



Kinburn: Perspectives of Successful Development

*(notes to the social-economic basis for sustainable development
of Kinburn national natural park)*

Introduction

There were times when this strip of land was considered divine. The legends tell about a majestic temple dedicated to Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, about the divine forest of Hecate, the goddess of sorcerers and phantoms. Indeed, in the ancient times people were coming here to worship their gods, in the Scythian times there lived the priests, and ordinary people were not allowed to live there. Even now living on Kinburn is not easy: winds, sands, water and wild nature have created conditions that forbid introduction of the modern civilization. And at the same time it is one of the last islands of really wild environment, foremother of the steppe, the basis of the traditional existence which is threatened by the unstable modern civilization. But it is still holding...

Whether it is possible to find a reasonable compromise, to the nature, traditions and legends and at the same time make all these riches accessible to the visitors and able to provide good living for local inhabitants? The main goal of this research is to prove that it is indeed possible.

This work is based upon numerous scientific researches of different years, on our study of real current situation and on proposals for the perspectives of development. Our conclusions are based upon the input from the personal meetings with different stakeholders in the region and in the central organs of Ukraine.

We want to thank all the participants of this project.

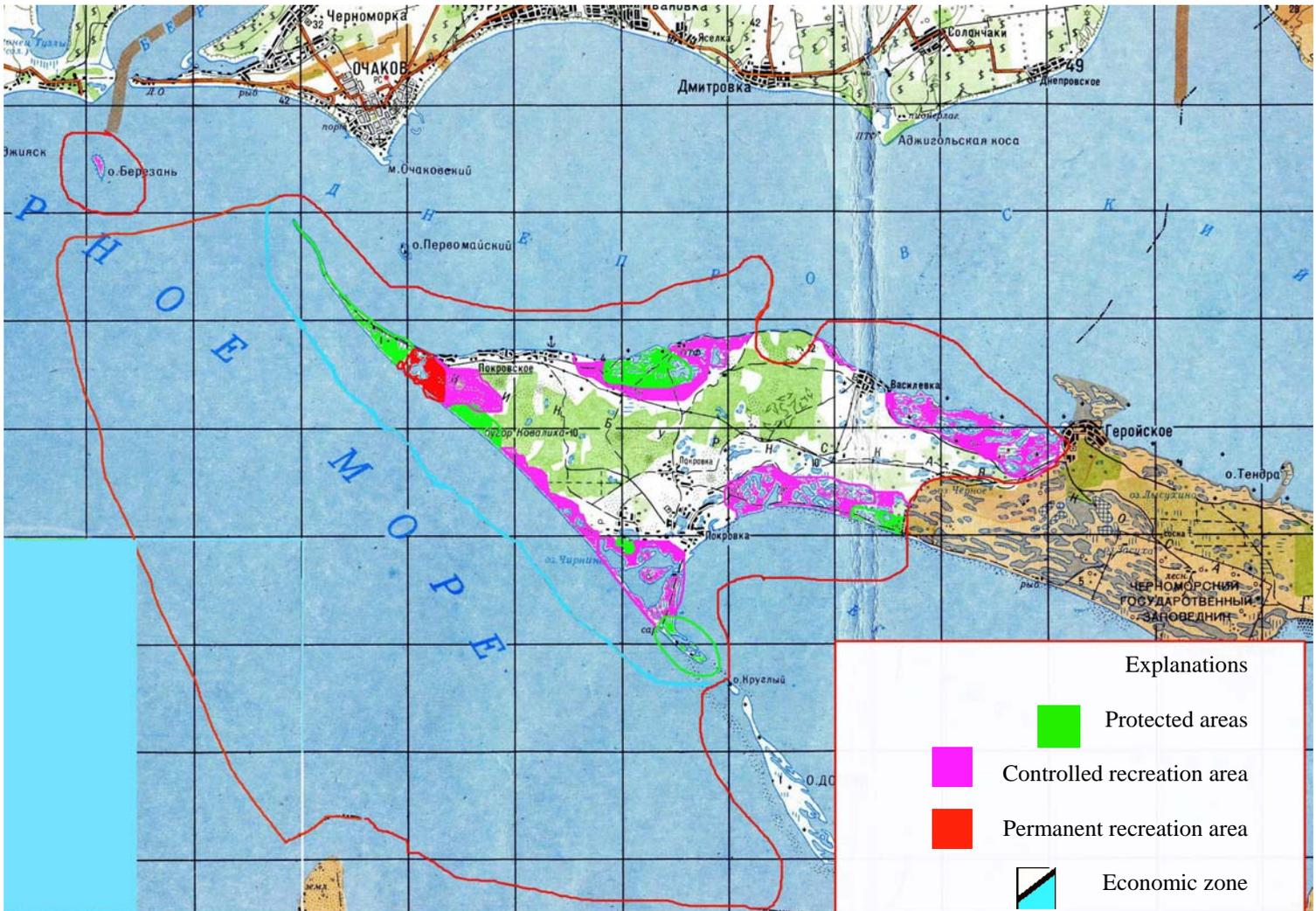
Special thanks to the Dutch program PUM and to the independent expert Ep Booneman who provided an incredible valuable input into the study of this problem; his input is the so valuable because of his fascination by wild nature and people who are striving to protect it. We are using his recommendations and advise with warm gratitude.

The study was done by the information center "Green Dossier".

Chapter 1. Ecological situation and zoning.

The state of environment (environmental conditions) in Kinburn spit has been described in numerous scientific works that were possible thanks to numerous grants. Names of these works can be found in the list of sources. We will not repeat them, argue with them or create any compilations. We are using the principle of zoning of the National Natural Park that has been proposed by the scientists of the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of sciences of Ukraine, and we consider the possibilities of sustainable development of the region according to the proposed zones.

PROVISIONAL SCHEME ZONING OF THE NATIONAL NATURE PARK "KINBURN"





Chapter 2. Diverse and numerous possibilities

The peninsula counts some 800 inhabitants (winter time – less) of which only a part lives there throughout the year. They are mainly established in three villages. One of them Pokrovka counts an increasing number of small hotels and self catering facilities that could be called pensions. They are usually not registered legally and do not pay taxes. The largest of them in Kinburn Hotel, “Krutaya Osyp” counts about 25 apartments giving room to 150 guests. The usual tourist season is from the end of May until mid-September. The village itself is void of any interest for tourists. Local habitat has been replaced by non-descript buildings and houses. The second village Vasylivka seems at a first glance better preserved and might present some traditional rural architectural interest. There is no infrastructure such as roads, waste water treatment and waste collection. Only two providers of telecommunications (mobile telephone) cover the peninsula. Tourists usually come by boat. Boats moor at a simple pier. Several inhabitants have 4WD cars that allow them to travel to Kherson and Mykolayiv which are respectively situated at 140 and 210 km. Tourists usually reach the island through a ferry connection with the town of Ochakov. The major tourist town of Odessa is also easily can be reached by boat. Small scale land- and water transport facilities are also provided by the inhabitants of the peninsula.

The RLP presently undergoes a change of status to be National Park. The framework decree has been signed recently by the President of Ukraine. This decision may lead to serious changes in the level of protection of the peninsula. Until now only partial agreement has been reached between the interested parties on the boundaries of the future National Park which will not cover automatically those of the RLP. It is urgent to decide upon them as it is important to decide upon the level of protection of the area which may not be included in the NP. The involved parties apparently do not have the same views about the importance of nature conservation as a thriving force for the sustainable development of the area. They even strongly disagree.

The following parties can be defined:

On the local level.

1. The local council, which by the voice of their chairman seem to be in favour of a large tourist development of the peninsula without giving much attention to the value of nature being the main capital of the peninsula.
2. The local direction of the RLP which is one of strongest advocates and defenders of an unspoiled Kinburn.
3. The small local business community which seem to be divided in their opinion on the importance of nature. Both seem to have only limited faith in the intentions of the local council
4. The Forest Committee (cf. Regional level)

On the regional level

5. The administration of the Mykolaiv Oblast, which according to the Deputy Governor and the head of the Economic Services is still in need of additional formation, related to the acceptable degree of human intervention; more precisely should there some kind of zoning and if so, what shape should it get. The Deputy Governor denied in very strong wording the persistent rumours of land sale on Kinburn;
 6. The Forest Committee, whose representative declares himself much in favour of the creation of a National Park with a limited zone of a high protection level, which is in his view than the present RNP and a buffer zone including part of the present forest zones. Forestry as an economic activity should be maintained. He does not agree with the opinion voiced in several documents and discussions, that forestry in the area in its present form is a marginal economic activity;
 6. The regional environmental department whose seems to be inclined towards a zoning of the peninsula with a general and high protection level. He is convinced of the need of urgent action as some negative developments presently take place.
 7. The Regional Department of Tourism is much interested in the development of the peninsula.
 8. The local NGO-community (Regional Public Council, which consists of environmental NGO's and the Committee for Kinburn Cape protection) to which several organizations belong, are the strong advocates
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of Kinburn and its development in a responsible way by protecting its uniqueness and by respecting the right of the local population to a decent existence. They are worried about the alleged land sales. They took several initiatives from awareness campaigns to court actions; presently they are working on a proposal for zoning.

On the national level we can distinguish more or less the same stakeholders.

9. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Ukraine through its State Service for Tourism and Resorts are much interested in a harmonious development of the peninsula as a potential tourist destination.

10. The Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Science that has carried out several investigations on the fauna of the peninsula. Presently they carry out an ecological assessment on the effects of one or more roads. They are seriously worried about the near future of Kinburn. Head of department Vassiliy Kostyushin informed us about a recently initiated NGO-campaign to mobilise public opinion in order to convince the authorities not to take any irreversible steps that may harm nature in Kinburn. In his capacity as programme coordinator of Wetlands International Black Sea Programme he took the lead of this campaign. Wetlands International is a widely spread international n.g.o.

Other barriers

The diversity of parties and interests and years old conflicts are not the only barriers encountered. The local infrastructure is extremely poor. Basic amenities such as transport, liquid waste and solid waste management are completely lacking. The only existing waste water treatment system, the one of Hotel Krutaya Osyp, never was put into operation and is now too small for the present size of the hotel. Waste water/sewage is directly evacuated into nature or in old septic tanks with a limited capacity of regeneration. The hydro-geological situation prevents creating land fills of a certain importance.

The local business community that relies upon tourism is not inclined to a close co-operation as a group. Most of them see each other only as competitors and are not aware of their common interests. 'Very fast return of low investment' is almost a common credo.

According to the director of RLP the absence of an effective enforcement system is another major obstacle. Activities as hunting take freely place without respecting rules about protected species and areas.

SUV's and lorries don't respect existing tracks and go everywhere in and outside reserved areas. Images on Google Earth give a clear picture of their negative impact. Also official entities such as the Forest Committee don't always seem to be respectful of the national laws regarding nature. There is nor capacity nor funding to control these activities.

The lack of skills among the local entrepreneurs is also a major hindrance to a sound development of the tourist sector. Training and transfer of knowledge must receive priority. Knowledge is available in Ukraine.

There are as many possibilities to create a really balanced development as there are problems, and even more. And each of these problems opens the way to its solution.

First, it is important to look closely at all the interested parties. Each player has his own interests in Kinburn, we see our goal in finding a balanced way to satisfy them all. And the first thing here is for the people to listen to each other. Therefore, the means of communication and education, like round table discussions, discussions in press including the Internet, press-tours or press-conferences, just any forms are useful here. The most important is to initiate an open and honest dialogue where every participant could tell what specifically attracts him in this territory, how does want to develop it and how does he want to see it in, say, 10 years. Such a dialogue can be conducted by a neutral organization playing the role of a mediator. Such an experience is available in different countries of Europe, where mediators have helped to resolve peacefully the conflict situations around natural reserves (so, Green Dossier has already cooperated with mediators from Austria in the framework of the ECNC program (European Center for Nature Conservation) "Founding of a Pan-European Ecological network in the region of Eastern and Southern Europe and the Black Sea (SEENET)").



Second, it is obvious that the local people and small businessmen lack knowledge and skills on environmentally responsible and profitable business; so, there is a need to provide education for them in this area. Specifically, there is a need for educational outreach about the risks to their natural ecosystem in the case when their resource management is not supportive to nature.

Third, so far, the issues of land use and land ownership are still in the shadow. How the land shares are distributed, who has the rights for that, which are these rights, which regulation mechanisms will work in the areas with different status of nature protection; all these issues must be clear for all types of land owners before they start to build anything in the area. Clarifying these issues is the most important part of public education activity.

This entire process will clarify the role and importance of each of stakeholders as well as their interdependency. They must learn how to find agreement and mutually beneficial or win-win solutions. This activity will require time, but it is impossible to instantly change people's mentality and their attitude towards each other, especially when they are in the state of conflict. But we are certain that this is the road to success, as there are so many similar projects in other countries that came to be great success (like creation of network 'Nature-2000' in Europe, program of sustainable development of protected areas in Caucasus, practical examples in Romania, and others).

This activity can be financed from a number of different sources, like local/oblast budgets, funds from the ministries of ecology, culture and tourism. It is possible to use sources of funding from international foundations and programs (financing of special projects, use of the existing informational and training resources). It is possible to make money even in Kinburn by using the advantages of the national natural park.

Many problems in Kinburn exist because of the imperfection of the Ukrainian environmental legislation, especially the part that concerns protected areas. In Kinburn, like in many other places it creates conflicts among stakeholders, even if these parties are state organs. So, the state project to create new and enlarge existing national natural parks have created conflict between the state organs that manage protected areas and forests, which can not find consensus on the zoning of the territory of the future national park. Besides, part of the land plots that are considered highly valuable for the national park, at present are managed by the defunct collective farm, fish farm, village council or forestry committee, and can therefore be not included in the boundaries of the National Park. This applies to the areas with rare species of plants that are protected by international legislation. For example, the unique 90 ha orchid field is part of the land used by the defunct fish farm and is currently the subject of division into shares; this may lead to it being in private ownership.

Such situation is not typical for most of the countries with well-developed the environmental legislation and strong traditions of rule of law. Informing the parties about the European experience and legislation in the area of nature protection will help to find good options for resolution of many of such problems.

It is important to find out to which extent the business activity in Kinburn, its national and local norms and regulations correspond to the international treaties signed by Ukraine and also to inform all the interested parties about the terms and conditions of the International Law on Reserved areas.

Chapter 3. Profitable and nature-friendly business

So, let us return to the problems mentioned above and see which will be the advantages of their solutions.

Infrastructure

This may be the most difficult of all problems in Kinburn, as infrastructure is simply not there.

Money on the road

Starting with the entry road: is it really needed? The absence of the road protects the area from chaotic construction. But, on the other hand, today people drive wherever they want, and numerous new roads they make with their 4x4 offroadsters go right over unique steppe plants. The design project of a modern tarmac road has been already approved; it is quite an expensive project, especially as the road should be built in accordance with the requirements used for the National Parks.

But what if instead of building a modern highway use part of the allocated funds for improvement of the existing dirt roads? They can be organized to minimize the damage to nature and properly marked. It would also make sense to introduce special permits for entering the vehicle to the territory of the National Park. Such permits could be given to local inhabitants, service organizations and licensed drivers, mostly from the nearby villages. It could become a source of income for the inhabitants of both oblasts (Mykolayiv and Kherson), and the entry fee could be used for the benefit of the Park. The same approach could be used for boats and ferries.

Money from the wastes

Another infrastructural problem is related to the solid wastes management. Collection of garbage, its sorting, transportation to the waste treatment plants and recycling could be profitable for small business of both oblasts. The market for recycled materials has already been created in Ukraine; there are such companies in Kherson and in Mykolayiv. Sponsoring the National Park could give them good publicity for further development, good source of raw materials and new jobs. This will be even more attractive when the oblast administration gives such enterprises tax advantages. Publicity and educational work on the issue could be done by grass root organizations, mass media and PR-agencies.

Money from wind and water

There are many technologies in the world on waste water treatment; one of the technologies utilizes reed filters which have been traditionally used in Kinburn, as this area is full of reed. It is easy to improve old technology and keep using this traditional material.

The area is also quite suitable for use of renewable energy from sun and wind; and this will allow saving money on heating and electric power. This is much easier now, when tax benefits and green tariffs have been introduced in Ukraine for users and producers of green energy. It is true that one household can hardly afford to buy a wind generator or a solar battery, but it is within the reach of the hotel owners, and quite easy for a group of owners or for the village community.

Hotels and tourism

The most attractive business in Kinburn is tourism. The so called rural tourism provides food for local people during the summer when numerous wild tourists stay and eat at their country houses.

But for proper development of rural tourism it is important to have a system of education of the hosts, certification of compliance with ecological legislation, especially on the territory of the National Park, and strict control by the local authorities of compliance with ecological norms. This activity could be profitable only if local providers introduce additional services for the tourists and if there is no competition from the new big tourist facilities. If there is no modern highway to the peninsula, then it will not be possible for such competition to come to the sea shore. Also strict compliance with the ecological norms regarding business activity in the National Park can inhibit construction on the beach. Several owners of existing hotels are also against new powerful competition. For sure, they will support NGOs in Mykolayiv oblast which campaign against construction in the area and which even created the Committee of Order in Kinburn. NGOs seldom find common grounds with businesses, and this may become one of the starting points for creative discussion that we have already mentioned. For sure, hotel owners need to understand the advantages of their location (legendary peninsula, tourist attractions, support of the



National Park) and take actions to comply with the ecological norms. It is important to introduce different levels of certification of the tourist facilities. Part of this work will be certification of the beaches ("Blue flag") and hotels ("Green Key") which will create a much better image and consequently attract many more tourists.

Tourist business can develop not only based on the existing facilities on the peninsula. It is possible to create a system of one-day excursions to Kinburn for the clients of different recreation centers located on the sea shore in Mykolayiv, Odessa and Kherson oblasts (there are over 300 of them). One-day trip to Kinburn by sea, visit to the National Park, water entertainment facilities, the beach itself, all these may help the development of profitable tourist service, and tourist agencies can send part of their profit to the support of the National Park. Short trips will not produce negative impact on the nature as long as the human load on the territory is maintained at the acceptable level and the sensible advertisement campaign is organized.

The importance of the National Park for development of the tourism is very high. Park employees have developed proposals for the organization of different numerous excursion trails and designed bird-watching spots which has a good perspective for Kinburn. This area is located on an important bird migration way; and it is possible to observe here 305 bird species, among them many extremely rare birds, like white-tail eagles and pink pelicans. The Park may offer infinite number of attractions for its visitors, and the financing might come from the co-operation with the tourist businesses. It will be necessary to find ways to provide targeted financing, as the National Park being a state organization has certain limitations on its business activities, but the ways to resolve these issues are already known: there are examples of creation of protected areas with parallel commercial companies, for example, in Odessa oblast.

Kinburn is also very attractive to the tourists that are interested in history and archeology; in this area there are ruins of the ancient Greek village, the history of the Silk Way, Chumak Way and important sea battles can form bases for creation of specialized excursions and tours.

The development of recreation, tourist and excursion services is considered by many supporters of Kinburn conservation as the main potential source of income (Oleg M. Derkach. Perspectives of use of the territory of the Regional Landscape Park "Kinburnska Kosa" for the educational and scientific tourism.// Collection of scientific transactions of the III New-Year Biological Readings.- Mykolayiv: Mykolayiv State University, 2003, p. 89-91. Volodymir M. Tytar, Environmental management of water-swamp areas (Standard and recommendations for creation of management plans)) (*Деркач О.М. Перспективи використання території РЛП "Кінбурнська коса" для навчально-пізнавального та наукового туризму //Збірник наукових праць III Новорічних біологічних читань. - Миколаїв: МДУ, 2003, С.89-91. Титар В.М., Экологический менеджмент водно-болотных угодий (Стандарт и рекомендации к составлению менеджмент-планов)*). It is hard to argue with these recommendations, but unfortunately the tourist businesses are not considered as sound partners for organization of the tourism in the peninsula. But in fact, many tourist agencies have well developed structure of client service and marketing, and they also enjoy support from the authorities.

And there are also other ways to provide financial support to the stability of Kinburn Park.

Additional income

Other activities involving the local community, these may be related to their traditional way of living and producing (agriculture, fishing and local handicrafts). Fishing once has been quite a profitable activity. And the local people still possess these skills and knowledge. There is much less fish now due to all sorts

of reasons, so the local fishing team has cut their activity to almost nothing, and the mussel and oyster factory has closed down through making losses. But at present we do not know what is the status of the fish and mussel population, in which way fish and mussel resources will change due to human activity, general change in water salinity and global climate change? To get the answers to these questions a series of research must be done, but fishing can still be used as a tourist activity, and this will certainly attract visitors.

Agricultural activity which is now aimed for own consumption by the local inhabitants, may also become a separate business if the local farmers start to cater to the tourists. Organic farming can bring higher profits. Naturally, to go organic farmers need to spend time learning, get the certificates and study the market.

Traditional handicrafts and souvenirs also form part of the tourist business, and they can bring some cash to the local people.

One of the new business activities could be harvesting of the sea weed which is used to make healthy pillows and mattresses that are becoming more and more popular. The seaweed now is just wasted on the shore, and it is a really useful raw material. And this also requires market study.

Yet another source of products for health is healing mud that is abundant in the peninsula. The mud can be used right in the lakes for taking mud bathes or extracted to create cosmetic and health products. It is also useful to investigate the healing potential of the salty waters of the Dnepr estuary.

Controlled gathering and processing of the ecologically pure medicinal herbs could also become a profitable business for the local people, and also for the National Park.

Entrepreneurs benefiting from the presence of the National Park should be compelled to contribute financially to the maintenance of the park.

Note: motorised sports and hunting should be excluded or if this appears to be impossible they should be limited to small clearly defined zones and periods.

Development of all types of businesses requires preliminary marketing research, design of appropriate business-plans and also a detailed plan of advertisement activity. Sell Kinburn peninsula as a quiet spot for lovers of nature and quietness as their ancestors experienced it; child friendly and sunny beaches etc. Clean sand beaches and shallow sea make the Kinburn strip an attractive place for kids and family recreation. If any marketing activities will be geared towards international i.e. western markets, which should not be recommended too much as long as basic amenities will not be available, it will be wise to use the uniqueness of nature and the remoteness as Unique Selling Points.

Chapter 4. Further Steps.

1. Organization of consultation process with participation of all interested parties. This could be the initiative of the Committee of Kinburn Salvation which is an important local force, or of the Community council at the Regional Department of Ecology at the oblast level.
2. Organization of the educational programs in the areas outlined in the present document (or participation in the existing educational programs from other related projects).
3. Development of business plans for the specific types of businesses (that will be selected in the process of consultations).
4. Research of the issues where there is not enough information available (like regulation of the legislative acts and compliance, possibilities of organic farming in the area, status of the fish resources, etc.).
5. Exchange of experience with other protected areas in Ukraine.

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