

## BEST PRACTICE: MIDDELFART, DENMARK



### Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Capacity building; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 72 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 16,546 (2023)

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Business.

**DMO** | 100% subsidiary of municipality.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Insufficient or declining tourism acceptance; Lack of community participation in tourism activities; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Middelfart is a coastal town on the island of Funen, characterised by a large whale population in the Little Belt. The tourism sector has grown steadily in recent years and plays an important role for the destination, with around 600,000 overnight stays in 2022, mostly domestic.

### Key Challenge

Increasing tourism (camping, cruises, second homes) contributes to significant disturbances and losses of biodiversity (especially fish stocks) as well as to resentment among locals towards tourists. The challenge is to promote awareness and understanding of biodiversity and conservation among both locals and tourists.

**Implementation of Solutions:** Sustainability actions focus on improving the aquatic environment and climate, creating shared responsibility and participation.

## SOLUTIONS

- Leveraging the existing infrastructure, *Vestre Skole Primary School* has been assigned an additional function after school opening hours: serving as a central meeting point for students, visitors, and citizens of the city, bringing tourists together with locals and providing insights into the destination's environmental problems and solutions (especially on climate change).
- *Visitors are involved in conservation activities* through unique and innovative experiences, such as:
  - Harbour porpoises, though less common, are a typical species in the Belt. When tourists spot one, they are encouraged to report it to a research organisation, which then donates to a fund dedicated to protecting the species.
  - Tourists can get *discounts* on water activities like diving or snorkelling by participating in *waste collection*. Collected waste is often repurposed into art materials.
  - *Crab hunting*, offered as an activity for tourists, help address the Belt's crab overpopulation issue. The experience is paired with the preparation of authentic crab dishes after the hunt.
- *Raising awareness and educating* local residents and tourists about environmental and climate issues. The measures include:
  - An annual three-day [\*climate festival\*](#) with workshops and seminars.
  - Setting up information boards with *QR codes* across local areas to inform people about measures, encouraging them to be proactive in environmental issues.
  - *Nature education offers*, such as guided hikes providing information about nature conservation, or ambassador programmes for children through special excursions.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires a strong political willingness and intense collaborations with the stakeholders).

**Cost & funding source:** Around 5,000 euros to support discounts on waste collection; 400,000 euros for awareness-raising and educational measures; both from the DMO budget.

## Success Factors & Barriers Regarding the Implementation

*Success factors:* A good relationship with the community; Long-term partnerships with interested and relevant stakeholders; Sufficient funding (especially national funding).

*Barriers:* Numerous regulations in local planning; Resistance to change in both the municipality and the tourism industry; Conservative attitudes of various stakeholder groups (e.g., farmers).

## Results and Impacts

- Increasing visitor numbers and rising interest in volunteer work at the highly successful climate festival.
- Shift towards more sustainable consumer behaviour, reflected in the increasing demand for vegetarian food. Shops also offer a more sustainable range of products and services, such as the municipality's revamped climate-friendly canteen.
- Improved biodiversity through reforestation and greater species diversity, with examples such as rediscovering a particular frog species.

### Takeaways

- Implementing these measures is not possible without setting up collaborative mechanisms.
- Top-down and bottom-up approaches work well.
- It is important to be persistent and always ask for funding and capacity.

## Useful Links

- [Climate Lab](#) | Middelfart Kommune
- [Middelfart Go Green](#) | Visit Middelfart

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