

Biography K Velander

My role as an academic has enabled her to educate people about ecotourism and become involved in projects world-wide advising communities on the how, what, when and where of developing nature based and ecotourism. This work led to the development of my **Tourism Resource Auditing Methodology (TRAM)**, a process that addresses whether tourism is the best way forward and if not helps to consider other options to encourage sustainable livelihoods. The emphasis is on capacity building as well as product development, by helping communities to address their training needs. The projects involved assessing the viability of teaching tourists about indigenous medicines in the **Tribal Elders Project, Leiticia, Colombia**, developing ecotourism in **Rio Esteban, Honduras** and funding conservation and community development via the **Foundation for Biodiversity, Ecuador**. In **Nepal** I carried out capacity building exercises for the **Kathmandu Environmental Education Project** as well as for the **Foundation for the People of the South Pacific** in **Fiji**. I have also advised on infrastructure development, marketing and rewards for the **Buenos Aires Cooperative, Honduras** and in **Estonia** helped produce a **Strategy for Development** for the **Setomaa Eco-villages**. Setomaa faces many challenges similar to the rural regions of Scotland, e.g. remoteness, population decline / lack of affordable accommodation and the need to extend tourism into the shoulder and winter seasons. Furthermore local people are concerned about the impacts of tourism on their environment and communities. Although the aim of the project was to consider how tourism could be increased, the resulting work also posed questions about potential threats and the infrastructure required to mitigate them. This work was taken a step further in **COMCOT (COMCOT: An innovative tool for improving the competitiveness of community based tourism, Central Baltic Interreg IV A)**. In this project six local communities were surveyed using questionnaires to assess their needs and desires relating to potential tourism development as well as their concerns. A visioning and community based prioritisation exercise was used to develop strategic action plans based on their responses. The resulting actions included everything from better signposting to training and to tourism providing more activities in which the local people could engage as well as the tourists. Issues related to lack of transport and accommodation, concerns about litter, loss of personal space and competition for food and other supplies in the local shops.

Other projects include designing and overseeing the development of 24 tourism training units for the EU funded **ECOLNET (European Ecotourism Network)**, an EU funded Life Long Learning project; <http://www.ecotourism-network.eu/en-about-us/en-ecolnet> (Life Long Learning Project) with the purpose being to provide educational material to support the European **Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS)** which has been endorsed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. I take part in conferences and seminars internationally, most recently related to establishing nature tourism in Lapland and the role of nature guides. This is a matter of personal interest based on years of experience as a wildlife guide, but also in conjunction with my position on the board of the Wild Scotland (<http://wild-scotland.org.uk/>).