

# VESURTE

Vocational Education for the Sustainable Development of Rural Tourism Enterprises  
An EU Leonardo Partnership Project  
with partners in Portugal, Spain, Poland and UK

Report of Second Meeting at SustEd, Stamford, UK  
March 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2012

## Planned questions for the meeting

1. What can we learn from each other and the best European practice?
2. What is sustainable tourism, and related forms of tourism?
3. What sustainable tourism courses occur in each partner country?
4. How can case studies help learners?
5. How can we use certification schemes for teaching? and what are they in each partner country?
6. What practical activities (questionnaires, surveys, interviews and videos) can learners do?
7. What competencies are needed by the rural sustainable tourism sector?
8. How can we find out the needs of learners?
9. What should be the structure of a module or course?

Only the first 4 questions were considered in any detail. At this stage of the project partners seemed to prefer visiting tourist destinations than considering such questions in any detail.

Meeting each morning at [Susted](#), Brewery House, Ketton, with visits in the afternoon and evening.

## Wednesday Mar 13

### Programme

We agreed the programme and timings for the meeting.

### Project

We reviewed the aim, objectives and results of the project, especially for the new members.

**Overall Project Aim** – To train rural tourism providers to become more sustainable.

### Objectives

- ⤴ To enable partners to learn about sustainable tourism initiatives in partner countries.
- ⤴ To develop and evaluate short training modules, using shared resources, for rural tourism sector staff, trainees, students and partners about sustainable and local tourism in the languages of the partner countries.
- ⤴ To identify ways of extending and disseminating the training modules.

### Characteristics of sustainable tourism

We defined and characterised sustainable tourism as in the presentation on the foot of the homepage of <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com>. Sustainable tourism is Tourism that is based on the principles of sustainable development. It is tourism that minimizes the costs and maximizes the benefits of tourism for natural environments and local communities, and can be carried out indefinitely without harming the resources on which it depends. The term should be used to refer to a condition of tourism, not a type of tourism. Well-managed high-volume tourism can, and ought to be, just as sustainable as small-scale, dispersed special interest tourism.

*‘Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.’*

World Tourism Organisation .

Sustainable tourism (as defined by Lonely Planet) can be more-or-less defined as ethical or responsible travel that takes into consideration the 'triple bottom line' issues of:

**Planet** - Environment: travel and tourism that minimises negative environmental impacts and, where possible, makes positive contributions to the conservation of biodiversity, wilderness, natural and human heritage.

**People** - Social/Cultural: travel that respects culture and traditions and fosters authentic interaction and greater understanding between travellers and hosts.

**Profit** - Economic: travel that has financial benefits for the host community and operates on the principles of fair trade.

### **Guide for Good Travellers**

Two Arts and Design students were given a brief for their Foundation course to design a Guide for Good Travellers, aimed at 16-24 year old travellers to Europe.

**Aim:** To encourage young people (16 – 30 year olds) to think about the impacts of their holiday , adventure travel and tourism on the environment, local people and the local economy, and then trying to make the impact of their holiday as positive as possible.

**Design:** To design 1) a logo 2) a small guide or pledge that is passport size, and no more than 6 pages 3) a card that is credit card size to fit in a wallet 4) an A4 colour poster 5) a webpage on <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com>. The guide/pledge and card would be for free distribution in student unions/ travel agencies, youth and backpacker hostels.

**Competition:** The final work would be judged by an international group from Portugal, Spain and Poland, as well as Susted in the UK. The winning design would be used as part of the VESURTE - Learn sustainable tourism project <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com>. The winning student would have the opportunity to present their design to the group and other students in either Portugal, Spain or Poland during a project meeting.

#### **Use:**

UNEP Green Passport online [www.unep.org/greenpassport](http://www.unep.org/greenpassport)

Green Passport

[http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/3/6/15360360/unep\\_green\\_passport\\_070509.pdf](http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/3/6/15360360/unep_green_passport_070509.pdf)

### **Supporting learners on mobility visits**

We identified some tips on how to support student learners when they visit partner in other countries, using Mobility funding, as part of this Leonardo project.

- ⤴ Meet before visit to discuss -history, geography, culture, customs, typical prices, currency, politics, drinking/smoking laws, habits of country.
- ⤴ Talk about security and personal safety.
- ⤴ Practice typical phrases, words, use of google translate, dictionaries, glossary of common terms.
- ⤴ Agree ways of recording visit – with phone, notebook, camera, video etc.
- ⤴ Try role play of welcome, introductions of self.
- ⤴ Explain accommodation, clothes and things to pack, size of case for flight.
- ⤴ Take own money for gifts, drink etc.
- ⤴ Block travel insurance
- ⤴ Special form for all students, with questions on eating habits, food allergies, health and medicines, contact details, mobile phone numbers of UK contact and student, signed by parents.
- ⤴ Do risk assessment for any physical, practical activities.

### **New College Stamford and sustainable development**

Green Week at New College Stamford and Stamford High School in March each year is a week of green/eco activities for students at the college and school. It includes themed days eg. On waste, energy, food, a debate between students from each institution, and various practical activities, such making a pledge footprint, making gifts from old and reused materials.

The partners met Christine Toulson, Vice Principal. She introduced how the college is integrating sustainable development in the campus management, community links, curriculum and culture (the 4 Cs) of the college. Two presentations on the College and sustainable development and the college's Green Week are on the <http://learnsustainability.weebly.com> – session 3 – website.

Learning points:

- The policy, plans and leadership shown and developed by the college influenced all aspects of the college.
- Sustainability was the responsibility of all staff and students eg. In student green charter and staff job descriptions.
- The Green Week focused attention on sustainable development across the college and was led by the curriculum and student activities.

### **Responsible Tourism students**

New College Stamford has a BTEC Level 3 Travel and Tourism course. Teresa Arnone is a lecturer in Tourism and holds an MA in Sustainable Tourism. She runs the BTEC module 12 in Responsible Tourism. 18 students from the Level 3 BTEC Responsible Tourism Module met with the partners in three groups – Portugal, Spain and Poland - to present and discuss how they were using Rutland Water as a case study for sustainable tourism. The partners presented some case studies of sustainable tourism in their rural area. The curriculum, 10 key questions for the case study, and example of student's work is included on <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com>.

Learning points:

- The students were interested in the partner's presentations and case studies, and wanted to learn more about their countries.
- Informal dialogue between small student groups and people from other countries with English as their second or third language was a good learning experience for both sides, especially in terms of skills for travel and tourism professionals.

### **Discussion on future involvement by New College Stamford in partner meetings and project**

Phil Matthews, Head of the Catering Dept., contributes with his students to many local food and community gardening projects. The partners met him and agreed to consider one of his staff for a future visit. He also will consider hosting a catering student from Poland for a short work experience, assuming all costs can be covered using Leonardo Mobility funding. Lastly the partners agreed to circulate local traditional recipes that could be exchanged with catering students in other partner countries eg. UK – pork pie, smoked ham; Poland Sekacz cake; Portugal – roast lamb from Baiao; Spain – octopus.

Learning points:

- Sustainably-produced food and drink is a universally interesting and basic topic of conversation, and a basis for sustainable tourism.
- Student work experience in another country is very appropriate for catering, hospitality, travel and tourism students.

### **Thursday Mar 14**

#### **Some education resources**

Two resources developed by SustEd were introduced to the partners as ways of engaging students in issues around sustainable tourism – namely climate change and the tourist's lifestyle, and ethical investments and finance in the tourism industry.

See Ethica- The Ethical Finance Game on <http://susted-ethica.blogspot.co.uk>

See YouthXchange Guidebook: Climate change and Lifestyle on <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002128/212876E.pdf>

## **Background to Rutland Water case study**

A presentation of pictures and maps of Rutland Water was presented to the partners, and can be seen on <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com/rutland-water.html>. This site also has the 4 part video of the talk by Will Kirstein to the New College Stamford students.

### Rutland Water

Lyndon Bird Reserve – Reintroduced the Osprey to England, with young birds from Scotland. Now they are breeding successfully with about 20+ birds making the annual migration from Ghana, through Portugal and Spain, and arriving at Rutland Water in early April. This is a big tourist attraction as it has a [live webcam](#) on the osprey nest, and tracks the migration. However many bird watchers arrive by car, and will often travel many miles by car to view a rare migrant bird. Ecotourism is actively marketed each year at the biggest bird Fair in Europe held each August at Rutland Water. Much of the marketing is for flights to Africa, S America, Asia and Europe to join bird watching tours.

There is little promotion of public transport to Rutland Water and none from either Oakham railway station or Stamford railway station.

A presentation on Rutland Water as a case study of sustainable tourism was shown to the partners. It can be seen on <http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com> and was shown to the Travel and Tourism students prior to their half day study visit to the Anglian Water Environmental Education Centre for a talk with Will Kirstein, the Education Manager. Videos in 4 parts of his talk are also on the website. The partners visited an Italian restaurant at Normanton on the banks of Rutland Water. This was a honeypot destination for tourist for fly-fishing using the 40 hire boats, sailing from the sailing club and weddings at the flooded Normanton church.

Learning point:

- Certification for sustainable tourism would help the local businesses promote a more sustainable and accountable image.
- Local businesses, such as the restaurant, could make their products more locally derived and produced if they wish to be considered as sustainable. Italian ingredients of pasta and anchovies have little link to Rutland Water.

### Rutland Cycling

This is an enterprise that hires bikes (One of the biggest bike hire businesses in the UK), organises bike courses, events and an annual bike festival. The cycle company is the largest bike hire business in the UK. Kerry Rough, Marketing Coordinator, for Rutland Cycling Ltd. introduced the development of cycling around Rutland Water. The 23 miles of cycle track and 300 hire bikes attract about 10,000 cyclists to Rutland Water annually. Rutland Water as a cycle destination is one of the most popular in the UK.

Learning points:

- Cycling is one of the most sustainable means of travel, but most cyclist drive to Rutland Water in cars.
- Little market research seems to be available on how tourists travel to Rutland Water, and where from.
- There are opportunities, at the waterside businesses, for promoting more sustainable travel to and from Rutland Water.

## **Student debate on sustainable tourism**

The debating motion was "This house believes that responsible and sustainable tourism is so important that it requires a legally-binding, rather than a voluntary, global code of ethics." One view may be - an unrestricted demand for finite resources dooms the resource - killing the golden goose! So one solution may be regulation and the polluter pays principle. This may be strongly resisted by the tourism industry.

Can tourists or tourism operators show more care for the local community and environment, as well as less consumption of energy etc?

Two Politics and Law A Level students from Stamford Endowed Schools and two students from New College Stamford participated in the debate. Two girls (one from each institution) proposed the motion and two boys opposed the motion. Godfrey Jennings, Lecturer in Politics and Law at New College Stamford, chaired and facilitated the debate. Two Art/ Design Foundation course students provided visual minutes of the debating points, each illustrating from opposing ends of a roll of wallpaper. After the formal proposing and opposing, the 15 observing students were invited to make statements.

The debating motion was defeated by 12 votes to 7.

Learning points:

- The activity was well structured and planned. All 20 or so participating students were actively engaged and interested, focusing on citizenship, democracy, rights and responsibilities and participation.
- The debate illustrated the difficulty of making political decisions as issues such as this were often never black or white.
- An extension to the activity could be to change the proposing and opposing roles so students learn to argue against themselves.
- The activity was very inter-disciplinary and cross-curricular. Travel and Tourism, Art and design and Politics students were all involved.
- The visual minuting was very successful as a way of promoting and exploring the debate with other students after the activity. It also provided good experience for the Art/Design students – with a growing number of professionals working in this field.

### **Principal of New College Stamford**

Andrew Patience, Principal, explained the management and desired culture and ethics of the college. He described how the vocational education system works in the UK, some of his challenges, and answered questions from the partners. This enabled us to compare vocational education provision in the partner countries.

Learning points:

- An engaged and engaging leader who listens and shows empathy with their audience, and the needs and interests of the local community, is the key to a sustainable education institution.

### **Horse and Jockey public house**

The partners had an informal presentation from Jason Allen, the owner and landlord of the Horse and Jockey pub, Manton. He is also on the Rutland Tourism Forum and represents tourism on the Rutland Water Partnership – two key strategic bodies influencing tourism at Rutland Water. He is also the owner of a new small caravan and camping park on the edge of Rutland Water.

The strategic bodies have developed good targeted promotional and marketing material eg. Discover Rutland website, advertising on the London tube, leaflets. The strategic bodies have successfully bid for Government funding of £4M to improve sustainable transport to and from Rutland Water. From April 2013 an electric bus, eventually with a bike trailer, will travel from the station at Oakham to connect Rutland Water with the three surrounding towns. This will partly tackle one of the main sustainable travel issues at Rutland Water.

Learning points:

- The owner illustrated very good customer care by coming to talk to all customers.
- The owner knew and understood the needs and vested interests of the local community well, and showed how businesses can cooperate with other businesses and public bodies.
- Strategic bodies must make difficult political decisions and implement practical solutions based on good evidence.

## **Friday Mar 15**

### **Food tourism - Stamford Community Orchard Group**

Max Winslow, Chair of SCOG, gave a brief presentation on how the small volunteer-led community organisation provides a tourism interest in the area. The presentation is on

<http://learnsustainability.weebly.com> – session 3.

The Stamford Community Orchard group organise an annual Apple Day in early October. It attracts about 2,000 people to Stamford Arts centre to celebrate and find out about local apple varieties and products. It is also a showcase for local producers. New College Stamford Catering and Hospitality students and staff have been involved with Apple Day for several years.

Learning point:

- ▲ Small voluntary organisations have a big role to play as tourism promoters and educators in rural areas, especially using special events that attract tourists around local food and drink.

### **Volunteer tourism - Working Worldwide On Organic Farms**

WWOOF provides an agrotourism experience for international and UK volunteers who want some experience of working on an organic farm or garden, in return for free meals and accommodation. SustEd offers Wwoofing experience to international volunteers who work in the orchard, soft fruit and vegetable garden, each for a period of about two weeks, staying in a caravan in the orchard, and eating meals with the family.

Wwoofing was discussed as a form of volunteer tourism and agrotourism. SustEd hosts volunteer WWOOFers from other countries for about two weeks providing food and accommodation in return for work in the organic garden and orchard, as well as with local schools and community groups.

See [www.wwoof.org.uk](http://www.wwoof.org.uk).

Learning point:

- ▲ Volunteer tourism is increasingly attractive to young people, encouraging longer stay, and greater engagement with the local community.
- ▲ It is often associated with learning new practical skills as well as enabling the volunteer to pass on their experience.

### **Rutland Water**

The partners did not visit Rutland Water Birdwatching and Education Centre, Egleton, as planned. However the students had visited the centre a week previously and been given the presentation by Will Kirstein, Education Manager, Anglian Water. The Rutland Water case study is on

<http://learnsustainabletourism.weebly.com>.

So the meeting finished at lunchtime, allowing time for sightseeing in Stamford and Cambridge.

### **Stamford - Fair Trade Town**

Stamford Fair Trade group promotes fair trade products, like chocolate and clothing, in Stamford. Stamford is now registered as one of the many Fair Trade Towns in the UK. However few of the products sold in shops or restaurants are fair trade products. But it is a start to raise awareness amongst visitors and shoppers about fair trade.

### **Website**

The partners have set up a Facebook site called VEST – Vocational Education Sustainable Tourism. However students in New College Stamford are barred from using Facebook as it distracts their learning in college. This is the same with many UK schools and colleges. However the free Weebly education site is not barred. So the UK partners will not use the Facebook site.

### **Review, evaluation and report of this meeting**

Adam Cade, SustEd, wrote the report, based partly on verbal feedback from the partners about the learning points.

Photographs and video of this UK meeting will be added to the project website in the near future.

**Plan and programme for next meeting in Portugal**

Rui will send a draft programme as soon as possible to all partners.