

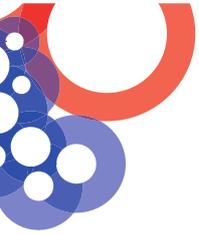


# New Crocodile Zoo: A model example for public-private cooperation

## Case study turisme



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Guldborgsund Municipality has a strategic aim to strengthen tourism at Lolland-Falster, for instance by supporting organisational processes for developing local tourism businesses. The purpose of including the Crocodile Zoo in the micro tourism Case Study has been to use cross-border/cross-regional collaboration to initiate the growth of a relatively small tourism attraction; with the aim to create a new big zoo attraction at a construction site owned by the municipality; near the highway in the northern part of Falster (outside the city of Nørre Alslev).

### **Background: Crocodile Zoo**

Crocodile Zoo is a (relatively) small tourism attraction with approx. 40.000 visitors per year (<https://www.krokodillezoo.dk>). It was initiated as a private initiative by Zoo Director René Hedegaard who is highly experienced within the field of crocodiles and reptiles. The zoo is located at his private farm house in a rural area at Falster, and it has been expanded continuously with financial and administrative support from Guldborgsund Municipality, and with investments from different funds. Currently, the attraction is “growing out of” its own success, and both the animals and visitors need more space. Hence, there is an urgent need to expand with new zoo facilities (buildings) at the current location, and at the same time the aim is to build a new and much bigger Crocodile Zoo nearby.

### **Process and CS related activities 2017-2019**

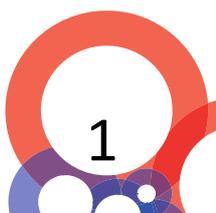
At the time when the B4R micro tourism Case Study began in early 2017, a draft prospectus for a new zoo was ready. The prospectus' estimated costs for a new zoo is DKK 100 million (approx. 330 million Euro). In meetings and dialogue between René Hedegaard, Business Lolland-Falster and the municipality it was decided to initiate a fundraising process, while simultaneously working out a new organisational structure for the zoo; with the intention of making it a fully private business through the establishment of a suitable fund structure (for constructing the new zoo facilities, and for the operation of the tourist attraction later on).

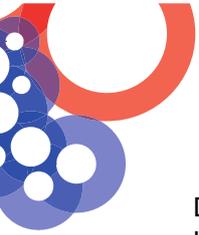
This organisational and fundraising process has involved several external consultants with specialised expertise, who have assisted the municipality and the zoo director. It has not turned out to be as straightforward as expected (see learning points beneath).

At the same time, the micro tourism Case Study group became involved in the Crocodile Zoo project in Spring 2017. During a meeting in Guldborgsund the group visited the zoo, and had discussions about how to approach the Danish-German knowledge sharing about the project, and about how the zoo business could be developed through cross-border collaboration.

In regards to cross-border initiatives it was later decided to pursue the establishment of a “sister zoo collaboration” between the Crocodile Zoo and a German zoo in Northern Germany. The idea was to either make a collaboration around joint marketing, or to make knowledge sharing in regards to business development and growth (in regards to visitors, income, etc.).

Together with the zoo, Guldborgsund Municipality mapped the relevant German zoos in the area. The preferred attraction to collaborate with is Meereszentrum Fehmarn - in regards to joint marketing initiatives. Unfortunately, Meereszentrum Fehmarn has not shown interest in meeting or collaborating. WFA has been involved in this, but without success. Recently, René Hedegaard has tried to take up contact with them in spring 2019, but no results so far.





During the project there was several joint activities across the border. In 2018 Zoo Director René Hedegaard participated in a Danish-German presentation, knowledge exchange and visit at a Donkey Farm in Germany. And in 2019 he and his daughter was part of the “mini-folkemøde” event in Tydal, where they brought a small crocodile and a snake to show and explain to the visitors.

### **CS leaning points - Crocodile Zoo**

The fundraising process for a new Crocodile Zoo was initiated at an early stage - without having an operation budget draft to support the prospectus. This meant that potential funds and investors would not begin a closer dialogue about the zoo project (even though many have shown interest in the project).

Sometimes it is one step forward and two steps backwards. In this case, the external fundraiser had to put her work on hold, for several months.

The zoo director’s expertise within the field of crocodile breeding and protection has proven very important in the fundraising process; hence, René Hedegaard’s skills and knowledge – shown in several fine recommendations from external partners - have been added to the prospectus.

The administrative and political decisions at the municipality take time, and do not always fit into the plans of a zoo attraction, that has a business to run, animals to take care of and visitors to take care of.

During the project it has turned out that current zoo facilities are very important for the realisation of the new zoo. Both because 1) it will take several years to realise a new zoo, and it is urgent to build new facilities (i.e. a new tropical house) in connection with the current zoo, and 2) the current zoo will function as a back-stage area for sick animals and as a breeding place, when the new zoo (hopefully) opens in the future.

Establishing a Danish-German collaboration between two zoos has turned out difficult.

### **Results**

3D-models of the new zoo buildings have been made for the prospectus.

Short fundraising videos have been made with René Hedegaard presenting the project.

A new organisational and legal structure/model for a new zoo has been made, and ready to be implemented on a later stage.

A report with estimations of (expected) visitor numbers at a new zoo has been made.

A report with a marked and budget analysis for a new zoo has been made (including the expected number of visitors; to support the prospectus and the fundraising process).

The municipality has set aside 2 x 7,5 million DKK in the 2021 and 2022 budgets to support the construction of a new zoo.

The fundraiser has done mapping of relevant funds and several meetings and talks with relevant investors (Danish funds). In close dialogue and collaboration with the zoo director.

Danish-German CS meetings and visits at the zoo have been conducted.

Initial contact to Meereszentrum Fehmarn has been made. But currently no progress.

