

SWEDEN – KALMAR

Cultural tourism “Opera on Öland”

The example shows possibilities of using the potential of summer residents, competences, skills, contacts and ideas. The result of the project may affect the rural economy in a positive way by attracting more visitors to the area, by facilitating development of new products within cultural tourism and by strengthening the cooperation between different rural stakeholders and thereby contribute to the generation of new rural jobs within new areas or activity.

1. Project details

Nature of the project

Purpose: The purpose of the project is to create an annual opera festival, using the potential of Öland as a summer residence for artists; singers, musicians, producers and the unique setting of the stage on the ruin of a castle on the edge of the World Heritage “Allvaret” on Öland. The vision is to have a whole week of culture in the future, involving not only opera but also art, theatre and dance. The culture week will act as a setting to develop new products within culture tourism.

Content: A non-profit organization called “The Association for Developing Culture Tourism in Öland” was formed and worked throughout the year planning and organising the event. The first event was launched in 2009 and there will be another in 2010.

Inspiration: The idea came from a private person who developed first contacts with an Opera Theatre in Stockholm.

Policy coherence: The project is connected to the rural development strategies at national level as well as at local and regional level. The project will strengthen the attraction of the region, which is also one of the main targets of the strategy of the local LAG Kalmar-Öland. The result of the project is expected to be new business opportunities and thereby new working opportunities in rural areas in cultural tourism. New working opportunities in rural areas and diversification of rural business are a target in Rural Development Programme (RDP). New business and development within the tourism industry is also a target of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Links between agriculture and the rest of the economy

Main agricultural sub-sectors involved: The main farm-based sub-sectors involved are accommodation, restaurants and food production on farms. Individual businesses within the tourism sector are also involved.

Scale of the project

Size: The Opera event had 1,300 visitors; 100 persons were involved on and off stage, both amateurs and professionals.

Time scale: The first stage of the project was carried out in 2009.

Coverage: The coverage is primarily regional, covering the Island of Öland in Kalmar County, Sweden.

Beneficiaries and supporters

Beneficiary: The project was proposed by a private person engaged in cultural activities in the region. In the second stage an association was formed with members from regional and local society. The person who proposed the project was acted as the project leader. The board consists of people mostly from the private and non profit sector engaged in culture and tourism business. Professionals from the main theatres in Stockholm participated and general interest for the project was high.

Supporters: Local politicians supported the project with funding. A local bank also supported the project with financing. Local society was supportive and the spirit surrounding the project was very positive. The voluntary and off stage work was crucial for the realisation of the project.

Finance

Funding: Private, voluntary work 30,000 EUR; Regional public funding, County administration 6,000 EUR; RDP, leader axis 4, 4.1.3 local attraction 2,500 EUR; Private cash funding 6,000 EUR; Regional public other funding 12,000 EUR.

Results

Direct results: A main purpose of the first year was to find out if it would be worthwhile to work further on the idea of developing a culture week. All the stakeholders within the public, private and voluntary sectors agreed on the fact that the Opera festival was a success and that it was worth carrying on and support the further development of the idea of an annual Culture Festival.

Main target: The main target is the local and regional society with special emphasis on the experience based tourism business.

Wider benefits: The project has been very encouraging for the local society on the island. People have been very proud of the Opera Festival.

2. Relevance of case study experiences for others

Problems: There were no major problems. It was easy to find committed people interested in participating in this big event.



Transferability and mainstreaming potential: The project might be transferable to other regions with a high share of summer residents. The idea of seeing summer residents as a potential and using their networks, skills or other abilities might be a way to find new ways of developing the local society and economy.

Innovation: The project is seen as innovative by using the summer residents as a resource factor to develop the local society and economy.

Institutional aspects: The partnership was arranged through the association that was established, mainly by participants from the private and non profit sectors within the regional and local society.

Social aspects: The project has not targeted any of the groups above.

Sustainability: The vision is to create an annual culture week as a base for development of cultural tourism. The Opera Festival has been extended for 2010 while public funding has decreased in comparison to 2009. The Culture week is planned to take place in 2011.

Lessons to pass on: A lesson to pass on is that creativity and development of new business activities within cultural tourism and the creative field cannot be managed in the same way and scheduled as for businesses within other fields (e.g. you may not have all the answers at place the time you apply for funding).