developed in 2009 to prepare the Public Use management Plan of the Parks and it included an assessment of the impacts of visitors activities on natural resources.

Another studies from other entities were revised.

Less information have been revised about cultural resources or about carrying capacity.

C.8 Was there an assessment of needs of the local community and economy?

2

No specific assessment has been developed but some previous documents and studies have been revised. The main one is an analysis about the impact of the Parks in the local economy, developed in 2009 to prepare the Public Use Management Plan of the Parks.

Some other studies and documents have been revised, most of them with very local scope.

The different stakeholders that analyse this information have actively participated during the process (development associations and County Councils).

C.9 Was there an assessment of strengths/weaknesses of tourism infrastructure/services?

1

No specific or global assessment has been developed. The main assessment about Parks' infrastructures and services for visitors was developed in 2009 to prepare the Public Use Management Plan in 2009. Come town councils and county administration have their own assessments.

C.10 Was there an assessment of existing visitor patterns and needs?

2

No specific assessment has been developed, but different entities in the territory gather information about visitors that have been analysed.

C.11 Was there an assessment to identify future visitor markets offering potential?

1

No specific assessment has been developed. Several entities as the Barcelona Tourism Authority or different Town Councils has their own tourism strategy where potential tourists are identified.

Implementation

C.12 Does the action plan include an indication of phasing/staging of action over time?

3

Yes. The Action Plan establishes a schedule for every action.

C.13 Does the action plan indicate which stakeholders or partners are responsible for the delivery of each action?

3

Yes. The responsible entities and partner entities are defined in every action.

C.14 What is the approximate size of the budget that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan per year, excluding staffing costs?

The total budget of the Action Plan is €242,500 for the 5 years.

The Protected Area Authorities provide around €77,000 (30%) for the five years, which means an average of €15,400 €/year.

C.15 What is this as a approximate percentage of its total budget?

This information is not provided in the application report.

Taking into account that the approximate budget of the three parks is around €2 million per year, the proportion is really small (0.69%).

C.16 Have funds been provided (or are they being sought) from other sources?

Yes, other entities will provide economic resources for the implementation of the Action Plan.

C.17 Does the level of funding seem reasonable to deliver the proposed action plan?

2

The budget of the Action Plan is quite low for five years, but it is focussed mainly in coordination activities and actions developed by the staff of the partner entities.

The budget foreseen seems enough for the foreseen actions.

C.18 Describe the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan?

The staff costs needed are estimated in hours of work: 7,537 hours for the 5 years. More than 4,000 hours will be provided by the Parks Authorities.

C.19 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

Yes, other entities will provide staff resources for the implementation of the Action Plan.

C.20 Do you believe the action proposed can be implemented with this level of staffing?

2

Yes, the level of staffing seems enough and the partner entities are committed to provide the needed staff.

C.21 Challenges in raising funding/resources. Do you anticipate any problems in securing sufficient funding and human resources to implement the action plan?

2

No further challenges of those specific of public funding: budget cuts and changes on the responsible people at a higher level.

C.22 Have any formal arrangements been made with partners (such as a legal agreement, a memorandum of understanding or a letter of commitment) for implementation of the strategy and action plan?

No, there are no formal arrangements.

C.23 Does the protected area have any other formal or informal arrangements with stakeholders for implementation of the strategy and action plan or other methods for ensuring their commitment?

All partner entities have assumed the commitment of implementing the actions they are responsible for by providing the needed economic and staff resources.

C.24 Has a process been put in place for monitoring and reporting on progress with the implementation of the action plan?

2

Yes. An annual report will be developed.

C.25 Have indicators been identified for the impact/success of the strategy and action plan, including how these will be monitored?

2

Yes. There are indicators defined for every action.

SECTION D – ADDRESSING THE KEY TOPICS

Please indicate below the level of current activity [A] and planned activity [B]. Please provide brief comments of explanation, as indicated in at the start of this form.

D1 Protecting valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage

D.1.1 Influencing land use planning and the control of potentially damaging developments A **2** B **2**

The Parks regulations and management plans ensure protection against damaging developments. In fact, most of the protected areas in the territory were established to avoid urban development and reduce high-environmental-impact activity in the natural areas.

The existence of a management entity for the protected area “Colls i Miralpeix-Costes del Garraf”, enhance proper implementation of the general regulations applicable to Natura 2000 sites.

The most vulnerable protected area is the marine zone, protected as a Natural 2000 Site but without a management body.

However, outside the protected areas boundaries it depends on regional and local urban planning and their proper enforcement by the public administrations. The higher urban pressures affects the coastal zone where there is the Master Plan for Coastal Urban Planning.

D.1.2 Influencing the location, type and design of tourism developments

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

The regulations and management plans of the protected areas influence tourism developments inside their boundaries.

The main tourist developments took place in the past. Nowadays, apart from the urban planning, the way of influencing the type of tourism is implementing voluntary sustainable tourism schemes: the European Charter, Biosphere Certification, Città Slow, SICTED, Sustainability Indicators System (ISOST).

It is planned to identify common requirements and procedures between the different schemes implemented in the territory to better coordinate them, to gather information and to extent them to the rest of the Charter Area (1.1.2)

D.1.3 Managing visitor flows, activities and behaviour in sensitive areas and sites

A **2** B **3**

The Public Use Plan establishes good regulation for visitor flows in the Parks according to a specific zoning.

The Park of Foix developed an interesting tool to control and minimise impacts of organised activities with many participants (races, routs, excursions): the Path Map for Organized Activities (MACAO). It was prepared through a participative process with the involvement of the stakeholders.

It is planned to develop a mapping tool for the Parks to identify sensitive sites and define the most suitable ways to practise and organise sportive activities without affecting the natural values or other visitors. The results will be participated with and communicated to the local stakeholders involved (1.1.3)

There is another relevant foreseen action to develop municipal laws that will ensure better enforcement of the regulations for motorized access to the Parks. (3.2.5)

It has been also included an action to work in cooperation between all the protected areas to agree a model of “public use” for the whole territory. (9.1.1)

D2 Supporting conservation through tourism

D.2.1 Encouraging visitors and tourism businesses to support conservation, through donations, volunteering and other activity A **2** B **2**

There are two examples of big companies contributing to nature conservation. The Barcelona Province Authority manages the Volunteering Network for the Protected Areas.

To achieve better involvement of tourism businesses in nature conservation it is planned the first step needed in the territory: rise their awareness about the protected areas (2.1.1). It is also planned to launch an award to distinguish the more committed businesses (2.1.3).

It is also planned to better coordinate the conservation and volunteering activities promoted by different entities in the territory and try to involve tourism businesses (2.2.1).

D.2.2 Using revenues obtained from tourism-related activity to support conservation A **1** B **2**

There isn't any scheme to use the revenues of tourism to support conservation, even if these revenues are quite high in some municipalities of the Charter area.

It is planned to analyse the use of the money raised by the tourist tax - more than €3 million in three years (2013 - 2015) – and to try to use part of it to support nature conservation in the future. This is an action that will be developed in partnership with other Charter Parks in Catalonia. (2.1.2)

D.2.3 Establishing, supporting and promoting tourism-related investments, projects and activities that help to conserve the natural and cultural heritage

A 2 B 2

Several projects and studies have been developed to enhance tourism activities related to natural and cultural heritage:

- Local products and gastronomy: slow food, Parc a Taula (The Park on the table), gastronomy routes, fairs and events, wine tourism, etc.
- Fishing sector: projects to develop tourist products linked with this traditional economic sector.
- Historic heritage: Castles route, Archaeological and Monumental sites, etc.

It is foreseen that the different local stakeholders continue developing these projects and enhancing investments to promote these kind of activities. However, these projects and activities are not included specifically in the Action Plan.

During the next period the aim is to improve knowledge and information about the existing activities to discover natural and cultural values of the territory and the possibilities to contribute to its conservation.

D3 Reducing carbon footprint, pollution and wasteful resource use

D.3.1 Working with tourism businesses to improve environmental management, including use of energy and water, waste management, and noise and light pollution A 1 B 2

There are some isolated examples of tourism businesses implementing sustainability certification schemes (EMAS, ISO 14000, LEED Certification, ...).

Two Counties have implemented the Spanish Scheme to approach destination quality (SICTED), with 29 businesses adhered, although it is planned to replace it for the sustainable tourism certification "Biosphere".

Some tourism infrastructures and services managed by public administration have implemented quality and sustainability schemes such as Blue Flag and SICTED for beaches, tourist offices, interpretation centres, etc.

A special effort is foreseen in the Action Plan to reduce waste production in organised activities with high number of participants (3.1.1), to improve waste management and selective collection of wastes in the municipalities of the Charter Area (3.1.2) and to raise awareness and best practices in the nautical and maritime sector (3.2.2).

It is also planned to coordinate and extent the existing schemes (1.1.2) and to implement the Charter Part II (7.1.2).

However it is very important to properly coordinate the different schemes promoted by public administrations in order to ensure businesses involvement and avoid confusion and discouragement.

D.3.2 Promoting the use of public transport and other alternatives to cars

A 1 B 2

There is a suburban train that connects Barcelona and the main coastal municipalities of the Charter Area. However, the existence of links and possibility of connecting these towns with other areas of the parks is very limited, due to the difficulty of access.

Some efforts have been made to promote walking trails and the use of bicycles. Some measures for improvement are included in the Sustainable Energy Action Plans (PAES) that have 9 out of 14 municipalities of the Charter Area.

This is a key point as car access to the Parks is one of the bigger problems in certain times and places (traffic jams, safety problems, etc.).

Several actions have been included in the action plan to achieve some progress:

- Monitor and control motorized access and promote sustainable mobility (3.2.4)
- Improve the information given by tourism businesses about public transport. (3.2.3)
- Implement and monitor the Sustainable Energy Action Plans in the whole Charter Area (3.2.1)

D4 Providing safe access, quality facilities and special experiences of the protected area, available for all visitors

D.4.1 Providing a wide range of access opportunities, with attention to safety and risk management A 2 B 2

There is a good network of walking paths, cycling routes and a wide range of different activities to enjoy and discover the protected areas and the whole Charter Area. However, these could be better communicated in a coordinated and integrated way to the visitors.

Specific measures are taken to ensure safe access to the protected areas by providing information to visitors about wild boar beatings, risk of fire, incidents, general recommendations, ocean currents, sea conditions, etc. It would be interesting that the tourism businesses collaborate in the dissemination of this information.

For the next 5 years it is planned to:

- Promote the improvement, connectivity and safety of a Bicycle Network that covers the whole Charter area connecting the urban centres (3.2.4)
- Improve the access control of motorized vehicles and identify black spots for safety and nature conservation (3.2.5)

- Improve the information provided to visitors about sustainable tourism in the whole territory (4.1.2)

D.4.2 Improving the quality of visitor facilities and services A 3 B 2

In two of the tree counties of the Charter Area – Alt Penedès and Garraf - it has been implemented a Quality System for Destinations promoted by the Ministry of Tourism (SICTED), so it covers most part of the territory. Once the destination is adhered, single services, centres, entities and tourism businesses can implement the Quality System SICTED, its quality requirements and procedures.

The three Parks Garraf, Olerdola and Foix are adhered and maintain a Quality Management System for their visitors services and infrastructures. It is also implemented in several tourist offices, information and interpretation centres and management bodies (Wine Tourism Penedes, beaches, NODE Garraf, one of the marines of Sitges, etc.).

There are other voluntary schemes to provide environmental quality mentioned in question 3.1.

There is no action related to the maintenance of the SICTED quality systems in the following years. It is said in the application report that the SICTED will be maintained but in fact, during the visit I was told that the Barcelona Province - who enhanced the implementation of SICTED - won't support it anymore and it will be replaced by the Sustainable Tourism Certification "Biosphere". There is some uncertainty about how it will affect the different entities and businesses involved, and if this certification will ensure the maintenance of the quality procedures and standards already implemented.

D.4.3 Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation and appreciation of the area's special natural and cultural heritage A 3 B 3

The parks Authorities provide a good set of annual programs targeted to different audiences (inhabitants, visitors, schools, etc.) to discover their cultural and natural values. One of those programs is "Passejades" ("walks") that promotes cheap guided walks in the parks offered by local businesses or groups.

The different destination managers (Tourism Department of Barcelona Province, Municipalities, Enorturisme Penedes, NODE Garraf, Nautical Centre of Vilanova i La Geltrú...) promote a wide range of tourism offers and activities to discover and enjoy the territory.

It is planned to:

- Improve the information provided to visitors about sustainable tourism in the whole territory (4.1.2)
- Identify all the entities that develop interpretation programs and activities and enhance their coordination and collaboration (1.1.1)
- Develop an inventory of tourism resources for the whole territory prioritizing those of most interest. (1.2.1)

D.4.4 Providing facilities and information for visitors with special needs

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

The Provincial Government of Barcelona has developed actions in different Parks to facilitate access to nature for people with disabilities (<http://parcs.diba.cat/es/web/accessibilitat>).

As a result, the Parks Garraf, Olerdola and Foix have:

- Two adapted itineraries (Garraf)
- Free lending service of materials to facilitate the mobility of disabled people: 1 handbike, third wheels for wheelchairs, 1 directional bar.
- Inclusive dramatised visits aimed at all audiences in which people with disabilities can participate (With guides that interpret sign language and materials to improve mobility).
- Inclusive school programs (with specialised assistants and materials if there are scholars with disabilities).
- 1 interactive inclusive game for children, shared with the rest of the parks in Barcelona Province.

There are also some other infrastructures, beaches and tourism businesses adapted for people with disabilities.

It seems that the Provincial Government of Barcelona will continue developing actions to improve services, facilities and information for disabled people in the Parks, but these actions are not included in the Action Plan 2017-2021.

There is no common strategy or specific actions to improve facilities, services and information for people with special needs in the whole Charter Area.

D5 Effectively communicating the area to visitors

D.5.1 Ensuring that marketing materials and activities promote the area effectively and responsibly

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

The main promotional information about the protected areas is offered by the Parks Authority in its web page, social media and through specific mobile applications (walking trains, the three parks, etc.).

The rest of the public stakeholders promote their own destinations or products, giving the protected areas different level of significance in their materials.

There has not been any analysis about how the different stakeholders promote the area and if they are doing it responsibly.

It is planned to develop information tools and materials about the values of the protected areas and the importance of their preservation to provide them to local stakeholders and tourism businesses (2.1.1). It is also planned to improve the information provided to visitors about sustainable tourism in the whole territory (4.1.2)

D.5.2 Providing good quality and effective visitor information and interpretation

A 3 B 3

The territory have a good set of information materials (maps, guides, leaflets, webs, Mobil apps, etc.) and a wide network of information and interpretation centres.

The Parks manages 18 information points and there are 7 more managed by other entities that are not coordinated between them nor with the Parks. The Parks organise a monthly training program for the staff of the information points and the rangers, to keep them up to date.

There are relevant actions planned to address this issue:

- Improve coordination and quality of information provided to visitors in the information and interpretation centres of the whole Charter Area. (5.1.2)
- Develop the "Environmental Education Plan 2020" that will establish a program of activities, minimum criteria of contents and will enhance networking among interpretation centres and businesses. (5.1.3)
- Develop the Charter Part II. (7.1.2)
- Improve the information provided to visitors about sustainable tourism in the whole territory, through an specific web page of sustainable tourism of the parks and through proper links and coordination of the existing tourist websites in the territory. (4.1.2)
- Develop information materials and tools about the values of the protected areas and their preservation to provide them to local stakeholders and tourism businesses. (2.1.1)

D.5.3 Ensuring that tourism businesses and other local stakeholders are well informed about the area and provide relevant and accurate information to visitors A 2 B 3

The protected areas provide several information and training activities for local businesses and other stakeholders.

All the action mentioned above (D.5.2) will enhance that tourism businesses and other stakeholders provide relevant and accurate information to visitors.

D.5.4 Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups. A 3 B 3

The three parks have specific annual programs of activities for young people and schools. The Consorci els Colls – Miralpeix, the Center for Sea Studies and some private businesses also develop specific programs for schools and students.

The coordination of these activities will be improved thanks to the development of the "Environmental Education Plan 2020". (5.1.3)

D6 Ensuring social cohesion

D.6.1 Anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing and potential conflicts with local residents A **2** B **3**

The Parks have formal participation structures to support their management:

- The Coordinating Council where there are representatives of the Town Councils.
- The Advisory Committee where there are also representatives of the local community (Only in the Park of Garraf).

Some municipalities and County organizations have organised spaces for networking and participation.

The Permanent Forum and the Working Group have meant and important improvement regarding this issue and these structures will be maintained and reinforced during the next 5 years. (6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 10.1.1)

D.6.2 Maintaining good communication and engagement between local residents, businesses, visitors and the protected area authority A **2** B **2**

The main tool of the protected areas to communicate with local residents, businesses and visitors are the social media.

The Consorci els Colls – Miralpeix also elaborate a monthly newsletter.

The Permanent Forum will improve the communication.

D.6.3 Encouraging and developing appropriate partnership activity with and between stakeholders A **2** B **2**

Participation the Advisory Committee of the Park of Garraf is only possible for associations, that is to say partnerships of stakeholders.

Different local entities have enhanced the establishment of partnerships between stakeholders, for example the Local Products Network.

The Permanent Forum and the Working Group will enhance partnerships with and between local stakeholders.

D7 Strengthening prosperity in the local community

D.7.1 Promoting the provision and identity of local produce and services and their purchase and use by visitors and tourism businesses A **3** B **3**

There are very interesting initiatives in the territory to promote local products:

- Parc a Taula (“the park on the table”): It is a cultural-culinary program promoted by the Provincial Council of Barcelona. The aim is to promote natural products developed and produced by restaurants, wineries and artisan producers of the villages within the Parks. It seeks to highlight Parks’ natural, cultural and

landscape values. The restaurants recommend dishes and use local products, the wineries produce wines with designation of origin and they all refer to the Park. It contributes to establish relationships between the tourism businesses and the primary producers. In the territory there are 38 participants: 2 accommodations, 13 restaurants, 8 wineries and 15 producers (including a fisherman guild). <http://parcs.diba.cat/es/web/parc-a-taula/inici>

- “Xarxa de Productes de la Terra” (Local Products Network): It is a voluntary partnership of 12 supramunicipal entities promoted by the Provincial Council of Barcelona. The objective is to enhance the business fabric and quality of local products. There are 64 participants in the Charter Area.
 - “Slow Food del Garraf i Penedes”, a partnership that organizes the “Mercats de la terra” (Land Markets) and has 3 restaurants certified and 8 partner producers.
 - Numerous markets, events and fairs to promote local products and gastronomy.
- It is planned to maintain this initiatives, to improve the “Parc a Taula” program (7.1.1) and to implement the Charter Part II. (7.1.2)

D.7.2 Supporting the economic viability and performance of local tourism businesses and the provision of local employment in tourism A 3 B 3

All the actions related to tourism and promoted by the public administrations have the aim of supporting economic viability of tourism businesses and promote local employment.

However, it has not been deeply analysed if tourism employment in the mature destinations (hotels, restaurants, etc.) fulfil social requirements.

D8 Providing training and capacity building

D.8.1 Providing relevant training for staff of the protected area authority in sustainable tourism development and management A 2 B 3

The staff of the Parks of Garraf, Oerdola and Foix participated in several training programs about tourism management and marketing, and specifically about the European Charter and the Sustainable Tourism Certification “Biosphere”.

It is planned to elaborate a survey about training needs (8.1.1) and to develop a training program targeted to all the local stakeholders, included the staff of the protected areas (8.1.2). Nevertheless, it is important that these training programs include sustainability issues even if these are not considered a priority by the tourism businesses.

The staff of the Parks will also participate in several meetings of the Charter Network (10.1.3) that will provide information about sustainable tourism.

D.8.2 Providing and encouraging relevant training and capacity building for tourism businesses and other stakeholders in sustainable tourism A 2 B 3

There are plenty of training activities for tourism businesses and other stakeholders provided by different entities. This offer will be improved and better coordinated thanks to the actions mentioned above (8.1.1 and 8.1.2).

There will be also specific training for tourism business on sustainability to implement the Charter Part II (7.1.2).

D9 Monitoring tourism performance and impacts

D.9.1 Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction A 2 B 3

Different stakeholders collect data about visitors (number, characteristics, degree of satisfaction, etc.). However, these entities are not coordinated neither in the gathering nor in the analysis of the data.

An action has been included in the Action Plan to create a commission that will try to establish a more coordinated and effective system for monitoring visitors (4.1.1).

It is also planned to install “vehicle counters” in the main and strategic entries of the protected areas to monitor the vehicle flows (3.2.4).

D.9.2 Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs A 2 B 2

Several studies about tourism reality and potential have been developed, but there is no regular and common system to gather information about businesses, their performance and needs.

It is foreseen that the participation structures will enhance exchange of studies and information about businesses.

At least an analysis of number, location, type and evolution of tourism businesses should be included in the monitoring reports of the Action Plan and the final evaluation report.

D.9.3 Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community A 2 B 3

There is a good monitoring of the impacts of tourism in natural resources developed by the manager entities of the protected areas. In fact, the three Parks gather information of the same indicators, as they have the same Public Use Plan. The Parks Garraf and Olerdola also have a Plan for Monitoring Ecological parameters.

There is no such good and coordinated monitoring on the impacts of tourism in local economy and community, but different entities have developed specific studies and analysis.

The Action Plan includes an action to achieve a better coordination between the protected areas authorities in management and monitoring of visitors, including gathering information about economic impact and sustainable tourism projects. (9.1.2)

D.9.4 Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan

A B

The Action Plan 2017-2021 includes an specific action to elaborate annual reports to evaluate the progress on its implementation (10.1.2). During the last year it is plan to evaluate the implementation of the whole Action Plan 2017-2021 in order to start the renewal process (10.1.4).

It is foreseen that the reports will be elaborated by the Charter Secretariat, formed by technical staff from the parks and an external assistance to support the implementation and the monitoring of the Action Plan. However, during the verification visit some staff changes had taken place and the replacement of the Technician of Public Use and Environmental Education is uncertain due to the slow administrative procedures.

D10 Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter

D.10.1 Communicating sustainable tourism actions and results to local stakeholders and more widely at a local, regional and national level A B

Good dissemination has been made of the participation process by the managers of protected areas and local entities through their communication tools.

It is foreseen to elaborate in 2018 a Communication Plan for the European Charter (5.1.1) where it would be essential to establish how to communicate the actions developed.

Other actions will help to disseminate the progress: the Consolidation of the Working Group (10.1.1), the Permanent Forum (6.1.1 and 6.1.2) and the Annual Reports (10.1.2).

D.10.2 Promoting and making visible the award of the Charter A B

See 10.1

D.10.3 Engaging with EUROPARC and the Charter Network, including participating in related events and activities A B

The staff of the Parks have participated in the Charter Meetings organised by EUROPARC-Spain in 2016 and by the Catalanian Charter Parks in 2016.

The Action Plan 2017-2021 includes an action to participate in the Charter Network Meetings at different levels: Catalonia, Spain and Europe.

However, apart from attending to the meetings it would be interesting to use other ways of participation in the Charter Network as for example contributing to the European Charter Newsletters, participate in European Projects, etc.

D.10.4 Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter A B

It is foreseen the renewal process in the Action Plan with an specific action (10.1.4).

SECTION E – EXPERIENCE AND FINAL COMMENTS

Please comment briefly on any points made by the applicant in this section which you believe are of particular interest.

E.1 Examples of excellence and best practice

- Network of information points of the Parks: The three parks have 18 information points or centres that work in partnership and are coordinated by the Parks Authority. There is a permanent training program of the staff of the information points with monthly sessions to keep them well informed about the Park's management and news. (see D.5.2)
- Activity programs to discover the natural and cultural values of the parks: The Parks Authority develops annual activity programs to discover and enjoy natural and cultural values of the protected areas. The programs are targeted to different type of audiences: inhabitants, visitors, schools, etc. The programs are "Live the Park", "Poetry in our Parks", "Walks", etc. Some of the activities are inclusive so can be adapted to people with special needs. (see D.4.3)
- Initiatives to promote local products and gastronomy: "Parc a Taula", "Xarxa de Productes de la terra" and "Slow Food del Garraf i Penedès" (see D.7.1)
- The Path Map for Organized Activities in Park of Foix (MACAO): Facing the great demand for organising sportive activities with a high number of participants in the Park, and taking into account the threats for nature conservation and for the other visitors, the Park of Foix developed a participative process, based on technical proposals, to establish the specific paths where those activities can take place. It is a good tool for the Park's management and it helped to minimise conflicts and impacts. The Map is periodically revised and updated.

E.2 Experience of working with the Charter – final comments

The Parks and the local stakeholders agree that working with the Charter has helped them to improve knowledge and collaboration between the different stakeholders of this complex territory. It has also allowed to make known the values of the protected areas.

E.3 Any further comments or observations

No