

RE-EVALUATION

Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Parque Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac

Name of verifier: Amanda Guzmán

Date of submission of re-evaluation application by protected area: 8/03/2016

Date of verification visit: 9-10/05/2016

Date of completion of this report: 15/07/2016

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

The visit took place during 9-10 May 2016. I held a long working meeting with the Park managers and they accompanied me to visit several interest points to see the results to several actions developed during the last 5 years. I also had the opportunity to visit and interview several Charter Partner businesses. Finally I held a meeting and several interviews with members of the Working Group.

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 Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac is located in the province of Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain). It is part of the Catalan pre-coastal mountains. It has an area of 13,693.7ha of which 40.8% is publicly owned, 21% is the area for special protection and 53% is a controlled hunting area.

It was protected initially by a Urban Planning Document (*Plan Especial de Protección*) in 1972 and in 1987 it was declared a natural Park.

The Park consists of two massifs, the Sant Llorenç del Munt, culminating in the peaks of La Mola (1,104 m) and Montcau (1,057 m), and the smaller Sierra de l'Obac.

The Park is noted for its large rock formations made up of calcareous conglomerates whose matrix has deltaic origin. The actions of rain and erosion have shaped the current landscape, very steep and full of cliffs and valleys filled with torrents and streams in all directions. At ground level, water has shaped an impressive array of cavities that generate caverns, caves, burrows and outpourings to the surface. In fact, part of the Park is included in the GeoPark of Central Catalonia, declared in 2012 and managed by the Bages County Council.

The climate is Mediterranean subhumid. The primary forest is the holm oak and pine forests, although there are important oak forests. The flora species of the bare rock are very characteristic and have different types of endemism. The great diversity of ecological environments encourage the existence of many animal species (more than two hundred species of vertebrates).

Human settlement in the mountains of Sant Llorenç del Munt is known since prehistoric times. There are numerous remains from different historical periods. The period that has left the deepest mark is the High Middle Ages and the highlight of this period are the Romanesque churches; and especially the monastery of Sant Llorenç del Munt (S. X), built on top of the Mola Peak. This is the most emblematic and most visited monument of the Park.

Adjacent to the monastery there is a restaurant, La Mola Restaurant. It is owned by the Park (*Diputació de Barcelona*) but has been operated by a local enterprise for many years. The restaurant customers and workers can only access it on foot (45 min to 1 hour trail). The transport of goods is done with donkeys and sometimes by helicopter. The restaurant is a tourist attraction, but the enterprise also is in charge of preserving and keeping the Monastery and its surroundings.

The peasantry ("*pagesia*"), once widespread throughout the massif, has left several typical Catalan country houses ("*masías*").

The Charter Area covers the 12 municipalities that contribute to the Park area. The whole Charter Area is 39,946 ha and the Park occupies 34%. The population of this area is 271,336 inhabitants unequally distributed, ranging from villages with less than 100 inhabitants to one city of over 200,000 (Terrassa).

Most of the population works in the service sector, followed by industrial sector. Less than 2% of the population works in primary sector (forestry and agriculture).

The Park has a high number of visitors, between 150,000 and 200,000 per year, with an average of 158,000 visitors per year during the last 5 years. This average was 173,000 in the 7 years before, so it seems to have decreased. Most of them come from the nearby towns (Barcelona, Sabadell, Terrasa) or other municipalities in the vicinity. Very few come from the rest of Catalonia, the rest of Spain (1%) or abroad (1%). Most visitors spend less than one day in the Park so their contribution to local economy is quite low.

The tourism infrastructure consists mainly of restaurants and bars and there are very few accommodation businesses. It is a metropolitan Park that serves the residents of the surrounding area, so there is not a structured and strong tourism sector.

Numerous visits are still concentrated in time (spring and autumn weekends) and space (central area of the Park, mainly La Mola and Montcau). This causes overcrowding problems in certain places and at certain times, with associated negative impacts.

However, the Park does good monitoring of natural values and apparently there are no major problems for the biodiversity conservation.

There is a clear north-south division in the Charter area:

- Southern area: municipalities with higher population and urbanisation (including Terrassa with 200,000 inhabitants). This area concentrates the greater part of the visitors that come to spend one day in the countryside or hiking. Accommodation infrastructure is scarce, except for Terrassa City (not related to the Park tourism).
- Northern area: the municipalities with less population density and moderate urbanisation. It attracts mainly visitors on weekends to have lunch, who are not aware of natural Park values. There are very good restaurants, and there are more rural accommodation businesses than in the southern area.

The Park is managed by the Provincial Council of Barcelona (*Diputació Provincial de Barcelona*), while the rest of nature Parks in Catalonia are managed by the Regional Government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*).

The Park has two participation bodies: the Coordinator Committee (formed by the 12 town councils, the regional government and a representative of the Advisory Committee) and the Advisory Committee (formed by representatives of local stakeholders).

Regarding tourism management the main stakeholders are the Provincial Council of Barcelona, Terrassa Tourism Board, the Tourism departments of the three County Councils and, Tourism Board of the Provincial Government (Barcelona) and the Tourism Board of the Regional Government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*).

The economic crisis affected in greater or lesser extent to all these entities.

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

The twelve municipalities of the Charter Area belong to three different counties (Bages, Vallès Occidental and Moianès) and to the same province (Barcelona). Tourism and main economic development projects are administratively organized according to these counties, the Barcelona province or the Catalanian Region. Therefore, the Charter Area is not managed as a tourism destination, while the Park is a main tourism attraction for the three counties.

The sustainable tourism strategy and action plan, rather than a common tourism strategy for a destination – based on target markets, products, promotion activities, etc. - is a roadmap to improve coordination and collaboration between the local stakeholders and to implement sustainable tourism principles in their different plans and activities. This is a logical solution due to the administrative organization of the territory.

Precisely for this reason, the involved entities have decided to maintain the same strategy - strategic guidelines and objectives - of the previous 5 years, which correspond to the Charter Principles.

The new action plan for the period 2016-2020 consists of 40 actions, 20 of which remain from the previous action plan. Each of the actions is well detailed in terms of description, responsible entities and calendar. The budget is quite low – around 400.000€ - and half of the actions are expected to be developed just with the human resources of the collaborating entities (without allocated budget). The strategy and action plan focuses on coordination efforts rather than high investments.

The Park is working with the main stakeholders in different participation structures to define and implement the sustainable tourism strategy and action plan: the Charter Working Group (WG), the Advisory Committee and Forum (PF), thematic working groups, etc. However a higher involvement of tourism businesses, municipalities and the Tourism Board of the Regional Government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) would be desirable.

The Park has undertaken a revision of the Action Plan monitoring undertaken by the Park. However, the monitoring was not very rigorous and there has been no measurement of the monitoring indicators. In my opinion, the level of implementation is quite lower than assumed by the stakeholders. Besides, the review was not accompanied by a broader analysis of the evolution of the tourism offer, the tourism demand, the participation, etc.

During 2015 the Park has led the revision of the strategy and action plan. It was participated process with several meetings of the WG and the PF, although the level of attendance to some meetings was quite low.

Finally, the Strategy remains the same and the Action Plan 2016-2020 will help the territory to progress towards sustainability. Even though some interesting activities that the Park and the stakeholders will undertake are not included in Action Plan.

The set of documents for the application of the Charter was complete. While I have the impression that the Park and the stakeholders have actually done higher progress than reflected in the documents. It would have been very helpful that the re-evaluation report contains more comprehensive information about the progress and the results achieved during the last five years.

As it is mentioned in the next section, the Park and its collaborating entities have made good progress on collaboration and tourism sustainability, but attending to the Charter certification they didn't address most of the recommendations made by the verifier and the Evaluation Committee five years ago.

The Park had a technical person devoted to the Charter secretariat. The contract finalized in April 2016 and by the date of completion of this report the administrative process to reincorporate her or another person is not finalised. The Park expect to have it solved in September. This is the reason why I couldn't meet during my visit that person who had been more involved in the implementation, monitoring and review of the strategy and action plan.

The representative of the Tourism Board of the Province of Barcelona was also unable to attend the meeting with the Working Group, so I couldn't interview her.

As mentioned in the beginning of this report, during my visit I could see a number of interest points and interview several stakeholders including tourism businesses and members of the Working Group. It was really helpful to understand better the progress of the Park and to gather additional information to the application documents.

Verifier's assessment

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

The main achievements of the territory has been the enhancement of the relationships between the Park and the local stakeholder as well as the improvement in collaboration and cooperation among the public entities involved. The participation structures have allowed a better understanding between the representatives of public and private stakeholders.

There has been also significant progress in assuming that conservation of natural and cultural values of the Park is a necessity and a priority when tourism developing actions are implemented. Therefore, the problem of the high concentration of visitors in certain locations and times is also assumed as common problem to be solved.

The Park has also strengthened the relationships with tourism businesses and encouraged them to put in practice the Charter Principles through various schemes and activities: Charter Part II, Parc a Taula, cooperation to implement SICTED (quality system), working group with businesses to define, implement and monitor the Environmental Education Plan, etc. As a result there is also a higher involvement of tourism businesses in the Permanent Forum.

During these years the Park has improved its network of walking trails in the less visited areas and has installed interpretive elements to highlight their natural and cultural values. The Park has also improved some essential infrastructure for managing visitor flows in the busiest area and its network of information points. In addition, the Park has maintained and improved its Quality Management System to better record information about visitors and their needs. This system ensures continuous improvement of Park facilities and services for visitors.

The Park has also developed extensive programs of activities to discover its natural and cultural values addressed to visitors, groups, schools and local community.

Therefore, the Park has maintained and improved the programs, tools and infrastructure that allow them to properly manage visitor flows and provide quality services.

However, during the last five years the Park and its collaborating entities have not managed to agree on effective actions to reduce the problems of overcrowding in the central part of the Park. In fact, there has been a step backwards in the main initiative that took place to reduce the use of private vehicles in the Park: the "Bus Parc".

The crisis and the disappearance of tourist consortiums has caused that some of the actions related to potential markets and tourism products could not be implemented.

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

Participation and collaboration

The participation structures settled to encourage sustainable tourism development in the Charter Area (WG, PF and thematic working groups) have allowed the involved entities to better know each other, to strengthen relationships and to improve their coordination and cooperation in various initiatives. Main public and private stakeholders are involved and work together to plan, implement and monitor the sustainable tourism action plan.

Participation has been also useful to enhance that the sustainable tourism principles are assumed by the different entities. Thus, the Park is gradually incorporating tourism concepts to its management and the rest of the entities are considering conservation concepts in their daily work.

A general agreement about the main sustainability problems have been reached and the proper composition and functioning of the participation structures will enable the stakeholders to undertake proper actions to address them in the coming years.

Several representatives have expressed a very good opinion of the collaboration process generated in the framework of the Charter, and this is one of the main strengths for the territory.

Park facilities and services for visitors

The Park has an extensive network of 20 walking trails distributed throughout the Park that allow to discover by foot its natural and cultural values. There are also a good set of information and interpretive materials that help discovering those values.

The Park also have several interpretive centres, and an extensive program of activities aimed at visitors, residents and schools that enhance to discover the Park values in a responsible way.

Network of information points

The Park manages a wide network of information points that covers almost every municipality and main attraction sites in the Park. This network is offered by its own or in collaboration with the town councils.

The Park also provide the Personalized Information Service - during weekends and holidays - consisting of 12 information points located at the main entrances to the Park, car Parks and facilities more frequented.

It is noteworthy that the Park offers an annual training program for the information agents mainly based on visits and excursions guided by technical staff of the Park. This program seeks to improve the quality of the information given to the visitors.

Close collaboration with tourism businesses

The Park has implemented the Charter Part II. During this process the tourism businesses commit with the sustainable tourism principles and the implementation of specific actions to improve their sustainability. Despite being a territory with an underdeveloped tourism industry, the business response has been very positive and currently there are 15 Charter Partner businesses.

Charter Part II has been quite successful because the tourism businesses participating have a strong commitment with sustainability and Park conservation. They don't enrol because the Charter will bring them more clients and income. While the Park is doing significant actions to distinguish them through the information centres, the web page and an specific brochure.

Should also be noted the coordination effort made by the Park and the County Councils to implement at the same time the Charter Part II and the quality tourism system SICTED, simplifying the work for the tourism entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Park develops other initiatives that allow closer collaboration with tourism businesses and enhance sustainable tourism:

- Parc a Taula
- Training program for information points and tourism businesses
- Working group with environmental education companies (Environmental Education Plan)

Quality Management System

The Park has a Quality Management System for the public use area since 2007, 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". It was previously a National Norm and nowadays an international norm.

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 are involved in the definition, implementation and maintenance of the quality management System.
- There is permanent control and monitoring of operation and quality of Park services and facilities.
- The Park takes permanent control and monitoring of visitor flows and visitor satisfaction.
- Depending on the results, goals and actions to improve quality are set annually (improvement annual plan).
- The quality management system is audited every year by an authorised certifier .

This certification means that the Park has a quality management system to monitor and improve the quality of its facilities every year.

Actions planned to reduce impacts of visitor concentration

It is widely known and accepted by all local stakeholders that concentration of high number of visitors in certain locations and times is the main problem of sustainability faced in the territory. During the last five years they have made some progress, especially providing activities, infrastructures and services in the less frequented areas of the Park.

It is very positive that the Action Plan 2016-2020 includes several actions specifically aimed at reducing this problem:

- Monitoring and research plan of the nature Parks network of Barcelona Province.
- Maintenance of the Quality Management System
- Working group on organized sport and hiking activities.
- Catalogue of best practices for the organization of sport and hiking activities.
- Mobility Plan of the Park.
- Improving dissemination and information of public transport.
- Draft project to inform visitors about the capacity of the car Parks occupation.
- Working group to reduce the use of private vehicle.

The proper implementation of these actions should enable significant progress in the next five years. If this is not the case and negative impacts for biodiversity continue, the option of regulating access to the hot spots should be evaluated.

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

Temporal and spatial concentration of visitors

The main sustainability problem of tourism in the Park is still present in spite of the efforts made during the last 5 years. The Park continues to have a large influx of one-day visitors, most of them coming from the nearby cities. Most of the visitors mainly concentrate in spring and autumn weekends and mainly in the central part of the Park (Coll d'Estanalle, La Mola, Montcau).

This concentration creates some environmental impacts: soil compaction, erosion, waste, impacts on fauna and flora, etc., as well as some management problems: waste water management (septic tanks) in areas of greater affluence, waste management, traffic jams and parking problems.

The Park has implemented several actions to improve visitors flow management in these areas, but it is quite difficult to reduce the number of visitors.

Low level of visitor contribution to local economy

The greater part of the visits to the Park are one-day visits without sleeping in the area and most visitors come from the nearby cities. As a result, the high number of visits generates a low economic impact in the territory.

There are very few accommodation businesses and the tourist sector is mainly focused on bars and restaurants, so the tourism industry is not well developed nor structured.

Lack of specific assessment about the tourism sector

To revise the strategy and action plan there has not been an specific analysis of the evolution of the tourism offer (number, type, distribution) and the tourism demand (number of visitors, origin, length of stay, activities). So there is no information about the evolution of the tourism sector during the last five years.

On the other hand, there has not been developed any specific assessment of potential visitors markets. This is a critical issue to create tourist products and to develop joint promotion. Local stakeholders agree on the importance of attracting visitors on the weekdays but there is no clear assessment about who those visitors are, what their needs are or how to reach them.

Languages

As most visitors come from the surrounding cities and villages, there are very few information and promotional materials about the area in other languages than Catalan.

The Park for example has a lot of interesting information material about what to do in the Park to discover its natural and cultural values, but only in Catalan. The Park partners have some more information materials in other languages, but most of them are also just in Catalan.

This is not a problem now, because 98% of the visitors come from Catalonia but this is an important gap in the territory if the aim is attract travellers from the rest of Spain or foreign markets with longer stays and higher impact on local economy.

There is no common strategy for tourism products development

As it was mentioned above, the administrative distribution of competencies on tourism among counties, province and region, make it difficult to establish a common strategy of tourist product development and promotion, as well as other economic development projects. That is to say, the Charter Area is not managed as a tourism destination but as part of different destinations: Bages, Valles Occidentales, Moianès, province of Barcelona, Region of Catalonia.

As a result, the sustainable tourism strategy and action plan included in the Charter application does not have a common basis development and promotion of tourism products in the whole Charter Area. Every entity is working on this regard and at least participate in the Working Group and Forum to inform the rest of the stakeholders.

Another difficulty is that the Tourism Board of Catalonia, with important competencies in Tourism development and promotion, is nor participating in the Working Group and the Forum despite they have been invited to.

Lack of attention to environmental issues

In the Charter area there is legislation to control land uses to avoid negative environmental impacts now and in the future, including tourism activities. The diagnosis and the action plan developed five years ago paid little attention to specific actions of environmental management: sewage water treatment, waste management, energy and resources consumption, renewal energies, etc. This situation continue and there has not been any assessment or actions planned regarding:

- satisfactory treatment of sewage water.
- encouraging reducing energy consumption.
- further use of renewable energy.
- actions to reduce water consumption.
- actions to improve waste management systems (reduce, reuse, recycle)
- introducing environmental management systems in public and private entities.
- actions to reduce activities and impacts of motor vehicles in the tracks and trails of the Charter Area (motocross, quads, buggies, etc.)
- developing specific training programs in sustainable tourism for staff of the Park, tourism businesses and local public entities in the next five years.

Conclusions and recommendations for the Charter area:

Considering the information given in this report, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

1.- Active participation of tourism businesses

There has been a significant progress on the involvement of tourism businesses as the 15 Charter Partner Businesses are suppose to participate in the Permanent Forum meetings. There is also one representative of tourism businesses in the working Group.

However, I would recommend to enhance their active participation and a higher level of attendance to the meetings. It would be also advisable that representatives of different type of businesses could be members of the Working Group (accommodation, restaurants, activities, etc.), as there are no tourism associations for the moment. Representatives of the two restaurants associations ("Els Fogons Gastronòmics del Bages" and "Cuina Vallès") could be also members of the Working Group and the Forum. The point is to bring to the discussions the view and priorities of the tourism businesses and enhance collaboration between public and private sector.

2. Increase the level of attendance to the meetings

A significant progress in the participation and collaboration between local stakeholders has been made. However, It would be advisable that the members of the Working Group and the Permanent Forum have greater attendance at meetings. The meetings are essential to keep updated of the developments and to influence and collaborate in the implementation of the action plan.

Efforts should be made by the different entities and solutions could be proposed by them to increase their interest and participation.

3.- Ensure human resources for the Charter secretariat

In order to ensure:

- Proper coordination, enhancement and monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan.
- Appropriate functioning of the participation structures.
- Complete implementation of some of the actions where the Park is the responsible entity.

It is necessary that the Park continues counting on a technical person in charge of this tasks of the Charter Secretariat. During the verification period the Park had not this technical support due to some administrative problems. It is suppose to be solved in the next months but if this situation continues it will be difficult for the Park to fulfil its commitments and to meet the objectives set out in the strategy and action plan.

This technical person was also dedicated to the quality management system which is essential for managing visitor flows and ensure quality of facilities and services.

4.- Identify potential markets and develop specific tourism products

It has been recognized as one of the main sustainability problems that the most part of the visits are of short duration (one day or less) and concentrated in time and space. Most of these visitors come from nearby towns and does not contribute to local economy.

To achieve the objective of attracting other kind of visitors with longer stays, in different times and greater impact on the local economy, it is recommended to identify potential markets, analyze their needs and create specific products and promotion to attract them.

County councils, according to the regional promotion plan, have to focus on nearby markets, although these are the ones with shorter stays.

If the potential markets of interest identified come from the rest of Spain or foreign countries, it would be advisable to start translating existing information materials into other languages.

5.- Address key topics of sustainable tourism

The implementation of the new action plan will mean important progress on essential and sustainability tourism issues agreed as a priority for the Charter Area. However, some other key topics of the Charter are not sufficiently addressed.

It is recommended to include specific actions to be developed by the Park or the collaborating entities regarding these issues, or at least monitor the progress in these areas over the next five years:

- **Environmental management of tourism:** Charter Part II enables working with some tourism businesses in this regard, but it is important that the rest of the businesses and public entities also make efforts to prevent negative impacts of tourism (renewable energy, waste management, use of resources, etc.)

- **Visitors payback:** The large number of visitors going up to La Mola, or concentrated in the central area of the Park, create problems of overcrowding, but they are also a great opportunity. The Park and its partners could take advantage of the numerous visitors, who usually repeat their visit to the Park and therefore feel close to it, and could develop actions so they can make direct contributions to infrastructure maintenance projects, conservation projects, etc. (visitor payback).
- **Accessibility for people with disabilities:** there is only one action to improve a itinerary in the Park. Although it is expected that the Provincial Government of Barcelona continues improving Park facilities and services. Anyway, it would be recommendable that the different stakeholders collaborate on a common strategy to improve services and information for people with disabilities (training, assessments, affordable improvements, adequate information and promotion of accessible facilities and services, accessible tourist products, etc.)

6.- Monitoring the strategy and the action plan

I recommend to monitor the results of the action plan with a proper and defined methodology. For example, it would be important to record what actions are finally developed describing in detail the scope and the results. It is important to consider that an action has been completed when it has been implemented as described initially and when the objectives have been fulfilled. Any deviation or change should be reasoned. The action plan can be adapted to the circumstances and revised during the five years of implementation, but the changes should be at least explained and registered.

In addition, it is recommended to periodically collect data to measure the monitoring indicators already defined in the action plan and register the results in the annual evaluation reports.

Furthermore, I maintain the recommendation made five years ago. I recommend the definition of at least three or four main objectives:- to be achieved through the implementation of the tourism strategy and the action plan, and the setting up of monitoring indicators to measure the level of success (for example, average length of stay, number of tourist out of season, etc.). This way in the next five years the monitoring not only will show whether the actions are implemented or not, but it will also be possible to evaluate whether they are contributing to achieve the main objectives or not. At that time, it will provide very useful information to draw up the new strategy and action plan.

Proper monitoring will reveal the progress achieved with the implementation of the action plan and will enable the stakeholders to make a wider dissemination of the benefits to public entities, private sector and local community. It would also help to make the process more stable and less depending on the changes of representatives and technical staff. If everything is properly registered, new participants can be more easily brought into the process.

7- Incorporate actions related to the Charter awarding process

I recommend to include in the Action Plan two actions related to the Charter awarding process that are going to be developed and require significant economic and human resources:

- **Renewal of the Charter Award:** I recommend including an action to ensure the renewal of the Charter award defining tasks and costs (final evaluation and conclusions of the strategy and action plan 2016-2020, drawing up a new strategy and action plan 2021 - 2025, participation, communication, application dossier, re-evaluation fee, etc.). This whole action will necessary start in 2020. In this regard, it is also advisable to analyse the evolution of tourism offer (number, type, distribution of tourism businesses..) and tourism demand (number, kind, distribution of visitors...),

and to include the results in the final evaluation report (*Memoria del Plan de Acción 2016-2020*) . I also recommend to make an effort to complete the re-evaluation report giving synthetic but sufficient explanatory information.

- **Charter Part II.** The maintenance and further development of the Charter Part II require also several activities that should be properly planned and monitored: verification, training, technical assistance for the revision of the Action Program and the Partner Agreement, new adhesions, promotional activities of the Charter Partners, etc.

There is no doubt that the Park will developed these actions but it is advisable that these are properly planned, funded and monitored.

8.- Charter dissemination

The Park has good tools to disseminate the Charter, its principles and achievements: the website, social network and brochures. However, it is recommended to complete and update the website and take advantage of all these tools.

Furthermore, for the next period, it is recommended that the rest of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Action Plan and the Charter process also contribute with their means to disseminate the Charter, the sustainable tourism principles, the implementation of the action plan and the overall progress towards sustainability. This is an opportunity to distinguish the destination and the tourism businesses by their quality and commitment to sustainability.

Recommendation on re-award of the Charter:

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. In general, sections A1-A14 contain clear and factual information. However I missed some information that would have been of interest to understand the evolution of tourism during the last 5 years. For example:

- Evolution of the type of visitors during the last 5 years in regard to their origin, interests, length of stay, activities, period of visit, etc.
- If there has been an increase or a decrease of number of visitors compared with the years before the Charter award.
- Number, territorial distribution and evolution of the private tourist infrastructure and services (accommodation, restaurants, businesses of guided activities and environmental education activities...).
- Evolution of the facilities and services of the Park during the last five years (new walking trails, interpretive signposting, services and activities, etc.)

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

I asked the Park to provide the composition of the Forum and information about the process and timetable for both reviewing/revising the strategy and developing the new action plan with the partners. This information was not contained in the re-evaluation report.

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

The information mentioned in question "I". Maybe this information was not available because the monitoring during the last five years focused on the level of implementation of every action but a wider analysis about the evolution of tourism didn't take place.

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

Yes, except for the issues mentioned.

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

No

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.:

2

The main current structure is the **Working Group** (WG) formed by 14 representatives of:

- (3) Park managers
- (1) Tourism Board of the Provincial Government of Barcelona (*Diputació de Barcelona*)
- (5) Tourism entities managed by the County Councils (*Consells Comarcals*)
- (2) Conservationist and scientific entities (Universities and hiking clubs)
- (2) Local community (representatives of farmers and hiking clubs)
- (1) Representative of tourism businesses

The WG has an average of three meetings per year.

However, the level of attendance to the meetings is quite low.

The **permanent Forum** has been integrated into the Advisory Committee of the Park, a formal Park management body whose operation is regulated by law. The Advisory Committee and Permanent Forum (PF) meets two times a year. On average the meetings last about 3 hours and 10-15% is devoted to the Charter.

The FP has 43 members:

- Area of Territory and Sustainability of the Provincial Council of Barcelona (5)
- Managers of the Park (3): Director, Head of Public Use and Technical Secretariat of the Charter.
- 3 representatives of town councils belonging to the Park Coordinating Committee
- 1 representative of the agricultural sector
- 2 representative of the tourism sector (*Consells Comarcals*)
- 2 representatives of the forestry sector
- 4 representatives of the entertainment entities (Hiking, Espeleology Motorcycling clubs)
- 2 representative of civic organisations (neighbour associations)
- 2 representative of scientific institutions
- 3 representatives of conservation organisations
- 1 representative of educational institutions (vacant post)
- Charter Partner Businesses (15)

The members of the WG are also members of the FP.

Other entities and social organisation can participate if they ask to.

My impression is that there is little time to discuss and debate the Charter issues during the Advisory Committee meetings, but this formal participation structure have higher rate of attendance and give official support to the Charter process.

In Addition, the Park has created and coordinated other thematic working groups focused on different issues to encourage participation of the stakeholders (environmental education, agriculture, public transport, organised sport and hiking activities, etc.).

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

- The Permanent Forum has been integrated into the Advisory Committee.
- Two local tourism entities (Consortios de Turismo) disappeared because of the economic crises and they are now represented by the County Councils.
- The Charter Partner Businesses joined the structures.

1.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved?

2

Yes. One representative of the local tourism businesses has joined the WG and all the Charter Partners Businesses are members of the PF. It is a requirement for the Charter Partner businesses to attend to at least 1 PF meeting per year.

The tourism businesses are therefore more involved now. However, their degree of attendance to the meetings is quite low.

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

The Park has strengthened significantly relationships with tourism businesses through the implementation of the Charter Part II and their involvement in the participation structures. The Park has also worked together with the environmental education businesses to elaborate the Environmental Education Plan. In addition, the Park develops an annual training program in which companies can participate.

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

In 2013 the Park initiated the implementation process of the Charter Part II coordinated with other tourism quality scheme (SICTED). Currently there are 15 Charter partner and there are already some more interested in joining.

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

1.3.1 The local community?

2

Yes. In the WG there are representatives of a hiking club, the Farmers Union of Catalonia, the City Council of Terrasa and the local public entities managing tourism (*Consells Comarcals*). Although the attendance o the meetings of the Farmers Union representative is quite low.

The involvement of the local community was quite high five years ago and it remains at the same level in the Advisory Committee where apart from the entities of the WG there are several civic organizations and entertainment entities participating directly (neighbour associations, hiking clubs, etc.).

However, it would be advisable greater involvement and active participation of the town councils in the process of the Charter.

1.3.2 Conservation interests?

3

Yes. Some conservation entities – apart from the Park – continue being members of the Working Group: two Universities of Barcelona and the hiking club.

Furthermore, other 4 conservationist entities are regular members of the Advisory Committee and Permanent Forum.

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

2

Yes, there are representatives of different areas of the Provincial Council of Barcelona.

However, there is still no involvement of the Regional Government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya*), entity with important competencies on tourism development and promotion.

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**

Yes, some representatives of the forestry sector and the agricultural sector are still involved in the Park Advisory Committee and Permanent Forum.

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 referred here one main achievement: Better understanding and greater rapprochement of positions between the different entities involved thanks to the participation process and structures. The Park has incorporated tourism concepts in its daily management and its partners have assumed sustainability criteria to minimize environmental impacts and to encourage Park conservation.

The overall comment on the progress of the Charter Area is given in page 5 (*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)?

The Park states in the re-evaluation report that the 87% of the Action Plan was implemented successfully because on only 13% of the actions couldn't be implemented.

According to the information provided in the final evaluation report of the implementation of the Action Plan 2011-2015 and the information gathered during the visit, I have the impression that there are more actions that actually couldn't be implemented or that have not been implemented as planned.

There are cases where the action is considered completed but it has been implemented just partially or something different than planned.

There could be also cases where the activities developed by the Park or the partners and the final results are not reported in detail.

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

The main reasons are the economic crisis and the subsequent shortage of human and economic resources. In particular, the disappearance of the entities managing tourism at local level (*consorcios turísticos*).

2.4 What are the most positive achievements in your view?

In my opinion, the main achievement of the territory is the one mentioned by the Park and explained in question 2.1: **A better understanding and greater rapprochement of positions between the different entities involved.**

Another important achievement is the successful implementation of the **Charter Part II** which has been well received by the tourism businesses. Charter Part II has enabled to strengthen relationships with the tourism enterprises and enhanced their participation in the Charter process.

It should be added that the Park has made a good effort to coordinate the Charter Part II implementation with another tourism quality system (SICTED), which has been beneficial for the project and the businesses.

It is worth noting that during these five years there has also been a significant improvement in the **Park facilities for the visitors** (walking trails, signage, interpretive elements, information materials, etc.).

2.5 What are the main challenges still faced?

The Park mentions in the report only the challenge of implementing the Charter Part III for Travel Agencies in order to continue strengthening the relationship with the local tourism businesses.

In my view, there are other main challenges that the Charter Area is still facing:

- Improve the temporal and spatial distribution of visitor flows to avoid concentration of visitors and their impacts.
- Attract tourists from more distant markets and even foreigners - if possible – that would prefer longer stays and that are specifically interested in discovering natural and cultural values of the Charter Area.
- Strengthen, professionalize and achieve a better organization of the private tourism sector in the territory.

Monitoring results

2.6 Has the Charter area monitored the results of its action plan over the past five years? **2**

Yes, the Park has monitored the degree of development of every action and has described very briefly what has been done in each case. The Park has also elaborated an annual evaluation report and almost in every meeting of the Working Group and the Forum they have informed about the degree of implementation of the action plan.

However, it has not been carried out a detailed and rigorous monitoring of the actions or any measurement of the indicators initially defined. In fact, I do not share the degree of compliance assigned to some of the actions considered completely implemented.

The Park and its partners have not made a broader analysis of the general results of the implementation of the action plan regarding key issues as the tourism offer, the tourism demand, the participation, etc.

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? **1**

The Park does not provide sufficient information in the re-evaluation report about how they have addressed all the recommendation. Therefore this section is evaluated on the basis of other application documents and the information gathered during the visit.

Please list the recommendations and give a score for each:

1. **Involvement and organisation of tourism businesses in the Charter area.** Get tourism enterprises participating more directly and actively in the Advisory Committee and the Working Group. **2**

2. **Network closely with other Parks near cities.** **1**

The Park had some meetings with the Montseny Natural Park and participates in different Park networks, but specific projects with other Parks near cities have not been developed.

3. **To define few main strategic objectives and its monitoring indicators.** So that the monitoring not only show whether the actions are implemented or not, but also if they are contributing to achieve the main objectives or not. **0**

No main objectives nor its indicators have been defined.

4. **To revise and complement the action plan.** Description of actions, revision of budgets and inclusion of actions that were going to be implemented by the Park or its partners and fit perfectly the sustainable tourism strategy. **2**

5. **Charter re-evaluation.** Include in the action plan a future action to ensure the renewal of the Charter award. **0**

The re-evaluation has been carried out, but no specific action was included in the previous or in the new Action Plan.

6. **Contribution of visitors to conservation.** The Park and its partners could take advantage of the numerous visitors who usually repeat their visit to the Park and therefore feel close to it, and could develop actions so they can make direct contributions to conservation projects, infrastructure maintenance projects, etc. (visitor payback). **0**

This issue has not been addressed.

7. **Guidelines on responsible promotion of the Park and the Charter area.** Prepare a document with specific guidelines on responsible promotion of the Park, which would be very useful for the Park itself and its partners. **2**

The Park has not prepared a specific document, but has worked together with tourism businesses and local entities to promote less frequented areas of the Park.

8. **Environmental Management.** Evaluating environmental management of the Park and local stakeholders to establish concrete actions for improvement. **1**

The Park has included an action to monitor their environmental management. The implementation of the Charter Part II addressed this issue with some businesses. But, no further evaluation of the environmental management of the rest of the stakeholders took place.

9. **Accessibility for disabled people** **1**

The Park has implemented some actions but there is no evidence that other stakeholders have done the same. There is no common and coordinated strategy regarding this issue.

10. **Assessment on future visitor markets and needs** **0**

No specific assessment has been carried out.

11. **Economically disadvantaged people** **0**

Nothing done or planned. The Charter area considers that it is not needed as most of the facilities and services are free.

Resources for implementation

2.8 How did the budget available for implementation of the action plan develop over the past five years?

The initial budget of the Action Plan was € 900,000. The Park has estimated that the final investment has been around € 300,000 (30%). Therefore, the investment has been finally less than estimated since there have been actions that have not been developed and actions that have been just partially implemented.

However, there has been no monitoring of the budget finally allocated to each action.

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

Less than originally planned. Due to the economic crisis and the dissolution of the tourism consortiums.

2.10 Were they sufficient for implementation of the plan?

No, the plan was partially implemented.

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?

Park staff has remained stable. But the disappearance of the tourism consortiums has made that they couldn't provide their staff as planned.

2.12 Has the level of staffing affected implementation of the action plan?

Yes, in the case of the tourism consortiums,

No, in the case of the rest of local stakeholders.

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?

2

The tourism strategy remains the same for the next 5 years. The same strategic lines of action and objectives.

2.14 Has a new action plan been prepared for the Charter area and its partners?

2

Yes

2.15 How are the strategy and new action plan presented (in terms of documents)?

Two documents: The Strategy (strategic lines and objectives) and the Action Plan 2016-2020 (detailed actions for every strategic line).

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.

10/12/2014 Working Group meeting (2 participants and the Park)- It is reported that the re-evaluation process will be developed in 2015.

20/04/2015 Working Group meeting (4 participants and the Park) - Revision of the level of implementation of the Action Plan 2011-2015 and definition of the participatory process to prepare the Action Plan 2016-2020.

03/06/2015 Permanent Forum meeting– Explanation and approval of the participatory process for the renewal of the Charter award.

02/07/2015 Permanent Forum meeting (23 participants) – The whole meeting was devoted to the definition and approval of the Action Plan (3 hours).

29/10/2015 Permanent Forum meeting – Report about the implementation of the Action Plan 2011-2015 and instructions to send amendments to the proposal of Action Plan 2016-2020 previously received by email.

02/11/2015 Working Group meeting (4 participants and the Park) – Work in the definition of the Action Plan 2016-2020

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

The Strategy is consistent with the objectives of the Park management plan and the mission of the Park is to ensure its implementation.

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

No

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? 0

2.20 Has there been any further assessment of visitor patterns and needs? 0

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

Answer to 2.20 and 2.21

No specific assessment have been pointed out by the Park.

The Park states that the Working Group is formed by different experts in these fields and the actions have been defined according to their suggestions.

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

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?

Approximately € 60,000 per year.

What is this as a percentage of its total budget?

Approximately 3.8% of its average annual budget.

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

Yes, it is planned that some actions are developed and funded by other partner entities.

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

2

In the actions that are budgeted, yes, it is considered sufficient.

However, half of the actions have not allocated budget. Most of them are expected to be developed just with the staff of the collaborating entities.

2.27 What is the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan?

The Head of Public Use of the Park and a Technical assistant to coordinate and monitor the Action Plan implementation (Charter Secretariat).

Other staff members of the Park will participate in the development of some actions and the Park Director participates in every meeting of the Working Group and the Advisory Committee.

Since May 2016 the Park has not any technical assistant for the Charter due to administrative issues. In the date of completion of this report the Park was in the process of hiring the person.

2.28 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

Yes. In several actions it is foreseen that the partner entities provide their own staff.

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

In most of the actions it is not defined the level of staffing provided by the different entities, but the commitment of the stakeholders suggest that enough level of staffing will be finally provided.

Commitment of partners

2.30 Is there a good indication of commitment from other partners to implementing the new action plan? **2**

Yes. During the visit I could see how some of the entities are very committed to the process of the Charter and the action plan. However, the level of attendance to the Working Group and the Forum meetings is quite low.

The Action Plan seems quite realistic. It is not very ambitious.

2.31 Does the Charter area have any formal arrangements with partners for implementation of this action plan?

No. There is no formal arrangements, but the Action Plan has been formally approved by the Coordinating Council of the Park.

Monitoring results

2.32 Have indicators been identified for monitoring the results of the strategy/new action plan? 2

Yes. Each action descriptor includes one or several monitoring indicators. Though many of them consist in the evidence of the implementation of the action (reports, meeting minutes, lists of attendees, studies, photographs, inventories, plans, etc.). Very few clear and measurable indicators provide information on the results of the performance, to evaluate if it has been successful or not.

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

During the last five years there has not been any monitoring of the indicators. The indicators are defined for the actions but there is no methodology defined to measure them and report the results.

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 still has a good set of management plans and regulations to ensure nature conservation and to prevent the impact of tourism activities in sensitive areas.

The Park also makes a good job monitoring flora and fauna, on their own or in collaboration with scientific institutions such as universities. Most of the information collected is dumped in their geographic information system that helps them manage the public use to avoid impacts.

In the previous action plan there were many interesting actions in this regard but some of them have not been completed or have not been implemented as planned. For example, it was planned to monitor visitor's environmental impacts in a particular sensible area of the Park but finally they have just defined some indicators that have not been monitored yet.

Two main actions are planned for the next five years regarding the monitoring of flora and fauna of the Park:

- (2.1) The Plan of Monitoring and Research for the Protected Areas of the Barcelona region
- (2.3) The Monitoring Centre Mediterranean Mountains that will be located in the Park.

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

There has been a good progress as a result of the following actions:

- Recovery and enhancement of the ancient wine vats and promotion of guided activities to discover them.
- Installation of interpretative panels in several walking trails and interest points to show the cultural and historical values of the Park.
- Inventory of architectural values by some municipalities.

The action plan was very ambitious in this regard and some other actions have not been implemented or have not been developed as planned due to the lack of funding and the disappearance of the responsible entities.

The Park and its partners continue organizing plenty of guided activities, events, trade fairs and cultural activities to support the maintenance of cultural heritage. These activities will be maintained in the following years.

No significant new actions are planned.

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 1 C 1

The Park has proper planning and legislation as a tool to control land uses (including tourism) and to avoid negative impacts.

No further specific actions were included in the previous action plan regarding this issue. And no further actions are foreseen in the new action plan.

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

The Park monitor several environmental indicators to ensure proper environmental management in their facilities as part of their Quality Management System.

The main action developed is the implementation of Charter part II. As a result there are 15 Charter Partner Businesses committed to sustainability.

Coordination and cooperation of the Park with other entities encourages that tourism activities develop are compatible with nature conservation.

Efforts have been made to mitigate visitors impacts in areas of higher pressure, to redirect the flow of visitors to other less visited areas and to promote the use of public transport. However the problem of concentration of a high number of visitors in the Central part of the Park is not solved yet.

Despite the efforts of the Park and the meetings held, there are two other important actions to reduce the impact of tourism and recreational activities in the Park that could not be completed. These two have been included again in the new action plan:

- (7.2) Editing of a catalogue of best environmental practices for sports activities and excursions organised in the Park.
- (8.1) Working group on sports activities and organised excursions

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

The Park manages a volunteer program that involves inhabitants of the Park and nearby towns. But no specific actions have been developed or planned regarding this issue.

Principle 4 – Meeting visitor needs/quality of experience

4.1 Surveys to measure visitor satisfaction A 2 B 2 C 2

The Park has a quality management system implemented in its department of public use and certified since 2007. That means carrying out permanently satisfaction surveys for visitors and analysing them to improve Park services and facilities (Annual Plan). The Park has improved the survey to make it more attractive to visitors and has increased the places where is conducted (facilities managed by private companies).

The Park has also implemented the Charter Part II. As a requirement the Charter Partner businesses carry out satisfaction surveys among their clients and include some questions about the Park.

It is planned to develop specific surveys for those visitors that don't go to the visitors centres.

4.2 Assessment of future visitor markets and their needs A 0 B 0 C 0

There was only one action planned to gather information of different market studies developed in the Charter Area but it has not been done. The responsible entity disappeared due to the economic crisis.

No actions are planned in this regard.

4.3 Specific provision of facilities and information for disabled people A 3 B 2 C 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 Park Sant Llorenç del Munt and l'Obac has:

- Four adapted information centres.
- 1 adapted itinerary.
- Free lending service of materials to facilitate the mobility of disabled people: handbikes, 2 Joëlette, third wheels for wheelchairs, directional bars, tandem bicycle, etc.
- Inclusive school programs (with specialised assistants and materials if there are scholars with disabilities).
- Educational and information materials with Braille version: the guide-book of the Park, the Park map, tales...
- 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).

The Charter Area is also participating in the Regional Project called “Tourism for everyone” to jointly promote public and private services and facilities adapted for disabled people (www.turismeperatothom.com).

The Provincial Government of Barcelona will continue developing actions to improve services, facilities and information for disabled people under the initiatives mentioned, but these actions are not included in the new action plan.

For the next 5 years it is just planned the improvement of an existing adapted itinerary to make it fully adapted for blind people (with interpretation).

4.4 Provision of facilities for economically disadvantaged people

A 2 B 2 C 2

There are no actions developed or planned regarding this issue because most of the Park facilities and services are free. This is not a priority for the area.

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 since 2007 a Quality Management System for the public use area, 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”. It was previously a national norm and nowadays it is an international norm.

This certification means that the Park has a quality management system to monitor and improve quality of its facilities and services every year. The Park has to define, implement and monitor an annual quality improvement plan.

The Park has also implemented the Charter Part II in coordination with other entity implementing SICTED (Quality System for tourism businesses). This action allowed both entities to evaluate services and facilities of tourism businesses and to enhance their improvement.

Finally, the Park has performed significant improvements to its network of facilities (walking trails, car Parks, signposting, interpretive panels, information centres, etc.).

It is expected to continue this line of actions.

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 2 C 1

Park promotion is developed mainly through the web page of the Natural Park Network of the Provincial Council of Barcelona (Diputació de Barcelona), as well as through publications for the whole Park network. It is promoted as a protected area highlighting its values and giving recommendations for the visit.

However, nothing has been done or planned to elaborate specific guidelines for responsible promotion of the Park, which would be very useful for the Park itself and its partners. For example, it would be advisable that the first image and place promoted in the Park web (and the main leaflet) is not the Sant Llorenç del Munt Monastery. Although it gives the name to the Park and is the most important monument it is also the site with major overcrowding problems in the Park.

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

A 2 B 2 C 2

The progress on the collaboration between the Park and the rest of the local stakeholders has favoured a more responsible promotion of the area. There is a common understanding of the need of promoting activities outside the central area of the Park.

It is also worth mentioning the Charter Part II to influence in the promotional activities of tourism businesses.

The territory will continue working this way. Although, it would be also interesting to draw up 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

There is plenty of information material (web pages, leaflets, guides) on where to go and what to do in the Park and the Charter Area, edited by the Park (*Diputació de Barcelona*) and the local entities managing tourism (*Consells comarcals*, tourism consortiums, municipalities).

However most of the information materials are still just in Catalan. This is normal as the 98% of the visitors come from Catalonia, but it can be a handicap to attract other markets for longer stays (rest of Spain, foreign markets). The main tourist products created to attract other visitor markets have materials in several languages.

It is foreseen to continue improving the information materials, but still not translating them to other languages.

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

A 3 B 3 C 3

Remarkable:

The Park manages a wide network of information points and centres that covers almost every municipality and main attraction sites in the Park. They also provide the Personalized Information Service - during weekends and holidays - consisting of 12 information points located at the main entrances to the Park, car Parks and more frequented facilities.

It is noteworthy that the Park offers an interesting annual training program for the information agents mainly based on visits and excursions to discover interest sites and values of the Park. These activities are usually guided by technical staff of the Park.

In the recent years there has been also an improvement of the information service by coordinating and settling common timetables for the different information points.

The Park will maintain this information facilities and services.

5.5 Process for ensuring others (especially tourism enterprises) provide good information A 3 B 3 C 3

The Park encourages other organizations and companies to provide good information through coordination meetings and working groups, sending information by e-mail to the Forum members, the website of the Park and different events and activities.

The Park also offers a training program for tourism businesses - Forum members, Charter Partners businesses, environmental education businesses, businesses managing Park facilities, members of "Parc a Taula" - which combines theoretical sessions and field trips to know more about the values of the Park. Companies participating in the training program are recognized as information points of the Park.

The implementation of the Charter Part II also ensures that tourism businesses provide adequate information about the Park.

Finally, the Environmental Education Plan - drafted in collaboration with tourism companies - also encourage them to use same contents and adequate information about the Park in their activities.

The Park plans to continue with all these activities, although most of them are not specifically included in the action plan.

5.6 Provision of guiding services and an events programme for visitors and local people, including groups and schools A 3 B 3 C 2

The Park offers a wide range of activity programs to discover natural and cultural values of the protected area. These programs are aimed at schools, groups, residents and Park visitors.

The Park has also an specific program of guided trails in the less visited areas and in cooperation with local businesses.

An effort has been done these years to ensure that forum members are aware of the activities promoted by the different local stakeholders in the Charter Area.

A significant progress has been done working together with environmental education businesses and defining the Environmental Education Plan.

It is planned to continue working in this direction. Although the main actions are not included in the action plan.

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 1 B 1 C 2

Several actions to create or develop tourism products have not been implemented or completed mainly because of the economic crisis and the disappearance of the tourist consortiums.

The territory has the tourist product "Els 3 Monts" which is already marketed by some travel agencies and it is planned to ensure its maintenance and promotion in the next period.

A gastronomic tourism product linked to wine and the wine vats have been created.

It is planned to continue developing different kind of activities, events, conferences and trade fairs in the territory, many of them related to natural and cultural values, gastronomy and local products of the Park.

There is also an action that will be coordinated by the Park to create a specific tourist product linked to the values of the Park.

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

Most of the actions dealing with the promotion of tourism products could not be developed because of the crisis and the disappearance of the tourism consortiums.

The competency for the creation and promotion of tourism products fall mainly on the Tourism Consortiums or Consells Comarcals, the Tourism Area of the Provincial Barcelona Government and the Regional Catalanian Government (Tourism Area), and most of their activities are not included in the action plan. The Regional Catalanian Government doesn't participate in the Working Group or the Forum.

It is planned to develop conferences and workshops to exchange information about tourism products created and promoted by several local and regional stakeholders. The Action Plan focuses on improving coordination and communication between institutions and businesses, to improve the sustainability of these products and their dissemination.

Principle 7 – Training

7.1 Providing or supporting training programmes for staff of the Charter area, in sustainable tourism A 3 B 2 C 2

The staff of the Park that is in charge of the Charter has improved their knowledge about tourism and sustainable tourism through:

- Specific training to implement the Charter Part II.
- Close collaboration with tourism entities to implement the tourism quality system (SICTED).
- Attendance to the annual Permanent Seminars on the Charter organized by EUROPARC-Spain.
- Meetings with tourism entities and tourism businesses.
- Participation in a fam-trip
- Attendance to different conferences and activities targeted to businesses and tourism entities.

The Park will continue developing this kind of activities, but it would be advisable that the Park staff receive some more specific training on sustainable tourism.

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

Several information and training sessions for tourism businesses have been held in the Charter Area. In this regard, noteworthy is the whole process of implementation of the Charter Part II that includes several training sessions on sustainable tourism for the tourism businesses.

It is planned to continue these two main actions.

However, it would be advisable to provide tourism businesses and public entities with specific training on sustainable tourism. The Park should also provide specific training to the new person hired for the Charter Secretariat.

Principle 8 – Community involvement and maintaining local quality of life

8.1 Involving local communities in the planning of tourism in the area A 3 B 3 C 3

The existence of different participation structures (Coordinator Committee, Advisory Committee and Permanent Forum, Charter Working Group and other thematic working groups) allow the local community to participate in the management of the Protected Area and to be aware of the activities developed by the Tourism Consortiums, other local entities and the Provincial Government of Barcelona.

The Tourism Consortiums and the County Councils (*Consells Comarcals*) have their own participation structures.

During the last five years the participation of tourism businesses in the WB and PF has increased.

There are several actions in the new action plan to continue this line of work: maintenance of the participation structures, thematic working groups...

8.2 Communication between the Charter area, local people and visitors A 2 B 2 C 2

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 participation structures and meetings mentioned above also enhance the communication with local community.

The Park also use the social network Facebook to communicate with local community and visitors. The Park has more than 4.000 followers.

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

Same tools and mechanisms mentioned in questions 8.1 and 8.2. Nevertheless, during the visit some conflict arose in the conversations that are not being addressed in the action plan: hunting versus hiking or farmer versus visitors.

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 2

There are interesting initiatives in the whole Charter Area to promote the purchase of local services, local gastronomy and local products by visitors and local tourism businesses:

- **“Parc a Taula”**. Is a cultural-culinary program promoted by the Provincial Council of Barcelona since 2005 and implemented in 5 protected areas of the region. The aim is to promote natural products developed and produced by restaurants, wineries and artisan producers of the villages within the Park. It seeks to highlight Park’s natural, cultural and landscape values. The restaurants recommend dishes, the wineries produce wines with designation of origin and the artisans produces multiple products locally, and they all refer to the Park. It contributes to establishing relationships between the tourism businesses and the primary producers. In the Parc Natural Sant Llorenç del Munt i l’Obac there are 7 accommodation businesses, 20 restaurants, 9 wineries and 9 agricultural producers involved.
- **“Moianès ve de Gust”**. Brand created by the Consortium Moianès to promote the products of the region and local gastronomy.
- **“Cuina Vallés”**. Restaurant Association with the aim of promoting the region and its local products through the cuisine.
- **“Els Fogons Gastronòmics del Bages”**. Association of professional chefs in the Bages Region to jointly promote the local cuisine focusing on traditions and local products.

The implementation of Charter Part II is also an interesting initiative to address this issue. The 15 Charter Partner Businesses are committed to purchasing and promoting local products.

These programmes will continue in the future, although most of them are not included in the action plan.

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

The Park prioritises the recruitment of local people for the Personalized Information Service. The county councils and the town councils try to encourage local employment and economic development in every activity

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

There are few traditional economic activities still alive in the area, due to economic evolution of the territory, but there are different initiatives to support them through tourism activities.

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

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 2 C 2

The quality management system of the Park enables keeping a very detailed record of visitor numbers over time and space. The Park has improved the system for recording this data with the collaboration of the private businesses managing Park facilities and information points.

However, there is still no coordinated system to compile these data with the ones recorded by other stakeholders (municipalities, tourism enterprises, etc.).

10.2 Creating and implementing a visitor management plan

A 2 B 2 C 2

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.

There is also an specific plan for the most visited area “La Mola” (Plan Director de La Mola), to ensure that the use of the area does not affect conservation. It includes access management, facilities improvement and enhancement of the heritage of two landmark points.

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

However, there are still problems of visitor concentration in time and space that needs to be solved.

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

The Park walking trails network has been increased and improved. This network helps to distribute visitor flows through less visited areas of the Park.

Nevertheless, the “**Bus Parc**” - one of the most interesting initiatives the Park had in this regard - has stopped running. The “Bus Parc” was a public transport service supported by the Park, the Provincial Council of Barcelona, the town councils of Terrassa, Mura and Talamanca, and the company “Transports Generals d'Olesa, SA”. This public support allowed to offer service at subsidized cost for visitors and local community.

Nowadays there is just a regular bus line with limited schedules and stops.

There has been an important setback in this regard

There were several actions that has not been developed as planned:

- Working Group to reduce use of private cars
- Improvement and dissemination of information about public transport
- Draft project to inform about capacity and occupancy of car Parks.
- Drafting the Plan of Walking Trails

It is planned to develop this actions during the next five years, as well as a “Mobility Plan of the Park”.

10.4 Controlling the siting and style of any new tourism development

A 2 B 2 C 2

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

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)

Park facilities and information point's network. Explanation given in page 6 (main strengths) and questions 5.4 and 5.6

Quality Management System. Explanation given in page 7 (main strengths) and questions 4.5. 4.6.

Charter part II and other schemes to enhance relationship with businesses. Explained in page 6 (main strengths).

Environmental Education Plan. The park has elaborated the plan in collaboration with tourism companies offering environmental education activities. They agreed on the common contents about the park and improvement actions. The Park also has a Working Group with regular meetings to monitor the implementation.

Annual training program for information agents and partner tourism businesses. The Park offers an annual training program for the information agents mainly based on visits and excursions guided by technical staff of the Park. This program seeks to improve the quality of the information given to the visitors and the tourism partner businesses can also participate. The Park also offers a training program for tourism businesses - Forum members, Charter Partners businesses, environmental education businesses, businesses managing Park facilities, members of "Parc a Taula" - which combines theoretical sessions and field trips to know more about the values of the Park. Companies participating in the training program are recognized as information points of the Park.

Range of inclusive activities in which people with disabilities can participate normally due to the specialized guides and materials mentioned in question 4.3

C2 Marketing and promotion of the Charter

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

In the official webpage of the Nature Park Network of the Province of Barcelona, there is an specific site of "sustainable tourism" where you can find information about:

- What is the Charter <http://parcs.diba.cat/web/turisme-sostenible-als-espais-naturals/carta-europea-de-turisme-sostenible>
- Specific information about the Charter in Parque Natural Sant Llorenç del Munt y l'Obac:
 - o Charter Partner Businesses
 - o Composition of the Working Group and the Permanent Forum, and how to participate.
 - o Charter process calendar and documents.

But currently this specific site about the Charter in the Park is not updated.

The Park has edited a brochure to promote Charter Partner Businesses and tries to put the Charter logo in every brochure.

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.

The Park attend to the annual Charter Seminar organized by EUROPARC-Spain, but this participation is not included in the evaluation report (*Memoria del Plan de Acción*) nor in the new action plan. It is advisable to include the Seminar in the action 1.4 and disseminate the main results and best practices to the Forum members.

C3 Experience of working with the Charter – final comments

The Park highlights that the main benefit obtained from working with the Charter methodology is to enhance collaboration between administrations and local businesses. An interesting result is that the local agents have adopted the Charter principles as their own.

The Park considers necessary to translate the efforts into a higher number of clients and income for the tourism businesses, in order to keep them enrolled. So the Park is very interested in implementing Charter Part III.

The economic crisis has been the greatest challenge they have faced during the implementation of the action plan, which involved the disappearance of some collaborating entities (tourism consortiums).

ANNEX 1 - PROGRAMM OF THE VISIT
Parque Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac

MONDAY, 9 TH MAY 2016			
Time	Activity	Participants	Place
10:30h	Arrival to Barcelona and transfer to the Park	- Angel Miño, Director of the Park.	Office of the Natural Park (La Mata, Matadepera)
11:30h	Meeting with the Head of Public Use of the Park	- Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park.	Office of the Natural Park (La Mata, Matadepera)
15:00h	Lunch with the managing team of the Park	- Angel Miño, Director of the Park. - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park. - Francesc Vilanova, Head of Park Rangers. - Olga Tejero, administrative staff of the Park.	Office of the Natural Park (La Mata, Matadepera)
16:30h	Visit to the area La Vall d'Horta to see the result of several actions developed there	- Angel Miño, Director of the Park. - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park.	Vall d'Horta
	Interview with managers of the municipality of Sant Llorenç Savall and visit to the Park's Information Point	- Ricard Torralba, Mayor. - José Antonio Olmo, Sports Concellor. - Angel Miño, Director of the Park. - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park.	Town Hall of Sant Llorenç Savall
	Interview with the director of RossinyolNou, a tourism business offering environmental education activities (Charter Partner)	- Jordi Llobet, Director of Rossinyol Nou. - Angel Miño, Director of the Park. - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park.	RossinyolNou Office (Sant Llorenç Savall, Vall d'Horta)
	Interview with the concessionaire of the Environmental Centre La Muntada and visit to its facilities.	- Adrià Garriga, Codirector. - Àngela Boixadera, Codirector. - Angel Miño, Director of the Park - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park	Environmental Centre La Muntada (Sant Llorenç Savall, Vall d'Horta)
	Visit to Park facilities around El Marquet de les Roques.	Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park	El Marquet de les Roques (Sant Llorenç Savall, Vall d'Horta)
20:00h	Dinner and accommodation in "Cal Carter" - apartments and restaurant- (Charter Partner). Visit to its facilities and interview with the owners.	- Josefina Calvet, owner. - Jordi Perich, owner.	Mura

TUESDAY, 10 TH MAY 2016			
Time	Activity	Participants	Place
8:00h	Visit to several points of cultural heritage interest and different Park facilities (trails, interpretive panels, etc.).	Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park	Tines a peu de vinya, itinerario (el Pont de Vilomara i Rocafort) L'hostal de Sant Jaume de Vallhonestà (Sant Vicenç de Castellet)
12:00h	Meeting with the Head of Public Use of the Park	Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park	Casa de Cultura, Matadepera.
13:00h	Meeting with the Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mirella Solsona, Mayor (welcome) - Benjamí Fortuna, Àrea de Turisme del Consell Comarcal del Bages - Eva Chica, Àrea de Turisme del Consell Comarcal del Vallès Occidental - M. Àngels Rodulfo, Àrea de Turisme del Ayuntamiento de Terrassa. - Alba Escalona, representative of farmers. - Christian Martino, representative of tourism businesses (Can Vinyers Restaurant) - Jaume Galofre, representative of conservationist groups and hiking centres (Centre Excursionista de Terrassa) - Kiku Closas, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona - Antoni Serra, Universidad de Barcelona - Angel Miño, Director of the Park - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park 	Casal de Cultura, Matadepera
14:30h	Lunch with the Working Group in Can Vinyers Restaurant (Charter Partner)	All mentioned above except from Alba Escalona.	Can Vinyers Restaurant (Matadepera)

TUESDAY, 10 TH MAY 2016			
Time	Activity	Participants	Place
17:00h	Visit to the Information Point and Interpretation Centre of the Park: Casa Nova de l'Obac. Interview with a representative of the concessionaire company (Charter Partner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enric Datzira, director of Centre d'Interpretació del Medi Ambient - Angel Miño, Director of the Park - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park 	Casa Nova de l'Obac (Terrassa)
19:00h	Visit to the Headquarters and facilities of the Centre Excursionista de Terrassa (CET) and meeting with its representatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eva Cervelló, President of CET - Joan Crispí, member of CET - Jaume Galofre, member of CET - Angel Miño, Director of the Park - Josep Canals, Head of Public Use of the Park 	Office of the Centre Excursionista de Terrassa (Terrassa)
20:00h	Dinner and accommodation in the Terrassa Park Hotel (Charter Partner)	-	Terrassa