

A MUNICIPALITY-NGO PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSFULLY IMPROVES NATURA 2000 VALUES IN DENMARK

For the first time as a coordinating beneficiary a Danish municipality received EU LIFE+ Nature program funds in 2010. The funding is dedicated to maintaining and improving the Natura 2000 values at the Bøjden Nor area on Fyn in Southern Denmark. The LIFE "Connect Habitats" project is presented by Faaborg-Midtfyn Municipality in cooperation with the NGOs "Foundation for the Protection of Birds" and the "Karen Krieger Foundation".

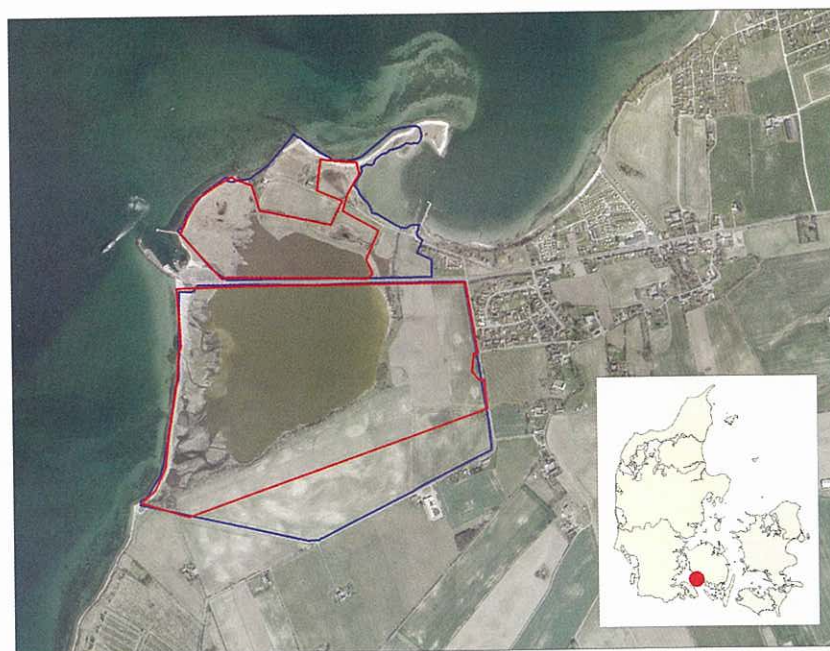
Bøjden Nor is part of the European Natura 2000 network. Within these areas the environmental authorities have a special obligation to maintain and improve the nature values. Bøjden Nor consists of a shallow coastal lagoon surrounded by salt meadows and remnants of dry grasslands. During the Natura 2000 planning process the conservation status of these habitat types has been assessed. The conclusion is that the conservation status is highly unfavourable due to a number of threats ranging from fragmentation, overgrowth with trees and shrubs, and desiccation. In addition, the conservation status is poor due to excessive nutrient enrichment from the catchment.



Bøjden Nor coastal lagoon surrounded by salt meadows. Agricultural areas in the background will be converted to dry grassland in 2013.
Photo by Helle Hjorth.

In the "Connect Habitats" project the main objective is to contribute to obtaining a favourable conservation status through restoration of a semi-natural habitat presently evaluated as being a national priority for nature restoration efforts. Thus, by land purchase this project targets dry grassland restoration which has a significant potential to develop both qualitatively and spatially at Bøjden Nor. By decreasing the nutrient impact from the catchment a secondary objective is to be able to contribute to obtain a favourable conservation status of the coastal lagoon and the salt meadows. In addition, new habitats will be created to benefit the endangered amphibian *Bufo calamita*.

"The Bøjden Nor project is a very clear example of how the Danish municipalities can deal with the demanding issues related to management and improvement of the most fragile Danish nature," states Grete Justesen, Chairman of the Faaborg-Midtfyn Municipality's Environmental Board. She continues, "According to the Habitats Directive the Danish Ministry of Environment has just published the Natura 2000 plans setting the level for the future management efforts in the valuable Natura 2000 areas. The project in Bøjden Nor clearly shows that the municipalities are prepared and ready to realize the plans and to put action into force. In this context it is also important to draw attention to the NGOs – e.g. the Foundation for the protection of Birds – that can become important partners in future Natura 2000 projects".



The project area is 91 hectares. When the project ends in 2013, 25 hectares of arable land would have been converted to dry grassland with a mosaic of small wetlands and *Bufo calamita* ponds. The construction works take place during the winter of 2012. Visitors are invited to explore the restored area in the coming spring.

The budget is €1,154,000. Of this the EU holds 50% while the Karen Krieger Foundation holds 30%, the Foundation for the protection of Birds holds 6% and the municipality itself holds 14%.

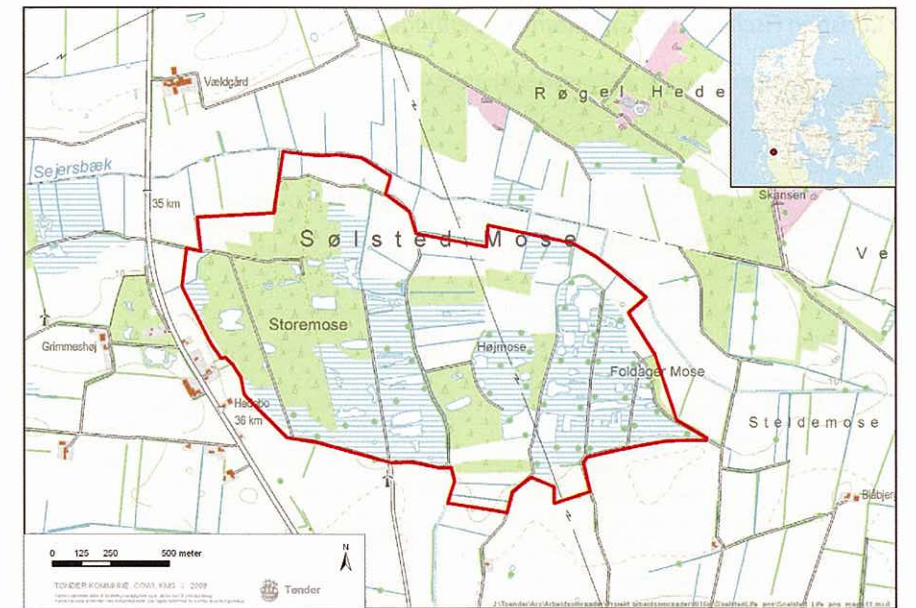
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The project area (in red) within the EU Habitat area (in blue). © Faaborg-Midtfyn Kommune and Grundkort Fyn.

LIFE + PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR THE RESTORATION OF RAISED BOG AREAS IN SOUTHERN DENMARK

Tønder Municipality has obtained funding from EU's LIFE+ Nature program which makes restoration of the former raised bog in Sølsted possible. With €1.2 million from the EU and €0.8 million from the project partners the restoration will be carried out in the next 4-5 years.

The Sølsted area is designated as a Natura 2000 area due to its bog nature types and due to the occurrence of Weather fish (*Misgurnus fossilis*). In the national Natura 2000 plan the aim is to convert the degraded bog structure into the original raised bog ecosystem. Raised bogs are one of the most threatened natural habitat types in Europe. With the LIFE+ project this ambitious goal can now be fulfilled and the Mayor of Tønder Municipality Laurids Rudebeck expresses his happiness with the project: "The Sølsted area is one of the most important nature areas in our municipality and now it becomes possible to secure and develop unique habitat types to benefit plants, animals and nature loving people. We look forward to bringing this project to fruition".



Map showing the 198 hectares of project area (in red) at Sølsted. Note the location in Denmark.

The project has been developed throughout several years in the form of technical surveys and detailed discussions with the landowners. This work has been vital to be able to obtain the LIFE+ funding and Mayor Laurids Rudebeck stresses that the project can now be carried out through constructive cooperation between the twenty private landowners and the municipality. The landowners are also satisfied with the process and express their willingness to find sustainable solutions. An important tool in this context is a land consolidation process which will provide replacement land for the areas to become a raised bog.

Tønder Municipality is the coordinating beneficiary designated by the EU. However, it is the largest landowner in the project area that provides most of the national economic contribution. Thus, the Foundation for the Protection of Birds has obtained important and generous economic contributions from the Danish foundations of "A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller" and of "15. Juni" and is responsible for 75% of the national funding. "The LIFE+ project makes it possible to realize an old dream. With hydrological improvements the conditions for development of the rare raised bog ecosystem will become optimal and we look forward to implementing the project together with the other landowners in the area," says Martin Iversen, Chairman of the Foundation for the Protection of Birds. Contributing to dissemination actions, the Danish Nature Agency is also involved in the project.



The funding from the EU became a reality in the summer of 2011. Since then the project has been carried forward by the municipality and negotiations with the landowners have begun. In return for economic compensation the landowners must accept an increased groundwater level on their properties in the Sølsted area and a clearance of trees and shrubs. Special care will be taken to maintain and eventually improve the habitat for Weather fish and new facilities will welcome visitors in 2015.

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Aerial photo showing the varied vegetation structure of the Sølsted project area (in red). © JWlufffoto.