

24/2010

FACT SHEET



*Photo: Kaare Manniche Ebert*

## The Nordic project, "Local contribution to halt the loss of biodiversity"

Factors that will help to achieve success in local projects to halt the loss of biodiversity – experience and recommendations from 14 Nordic local authorities

The local authorities taking part in the project have met to discuss what they had learnt from their participation in the project. They agreed on some joint recommendations for what is important if municipal environmental projects are to be successful. Based on their experience, the most important factors that can lead to success are thought to be the following.

### **Rooted in the local setting**

Having valuable, local biological occurrences or valuable cultural environments gives a sense of belonging and something of which inhabitants, landowners, politicians and businesses can be proud. The desire to safeguard these treasures follows with enhanced knowledge. All in all, you should know what nature gives you and does for you if you are going to be able to understand why it should be protected. It is therefore important that researchers have good contact with local people and politicians. It is especially vital to create interest for and ownership of future management.

Local involvement in the democratic process is highly valued by politicians. It is therefore important to have contact with networks like citizens' associations and local environmental organisations.

A good way to start the work in a local authority is to tie biological diversity to a relevant, ongoing development project. Such ongoing processes have their focus set on the local environment and this gives better space to create an interest for biological diversity.



### Political rooting and involvement

National initiatives do not necessarily lead to local measures, particularly not in small boroughs. It is therefore important to gain the interest of and involve political bodies and individual politicians. For instance, public meetings may be held when a project concerning the natural environment begins, or politicians can be invited to inspections in important areas.

To gain the approval of local politicians, it is vital to have an action plan for the natural environment and biological diversity. Biodiversity is linked to the cultural environment and areas for outdoor pursuits, and these should be viewed in context. In this way, preservation of biological diversity can be viewed as a premise for other benefits. It is best if resource requirements are also linked to the action plan.

It is most important to get information well before decisions are to be taken. Relevant people who are interested will thus be well informed and will have time to offer good ideas which can help to achieve good all-round solutions where all the parties affected are represented. This is also the basis for a good municipal land-use plan with local, regional and national interests.

As new politicians come on the scene, they can contribute new views. The long-term perspectives should therefore have broad political rooting.

### Expertise

Expertise is important and it is vital to take good care of the opportunities that exist. Interdisciplinary cooperation and cooperation between neighbouring local authorities are especially essential and result in valuable development of expertise that is most useful in the day-to-day work. It also brings more insight into which questions it is possible to seek answers to. Not all local authorities, especially small ones, have employees who work directly with biological diversity, and even larger ones may lack people with good knowledge of it. In these cases, personal and local interest proves to be decisive for realising a project.

### Teaching natural history, and the natural environment as a place to learn

That schools and nursery schools have access to a good natural environment often gains broad support among politicians, but to be in a position to communicate the value of biological diversity it is very important to have good contact with these institutions. Ongoing projects are a resource which can be exploited in relation to schools and nursery schools, as well as the rest of the population. The very fact that something is happening and developing creates interest in itself, and public events associated with the projects can bring more knowledge about the importance of natural history and the environment. When areas are made available and brought into use, people can see the species and habitats in a larger context.

### Cooperation between national and local levels

Good cooperation between national and local levels is necessary in questions which affect the natural and cultural environments since it is a matter of shared responsibility. Protecting biological diversity is a joint task. There should be open doors between the parties who are cooperating, and the authorities on the central level should have chance to work together on projects, etc. on the local level.

### Funding opportunities

The possibility to obtain funding for nature environment projects is decisive. Projects to develop residential areas, traffic arteries and industrial sites can offer good opportunities. Such projects generally have substantial resources to hand, which makes it easier to obtain funding for a subproject on biological diversity.

Another possibility is to help others to obtain resources for the project. Gaining access to resources requires broad cooperation between international, national and local NGOs, the EU, national and local authorities, organisations like the Nordic Council of Ministers, and industrial concerns.

### International cooperation

This Nordic cooperation has given the participants the chance to see the interaction between international targets and local projects and solutions. Many of the projects in the 14 local authorities would have been undertaken without this cooperation, but for some authorities it has functioned as a catalyst to achieve progress in the projects. Participation in a Nordic network has also strengthened the political foundation. Viewed with international eyes, the strength of this project is that it has enabled us to link local projects with an international target, and spread knowledge and cooperation across the Nordic region.

