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SHAPE

# COMMON METHODS FOR REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism  
Deliverable DT1.1.2

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## Acronyms

SHA Sustainable Heritage Areas

### 1. Introduction

SHAPE partners share an aspiration to create effective stakeholder networks to achieve local goals. Partner aims for stakeholder engagement include the following:

- Development of new tourism products from integrating existing projects.
- Connecting stakeholders from different geographical parts of SHAs
- Provide opportunities for young people.
- Identify stakeholders who have highest motivation and commitment to long-term cooperation
- Connect and learn from experiences of sustainable ecotourism development in similar regions

This document builds on DT1.1.1: Common methods to identify stakeholder groups and interactions and discusses approaches to the regional stakeholder workshops that are to be held in each SHA. It is also closely linked to DT2.1.1; common participatory processes to map assets and assess climate change impacts. The participatory mapping processes are to be implemented in the first regional workshops and are an important stakeholder engagement activity, which will have a considerable influence over the direction of SHAPE activities over the course of the project.

A range of potential stakeholder engagement methods and approaches were presented to project partners during the stakeholder engagement workshop. Discussion then focussed on how methods would work in the context of different SHAs. A power-point presentation describing the methods in some detail and links to supporting resources was made available to partners following the workshop.

### 2. Common methods for regional stakeholder meetings

#### 2.1. Aims of regional stakeholder meetings

The aims of the first regional stakeholder meetings from a stakeholder engagement perspective are the following:

- Identify existing and potential stakeholder partnerships
- Understand stakeholders' interest in addressing local/regional challenges, capitalising on opportunities for sustainable ecotourism and developing new partnerships.

Regional workshops will be an important way of creating two way dialogue about SHAPE activities, disseminating project information and providing a forum where problems can be negotiated and

innovative ideas proposed. Stakeholders will be invited to attend four six-monthly meetings in each SHA over the course of the SHAPE project. The aims of these are to:

- Allow stakeholders to discuss progress on partnership activities
- Evaluate project outcomes
- Provide continued motivation for stakeholder engagement
- Allow stakeholders to inform the development and testing of the e-service as SHAPE progresses

## 2.2. Common methods to be used in regional workshops in each SHA.

### Participant questionnaires

There should be a short questionnaire used for all SHAs at the beginning or the end of regional workshops to gauge the priorities, motivations, and expectations that stakeholders have in relation to SHAPE activities. This will be developed by UHI with input from partners to ensure that common questions are meaningful for each SHA. This will provide an effective means of evaluating attitudes of stakeholders and a basis to evaluate how these change over the course of SHAPE. The questionnaire will also include questions on how stakeholders perceived the methods used in workshops. The results will be integrated into the SHAPE e-service, providing a stakeholder perspective of asset mapping and stakeholder engagement methods

### Use of common mapping methods

Common approaches to mapping will be implemented in the first regional workshops (see DT2.1.2; common participatory processes to map assets and assess climate change impacts).

### Common areas for discussion at regional workshops

There will be discussion at the first regional workshops about **the challenges in each area for developing sustainable ecotourism initiatives**. This will be an extension of discussions that have already taken place among project partners building on the following themes:

- Geographical challenges (in terms of cost and time required to travel in SHA) due to distances involved and sparse population
- Issues with communicating in different languages
- Low level of existing stakeholder cooperation and motivation
- Engagement of very small organisations with limited infrastructure and resources
- Lack of coordination in tourism sector
- Low numbers of young people
- Existing conflict caused by growing tourism impacts e.g. resistance to tourism business growth in some areas.

Following the participatory asset mapping work at the first regional workshops, there will be discussion about **potential solutions to challenges associated with asset management and the development of sustainable ecotourism initiatives**. Each partner will be encouraged to discuss several different solutions or initiatives with stakeholders, which will then be considered for implementation by partners at the next partner meeting in spring 2018. Applying a method of ranking or scoring may be useful to gain an understanding of stakeholder preferences, which will help partners understand the level of support for different initiatives.

Learning from stakeholders about **existing and potential stakeholder partnerships** is a further discussion area that should be included in the first regional workshops. This information may be gathered in the stakeholder questionnaire, but there should also be discussion in each workshop concerning the new partnerships required to develop sustainable ecotourism initiatives. To enhance the success of initiatives, it is optimal to include stakeholders that have a high level of interest and willingness to engage in SHAPE activities; direct discussion with stakeholders will provide this information and possibly alert partners to stakeholders who have not yet been identified, but who should be engaged in the future. This information will be used to develop DT1.3.1. Identification of existing and potential stakeholder partnerships.

### **2.3. Participatory approaches for use in regional workshops**

Partners are encouraged to use a range of participatory processes and techniques in the regional workshops to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice and that the information gathered is of high quality. The following may be particularly useful.

#### **Information gathering techniques**

To ensure that all participants in regional workshops have the opportunity to express their views, it is advisable to use structured information gathering techniques. This allows a large amount of information to be collected rapidly and is a way of overcoming negative group dynamics e.g the domination of discussions by more vocal/powerful individuals. Techniques that may be useful in SHAPE workshops include the following:

*Metaplan* – Each participant provides key points relevant to focal discussion topic on post-it notes (up to 3-4 responses from each person) and places these on large sheet of wall-mounted papers. Contributions are grouped according to theme and the workshop facilitator may then feedback the collective thoughts of the workshop participants, stimulating further discussion. This is a visual and dynamic exercise which encourages engagement.

#### *Carousels/small working groups*

This is a method for addressing a number of subjects or questions simultaneously in a dynamic way. Participants work in small subgroups and rotate around different work-stations addressing a separate issue at each station. Each subgroup adds new points or issues at each work station for a set amount of time and work their way around each. This is a variation on more conventional group work, where the subgroups each spend time discussing a specific issue/topic for a short period of time, and then feedback the main points to the larger group.

### *Ranking/prioritisation exercises*

These may be used to:

- understand the relative importance and level of consensus of priorities and perceived challenges among stakeholders
- rank suggested 'solutions', approaches to tackling challenges, or new ecotourism initiatives discussed during workshop (transparent way to help decide on project direction)

Simple ranks (1-5) or allocation of sticky dots to different ideas displayed on wall are two ways of doing this.

### **Managing Conflict**

Some workshops will bring together stakeholders who have not traditionally worked together and may have been in conflict. Developing effective mechanisms to achieve this requires identifying and mitigating areas of conflict to find constructive ways of working towards common interests. Therefore, workshops must be designed to facilitate positive interactions between stakeholders and structured to manage tension and negative interactions.

Workshop methods should ensure that all voices are heard and focus on constructive new ways of working together. A good strategy is to openly acknowledge different stakeholder perspectives and to work towards identifying common ground and priorities. This should help to identify solutions and new approaches that address the priorities and concerns of as many stakeholders as possible, by recognising the need for trade-off and compromise.

Good communication strategies are key to preventing and managing conflict. Being clear at the outset about the objectives of the workshop, conveying positive messages about the value of SHAPE activities, and following a policy of transparency and feedback during the project will also contribute to the success of stakeholder engagement. Communications with stakeholders should be guided by the principles in the SHAPE communication strategy (e.g. building trust, offering feedback, facilitating discussions, managing expectations, etc.) (Abrahamsen, 2017).

## 3. Summary of guidelines for regional stakeholder meetings

Workshop discussion topics:

- Stakeholders' priorities, motivations and expectations
- Existing natural and cultural assets in the area
- Ongoing and future challenges in the SHA for developing sustainable ecotourism initiatives and sustainable development in general
- Potential solutions and initiatives to tackle challenges
- Existing and potential partnerships to develop sustainable ecotourism in the SHA

Methods to implement during the workshops:

- Entry/exist questionnaires
- Common methods for mapping assets
- Information gathering techniques such as metaplans, small group work and carousels
- Ranking and prioritisation exercises
- Open dialogue
- Facilitated discussions
- Feedback between partners and stakeholders on progress made in workshops

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## References

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