



**Closer  
to Nature**

## PRESS RELEASE

### **New Educational Trail in the Abandoned Settlement of Umíř Lures Hikers with the Romantic Option of Spending the Night under the Open Sky**

**Umíř (17/8/2013):** Nature lovers and those with a penchant for abandoned places exuding a mysterious atmosphere may put a new item on their bucket list: a new, out-of-the-ordinary educational trail is open to the public as of today. Located in a “ghost town” on the border between the administrative regions of Pilsen and Karlovy Vary, it is supplemented by a bivouac shelter, which allows visitors to spend the night before resuming their hike the next day on the trail through the beautiful scenery of the Manětín Hills Nature Reserve.

Umíř is an abandoned settlement, spread across a plateau surrounded by extensive woodlands, not far from the castle ruins (and the identically named chateau) of Nečtiny. The history of this spot of solitude reaches back to the 17th century, when a total of eight homesteaders lived here. At the end of the 1930s, the area was directly affected by the dramatic events connected with building a line of defense against Germany, followed by the annexation of part of Czechoslovak territory. Very close to the village's former built-up area, one can still find the remains of the fortification line built in 1937. After 1945, the German inhabitants of Umíř were expelled; for a brief period the settlement then became part of the Dlouhá Louka military installation. Over time, the houses gradually succumbed to decrepitude. Only five wells belonging to various homesteads in the village, a chapel, and a few cellars remain to this day.

At this site, of particular interest to conservationists are the surviving meadows, which are the result of 500 years of human activity, and with the centennial orchard. To highlight the natural sights of particular interest, to keep alive the history of the place, to care for the old fruit trees, and to “resuscitate” this hidden gem - those were the goals of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation (ČSOP). In order to make the place safe for visitors, the wells were first covered, but a wooden windlass was installed across one of the wells, so that visitors may pull up their own supply of local water. A canopied sitting area was also built, which allows up to three people to bivouac overnight, and in the former village, six information signs have been erected, which supplement the existing panels with historical information.

The project came into being in cooperation with Lesy ČR and NET4GAS, the general partner of the ČSOP. *“By way of the Closer to Nature program of NET4GAS, we have been seeking to get people to go outside and explore the beauty of nature in an entertaining, yet educational form since 2007. The protection of nature is an irreplaceable part of our CSR activities,”* says Zuzana Kučerová, Promotion Specialist at NET4GAS. Jiří Šindelář from the Berkut Local Chapter of the ČSOP, who is in charge of the Umíř project, adds: *“Thanks to the Closer to Nature program, we are able to introduce the general public to the beauty of the nature reserves under the patronage of our organization, and to continue our efforts to build bivouac shelters for visitors who are passing through. In the past few years, for instance, the program allowed us to build the “Katovna” (in an ancient place of execution) on Zlatý vrch in Bečov, a log cabin at Nad řekou, and a camping spot at the St. Vitus ore mine.”*

This Saturday afternoon, the hiking trail was officially opened during a ceremony attended by the mayor of Krsy (Jan Orosz), the patrons of the project, and the general public. Also, the local chapel,

having been previously restored to its former beauty, was consecrated as part of the event. One may hope that the blessings will guide the steps of pilgrims, so that only those who are mindful and observant of the environment and of their surroundings follow the yellow hiking trail to Umíř. The trail has been marked by the Czech Hiking Club (KČT) from Plachtín near Nečtiny and from Trhomné near Krsy. The GPS coordinates are 49°56'6.454"N, 13°8'14.144"E.

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**The Czech Union for Nature Conservation** is a civic association of people who share an active interest in nature conservation and the environment. ČSOP's mission is to protect and restore nature, the landscape and the environment, to promote environmental education and support sustainable living. The Union currently has 9,000 members coming from the ranks of professional naturalists, experienced volunteers as well as pure enthusiasts who simply love nature. For more information please go to [www.csop.cz](http://www.csop.cz).

**NET4GAS** is aware of its social responsibility and therefore develops and constantly deepens its concept of corporate philanthropy and sponsorship. The company acts as a reliable and safe gas transmission system operator and develops a responsible environmental policy that takes into account the interests of future generations. The NET4GAS long-term strategy - which is put into practice through the NET4GAS Closer to Nature programme - springs from the close relation between the core business pursued by NET4GAS on the one hand, and nature-conservation and environmental issues on the other. NET4GAS is the general partner of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation since 2007 and supports other projects for which the motto "Closer to Nature" represents an integral part of sustainable development. For detailed information on the localities newly opened to the public and on other nature spots of interest, as well as for destination tips, please visit [www.closetonature.cz](http://www.closetonature.cz).