

FINLAND

Promoting local development in rural areas

Location

Lake Lappajärvi

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Axis / Priority

P6 - Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas

Measure

M07 – Basic services & village renewal

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 51 667

EAFRD 19 530

National/Regional 26 970

Private 5 167

Project duration

2016 – 2017

Project promoter

Järviseutu-seura ry

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A feasibility study was launched in order to set the foundations for turning an ancient crater lake into a driver for local development.

Summary

Lappajärvi is a lake in South Ostrobothnia, Finland. It is formed from a 23 km wide meteorite impact crater, which is estimated to be 76 million years old. It is Europe's largest crater lake and is well-known among geologists and crater researchers. However it is not known among tourists and general public.



The Finnish rural development programme helped finance a feasibility study aiming to prepare an application for Unesco Geopark-status. The study also includes preparations for the creation of a geo and nature information centre to serve tourists and explain the uniqueness of the lake. In addition the project aims to develop a business model for a Nordic/European planetary information centre.

Results

As a result of this feasibility study it is expected that the improved tourist services will attract at least 10 000 visitors per annum.

One of the early results of this project is that it contributes to local level understanding of the value of Lappajärvi as a unique natural asset.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The example of the Lappajärvi case is a reminder that increased understanding of local areas and sites (their historic, natural or cultural significance, for example) can contribute greatly to the potential for them to become drivers for local development.

Context

Lappajärvi is a lake in South Ostrobothnia, Finland, in the municipalities of Lappajärvi, Alajärvi and Vimpeli. It is formed from a 23 km wide meteorite impact crater, which is estimated to be 76 million years old. The 1.5 km wide meteorite hit the ground with a speed of 60 000 km/h. The crash generated energy equal to 17 million Hiroshima nuclear bombs. An island in the middle of the lake, Kärnäsaari (Kärnä Island), gives the name to the black impact melt rock (impactite) found there, locally called kärnäite.

Europe's largest crater lake Lappajärvi is well-known among geologists and crater researchers, but not so much among the tourists and general public. One of the crater's strengths is that it is still young (in the geological terms) and well-preserved. Its rim is 100 meters above the lake surface in the Lakeaharju (Wide Esker) and Pyhävuori (Holy Mountain) areas, which offer unique views. Compared to many other crater locations in the world, Lappajärvi is easily accessible thanks to good quality roads and is only an hour or two from the Finnish capital Helsinki or the regional capital Seinäjoki.

Objectives

This feasibility study on Lake Lappajärvi aims at:

1. Preparing the application for Unesco Geopark-status.
2. Planning and establishing a geo and nature information centre to serve tourists and explain the uniqueness of the lake. The centre will also showcase the lake region's history and culture.
3. Establishing a business model for a Nordic/European planetary information centre.

Activities

The project was enabled by the right people meeting each other at the right moment. The project owner, a local development association, contacted the Geological Survey of Finland and came to know Dr. Teemu Öhman, whose specialisation is meteorite impacts and who also happened to know the value of Lappajärvi very well. Öhman's international links were a great asset to the whole project. Researchers from the Geological Survey of Finland and Öhman carried out this field study on Lappajärvi geotrails during the summer and autumn of

2016. The planned trails will give visitors an opportunity to get familiar with two billion years of Earth history, the dramatic formation and evolution of the lake and other unique natural and cultural features of the region.



The design of the nature information centre and the interlinked planetary information centre will be based on the unique history and environment of Lappajärvi. An interesting detail is that the region already holds an extensive archive of NASA's (The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration) planetary images. Elsewhere in Europe similar archives can only be found in Paris, Berlin, London and Rome. In addition, Finland's largest private mineral collection of over 4 000 samples of international stature that showcase also the mineral riches of the region will form an integral part of the nature information centre. Both centres will be designed by the top Finnish researchers who have direct links to NASA and ESA (European Space Agency).

Main results

The quantitative objective of the project is that the improved tourist services are expected to attract at least 10 000 visitors per annum.

At this early stage of the project the most valuable result locally is the improved understanding of the value of Lappajärvi as a unique natural asset.

Main lessons

Transferring this example as such is difficult as it is based on very unique local natural assets. However, the Lappajärvi case reminds everyone to look closer into their rural territories: it may take decades and centuries until real hidden jewels are found and ready to be utilised in local tourism and development.

Additional sources of information

n/a