

## Naturefriends International



### Selecting a Landscape of the Year: Queries and Criteria

The designation of regions as ‘Landscapes of the Year’ has become one of Naturefriends’ established trademarks. Both the Naturefriends organisations involved and the region selected benefit from the PR activities linked with the designation. Landscapes of the Year have come to be regarded by the broad public and by individual consumers as prime ecotourism regions. It follows that their selection implies a serious obligation and immense responsibility for Naturefriends.

From the above it is obvious that Landscape-of-the-Year projects are not the sole remit of Naturefriends International, but much rather joint undertakings by the Naturefriends organisations involved and NFI.

#### **The following criteria need to be taken into account when submitting proposals:**

##### *Positive criteria:*

- Crossing borders: borders as an opportunity to overcome common problems (bridging function)
- Ecological importance (worthy of protection, endangered), with an upbeat perspective as an indispensable dimension
- Manageable proportions (geographical size, political structures)
- Presence of potential regional stakeholders (Naturfriends or other initiatives)

##### *Negative criteria:*

- Designation of the entire region as national park or biosphere reserve (it goes without saying that parts of the region may be protected)
- Excessive mass tourism (risk of LoY designation being misused)

The demarcation and/or specification of the region usually pose major problems.

#### **The demarcation of a region could be based on**

- shared, cross-border geographical features (e.g. basin, valley, hill belt) divided by political boundaries – Oder delta, Jura, Colli orientali, Lake Constance, High Tatras, Small Carpathians)
- cross-border natural space zones (e.g. Wadden Sea)
- region-specific features (nature, culture, language minorities) that can be couched in a common term (e.g. Bohemian **Forest**, **Bandlkramerland** [land of **dry-goods hawkers**], **Basque** region)
- a historical, cross-border regional epithet
- a touristic, cross-border regional epithet
- a political institution tasked with promoting regional cooperation (e.g. Euro-region)

**Another important selection criterion is the likeliness of achieving the “Landscape-of-the-Year” objectives in a given region:**

- What Naturefriends wish to achieve with a designation, is to sensitise people to “sustainable development”, to draw attention to the global dimension and to generate awareness of the need to take sustainable action at the regional level.
- Naturefriends wish to adopt the role of moderator, promoting a dialogue among the partners engaged in regional development projects and thereby providing the basis for cooperation and joint projects.
- The Landscape-of-the Year process is supposed to result in a mission statement and an action plan for sustainable development in the region selected and thereby to create the basis for projects put in place by individual stakeholders involved in regional development.
- Another useful option is the establishment of a regional development agency as a sequel to the Landscape-of-the-Year project group. The agency would carry forward the efforts targeted at a holistic, sustainable regional development, would come up with new projects, would offer advice to project promoters, would coordinate the region’s development and cooperate with superior authorities.

The overall project may also benefit from pertinent initiatives already under way in the region or in part of the region proposed (e.g. active regional development associations, Local Agenda 21).

**Ideal-type items on a Landscape-of-the-Year programme:**

<b>Time periods</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Products / Outcome</b>
Year 0	<p>A region is proposed to NFI</p> <p><b>The operational environment is analysed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead organisations on the ground</li> <li>• Regionally specific features in the European context</li> <li>• Specific problem areas (e.g. transport, emigration, etc.)</li> <li>• Options of latching on to regional development initiatives and processes, which hold the promise of synergies without causing a competitive climate</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision is taken on the Landscape of the Year</b></p>	<p>Decision is taken on the Landscape of the Year</p>
Year 2	<p><b>Preparations:</b></p> <p>Clear-cut demarcation of the region</p> <p>Partners meet on the ground and negotiate binding agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needs analysis</li> <li>• agreement on methods</li> </ul> <p>Meeting of regional authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sorting out partnerships</li> <li>• Agreement on common procedure</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Project Group in charge of overall</li> </ul>	<p>Subject areas and approaches (methods)</p> <p><b>Brochure featuring the Landscape of the Year in question</b></p>

	<p>planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• periodic meetings (every 2 - 3 months)</li> <li>• time and place of kick-off event are specified</li> <li>• PR activities are launched</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a view to local stewardship, it would be useful to enlist the services of a regional representative</li> <li>• <b>Crafting of the brochure</b> (A5, ca 36 pages, setting out the background to the LoY project: ecology, culture, some touristic information, people's histories...)</li> </ul>	
<p>Year 3 (= Year 1 of the LoY)</p>	<p><b>Activities are launched:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Project Group is in charge of overall planning – periodic meetings (every 2 - 3 months)</li> <li>• Themed regional project group(s), which are offered international support in process development and monitoring whenever possible and reasonable</li> <li>• Series of moderated workshops for regional stakeholders tasked with crafting a mission statement and/or a regional sustainability strategy</li> <li>• Possibly a project advisory council (VIPs); small group; maybe 2 meetings in years 3 and 4 – helpful, whenever project priorities and political moorings need to be adjusted</li> </ul> <p>Publication of the brochure prior to / or in time for the kick-off event.</p> <p><b>Tour for international journalists and kick-off event,</b> periodic media relations</p> <p><b>School of Soft Travel</b> (sustainability coaching for diverse target groups): multi-stakeholder approach to get the LoY project rooted and to broaden its basis in the region. Results are input into the process.</p>	<p>Mission statement: 'establish new regional identity by crossing borders'</p>
<p>Year 4 (= Year 2 of the LoY)</p>	<p><b>Intensive stage:</b></p> <p>Seminars, discussions, workshops, cultural programme.</p> <p>Tourism programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tour d'horizon</b></li> <li>• Possibly other travel formats</li> </ul> <p>Other projects, such as an international youth work camp, (photo) championships, and products, such as postcards, calendars...</p> <p>The individual programmes and products are related to problems identified and to the results generated by the themed project groups. The emphasis is on the cross-border engagement with diverse subject areas and on the crafting of measures, strategies and demands.</p> <p>Designing 'nature and culture trails' (leaflet) – something with a lasting effect in the region.</p> <p>Periodic PR work</p> <p>International project group+ stakeholders coordinate and collate individual results.</p> <p><b>Closing event</b> – the occasion for presenting a catalogue of demands, a mission statement, a regional sustainabil-</p>	<p>Master plan, sustainability strategy, tourism products, catalogue of demands</p>

	ity strategy, etc.	
Year 5	<p><b>Conclusion</b>  Agreeing on future course of action in the Landscape of the Year and on the continued (toned down) involvement of NFI and of the Naturefriends organisations concerned.  Evaluation: internal and external evaluation  Keep tourism products going</p>	<p>Final report  Evaluation report  Tourism products</p>

**‘Minimum programme’ of a Landscape-of-the-Year project:**

- Setting up a project group of the Naturefriends organisations concerned
- Brochure featuring the Landscape of the Year
- Kick-off event
- Tour for international journalists
- Closing event
- Diverse activities depending on available options

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