

Report to the International Jury
about the
Implementation of the Blue Flag programme
in the Åland Islands (Finland)



February 2019

The Åland Islands (Finland) is working on implementing the Blue Flag programme. The plan is that the first marinas in the Åland Islands will fly the Blue Flag in the summer 2020. The Åland Islands has already completed the Blue Flag feasibility study for the International Jury and is at the moment focusing on implementing the Blue Flag for Marinas.

Last September, the National Jury approved four marinas in the Åland Islands as Blue Flag Pilot Sites. The four Pilot Marinas are Glada Laxens Gästhamn, Kastelholms Gästhamn, Käringsunds Gästhamn and MSF Gästhamn. All four marinas are very excited being awarded the Blue Flag Pilot Status.

All four Pilot Marinas are participating in the Interreg Central Baltic Project *Smart Marina*¹. The project is aiming to develop climate-smart solutions in the participating guest harbours around the Baltic Sea Area. Altogether 32 guest harbours/marinas from Sweden, Finland, Åland Islands and Estonia are participating in the project.

The season 2019: “A Try-out Blue Flag Season” for the Åland Islands

Blue Flag Åland is planning to use the season 2019 as a “Try-out Blue Flag Season” - both for the Pilot Marinas and for the National Operator. The marinas will try to fulfill the Blue Flag Criteria during the season and will actively communicate their Pilot Status to their employees, guest and partners. All the marinas are also doing individual updates to fulfill the the Blue Flag Criteria.

Glada Laxens gästhamn² is a small marina located on the small island Bärö in the municipality of Kumlinge in the eastern Åland Island archipelago. The marina has around 20 berths. Glada Laxens Gästhamn is at the moment building new more environmental friendly sanitary facilities. Water-saving toilets, taps and showers will be installed and sensors will regulate the light. The marina will also update their sewage treatment system and their waste facility during 2019 to better meet the Blue Flag Criteria.



Picture from the homepage of Glada Laxen,
<https://www.gladalaxen.com/galleri>

¹ <https://www.smartmarina.eu>

² <https://www.gladalaxen.com>

Kastelholms Gästhamn³ is located at Slottssundet in the municipality of Sund on the mainland of the Åland Islands. The marina has around 120 berths.

For the season 2019, Kastelholms Gästhamn is building a new more environmental friendly laundry room. The marina will also update their sanitary facilities with water-saving toilets and taps with sensors. One more dishwashing station on land will be built for the summer 2019. Also the small marina office will be renovated to better meet the Blue Flag Criteria.



Picture from the homepage of Kastelholms Gästhamn, <http://kastelholmsgasthamn.ax/bildspel>

Käringsunds Gästhamn⁴ is located in the municipality of Eckerö on the mainland of the Åland Islands. The Marina has around 60 berths.

Käringsunds Gästhamn is planning new more environmental friendly sanitary facilities for the season 2020. Water-saving toilets, taps and showers will be installed. The marina is also planning to up-date their electricity and water systems at the berths. At the same time, the marina will improve their accessibility and facilities for disabled people to better meet the Blue Flag Criteria.



Picture from the homepage of Käringsunds Gästhamn, <http://www.karingsundsgasthamn.ax>

³ <http://kastelholmsgasthamn.ax>

⁴ <http://www.karingsundsgasthamn.ax>

MSF Gästhamn⁵ is located at the east side of the city of Mariehamn, on the mainland of the Åland Islands. MSF Gästhamn is the biggest marina in the Åland Islands with its 300 berths. Also MSF Gästhamn is updating their sanitary facilities to make them more environmental friendly and to better meet the Blue Flag Criteria. Water-saving toilets and new taps with sensors will be installed. The Marina is also investigating the different available options for environmental friendly fuel and green electricity. In the beginning of the season, all the employees will receive an extensive safety education.



*Picture from the homepage of MSF,
<http://www.msf.ax>*

During 2019, all the Pilot Marinas will also work on their environmental policies and their environmental plans. The Pilot Marinas will also update their information relating to local ecosystems and environmental elements.

During the summer 2019, the National Operator will visit all four Pilot Marinas again to conduct “try-out control visits”. The National Operator is also planning to send a Gap Analysis for one more marina for the next National Jury meeting in September 2019.

Change of organisations being responsible for the Blue Flag programme

From March 1st 2019, the plan is that Visit Åland will be in charge of both the Blue Flag and Green Key programmes in the Åland Islands. During the last years, the work with the programmes has been part of the Project *Hållbar Destination (Sustainable Destination)*. Already during this time, Visit Åland has together with Ålands Natur & Miljö been responsible for the implementation of the Blue Flag Programme, but formally the Operator has been employed by Ålands Natur & Miljö.

⁵ <http://www.msf.ax/>

Since Visit Åland has been one of the lead partners - and also has the closest connections to existing and potential Blue Flag and Green Key sites - it is a natural step that the organisation will run the programmes. Ålands landskapsregering (the Åland Government) has granted Visit Åland funding to continue the Green Key and Blue Flag programmes in the Åland Islands. Ålands Natur & Miljö will continue as a partner.

The partners of *Hållbar Destination* together with Ålands landskapsregering are very pleased with the Green Key and the Blue Flag programmes in the Åland Islands. They all agree that Visit Åland running the programmes is the most efficient and sustainable way to continue the work. As a result of the changes, Visit Åland will apply for affiliate membership of FEE. The National Operator has been in contact both with the head offices for Blue Flag and Green Key and with FEE Finland regarding these changes.

Visit Åland, Ålands Natur & Miljö, the National Operator and the Pilot Sites are all very eager to keep implementing the Blue Flag programme in the Åland Islands! The plan is to send the first applications to the International Jury in February 2020.

If you have any questions or comments you are more than welcome to contact me!

Sincerely,

Emma Lundberg
National Operator
Blue Flag Åland