

Report from the NSC Environment Group to the NSC Annual Business Meeting, June 17th, 2005.

This report is based on the Work Programme of the NSCEG for 2004, which is available at the NSC website at:

www.northsea.org/nsc/thematic_groups/environment/documents/nsceg_work_programme_2004.pdf

Since the previous NSC General Assembly the NSCEG has held one meeting of the full group, in Arendal, Aust-Agder, Norway (see below).

The Project Working Group (PWG) has had two meetings: in October 2004 in Arendal and in February 2005 in Göteborg, Västra Götaland, Sweden. All meetings were led by the political chair. To these PWG meetings all members of the NSCEG, as well as other NSC environmental contact persons, were invited. Most regular PWG members participated.

The February meeting of the PWG was held in connection with a seminar on "sustainability training for staff and politicians". The latter unfortunately only attracted experts from the hosting Region, Västra Götaland.

• The NSCEG Annual Meeting and Conference 2004

Hosted by Aust-Agder fylkeskommune, Norway, the event took place in Arendal on 21-22 October. The topic was "Sustainable Innovation for Regional Development". Meetings of both the Environment Group and the Economic Development Group were held in connection with this Conference. A Conference Report, as well as material from speaker presentations, etc, are available on the NSC website at:

http://www.northsea.org/nsc/thematic_groups/environment/documents/index.htm

Presentations by prominent speakers were mixed with concrete examples of activities by North Sea Regions in the field of sustainable innovation.

The study tour was highly appreciated by participants, who went to Grimstad to see two sites:
a) Agder University College, focusing on renewable energies, a.o. fuel cells, running on hydrogen, generated with solar energy. Also various cultivated bio-fuels were shown.
b) Ericsson, where it was explained how the closing of the large Ericsson company's high-tech activities opened up for starting a great number of new SMEs in similar branches. The visitors got to know particularly about Marine Communications (mobile telephone solutions for ships crossing the oceans) and LogIT Systems (ICT solutions to facilitate the coordination of different transport modes).

Four workshops started the second Conference day, including the customary session of "Political Visioning", aimed particularly at elected members. The theme of this was "how Regions can promote sustainable innovation". The themes of the "technical workshops" were:

- Innovative sustainable energy (facilitator: Hans van Meerendonk)
- Innovations for sustainable tourism (facilitator: Ian Dunlop)

- Methods for Regions to stimulate innovation (incl Green Purchasing) (facilitator: Gunilla Sandström)

• **Observership at the North Sea Conference process;**

Next year on May 4-5, the Environment Ministers of the North Sea countries will have a Ministerial Meeting in Göteborg, Sweden, the "MM06". They will discuss the environmental impacts of shipping and fisheries (see Bergen Declaration at www.northseaconference.no)

These North Sea Conferences are the only regular meetings at national government level that take place around the North Sea. For the North Sea Commission it is very important that these regular contacts at national level continue and that they, preferably, are widened to other sectors. In this case to the Ministers of Transport and Fisheries.

The NSCEG is representing the NSC in an "Issue Group for Sustainable Shipping" (IGSS), assisted by two experts provided jointly by the NSC and the Region Västra Götaland, Sweden. Two IGSS meetings have been held since last summer, in The Hague and Hamburg. This work includes the writing of proposals for the Ministerial Statement and various studies to bring light on issues of importance.

The NSC, again with Västra Götaland, funded a study of the possibilities to provide ships with electricity from shore, so that they do not have to run their polluting engines while at berth. (Study available at: http://www.mariterm.se/nedladdningsbara_rapporter.html) Promotion of shore-side electricity is one of the NSC proposals for the MM06.

Another proposal is that the Ministers should call for a European Directive on Quality of Marine Fuels. This could guarantee the shipping industry better fuel and give us less of the air pollution from ships, which today is threatening the health of our citizens and the balance of our environment. (The NSC background paper on air pollution from ships in harbours is attached to this report.)

The NSC is also particularly involved in the IGSS work to define a "Clean Ship Approach", which looks upon ships from the design and construction stage, through the operation and maintenance stages to the final decommissioning stage.

• **Observership at OSPAR**

CPMR has gained observership status at OSPAR, the political framework which adopts binding regulations for the environment in the entire North East Atlantic, including the North Sea. This task will be carried out by the NSC. It puts great demands on our members to make an active contribution to various committees and working groups, as well as to OSPAR political meetings.

This work is co-ordinated by the NSC secretariat and to date the following person/Regions have agreed to take part. Some of them have attended and reported from various working meetings.

ASMO, Assessment and Monitoring: at present no contact person

BDC, Biodiversity: Per Hörberg, Region Västra Götaland SE, per.horberg@vgregion.se

BDC, Env. Impacts of Human Activities (wind energy):
Michael Moll, Policy Officer, Suffolk County Council, UK,
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(CO2 sequestering): Professor David Macdonald, University of Aberdeen,
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HSC, Hazardous Substances: Monica Køhrsen, Chemical engineer, Ringkjøbing County,
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RSC, Radioactive Substances: Sverre Fosse, Aust-Agder fylkeskommune, NO,
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(Further information about OSPAR's work is available at www.ospar.org)

• Initiatives and ongoing work from the NSCEG

The NSCEG has adapted its working year to the request by the Executive Committee to let it adopt the work programmes of all the Thematic Groups at its spring meeting, for subsequent review by the General Assembly in the summer. Therefore the NSCEG Annual Meeting decided to have no annual conference in 2005 but to postpone it until winter 2006. Instead there will be a number of PWG meetings, in connection with which various events are to be organised.

Among the initiatives and planned events/seminars/conferences are

- Green Purchasing, a future area for co-operation, initiator Västra Götaland, SE
- Creating a network of regional development planners, initiator North Jutland, DK
- A conference on EU's Lisbon Strategy in November, where the NSCEG will highlight the topic of "Promoting energy efficient and low emission eco-innovations."

• Service to the NSC Executive Committee and secretariat

The Thematic Group co-ordinators are now themselves updating the respective web pages of their groups on the NSC web site.

They are also contributing to the discussion papers, which are produced for the discussion of the NSC future, etc, in the Executive Committee and its Strategic Committee.

The NSCEG co-ordinator has also contributed to outlining the potential areas for co-operation between the NSC and the Baltic Sea Commission.

The co-ordinator also took part in a number of meetings with the secretariat and the other Thematic Group co-ordinators, a.o. to prepare study visits and workshops in connection with the NSC General Assembly.

The co-ordinator also assisted the secretariat with material for the NSC Newsletter and website, as well as in the preparation of information material.

Other contribution to CPMR work:

The co-ordinator has expressed continued support for the idea of forming a new CPMR Intercom Group on Sustainable Development.

Borås, May 4th, 2005.

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