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Minutes for the 15th NSC Annual Business Meeting June 16th, Aviemore, Highland, Scotland

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Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen, President of the NSC, welcomed everyone and thanked the Highland Council for hosting the 2006 General Assembly. There was 112 delegates attending at the meeting.

Adoption of Agenda

Agreed – with the amendment of moving item 7 (Report from the Interreg IIIB Programme for the North Sea) to item 2.

1. Annual Reports

1.1. Presidents Report

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (President, NSC) reviewed the NSC's previous year's activities and outlined plans for the future. She thanked everyone for their support in the work of the organisation.

The President advised the audience of some of the changes to the Thematic Groups: Cllr Anders Fasth (Västra Götaland) is the new Chair of the Fisheries Group and Cllr Sandy Clunes (Shetland) has become a Vice Chair.

Cllr Leif Blomqvist (Västra Götaland) is the new Chair and Cllr Charles King (Highland Council) is a new Vice Chair of the Transport Group.

The Presidents Report is available on the NSC website;

http://www.northsea.org/nsc/general_assembly/2006_ga_news/president_report_160606.pdf

Decision:

The Presidents Report was adopted.

The Cllr Eddie Carrick, Chairman of the East of Scotland European Consortium (ESEC), presented the President with the specially designed North Sea Commission tartan.

1.2. Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups

- 1.2.1. Culture and Tourism
- 1.2.2. Economic Development
- 1.2.3. Education and Research
- 1.2.4. Environment
- 1.2.5. Fisheries
- 1.2.6. Transport

Decision:

The Annual Reports were adopted.



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1.3. Report from the Ad-Hoc Work Groups

1.3.1. Work Group Territorial Cooperation

Decision:

Report adopted.

1.3.2. Work Group on Maritime Policy Green Paper

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Vice President, NSC) advised that consultation on the Maritime Policy Green Paper had started and that comments should be put forward for the November meeting. She also advised that a meeting is to be held with John Richardson (Head of the Maritime Policy Taskforce) on the 4th July 2006. The meeting will discuss maritime policy and the NSC resolution, and will involve the Chairs and Co-ordinators of the NSC Environment, Transport and Fisheries thematic groups.

Decision:

Report adopted.

2. Report from the Interreg IIIB Programme for the North Sea, by Lorraine George

Lorraine George described the progress of the North Sea Programme over the last 12 months and outlined plans for the future. She emphasised the need to achieve outputs from projects, and the need to prove the value of the Programme in terms of additionality and value for money.

She described how the North Sea area is working with other programme areas to share experiences. She also outlined the planned timetable for the future programme. She stressed that this ambitious programme will require projects to be focussed and able to influence policy.

She advised everyone to visit the Interreg website to see the new Programme information.

3. NSC Work Plans 2006 – 2007

3.1. Executive Committee Work Plan

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Vice-President, NSC) outlined the key activities in the Executive Committee Work Plan. She highlighted the importance of political lobbying, and of increased internal and external communication. She stated that the Executive Committee's Work Plan requires input from the Thematic Group Work Plans. These plans should be prepared in time for consideration and approval by the Executive Committee in the Spring. This would then allow time for inclusion in the Executive Committee Work Plan prior to the NSC's Annual General Assembly. Each of the



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Thematic Groups will be asked to update their Terms of Reference/Roles and Responsibilities. These will be discussed at the next meeting of the NSC Executive Committee in October.

Decision:

The Work Plan was adopted.

3.2. Work Plans of the Thematic Groups

3.2.1. Culture and Tourism

Cllr. Annelie Stark (Culture and Tourism Chair) advised the meeting that the plan had been produced in February and now requires updating to reflect current circumstances. The group has been active in attending ECTN and CoR meetings, and will soon meet in Brussels to influence Culture 2007. The SustTour project was not approved, so some revision will be required to the plan's priorities. A revised plan will be submitted following the next meeting of the group at the Food and Regional Development Conference in Dundee, Scotland.

3.2.2. Economic Development

Cllr Kevan Lim (Economic Development Group Vice Chair) advised the meeting that the Work Plan should not be approved as there are proposals to merge the Economic Development Group with the Education & Research Group. If the merger takes place the work plan will be reviewed and reduced to focus on one or two tasks for the new group.

3.2.3. Education and Research

Cllr Alexander Thomson (Education & Research Group Chair) outlined the group's current activities and plans for the future. Following the March Executive Committee meeting, the group's work plan was revised and reprioritised, and various elements of work were reallocated. The group has a number of strong actions to take forward in the future. If the proposed merger of the two groups takes place, there is a plan to agree management of the merger and help ensure the continued delivery of identified key projects.

Cllr Thomson also gave his thanks to Ann Brown (Education & Research Group Co-ordinator) for her continued hard work in ensuring the successful management of the group and its activities.

3.2.4. Environment

Cllr Alison McInnes (Environment Group Chair) outlined the key aims and work of the Environment Group. The four primary areas of concern for the group are: climate change, water, biodiversity and landscape and the use of resources. The priorities for the group will be to follow up from their annual conference, the promotion of sustainable shipping, the NSC Food and Regional Development Conference, OSPAR observership, and providing a network and the opportunity for the exchange of knowledge.



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Cllr McInnes also advised that Per Hörberg (Environment Group Co-ordinator) would cease to be the Co-ordinator in October 2006. She paid tribute to all his work and involvement in the group.

3.2.5. Fisheries

Cllr Anders Fasth (Fisheries Group Chair) thanked his Vice Chairs and Co-ordinator for their help in progressing the work of the group. He stressed that the work plan was a living document and would continue to be updated. He also outlined recent and proposed meetings.

3.2.6. Transport

Jon Halvard Eide (Transport Group Co-ordinator) outlined the main aims of the Transport Group and their wish to become more strategic and focussed. He highlighted the meetings planned and the group's input to the Maritime Policy Green Paper.

Decision:

The Work Plans were approved.

4. Finances

4.1. Accounts 2006

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) gave a report on the accounts. He said that during the last 12 months there had been exceptional costs for Co-ordinators time, the internet site and the Trollhattan and Ringkøbing conferences. He reported the increase in the membership fees charged this year (2.4% increase). He said that one Council had resigned (Finnmark) and that although Suffolk County Council had resigned from the NSC they still remained involved through the East of England Regional Assembly.

Decision:

The Accounts were approved.

4.2. Audit Report

Decision:

The Audit Report was approved.

4.3. Budget 2007

Decision:

The 2007 Budget was approved.



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5. Election of NSC Office bearers

5.1. Election of President

Decision:

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark) was re-elected as President for a two year period.

5.2. Election of Vice President

Decision:

Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) was re-elected as Vice President for a two year period.

5.3. Update of the Members and Substitute Members to the NSC Executive Committee, elected by the National delegations in 2005

The meeting was advised that Cllr Henrik Ringbæk Madsen (Nordjylland Amt) is the new Substitute member for Denmark and that Cllr Maria Plass (Region Västra Götaland) is the new Substitute member for Sweden.

Decision:

Agreed that the members of the Executive Committee should continue for one more year.

6. NSC Organisational issues

(At the beginning of the meeting voting signs was handed out and 25 vote-signs were given out.)

6.1. Procedures for NSC

Decision:

The Proposed Procedures were approved.

6.2. The future organisation of NSC

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Vice President, NSC) outlined the proposed future structure of the North Sea Commission. This included the Fisheries Group being renamed as 'Maritime Resources', the Environment Group being renamed 'Sustainable Development' and the merger of the Economic Development Group and the Education and Research Group to form a new 'Innovation and Education Group'. She stressed that the majority view at the last Executive Committee meeting was that these changes should take place. Cllr Findlay also emphasised the important feedback from the previous day's Political Seminar.



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Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) appreciated that the majority view had been to accept the proposed changes. He felt, however, that the changes could have gone further and that the proposed structure had serious implications for the organisation's future finances and resources. He did not, therefore, support the recommendations.

Cllr Kathleen Matheson (Highland) recognised that there may be problems in sourcing and funding Co-ordinators, but pointed out that the existing Co-ordinators were in favour of the proposed changes, and stressed that regions providing Co-ordinators do benefit from the increased learning and networking activities.

A vote was taken on the adoption of the new organisational model. Two votes were registered against the proposed structure and twenty-one votes supported the proposals.

Decision:

The proposed new structure was approved.

7. Report from CPMR

Jean Didier Hache briefed the meeting on the work of the CPMR and its political initiatives. He outlined planned activities for the future, including influencing future Structural Funds. He talked about the Maritime Policy Green Paper and the conflicts that can arise between different parts of EU legislation. He mentioned the work that has been carried out on Energy issues and the aim to influence EU energy policies. He encouraged everyone to take part in the CPMR's energy event on the 5th-6th October.

8. Resolutions and Political Statements

8.1. Resolution on Maritime Policy Green Paper

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (President NSC) outlined the amendments made at the Executive Committee meeting to the Draft Resolution (from Aberdeenshire Council, Rogaland County Council, and the NSC Environment and Transport Groups).

Cllr Ellen Solheim (Rogaland County Council) recommended the Resolution and requested inclusion of an additional paragraph. She emphasised her area's concern about Sellafeld. She stressed the importance of the EU Maritime Policy and the need to influence countries outside the EU.

Cllr Annelie Stark (Västra Götaland) requested inclusion of an additional sentence to emphasise the importance of culture, heritage and local identity.

Cllr Gisle Handeland (Hordaland) stated the timing for the resolution was good and that maritime safety, fuels, heritage and sustainability need to be debated. He also emphasised the importance of the Sellafeld issue.



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Cllr Kathleen Matheson (Highland) requested inclusion of an additional paragraph on the AIS system (improved tracability of vessels).

Decision:

The amended Resolution was approved.

The additional amendments proposed by Västra Götaland Region and the Highland Council were approved.

8.2. Resolution on the Northern Dimension

Decision:

The Resolution was approved.

9. The 16th General Assembly

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen stressed the importance of hosting a joint conference with Interreg North Sea. Interest has been expressed in hosting the 16th General Assembly in Norway.

Decision:

It was agreed that the next General Assembly should be held jointly with Interreg North Sea Programme in Norway.

All papers prepared for the meeting is available on the NSC website:

http://www.northsea.org/nsc/general_assembly/2006_abm/agenda_agm.html

The final resolutions and the Presidents report are available at this link:

http://www.northsea.org/nsc/general_assembly/2006_ga_news/newpage.html

VC/VJ/LH

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