

In 2015, the biosphere reserve office in Blekinge Archipelago initiated and operated a pilot-study to identify opportunities for developing the outdoors tourism in the area, focusing on the coast and archipelago as a whole. The pilot-study revealed many opportunities for development but a coordinating function, linking and gathering actors and initiatives, was missing. As a consequence, Blekinge Archipelago applied for, and was granted, funding for a three year project with the purpose of marketing Blekinge as an outdoors tourist destination.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth believes that the tourist industry has a great growth potential and finances the project together with EU LEADER-funds and the biosphere reserve office. The biosphere reserve office will hire a project leader and realize the project but the regional authority, which has the economic muscles and liquidity, is the formal owner/responsible authority of the project. A steering group is established, with representatives from the municipalities, the County Administrative Board, the biosphere reserve organization and the regional authority. The reference group includes local organizations and entrepreneurs, and project groups for each of the planned routes (hiking, biking etc.) have already been formed, also engaging the local community and local businesses.

By coordinating existing routes, by filling the gaps with new routes and by marketing the destination under the brand Arkipelagrutten (The Archipelago route), the project aims to increase the attractiveness of the whole destination. Maps, an app and information points along the routes will be produced.

Today, there are routes and public transport connecting parts of the area but there are gaps that need to be filled in order to develop cohesive Archipelago routes. The existing routes are not packaged or marketed together which can make them less accessible or attractive to tourists. To optimize the possibilities for different kinds of outdoors experiences, investments will be made into developing routes for hiking, biking, sailing and public transport in the archipelago. Horseback riding and recreational fishing are also part of the concept. Further, the project aims to develop the local businesses along the routes. By facilitating collaboration between entrepreneurs, packages for the tourist market can be produced.

Another essential goal of the project is to produce a policy for sustainable tourism and to enhance and strengthen the local businesses' internal work with sustainability. In other words, this project will contribute to the achievement of several of the SDGs