Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark
Progress Report 2017

Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee
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1. Introduction

The Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark was designated as a Japanese Geopark in October 2009, and as a Global Geopark in September 2013. Subsequently, the main administrative body of the geopark commenced activities under the name of ‘Oki Islands Global Geopark Promotion Committee’ (henceforth: the committee) with the aim of utilizing the ‘Global Geopark’ designation to promote regional development. Following this in November 2015, Global Geoparks were formally ratified by UNESCO as ‘UNESCO Global Geoparks’. As a result, the committee was renamed ‘Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee’ and the geopark commenced activities utilizing the ‘UNESCO Global Geopark’ designation. Geopark promotion initiatives in the region have produced a variety of positive results, including economic and educational results.

This report will summarize the activities of the geopark in the last four years since designation as a global geopark, including results of geopark activities, contribution to the geoparks network and future plans for further regional development utilizing the geopark.

1.1. Location and area of Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark
The Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark is located in the Sea of Japan in between the Japanese Archipelago and the Asian Continent, around 40-80km to the north of Shimane Peninsula in western Honshu Island. The geopark is composed of four inhabited islands, Dōgo, Nakanoshima, Nishinoshima and Chiburijima, as well as around 180 small uninhabited islets (Image 1.)

The total geopark area is 673.5km² (Image 2.). The committee considers the marine environment surrounding the geopark, which is characterized by geographical isolation, marine life, and ways of life centered around the fisheries industry, as a fundamental part of the geopark. Consequently, the geopark area encompasses a land area (346.0km²), and a marine area (327.5km²) of 1km from the coastline.
1.2. **Features of Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark**

The geological heritage to be discovered in each area of the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark allows one to discover the unique history of the islands, which reveals the ‘geohistory’ of the land, the ‘unique ecosystem’ and ‘lifestyles and traditions’ of the people. By encouraging people to enjoy, discover and explore the connections that exist between these elements, the geopark not only aspires for the development of the Oki region, but also to pave the way for a better future for the Earth and its people.

One feature of the geopark is that the cultural and biological resources of the region are introduced as highlights of the geopark and connected with the geological heritage. For example, the ways of life of the people that commenced with the volcanic glass obsidian, the unique ecosystem which records the geological history of the land and the climate, and cultural history cultivated by the isolated island environment are major themes of the geopark.

Consequently, the theme of the geopark: ‘scenery that reveals the intimate connections between the impressive landscape, the unique ecosystem and the diverse culture of the local people which have developed in isolated islands in the Sea of Japan’ incorporates the following four topics that represent the geological heritage of the geopark.

1. **Geology** that records the formation process of the Sea of Japan, such as Oki gneiss.
2. Spectacular eroded scenery, such as on the Kuniga, Shirashima, Akiya and Sekiheki coasts.
3. A unique plant distribution which reflects the impacts of climate change that occurred during the Quaternary period.
4. *Makihata* rotation farming and other traditional industries and culture which represent the sustainable use of resources in an isolated island environment.

Also, in order to convey the geopark in a simple manner to those who have no geological knowledge, the geopark utilizes the following three themes, and encourages visitors to discover, enjoy and explore the connections that exist between these elements.

1. ‘Geohistory’ that formed the land of the islands,
2. ‘Unique ecosystem’ that developed on the land,
3. ‘Lifestyles and traditions’ of the people that date back to ancient times.

1. **Geohistory**

A wide variety of rocks are found in the Oki Islands: metamorphic rocks (gneiss, hornfels), igneous rocks (rhyolite, andesite, trachyte, basalt, granite, quartz syenite and intrusive igneous rocks from the mantle and lower crust), and sedimentary rocks (conglomerate rock, sandstone, mudstone, diatomaceous rock, and pyroclastic sediment).
These rocks identify the process and the multiple changes the land experienced before becoming isolated islands. From the ‘Continental Period’ 250 million to 26 million years ago, to the ‘Sea of Japan Formation Period’ 26 million to 10 million years ago, to the ‘Volcanic Islands Period’ 7 million to 400,000 years ago and finally the ‘Peninsula to Isolated Islands Period’ 2.6 million years ago to the present.

The land of the Oki Islands was formed by a fragment of the continent that was left behind during the formation of the Sea of Japan and subsequent volcanic activity. The islands therefore contain both the continental rock Oki gneiss and igneous rocks, including alkaline volcanic rocks which are uncommon around the Japanese Archipelago. Many of these rocks are valuable as textbook examples of wave erosion and weathering. Moreover, their patterns and diverse shapes create landscapes which have aesthetic value and also reveal processes of the land’s formation. Furthermore, the complex terrain formed by these rocks has cultivated diverse environments and influenced the ecosystem (unique ecosystem) and cultural history (lifestyles and traditions) of the islands.

2. Unique Ecosystem

The ecosystem of the Oki Islands features an unusual combination of plant life from northern, southern, high mountain and continental regions. There are also endemic species such as Oki salamander and Oki hare which identify differences between the environment of the Oki Islands and the mainland, as well as endemic beetles, butterflies and moths and other uncommon species.

This unique ecosystem is a consequence of the geological history of the islands. During the ‘Peninsula to Isolated Islands Stage’ (around 2.6 million years ago to the present), the islands experienced extreme geographical changes due to climate change, which caused them to become alternately connected to the mainland and isolated islands. It is thought that each time the climate changed, plants and animals from the mainland came to inhabit the islands.

In addition, as the islands are located in the Sea of Japan, they serve as a stopping point for many different species of migratory bird. In addition, as a great deal of the coastline is undeveloped, the pre-existing environment has been preserved and features rich coastal vegetation compared to other regions.

Therefore, in addition to the very interesting fact that the biology of the islands records the geological history of the land, it can be said that it is ‘important heritage of the land’ as it demonstrates the extent to which living things are affected by the landscape and climate.

3. Lifestyles and Traditions

The cultural history of the Oki Islands dates back to ancient times (around 30,000 years ago) with the excavation of obsidian. The islands were also designated as a location from which high quality food items were sent to the emperor, as well as a location of exile for nobility in
the Middle Ages. Later on in the early 19th century, the islands were a port of call for the so-called ‘northern-bound ships’ which conducted trade around the archipelago. This diverse history has resulted in the formation of a rich and diverse culture. Moreover, remnants of a unique farming method called ‘makihata’ which was developed in order to live on islands with little flat land and sparse topsoil can be seen on the islands. There are other elements characteristic of an environment surrounded by the Sea of Japan, including stone walls, boarded fences, and boat houses which can be seen in the fishing villages around the islands. Alongside this, the semi-isolated geographical location of the islands and their mountainous terrain have helped preserve traditional festivals and performing arts which resemble classical styles, as well variation in spoken dialects, and lifestyles that are rooted in the natural environment. These features identify how the cultural history of the Oki Islands has been cultivated by the bountiful mountains and sea environment brought about by the formation of the land and ecosystem.

As demonstrated above, this small island geopark is not only a place where one can discover about the composition of the Earth. It is a place where one can enjoy natural and cultural scenery which developed as a result of the geology, geography, topography, geological history, vegetation, culture and history of the land.
2. Management Structure of the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark

2.1. Management body and structure
The objective of the geopark is to plan for regional development by preserving and utilizing local resources whilst developing human resources. With this aim, the management of the geopark is conducted by the ‘Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee’ (henceforth ‘the committee’), which is composed of 45 cooperating organizations including Shimane Prefectural Government, the four municipal governments of the Oki Islands, tourism associations, chambers of commerce and industry, transport companies and NPOs.

The committee is further composed of four internal bodies, including the General Meeting, Executive Meeting, Head Office and Working Groups (Investigation & Research, Marketing and Human Resources), as well as 31 external bodies, including universities and geological research bodies which provide specialist support, and the Ministry of the Environment.

Appendix 1 (pg 12): Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee Organization Chart
Appendix 3: Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee Member List
Appendix 4: Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Promotion Committee Advisor List

The Executive Meeting assembles annually, during which representatives of the composing bodies meet to authorize the annual budget and plan. The Executive Meeting is attended by the executives of the committee who finalize the specific details of the action plan.

Alongside the committee, the Head Office is the main contact of geopark within the Oki region and is responsible for drafting the plan.

The working groups are composed of relevant bodies that consult with Head Office in order to carry out their various important roles. The working groups and their responsibilities are listed below:

1) Investigation & Research: conducting surveys and research, and protection and preservation of regional resources
2) Marketing: promotion, event planning, product development
3) Human Resources: guide development, guide system development, hosting study workshops and connecting with educational institutions

Within the region, the committee has the important role of conducting administrative work such as human resource development, dissemination of information, planning and promotion, investigation and research. Regarding the development of infrastructure in the region, including the construction of walking trails, restrooms, signboards, and so on, the committee
acts as the coordinator of the relevant bodies which are in charge of the operation (Image 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Works</th>
<th>Conducting Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking trail maintenance, restroom maintenance</td>
<td>Ministry of the Environment, Shimane Prefecture Environment &amp; Civic Affairs Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of large area signboards</td>
<td>Ministry of the Environment, Shimane Prefecture Environment &amp; Civic Affairs Department, Public Works Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation signboards</td>
<td>Shimane Prefecture Environment &amp; Civic Affairs Department, Public Works Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads, etc., road signs</td>
<td>Shimane Prefecture Public Works Department, Municipalities of the Oki Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking trails, direction and distance markers</td>
<td>Shimane Prefecture Public Works Department, Municipalities of the Oki Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image 3: Labor division of public works.

2.2. Budget
The geopark manages its own finances and has an independent budget. The main sources of capital are funds contributed by the four municipalities of the Oki Islands (Okinoshima Town, Nishinoshima Town, Ama Town, and Chibu Village) and Shimane Prefecture. The expenses of the committee include contributions to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network and the Japanese Geoparks Network, as well as administrative work (human resource development, spreading information, planning and publicity, etc.) and research. Infrastructure development such as the construction of walking trails, toilets, signboards, and so on is conducted by the various organizations identified in Image 3.
Moreover, the committee collaborates with a major domestic distribution company, called AEON Group, which also makes annual donations to the geopark budget.
2.3. Strengthening the Promotion Structure

Currently, the Head Office of the committee employs nine staff members. This includes staff dispatched from the prefectural government and from the four municipal governments, as well as a geology specialist and a biology specialist who are employed by the committee in Image 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Head</td>
<td>Kazuhiro Nobe</td>
<td>• Manage office duties</td>
<td>Okinoshima Town employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Staff</td>
<td>Nobuo Matoji</td>
<td>• Office accounting</td>
<td>Okinoshima Tourism Association employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Staff</td>
<td>Hayato Yamato</td>
<td>• Planning, promotion</td>
<td>Ama Town employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Staff</td>
<td>Masahiko Shiki</td>
<td>• Investigation, research</td>
<td>Chibu Village employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Staff</td>
<td>Yukari Yonekura</td>
<td>• Certified product development</td>
<td>Okinoshima Town employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology Specialist</td>
<td>Masanori Hirata</td>
<td>• Earth science related work</td>
<td>Committee employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology Specialist</td>
<td>Miya Okada</td>
<td>• Biology related work</td>
<td>Committee employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-language Specialist</td>
<td>Teresa Sadkowsky</td>
<td>• English language support</td>
<td>Okinoshima Town employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-language Specialist</td>
<td>Jagoda Woloszyn</td>
<td>• Foreign language support (English, Polish)</td>
<td>Shimane Prefecture employee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image 4: Head Office Structure

In order to further strengthen this structure, and to promote tourism and regional development utilizing the geopark, the committee is developing plans to construct base facilities which will display the various resources of the geopark and their relationships to each other in a simple manner, as well as increase visitor satisfaction.

Considering that nearly 90% of visitors to the geopark use the regular ferry service, the base facilities will be constructed nearby the ferry terminal of each island. This way, both visitors and local residents will be able to discover about the heritage of the geopark. The committee aims to create facilities that are interactive and function as a facility for human resources development, including geopark guide development and education. The committee plans to establish base facilities on each island in 2017-2019 (Image 5).
Image 5: Base facility construction plan.
3. Management of Issues Addressed by the GGN Bureau in December 2012

Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark was designated as a global geopark in September 2013 at the Asia Pacific Geoparks Network Symposium. However, prior to this in December 2012, the committee was required to submit additional information to the GGN Bureau, including a management plan and countermeasures regarding eight problem areas. See appendixes for the letter received from the GGN Bureau and the response submitted by the committee (Appendix 5, 6, 7, 8).

3.1. Actions requested

(1) Further information on the implementation of the geopark activities and services. Completion of a final plan for the implementation of sustainable development projects within the Geopark territory.

Response:

In 2016, the geopark formulated the “Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Basic Plan” which summarizes the direction of geopark activities and identifies the fundamental concept of the geopark which is in line with the objectives and significance of UNESCO Global Geoparks activities, and the fundamental approach of the geopark for achieving sustainable regional development (Appendix 1).

A 5-year Action Plan (2015 – 2019), which contains 106 items detailing the specific work to be conducted by the committee, was drafted alongside the Basic Plan (Appendix 2). The committee will conduct its activities whilst checking the annual progress of the plan.

(2) Identification of a four year work programme for geo-tourism activities associated with the Geopark, and agreement to implement this with the relevant tourism actors in the area, including geosite interpretation and signaling and the intangible heritage integration, as well as confirmation of the availability of the required budget.

Response:

The 5-year Action Plan developed in 2016 is the further improved version of the 4-year plan (draft) and budget report submitted in August 2013.

Firstly, in order to promote geotourism, over the period from 2011 to 2015, the construction of 13 general area signboards, 80 geosite signboards, 79 direction signs, 30 direction signs (walking trails), 28 lookout, guardrail and parking areas, 4 barrier-free restrooms, and 6 walking trails (new and old) has been systematically conducted.
The committee has also been conducting a number of other activities in the area including the sale of geopark tours through partnerships with tourism agencies, promotion to increase visitor numbers, and geopark guide development. Regarding promotion, aside from the resources identified in Appendix 9, the committee works to promote the geopark through events, use of mass media outlets, and the creation of promotion movies, etc. In addition, the committee utilizes popular guide books such as Lonely Planet, as well as tourism magazines and webpages in order to promote the geopark internationally. As a result of these efforts, the geopark has seen an increase in foreign visitors and visitors overall (Image 6, 7).

![Annual Visitor Numbers](image6.png)

Image 6: Annual Visitor Numbers.

![Annual Foreign Visitor Numbers (By boat)](image7.png)

Image 7: Annual Foreign Visitor Numbers.
Moreover, in April 2013, the geopark signed a contract with the tourism association of each municipality of the Oki Islands, and the associations participate in planning as members of the committee (Appendix 8, p53-58).

In addition, in order to further strengthen these relationships a staff member of one of the municipal tourism associations was transferred to the committee in April 2016.

(3) Identification of a convincing strategy to achieve added value from the geopark status, including specific visibility of the Geopark in the work of key partners.

Response:
The committee utilizes the name and logo mark of UNESCO Global Geoparks to promote regional economic development and educational activities including societal education. Through use of the logo mark, the committee aims to achieve added value from the geopark status. The specific plan for promoting added value from the geopark status is addressed in the Basic Plan and the Action Plan (Appendix 1, 2).

1) Domestic and international promotion utilizing the geopark status

a) Active use of the logo mark
The committee actively utilizes the UNESCO Global Geoparks logo mark on publications, signboards and so on, and aims to spread awareness about the activities of UNESCO Global Geoparks. The geopark is also cooperating with tourism agencies and food producers (manufacturers) and encouraging the use of the geopark logo mark in order to raise the value of materials used for tourism promotion and products such as souvenirs. Moreover, with the aim of raising the standard of the geopark brand, the committee is developing a certification system for products as well as stores which will be determined by the committee.

b) Product certification system development
The committee is promoting the certification and development of products which utilize local resources and feature regional characteristics. The aim of these activities is to increase satisfaction of visitors, promote the creation of an Oki product brand, and stimulate the economy, industry and cultural activities of the region. In order to achieve these, the committee has been developing the ‘Geopark Certified Product’, ‘Support for development of new Geopark Certified Products’ and ‘Geopark-wrapping’ systems targeted at local companies, organizations, and individual business owners since 2016.
2) Collaboration with a large corporation utilizing the geopark name
Since 2011, the committee has collaborated with AEON Group by developing an e-money card, the first geopark AEON card of its kind, wherein a proportion of funds spent are donated to the geopark. The donated funds are utilized in protection and preservation activities as well as promotion of the geopark (Image 8).
Also, since 2014, the geopark has collaborated with outdoor equipment brand and outdoor tour operator Montbell to increase visitor numbers to the geopark.

3) Geopark activities in educational institutions
Since the onset of the geopark in 2009, the committee has actively engaged in promoting the use of the geopark in local school education, and is conducting an integrated education program from elementary to senior high school (Image 9).
Also, regarding elementary and junior high school education, the committee formerly conducted educational activities by sending Head Office staff members to schools. However, in order to develop a system in which school instructors are able to utilize geopark resources independently, the ‘Daisen-Oki National Park Oki Region Environmental Education Program (Environmental Education Program)’ was developed in 2015. This program was developed jointly by the Ministry of the Environment and the committee. Moreover, in order for the smooth running of education in elementary and junior high schools, the committee holds training workshops for newly transferred teachers and teacher research groups. The content of the workshops allows for the participants to understand the importance of geopark education and also the value of the geopark, as well as instructs how to use the program resources and link them to the curriculum.

4) Regional geopark activities
The committee considers human resource development as essential for achieving the sustainable development of the local community. In this aim, the committee runs local workshops and events in collaboration with community centers in order to encourage local residents to rediscover the features of the region, increase regional pride, and develop skills for teaching others about the region. Also, as these activities include regional cleaning activities and removal of invasive plants, local awareness about environmental protection and beautification of the region is increasing.

5) Preservation and protection activities and investigation and research activities
The geopark not only protects geosites under national and local legislation, the committee is also developing ‘geosite records’ to monitor change and enhance the protection of the geosites. There are currently 21 locations in which geosite records exist and in the future these will be created for all 122 geosites. Investigation and research activities within the geopark are currently insufficient. With the objective of strengthening this area, in 2017 the geopark will formulate the ‘Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Investigation and Research Activity Plan’, which will be utilized as fundamental material for the designation of species for protection as well as special protection areas.

(4) Identification of an action plan for cooperation and exchange with other Geoparks at the national and international level.

Response:
The committee is conducting a number of activities with the objective of enhancing the quality of the geopark and also to contribute to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network and
Japanese Geoparks Network. Aside from participation in Global Geopark Network meetings, the specific activities of the committee are listed below.

1) Collaboration and exchange with other UNESCO Global Geoparks in Japan
   a) Collaboration and exchange with San’in Kaigan UNESCO Global Geopark
      Since the San’in Kaigan UNESCO Global Geopark and the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark are neighbors, the geoparks have developed a geotour linking the two regions, including a stamp rally and treasure hunt event, and sales of tourism products linking the two geoparks utilizing the high-speed jetfoil ferry. Alongside this, the geoparks conduct guide exchange activities including beach cleaning events (Image 10).

   Image 10: Guide exchange and beach clean event.

b) Collaboration and exchange with other UNESCO Global Geoparks
   At present, there are eight UNESCO Global Geoparks in Japan. In order to support aspiring geoparks in Japan through collaborative activity among UNESCO Global Geoparks, the ‘UNESCO Geopark Working Group’ was established and is coordinated by the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark.

2) Collaboration and exchange with geoparks outside Japan
   a) Collaboration and exchange with Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark
      At present, the geopark aims to establish a sister geopark relationship with Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark. Since 2015, a guide and geopark office member seminar was held, and in December 2016, an exchange workshop was held in Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark with seven Japanese Geoparks present. The Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark
assisted with coordination of this event (Appendix 10).

b) Support of geopark activities in Poland

One of the municipalities in the Oki Islands, Okinoshima Town, established a sister-city relationship with a city in Poland. In order to support this exchange, the committee head office employed a new staff member from Poland from August 2016. Following this, the geopark was able to commence exchange with Kielce Geopark in Poland and plans to host an exchange visit in 2017.

3.2. Additional actions

(1) The extraction of obsidian
See Appendix 6 (p9): Oki Islands Geopark Report to the Global Geoparks Network Bureau

(2) Geopark boundary
See Appendix 6 (p10): Oki Islands Geopark Report to the Global Geoparks Network Bureau

(3) Communication in English

As a result of geopark promotion activities, the geopark has seen an increase in foreign visitors. In order to deal with this increase, the committee employed an additional foreign language specialist. Also, in order to strengthen capacity for receiving foreign visitors, staff with English-language ability is being employed at the tourist offices which are the entrances to the geopark. Also, strategies to improve the English-language facilities in local businesses such as restaurants and hotels are being carried out, including translation of information and assisting training seminars.

The geopark has developed a guide certification system for Japanese-speaking visitors. Regarding English-language ability of geopark guides, the geopark is pursuing methods to encourage guides to acquire the required regional certification for guiding in a language other than Japanese. In the meantime, an audio guide system in Japanese, English and French is being developed (Image 11).
(4) Geological guide knowledge
Since 2011, the committee has conducted regular guide development seminars in order to improve the quality of the geopark guides and enhance visitor satisfaction. These seminars covered education of fundamental geological concepts. However, in 2015, the committee developed a guide certification system in order to further improve the quality of the geopark guides. Under this system, the geopark is developing guides with fundamental knowledge of the geopark, as well as the ability to convey this knowledge in a comprehensible and enjoyable manner, and risk management skills. (Appendix 11: Certified Guide Development Course).
In November 2015, 10 guides passed the Intermediate Guide (Level 2) examination, and of these 4 guides from each guide association have requested their certification badge. The committee aims to develop 5 Master Guides (Master), 10 Advanced Guides (Level 1) and 20 Intermediate Guides (Level 2) before 2019.

4. Network Contribution

4.1. UNESCO Global Geopark Network Contribution
The committee aims not only for the improvement of the quality of the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark, but for the improvement of the network as a whole, including UNESCO Global Geopark areas and aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks. In order to achieve this, the geopark has participated in GGN, EGN, and APGN conferences since 2011. At such conferences, the committee has presented on the incorporation of ‘lifestyle and traditions’, and the ‘unique ecosystem’ into the geopark activities, the use of the geopark in educational institutions, and on geotourism activities.
At present, there are eight UNESCO Global Geoparks in Japan. In order to support aspiring geoparks in Japan through collaborative activity among UNESCO Global Geoparks, the ‘UNESCO Geopark Working Group’ was established and is coordinated by the Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark. Below is an example of the activities of the working group at the International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks at the English Riviera Global Geopark, wherein the Japanese UNESCO Global Geoparks ran a booth (Image 12).
5. Current Objectives and Action Plan

5.1. Basic Plan of Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark

In 2016, the geopark formulated the “Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark Basic Plan” which identifies the objectives of the committee for achieving sustainable regional development utilizing the geopark. Alongside the Basic Plan is a 5-year Action Plan (2015 – 2019) containing 106 specific items detailing the status and numerical targets as well as the conducting organization of the work planned by the committee.

In order to deal with changes in the environment surrounding the Oki Islands, the committee will reassess the basic plan upon each Japanese Geoparks Network site evaluation and UNESCO Global Geoparks site evaluation. The Basic Plan has set the following three numerical targets that will be used to evaluate and inspect the work conducted.

1) Visitor numbers
   Maintain stable annual number of 140,000, whilst aiming for an increase to 150,000.
2) Satisfaction and intention to re-visit
   Conduct survey of visitors. Aim for 80% of respondents to be satisfied with their visit and wishing to revisit.
3) Interest of local residents
   Determine in consideration of the results of the survey carried out in 2016.
5.2. Strategic plan for relevant regional actors of Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark

In order to carry out the promotion of sustainable regional development utilizing the geopark, the geopark must effectively establish relationships with and work together with organizations, bodies, local residents, specialists and a variety of individuals. Therefore, a plan that clearly identifies and specifies the roles of each actor in the region is necessary. This plan will be created in 2017.

5.3. Conclusion

Oki Islands UNESCO Global Geopark strives to create a geopark in which the local residents ‘can proudly introduce their region to others’. The committee considers the development of individuals who are proud of the region and recognize its value a highly important foundation for planning for an increase in visitor numbers, and creating a brand for local produce through stimulation of primary industries.

Since the recognition of the geopark as a Japanese Geopark in October 2009, and then as a Global Geopark in 2013 the committee has been developing education initiatives in schools and society, as well as geotourism through geopark guided tours. As a result of these efforts, the geopark has seen a number of outcomes including an increase in overall visitor numbers, in particular foreign visitors.

The committee will continue to plan for the sustainable development of the Oki region, and develop a local population that is proud of and actively supports the geopark.