Arctic Race – a success
The first edition of Arctic Race of Norway was a success beyond any expectation last year, in spite of the limited time of planning for all parties involved. The weather was lovely, as good or better as we wanted. The organization of the race from ASO and Arctic Race of Norway was very professionally done, and the cities and municipalities along the different stages did an amazing job.

And last, but not least; the inhabitants from Bodø, through Lofoten, Vesterålen and to Harstad, created the race into something extraordinary that TV-viewers in many countries could watch. With so many more countries wanting to broadcast from the race this year, we expect that this will have an increasing effect on the interest of visiting the north.

Northern Norway as a tourist destination
In addition to this, some journalists / TV reporters took part in excursions at the different places to experience and learn more about the region along the stage. It is important to increase this type of activities in the next editions. Visit Norway and Northern Norway Tourist Boards use of social media and internet showed that there was a significant growth of interest in search (on Google etc) for Northern Norway during and after the race.

Arctic Race of Norway has to be seen in a longer term, regarding the effect the race might have on the interest for Northern Norway as a tourist destination. Norway and Northern Norway are not very well known internationally, and it takes time and effort to increase attention and interest of a tourist destination. We are convinced that Arctic Race will make a difference in creating more interest for Nordland and Northern Norway as a tourist destination.

Nordland is working with developing high quality tourist products, and bicycling routes is one of the concepts that is of great importance for us. We think that Arctic Race can be used to get more focus on bicycle tourism. The conditions for this are excellent in Nordland! As an example Arctic Race was used to focus on bicycling at a travel fair in Denmark, this winter in cooperation between Innovation Norway, Arctic Race and Northern Norway Tourist Board.

Our tourism strategy in Nordland is: “Nordland will develop and deliver world class experiences – during the whole year”, and Arctic Race of Norway can contribute to this.
We believe that it is important that the whole value chain from Innovation Norway, Northern Norway Tourist Board, the local/regional area Tourist Boards (destinasjonsselskap) and down to the products and product owners are cooperating.

**Slide 7**

**Culture**

Nordland is focusing on the coast and coastal culture, but also on arts. Through a broad variety of culture and art projects. Artscape Nordland is known world-wide, with sculptures from the world’s leading artist made “in situ” communicating directly with our breath taking nature.

The people of Northern Norway are known for their warm, including, lively behaviour. We welcome guest, talking from the heart, with a good sense of humour. Arctic Race is not only a sports arrangement. It is a public gathering, a party and celebration which the locals and bike supporters participate in.

**Slide 8**

**Bicycling – a potential to increase physical activity in our population**

Also in Norway physical activity has decreased to an alarming low level. Actually, by measuring objectively, we have found that just 20% of the adult population is satisfying our national activity recommendations to gain wanted health benefits. As you all know, different chronic health problems are following as a consequence. This is of great concern of me as an executive of both culture and public health.

**Slide 9 (kanin)**

Our aim is to significantly raise the activity level. Among many different strategies we are considering increased use of bicycle as one of the most interesting with perhaps the greatest potential – both to the adult population and among youngsters.

And in fact – the interest for bicycling has increased the last years. I believe the growing attention and growing publicity to the cycle sport is an important reason to this trend. And it is of course a great sport! I am convinced Arctic Race last year gave this interest a further push forward.

**Slide 10 (Old men in cycling-race)**

One excellent example of this potential is our local arrangement called Midnight Sun Race in Bodø. With different distances from 50 to 190 km and with a marketing and profile adapted to all categories of people, about 2500 participants attending this happening. For many this race has become a challenge they have to prepare and exercise for, also in the rest of the year.

Now our intention is to challenge other sport clubs in cooperation with local authorities to introduce similar local arrangements all over our county Nordland. Perhaps we can also, within the energy field Arctic Race is creating in North Norway, act together with Troms county and Finnmark county to achieve a mass movement on wheels all over North Norway. This would give significant positive contributions to our public health. I hope more people would use their bikes commuting to and from work.

**Slide 11 (unger)**

Our aim is that all children should have a safe route to and from school enabling cycling or walking.

Arctic Race has for us created a new and powerful base for growth – related to tourism, to cultural work as well as for better public health.
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