COAST ALIVE: A TOOL KIT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coast Alive was an EU-supported project that ran from 2009 to 2012 and aimed to explore how to use 12,000km of paths to mobilise people to be physically active, while considering how to limit the damage to natural and cultural heritage if an increased number of people do start using the paths.

Coast Alive builds on the work of two earlier transnational projects, the *North Sea Cycle Route*, and the *North Sea Trail*. These two projects had between them developed 12,000km of paths and routes around the North Sea. *Coast Alive* partners worked to develop new initiatives to encourage their local populations to use these paths to improve their physical and mental health.

The project was funded by the European Commission under the Interreg IVB North Sea Programme.

This was a transnational project: partners came from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and England. What they had in common was a North Sea coast in their countries; a passion for the outdoors; and a desire to promote healthy active use of coastal paths, without damaging the natural environment.

Each country tends to have developed a different approach to promoting outdoor recreation and increasing use of paths. *Coast Alive* aimed to explore the diversity of approaches being taken, and to find some of the common themes to effective action.

The central challenge behind the project was to use the coastal path network to promote healthy physical activity among people living on or near the paths. Research on physical activity promotion shows that it is necessary to combine environmental improvements with promotional and social marketing activity, to maximise uptake.

Alongside promoting activity, an additional challenge lay in addressing the possible negative consequences of widespread promotion of trail use. There was concern that successful promotion of increased activity on the paths network would also lead to negative environmental impacts.

The third challenge is the issue of mitigating and adapting to 'climate risk'; taking the climate into account when looking at the impact of increased activity on natural and cultural heritage. Addressing the challenges associated with climate change requires an integrated approach – both limiting the magnitude and rate of change and dealing with the residual impacts and opportunities.

This toolkit presents experiences from *Coast Alive*, to help people planning similar projects in the future. Learning is presented for these topics:

- ***Setting clear measurable objectives and agreeing target audiences***, including agreeing objectives with partners at the start; establishing the business case and budget; and planning for the end of the project.

- ***Building effective partnerships and encourage leadership*** including seeing the partnership from the partners' point of view; involving a wide range of organisations; identifying clear roles and responsibilities; and communicating well.

- ***Securing human, organisational and financial resources for the project*** including working with partners who can bring people and expertise to the project; identifying partnership organisations as part of an agreed project plan; being innovative and imaginative.

- ***Marketing to the agreed target audience*** including being clear about the target audience and seeing things from their perspective; conducting some market research; and being aware of potential impacts on the wider community.

- ***Running the project effectively*** including working to the agreed project plan; being realistic about the time and budget available; communicating frequently with all partners; managing risks carefully; and responding to changing circumstance and opportunities.

- ***Promoting the project and engaging people*** including agreeing a promotional strategy as part of an overall project plan; communicating well and developing social networks; appealing to the target audiences' interests and priorities; and using appropriate media to communicate.

- ***Making the project viable in the long term*** including planning for long-term sustainability from the start; working with volunteers and involving local communities; investing in social infrastructure; and strengthening teams and organisation so they are long lasting.

The project found that small amounts of investment can be multiplied many times by the effort and enthusiasm of volunteers and dedicated project teams. But the context to that action is critical – responding to and building on national cultures.

Promoting physical activity was the easier part of the project: many people in all the project countries were keen to be active in the outdoors, they just needed to be given the opportunities. More challenging was the objective of promoting the natural and cultural heritage. More needs to be done on this issue, by making strong connections between the health, environmental and cultural aspects of our natural environment.

Magne Haugseng,
Project Manager
September 2012

2. INTRODUCTION TO COAST ALIVE

Coast Alive was an EU-supported project that ran from 2009 to 2012 and aimed to explore how to use 12,000km of paths to mobilise people to be physically active, while considering how to limit the damage to natural and cultural heritage if an increased number of people do start using the paths. The project was funded by the European Commission under the Interreg IVB North Sea Programme.
This was a truly transnational project: partners came from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and England. What they had in common was a North Sea coast in their countries; a passion for the outdoors; and a desire to promote healthy active use of coastal paths, without damaging the natural environment.

Across the partner countries, there are many similarities in terms of climate, landscape, and use of the natural coastal environment. But each country tends to have developed a different approach to promoting outdoor recreation and increasing use of paths. *Coast Alive* aimed to explore the diversity of approaches being taken, and to find some of the common themes to effective action. We did not expect to find a single answer, but to explore the rich diversity of approaches, informed by differences in culture and history in each country. In this way we hoped to be able to explore the added value of transnational collaboration.
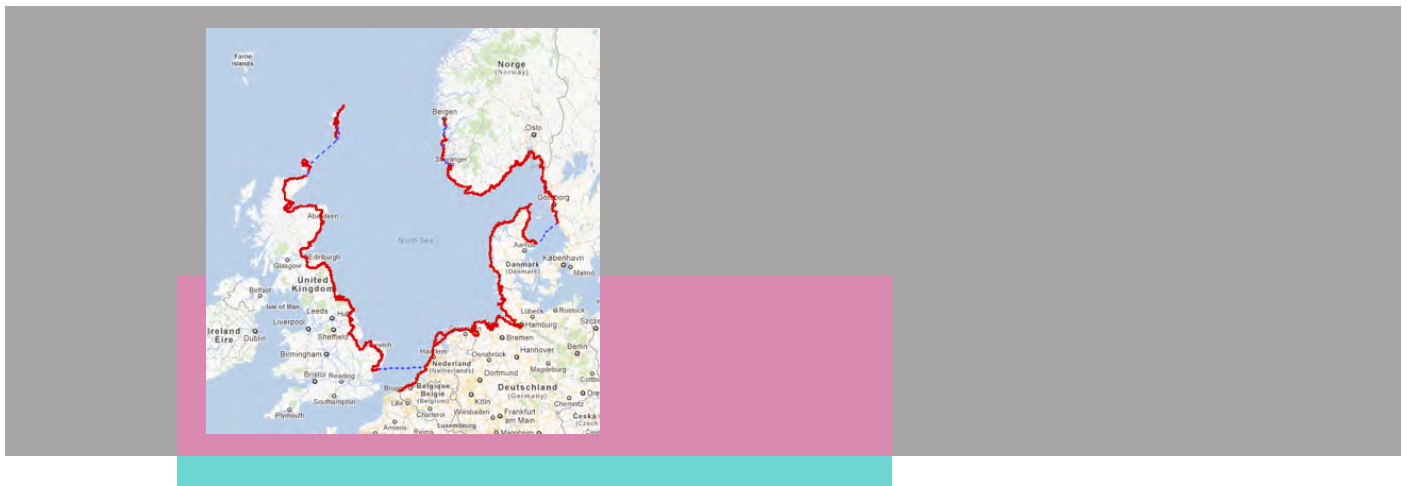
Coast Alive builds on the work of two earlier transnational projects, the *North Sea Cycle Route*, and the *North Sea Trail*. These two projects had between them developed 12,000km of paths and routes around the North Sea. *Coast Alive* partners worked to develop new initiatives to encourage their local populations to use these paths to improve their physical and mental health.

Coast Alive: the big question
"How do we best use our 12,000km of paths to improve health, without negative environmental impacts? "

This Toolkit is one of the main products of the *Coast Alive* project. It is not a research document, but reports on the real-life experiences of those working on the project, bringing together the vast experience from project partners, to help those planning or working on similar issues.

Aims of the toolkit
- To present the experiences and learning from Coast Alive (both positive and negative), to help others with similar aims in the future
- To encourage joint working between health professionals, physical activity promoters and environmental managers
- To demonstrate the diversity of approaches taken across Europe within the *Coast Alive* project

Audience
- Professionals and volunteers interested in mobilising people for outdoor activities
- People tasked with the job of limiting the damage of visitors and tourists to natural and cultural heritage
- Decision makers in local and national government
- Park wardens; rangers; public health professionals; business people (esp SMEs) teachers; recreation providers; community workers; politicians; custodians of natural heritage

3. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

"Physical activity is a fundamental means of improving physical and mental health. For too many paople, however, it has been removed from everyday life, with dramatic effects for health and well-being."
Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe. [1]

Across the European Union, a lack of regular physical activity is having a negative impact on many aspects of public health. Two thirds of the adult population (people aged 15 years or more) in the European Union do not reach recommended levels of activity. The prevalence of obesity has tripled in many countries of the WHO European Region since the 1980s, and the numbers of those affected continue to rise at an alarming rate, particularly among children. Based on the latest estimates in European Union countries, overweight affects 30-70% and obesity affects 10-30% of adults.

Yet a natural and convenient strategy for tackling obesity lies on our doorsteps: regular walks, bike rides, and other activities along the network of paths. Using the paths – for recreation or transport – could make a significant contribution to people's total physical activity, and help to tackle the increasing problems of obesity and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes. Our path network is a significant natural resource that is, in many cases, underused.

As a result of previous projects – the *North Sea Cycle Route* and the *North Sea Trail* – we have a fantastic network of 12,000km of paths around the coast. But these appear to be underused and are mainly promoted for long distance journeys, by experienced walkers and cyclists. *Coast Alive* aimed to explore how to get people to use the routes all year round, as often as possible.

If the project were able to encourage people all along the route to integrate walking and cycling into their daily lives, this would make a significant contribution to public health. At the same time, the project aims to contribute to economic development in the North Sea region by stimulating investment and activity by small and medium enterprises along the route.

[1] See for example www.noo.org.uk/core

4. THE CHALLENGE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON THE PATH NETWORK, WITHOUT NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Promoting activity

The central challenge behind the project was to use the coastal path network to promote healthy physical activity among people living on or near the paths. Research on physical activity promotion tells us that it is necessary to combine environmental improvements with promotional and social marketing activity, to maximise uptake. It is no good assuming that we can 'build it and they will come' – there needs to be active promotion. In our case we had a superb natural environment - 12,000km of natural marked trails - the challenge was how to encourage people to use the trails. This meant applying a wide range of promotional techniques in our portfolio of projects, ranging from geocaching to canoeing; from hammock camping to walking festivals. All these were designed to tempt people to try the great outdoors and experience the trail network more frequently.

Minimising local impacts

Alongside promoting activity, an additional challenge lay in addressing the possible negative consequences of widespread promotion of trail use. We were concerned that successful promotion of increased activity on the paths network would also lead to negative environmental impacts.

Would increased physical activity on trails lead to:
- Erosion of paths?
- Damage to cultural heritage such as buildings?
- Damage to plants and ecosystems?
- Litter?
- Increased vehicle traffic leading to pollution and CO_2?
- Local parking problems?

To promote physical activity, *Coast Alive* clearly had to work in close partnership with professionals charged with protecting and maintaining the natural environment, including landowners as well as park wardens or rangers. This meant that we had to develop a deep understanding of the approaches that we could take that would minimise the negative impacts of the project. Central to this challenge is monitoring visitor numbers and using this to develop an assessment of the potential impacts on the environment. This approach was essential to ensure that we maximised the sustainability of the project, ensuring that approaches to increasing activity were not doing more harm than good, and could therefore be expected to be sustainable for longer.

EXAMPLE

The 'Protect the Path' project took place in Fjaler Municipality, close to the North Sea Trail at Korssund in Norway. Here, the paths get very wet, especially in the higher areas, which leads to increased erosion. As part of the project, the team used specially produced nets to cover the wettest part of the path, to reduce the wear, while still allowing a maintenance of activity on the path.

It was interesting to note that the focus on this issue varied greatly throughout the project partners. In some areas – notably the less populated parts of Scandinavia – the population densities are so low that damage to the environment is an unlikely outcome of increased visitor numbers. In others – notably the UK or Netherlands – overuse is a very real issue and had to be dealt with through careful monitoring of visitor numbers alongside selected promotions of different geographical locations and ground management including restoration and management of drainage.

Climate risk

The third challenge is the issue of mitigating and adapting to 'climate risk'. As we look at the impact of increased activity on natural and cultural heritage, we also need to be able to take the climate into account. *Coast Alive* has been supported by the UK's Climate Impact Panel, the British government's primary climate watchdog. They have encouraged us to move from 'climate change' to 'climate risk' in our deliberations, enabling us to start looking at potential scenarios and build up risk prognoses. This concept appears to be more acceptable to the business community, who respond better to risks and are familiar with thinking through risk mitigation strategies. Addressing the challenges associated with climate change requires an integrated approach – both limiting the magnitude and rate of change and dealing with the residual impacts and opportunities.

EXAMPLE

The climate risk challenge has been taken up by Norfolk, one of the project partners. They anticipate some dramatic changes over the next 100 years due to the rise in sea levels changing the nature of the coastline. They have focused on a specific, very vulnerable section of the Norfolk coast, Happisburgh, where valuable cultural assets – including an historic lighthouse - are likely to be swept up by the sea. The project has therefore had to focus on promoting increased coastal activity in the context of an understanding of the future shape of the coastline, and the approaches they can take to minimise negative impacts.
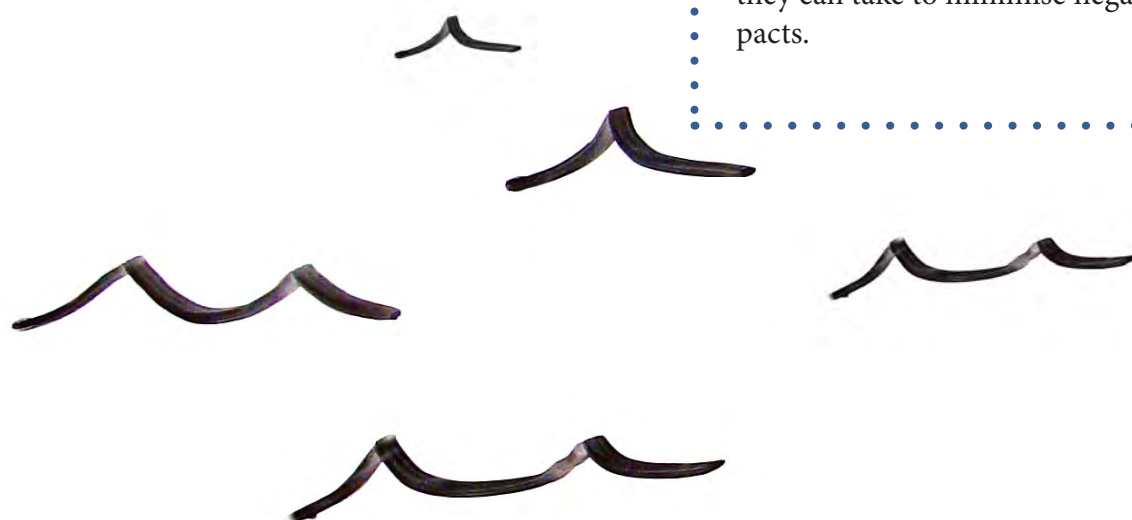
5. PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

In this section, we set out our experiences from *Coast Alive,* to help people planning similar projects in the future. These are set out under the following headings:

- Setting clear measurable objectives and agreeing target audiences
- Building effective partnerships and encourage leadership
- Securing human, organisational and financial resources for the project
- Marketing to the agreed target audience
- Running the project effectively
- Promoting the project and engaging people
- Making the project viable in the long term

a) Setting clear measurable objectives and agreeing target audiences

The best, most effective components of *Coast* Alive were those that set out very clearly what they were going to do, right from the start. Aims and objectives need to be agreed with all project partners, and set out in writing. We found it was easy to share a general aim or ambition – promoting walking and use of the local paths – but considerably harder to focus on the specifics of exactly what will happen, when, and how.

When these written objectives are agreed, then the project team can focus on delivering activities that closely match these objectives.

EXAMPLE

The Swedish project Gångstråk Hylte ('Local Trails in Hylte') had an aim to 'increase everyday exercise through the use of local trails, with a special focus on less privileged groups'.

Beneath this aim were some very clear objectives, and the project team made sure their activities met these objectives closely:

Objective	Activity
Make local trails more appealing to the public.	*Extensive marketing of the trails; trail marking; publication of new maps; discussions with local groups.*
Involve less privileged groups in the making of public policies regarding the trails, to make the trails more accessible for these people.	*A meeting with a class studying "Swedish for immigrants". This asked them about exercise and walking preferences.* *A meeting with the local council for the disabled.*
Increase the number of people who regularly use the trails.	*Through promotion and discussion. Measured with quantitative and qualitative evaluation.*

Agreeing these aims and objectives can then open up discussions about who you need on the project team. It is also essential to agree an evaluation plan. This sets out clearly how the achievement of each objective is going to be measured. This also needs to be agreed with partners well in advance of activities beginning. This is essential so that 'baseline' measures can be taken – measures before there has been any promotional activity.

EXAMPLE

The project *Walks in the Cromer and Sheringham area* aimed to investigate ways of engaging local small and medium-sized businesses close to promoted walking routes in the Cromer and Sheringham area in the UK, in order to bring repeat custom. It targeted visitors to the area and was promoted via a variety of local tourist accommodation providers.

The project was very carefully evaluated. All outputs of the project were carefully monitored, and every contact counted. Targets were agreed at the outset, and these were compared against actual progress. This allowed not only high quality evaluation at the end of the project (to check that the project had met its objectives but also process evaluation (allowing adaptation as the project progresses).

Extract from monitoring questionnaire.

	INDICATOR	Expected	Achieved
1	Number of events in this CMI organised by you	1	1
2	No. of external events in this CMI that you attended where you marketed Coast Alive	4	2
3	No. published leaflets, booklets, books etc. for events or marketing as part of this CMI	3,000 books 120 posters	3,000 books 120 posters
4	No. of TV or radio interviews as part of this CMI	1	0
5	How many men attended at own events in this CMI *Have included businesses visited when delivering books*	25	32
6	How many women attended at own events in this CMI *Have included businesses visited when delivering books*	25	46
7	How many men were talked to at external events as part of this CMI?	20	9 (so far)
8	How many women were talked to at external events as part of this CMI?	20	14 (so far)
9	No. of organisations represented at own events as part of this CMI	9	10
10	No. of organisations talked to at external events as part of this CMI	10	7 (so far)
11	No. of leaflets etc. distributed at own and external events as part of this CMI	3,000	1,360 (so far)
12	No. of organisations within and outside your core partnership involved in project activities as part of this CMI	9	9
13	No. of individuals within and outside your core partnership involved in project activities as part of this CMI	15	57

There are many different styles of evaluation, and methods that can be used, and detailed guidance on evaluation is available from a number of sources. We found it was useful to combine quantitative measures (eg counting people on paths; counting attendance at events; conducting exit surveys) with qualitative measures (discussions with people, including focus groups or interviews).

Agreeing clear measurable objectives does not mean the project is inflexible: we found it was essential to allow the project to grow and change as it went. But agreed objectives allow a 'reality check': asking 'are we on track?'

TOP TIPS

- Set clear measurable objectives, and a monitoring and evaluation framework
- Focus on clear target audiences
- Agree objectives with partners at the start
- Develop the project plan based on evidence and trans-national best practice
- Establish the business case and budget
- Conduct a risk assessment
- Plan for the end of the project, to leave a legacy

b) Building effective partnerships and encouraging leadership

Projects such as *Coast Alive* thrive on partnerships. The whole nature of the project was about bringing together approaches from public health and the environment. This means that effective partnerships were essential for success. But in this field there are so many different potential stakeholders, the challenge can be how to identify the most important ones.

Key Stakeholders?

- Politicians
- Local and national businesses
- Non governmental organisations
- Health sector organisations
- Environmental groups
- Park and path managers
- Forestry groups
- Tourist boards
- Cafes, hotels and Bed and Breakfasts on the routes

It was important to see partnership development as a sub-project in itself, and not just something that happens naturally. Building a coalition takes time and resources. But in general we found it was worth taking this time as many aspects of projects can only be delivered in partnership.

In all cases, face to face meetings were an essential aspect of establishing common ground and setting up relationships. For some partners these meetings were conducted in natural settings, to make the connection to the project. There were many challenges in building relationships, primarily when people who initially show enthusiasm for the project reduce their commitment over time. Reaching the health sector was particularly challenging – some projects found they could not directly contact doctors but had to go through the practice manager, or find a member of staff who was a keen walker. Engaging small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) was also challenging as they always have to see some commercial advantage in spending time on a project. This is why we brought in the British Federation of Small Business to some of our meetings.

The key seemed to be to identify the widest range of partners, and to think clearly about what is in it for them. If you see the project from the other person's point of view, you can begin to understand why they might want to be involved and what they might view as success. This has to take into account the objectives and identity of the partner organization.

EXAMPLE

North Jutland ran a project called 'Monkey Sunday' that brought together a wide range of stake-holders, all of whom had a different interest in the project. The project aimed to reach deprived young people (aged 9-17) who were not attending school and were getting into trouble. *Monkey Sunday* provided fun activities in the forest, and provided the opportunity for the young people to try activities such as sailing. Each stakeholder had a different view of the project:

- Danish Nature and Forest Agency – getting young people into the forests
- Police – reducing youth crime
- Social services – reducing demand on their services
- Bus company – increasing revenue

A truly collaborative project thus produces a 'win-win' situation, where each stakeholder's needs are addressed.

TOP TIPS

- Building effective partnerships is a core part of the project
- Think carefully about partners: who can help the project? What will each partner contribute? What does each partner want from the project? Ask them.
- Involve a wide range of organisations, and involve them in the planning
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities, to increase ownership of the project
- Agree leaders for each part of the project
- Consider a formal partnership agreement or agreed project plan
- Nurture partnerships for a long term relationship
- Get together often and communicate clearly
- Agree governance arrangements including steering group

c) Securing human, organisational and financial resources for the project

With a partnership in place, and clear measurable objectives, we found the next step to be gaining broad consensus from a wider range of stakeholders for the need for the project. To make the project successful meant gaining support from key people such as politicians, local businesses, and from a broad range of people who may help turn the project into reality.

This meant making a 'business case' for the project – mapping out the advantages of the project and selling them to the stakeholders.

EXAMPLE

In Norfolk, England, the project team were keen to maximise the use and impact of their series of booklets of local walks. They recognised that other agencies could help to increase use. They agreed that one of their objectives would be:

To build relationships with local health professionals (including Health trainers/connectors), mental health charities and community organisations to encourage the promotion of the walks booklets to those people who would particularly benefit their health from walking on a more regular basis.

To achieve this they made sure that the launch of each booklet was aimed not just at the general public, but also reached the key professional audiences who could reach specific target audiences. Launch invitations were sent to people in the NHS such as Health Trainers, and Mental Health Services, and to people from the Countywide Sports Partnership, the local Let's Get Active Campaign, as well as Community projects related to food, exercise and behavioural change.

The launch events stressed the benefits of joint working, and of using the walks booklet to reach key priority audiences. The professionals were taken on a local walk and heard about the links to local history. The evaluation focused on the professionals' perceptions of the launch and the usefulness of the booklet.

To date, 4 different booklets have been published; approximately 16,000 booklets have been distributed to a wide range of organisations/locations as well as to individuals.

Coast Alive provided small amounts of funding for each organisation to pump-prime their activities. This was a well-structured system, based on brief applications, quick approval and short final report for each Community Mobilisation Initiative (CMI). We found this absolutely invaluable in helping to get projects started and to gain support for others. The money often acted as a catalyst and started the relationships on a stronger footing than by going 'cap in hand'. We found the small amounts of money available for these projects could be multiplied by working with willing people and volunteers which increased the sustainability of the projects.

EXAMPLE

In Rogaland, Norway, the project team thought big and used their funding to lever additional resources for the project on universal access.

The project team worked in co-operation with the national "Friluftsrådenes Landsforbund" (the national Outdoor Recreation Board) and the Ministry of Health, on a project to grade outdoor recreation areas in order to pin point, describe and remove physical barriers. The plan is to grade a minimum of 52 locations in Rogaland, at least 2 areas in every one of the 26 municipalities. The results will be made available online (www.tilgjengelighet.no) where users can find out if Outdoor Recreation Areas are appropriate for people with specific types of disability.

The project was very ambitious – about €100,000 in total, but due to the strong partnership, Coast Alive provided only around €20,000, mainly for staff costs. The rest of the costs was covered by national funding and funding from the County Council. In addition, the municipalities and the recreation boards contributed staff time.

However, it must be said that few *Coast Alive* projects were able to secure additional funding. While we could readily use our funds to lever additional help and staff time, few partners brought 'cash to the table'. This remains a challenge to projects in the environmental sector.

TOP TIPS

- Work with partners who can bring people and expertise to the project; small amounts of money go a long way with committed staff and volunteers
- Identify partnership organisations as part of an agreed project plan; consider what happens if people leave
- Consider developing a business case that may help recruit new partners
- Establish your budget and stick to it
- Be innovative and imaginative

d) Marketing to the agreed target audience

Prioritising and selecting specific target audiences is an essential part of any behavioural change or social marketing project. *Coast Alive* developed three themes to its work, that helped with targeting.

Active Coast: aimed to stimulate activities, exchange experiences, build on and evaluate them to improve activities, involvement and engagement

Community Coast: set out to identify and test ways of engaging stakeholders to manage, promote and use the trails

Open Coast: To identify and remove the barriers, both physical and psychological, that prevent groups of society from enjoying the benefits of being active outdoors

These themes helped with the organisation and structure of the work on the project, and helped us to work out which partners to work with, but they did not help with the selection of target groups in the communities. This issue was left to each of us to agree in conjunction with local stakeholders.

For example, many projects said their target audience was 'everyone' - they simply wanted to raise awareness and use of the path network. Others identified clear sub groups in the population who they felt should be prioritised. Examples were: families with children; young people; inactive people; people with mental health problems; and people with disabilities. Activities were then tailored accordingly.

EXAMPLE

In the Province of Zeeland, there is a large and growing population of people aged 50+. It is predicted that within three years there will be three older people for every young person. The project worked with the local government of Schouwen-Duiveland, local and regional sports, health and welfare organisations, and the SportZeeland Foundation, and identified older people as their main target audience.

Their project aimed to improve knowledge about health issues affecting older people, and raise awareness of the local possibilities to get physically active within their region. They worked with local clubs to promote activities along the local coastline, with a focus on walking and cycling.

The critical issue was to work with intermediaries who understand the target audience's needs, and to produce highly targeted communications and programmes, based on their needs. This approach was often further refined in consultation with stakeholders.

Above all, the basic principle of marketing was applied: to think from the view of the target audience, and emphasise the benefits that *they* think are important.

EXAMPLE

These four projects all promoted walking in very different ways, according to the target audience:

In Great Yarmouth, the focus was on *health*: booklets described 'health walks' emphasised the benefits to health and wellbeing of regular walking in the countryside.

In North Jutland, Denmark, backpacks were marketed to people containing hammocks and sitting mats, to encourage them to spend a night in the outdoors. Here the emphasis was on *adventure*.

Norfolk and Zeeland developed, a smart phone 'app', building on people's interest in *natural heritage.* The app was designed to allow countryside users, volunteers and officers to monitor and feedback the condition of heritage along the coast line. All partners will be offered the app for their own use.

In the North York Moors a self guided trail for families was promoted with Tracker Packs including maps, activities, identification charts, binoculars etc to find and identify animals . This focused on kids having *fun with nature.*

TOP TIPS

- Be clear about the target audience
- See things from their perspective; consider cultural issues
- Talk to the target audience – do some market research
- Work with community champions
- Focus the project on where you will have greatest impact
- Be aware of potential impacts on the wider community
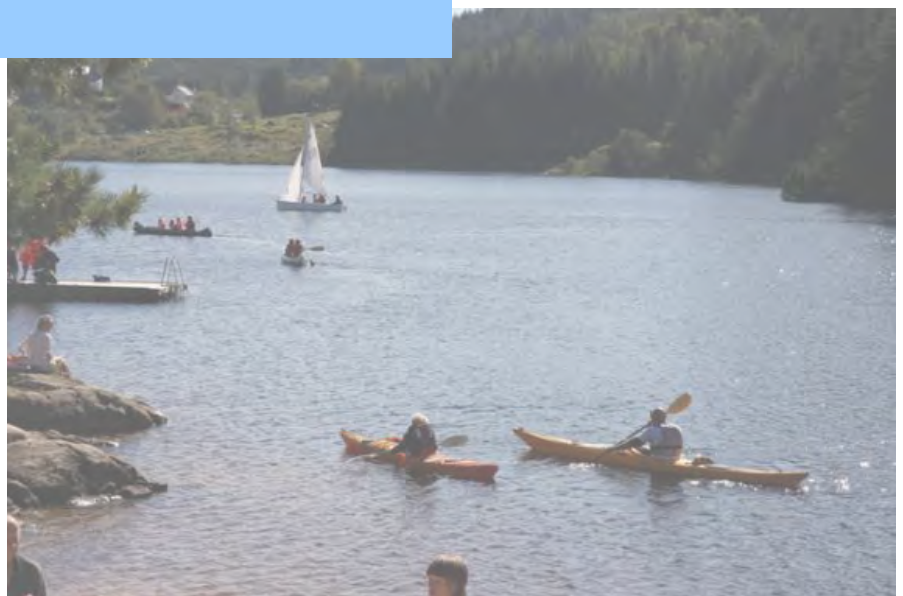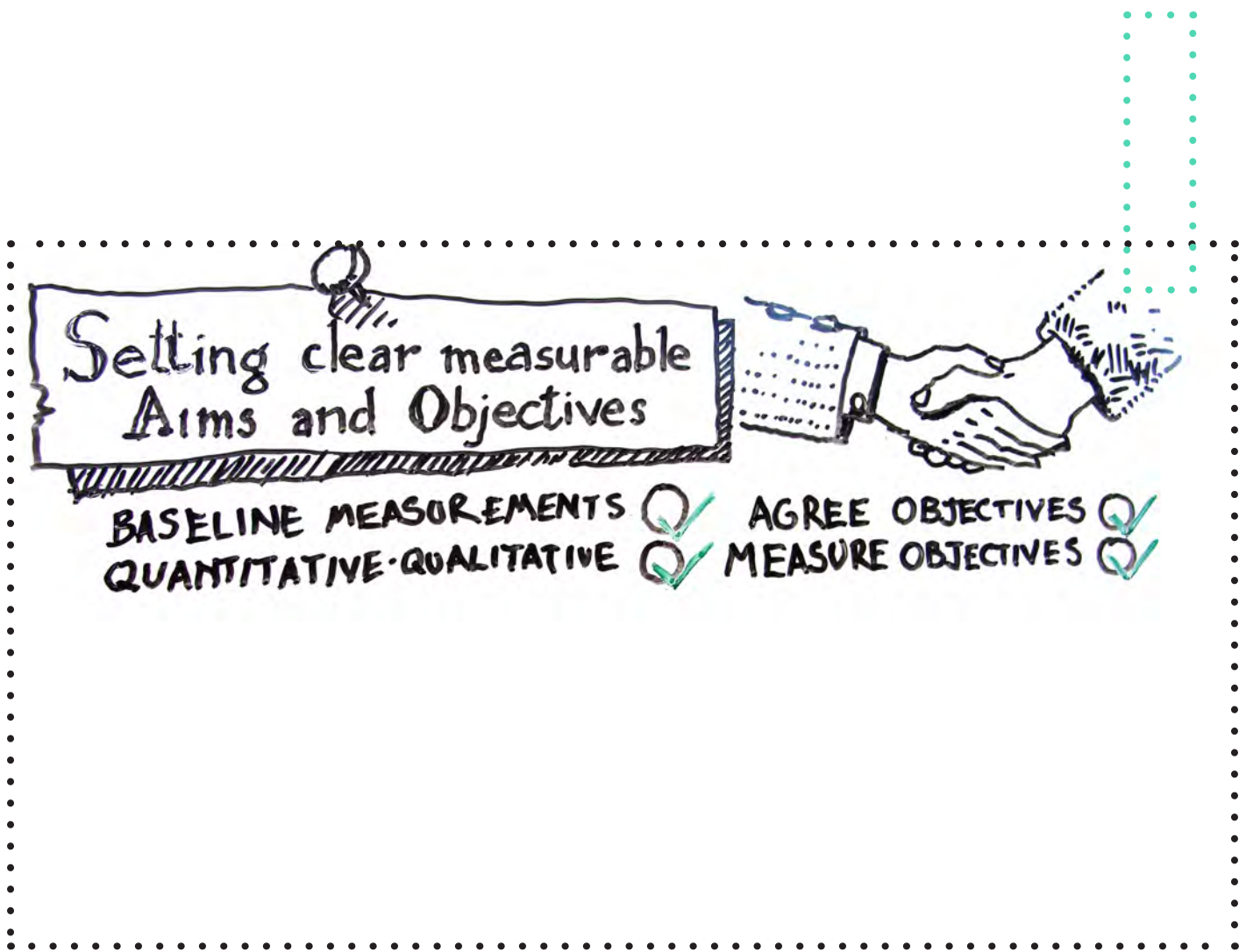
e) Running the project effectively

Coast Alive was a large, complex project. It was essential to have strong project management systems in place across the project.

At the level of the local Community Mobilisation Initiatives, we found it was particularly valuable to have face to face meetings with partners. While lots of things can be discussed by email or on the phone, there is a clear advantage in meetings to forge agreements between project partners. This is especially the case when agreeing goals and timelines.

Another clear learning point for us was the value of the pre-project planning phase. Many project managers wish they had spent more time in the planning and preparation phases of the project – especially to get partners on board early.

As mentioned above, we found it essential to agree clear aims and objectives at the start of the project. This was one of the most important elements of project management. If clear objectives are agreed early, the rest of the project activities and monitoring and evaluation can flow from that. However, it is also important to remain flexible, and ensure that the project is able to learn from situations that arise during the project, and make appropriate adaptations.

EXAMPLE

In Norway, the Vest-Agder County Council teamed up with the Lister Outdoor-recreation Board to work on the Tronåsen-race/march. This was a race along an old 5km long gravelled road, that had become something of a tourist attraction since it had been restored in 2009. This was the first time this event had been run, although the organisers were hoping it would become an annual event.

Coast Alive objectives were to make sure that the event was not just a race for the fit and able, but was open to children and people with disabilities, and was an arena for learning about outdoor-activity, and a marketing opportunity for the Flekkefjord Tourist Association. They worked hard on marketing the event, focusing on attracting families and people beyond the usual race attendees.

The results were good: while seven people set off first to race the route, another 232 walked the distance. This shows that the project was successful in reaching new participants, and that the event now has a good participant base for subsequent years.

However, the project team had to adapt the project as it progressed, and they were honest about some of the limitations of the project during the monitoring phase. The objective to make the race appeal to people with disabilities had to be dropped after a review showed the route was too steep to find a suitable way to achieve this goal. Also, there was less promotional activity than planned, due to insufficient budget being specifically allocated to this objective.

TOP TIPS

- Work to the agreed project plan
- Allow lots of time for planning
- Be realistic about the time and budget available
- Ensure you keep up with the monitoring
- Communicate frequently with all partners – especially face to face meetings
- Manage risks carefully – beware of banana skins
- Be adaptable and prepared to respond to changing circumstance and opportunities
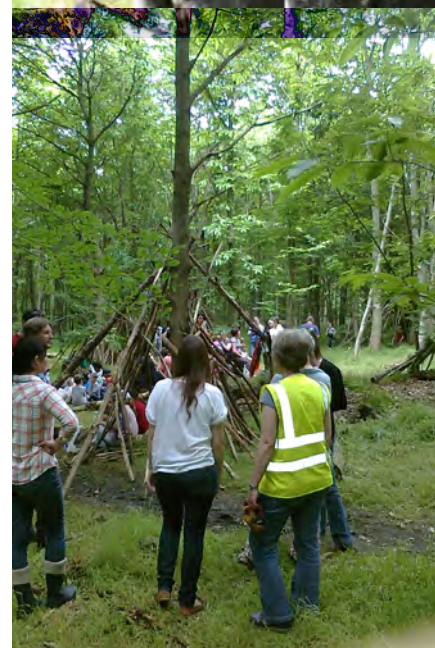
f) Promoting the project and engaging people

Promotion is essential to a project like *Coast Alive;* it is no use having loads of good ideas about increasing usage of the paths and natural resources, if nobody hears them.

We found it necessary to have a dedicated promotional strategy for every element of the community projects. This applied at every level of the project. For example at a strategic level we needed to communicate to and engage with partners to encourage them to join the project. And when organising events, promotion was an absolutely critical element that determined how many people turned up and took part in the activities.

Promotion took many forms, including the traditional (posters; leaflets; adverts in newspapers; public relations campaigns; talking to journalists) as well as the innovative, using new forms of social media.

EXAMPLES

In North Jutland, the project was promoted via a dedicated facebook page – this had over 1,000 'friends'.

In Møre and Romsdal, places for cycling, walking, kayaking and skiing were mapped and graded: green(X), blue(XX), red (XXX) and black(XXXX) according their difficulty. This information was made available on the website www.morotur.no

In Zeeland, the project team explored the use of smart phone apps for heritage/cultural walks/tours. The app pin-points heritage sites either in isolation or as part of a walking route, and then links them to suggested walks.

In Noway, Sogn og Fjordane county council explored an update to an old tradition. Across the country are hundreds of mailboxes, containing a notebook to write down your name. The tradition is that you write your name when visiting to track your progress. The new idea is that the boxes also contain a code, which can be sent by mobile phone to a hotline number. This is then shown on a website and people rewarded for their progress.

When promoting the project we made sure we promoted the aspect of walking or cycling that appealed most to the target audience. To find this out we had to talk to people – either informally or through a more formal structure such as a focus group. This also applies to engaging with partners – and in particular to businesses – where we needed to understand what made them want to take part in the project.

EXAMPLE

Geocaching is one of the best examples of the use of technology to promote trail use. It involves hiding 'treasure' in a secret location in the outdoors (under a log; behind a tree; etc) and encouraging children (and adults) to search for them using GPS devices, or directions from a website. When you find the cache you might swap one of the items (often small toys) and sign a sheet to say you have found the cache.

Geocaching is becoming increasingly popular and *Coast Alive* put a great deal of effort into using the approach to promote the outdoors, and the project itself. We made a large number of branded 'geocoins' – like large coins or medals – to be put into geocaches and to help market the infrastructure we have and what Coast Alive stands for. Each coin has its own webpage and in some cases has a mission – eg to travel the whole North Sea Trail before returning to Denmark again.

Using this approach, people finding geocoins become inquisitive about the project and visit the website, and perhaps use it again to find more coins. On the website people can also write their own stories so we can follow the progress of a coin around the North Sea. More and more coins are being placed in geocaches along our 12,000km of network all the time.

TOP TIPS

- Agree a promotional strategy as part of an overall project plan
- Communicate at all levels: overall project promotion alongside detailed marketing of each activity
- Talk to people; have face-to-face meetings whenever possible
- Develop social networks; engage people in the long term who can support the project
- Appeal to the target audiences' interests and priorities
- Work alongside people in the target audience
- Use appropriate media to communicate, and consider social media

g) Making a project viable in the long term

Coast Alive was all about sustainability: we wanted to make sure that the activities that we put on contributed to a more sustainable environment, and that increased activity in the outdoors did not lead to increased pressure on the environment. But more than this, we wanted to make sure that the project itself was sustainable. So our final lesson is still continuing – and we hope will continue for many years to come. It is learning how to make sure that the project lives on, long before the project funding has stopped, and project teams have gone on to other things.

We took various approaches to enhancing the sustainability of the project:

- Mainstreaming the project with partners from the statutory sector – notably health – who can 'pick up the reins'
- Making sure sufficient resources – such as booklets and publications – are printed to keep the project alive
- Working with volunteers, who might be more likely to work on the project in the future
- Involving the local populations wherever possible
- Continued promotion; maintaining networks and relationships
- Investing in infrastructure: footpaths; bike paths; campsites; that will live on
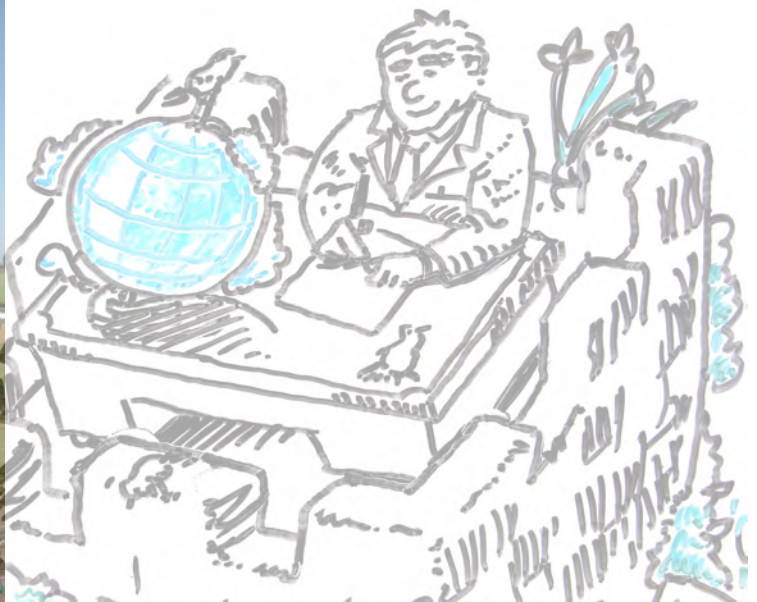
EXAMPLES

In North Jutland the project team is digitising all the local trails. This means that people can download trails maps before they go for a walk, and can use the digitised trails for GPS treasure hunts and geocaching. These digital trails will remain long after *Coast Alive*.

In the North York Moors, the project team aimed to make the project sustainable beyond *Coast Alive* funding. They ran a Bike It project that involved local schools and volunteer groups, and a network of bike leaders to deliver events. Local cycle hire firms and training centres were recruited to the project and benefited financially from the introduction of the scheme and have agreed to continue to run the project beyond the *Coast Alive* funding.

In Hordaland, the project team worked on making the Fjell fortress - one of the most popular tourist spots - available for people with disabilities. They made extensive adaptations to the trail to make it accessible, and these changes will remain long after the project funding has finished. An unexpected spin-of of this initiative is that the local farmers are now looking into how they can make it possible for disabled people to get in closer contact with the farm animals that are grazing in this area.

TOP TIPS

- Plan for long-term sustainability from the start
- Aim to make resources available for the long term
- Work with volunteers and involve local communities
- Continue promotion to ensure high awareness
- Invest in social infrastructure
- Strengthen teams and organisation so they are long lasting

6. NEXT STEPS & CONCLUSIONS

In this report we have tried to show the rich diversity of approaches that were taken in *Coast Alive* to the core challenge of maximising the use of 12,000km of paths to improve health, without negative environmental impacts.

As we had hoped from the start, each project team in the different countries has developed a different approach to promoting health, recreation and increasing use of paths. *Coast Alive* helped to establish some of the more effective approaches, and demonstrate the added value of transnational collaboration.

We have shown that small amounts of investment can be multiplied many times by the effort and enthusiasm of volunteers and dedicated project teams. But the context to that action is critical – responding to and building on national cultures.

We found promoting physical activity to be the easier part of the project. Many people in all the project countries were keen to be active in the outdoors, they just needed to be given the opportunities. More challenging for us was the objective of promoting the natural and cultural heritage. More needs to be done on this issue, by making strong connections between the health, environmental and cultural aspects of our natural environment.

What is clear from all the work we have done on *Coast Alive* is that there is significant added value in working to promote healthy use of the paths network: it is not enough to assume that we can 'build it and they will come'. We need to continue to build and strengthen healthy collaboration between health, transport, environment and culture professionals, to increase the focus on enjoyment of healthy physical activity in our natural environment.

FURTHER READING

There is a wealth of further information on the Coast Alive website: *www.coast-alive.eu*

Including a video describing the project; full details of all community mobilisation initiatives, and background documents. You can search for specific initiatives according to topic, target audience or setting, or simply browse and find out more about this fascinating project!

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