

NORTH SEA COMMISSION ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Work Programme 2006-2007, after Annual Meeting, April 4th, 2006.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues,

The North Sea Commission Environment Group looks forward to another busy 12 months as it continues to promote the aspirations of the NSC member regions on environmental and sustainability issues.

Our annual conference, Energising Regional Economies, was held in Leeuwarden on 5-6 April 2006 in partnership with the Province of Fryslân and the CPMR Energy Group. Addressing the key issues of sustainable energy, economic development and innovation on a regional level, this event offered our group and the participants an exciting event with excellent opportunities to exchange information and learn from each other.

We have also been active in promoting our aims at the North Sea Ministers Meeting in Gothenburg on 4-5 May 2006 and continue with our work on observing the work of OSPAR. Of course the group will also continue to work towards the goals set out in its work plan, and I look forward to our regular Project Working Group meetings, which continue to offer participants an effective forum for discussion and exchanging information. I believe we are fortunate to have a hard working group of people who are committed to the work of the North Sea Commission Environment Group and I am very grateful for the work of our members.

I also look forward to seeing developments from last year continuing, from the Network of Regional Planners that was established in 2005, to continuing to contribute to the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy.

As Chair of the group I am very fortunate to have the support of two very active vice chairs in Councillor Andreas Lervik, Østfold Fylkeskommune, Norway, and Councillor Henrik Ringbæk Madsen, Nordjyllands Amt, Denmark as well as our excellent Co-ordinator, Per Hörberg, of Västra Götaland Region, Sweden. Their commitment to the group has been invaluable and our effectiveness has been the result of a genuine team effort.

Councillor Alison McInnes
Aberdeenshire Council
Chair of the North Sea Commission Environment Group

Work Programme - BACKGROUND

The overall vision of the NSCEG is to encourage the development of sustainable communities, the sustainable use of resources and the development of policies and actions, which take full account of environmental requirements.

The aim of the NSCEG is to progress key environmental issues, as they affect local authorities bordering the North Sea, by co-ordinating and initiating projects involving all members, or on a partnership basis. The NSCEG, through the NSC Executive Committee, will attempt to influence future research and future EU and national policies. The NSCEG will also take steps to encourage a heightened awareness of the North Sea as an important ecological area.

In order to achieve its aims the NSCEG engages in Project development, Exchange of experience and dissemination of information, Participation in relevant international commissions, meetings or organisations.

Activities

- To work for funding of joint projects and to help member regions to find partners in projects.
- To work for the improvement of the horizontal (between regions, local authorities and nations) and vertical (between EU/national/regional local) flow of information.
- To develop involvement with relevant international commissions or organisations.
- To be active in the planning and implementation of European programmes.

The NSC Executive Committee has requested to have co-ordinated work programmes from all Thematic Groups to approve at its meeting on June 14th, 2006.

Emphasis in this Work Programme is on finding opportunities for working together with other Thematic Groups and to contribute to the implementation of the EU strategies on growth and jobs ("Lisbon") and sustainable development ("Göteborg"). Further more, the importance of communicating what work the NSCEG – and the NSC – actually is doing is underlined.

During the drafting of the NSCEG Work Programme for 2005-2006 a new "Aim" of the NSCEG was discussed: "To support members of the NSC to speed up rate of adjustment/change towards Environmental sustainability in our communities around the North Sea". Four "Primary Concerns" were identified: Climate Change – working to mitigate and adapt, Water, Biodiversity and Landscape, Use of Resources

The attainment of this aim and the addressing of these concerns should be supported by "NSCEG action", "NSCEG organisational and administrative activities" as well as "NSCEG requests to the Executive Committee". These various activities are specified in the below matrix.

NORTH SEA COMMISSION ENVIRONMENT GROUP Work Programme 2006 - 2007

NSCEG activity	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Resources & Comments	Output
Influence so that a future EU Objective 3/"Interreg 4" programme for the North Sea reflects NSCEG priorities	Liase with the NSC, the Interreg secretariat and other stakeholders. NSC members should influence national level, a.o. in order to make sure that "energy" becomes one priority in the new Objective 3/"Interreg 4".	NSCEG Co-ordinator, NSC Executive Committee and secretariat	2006	Co-ordinator's time. Support efforts by member regions.	Objective 3/"Interreg 4" Programme for the North Sea area, which can co-fund projects of benefit to the North Sea environment.
Green/Sustainable Purchasing	Organise exchange of experience between purchasing experts of the NSC Regions on environmentally and socially responsible purchasing	The Region of Västra Götaland, SE	2007	Co-ordinator's and PWG members' time, staff from Region of Västra Götaland	Participation and arranging of workshop at international Green Purchasing conference in Barcelona, Sept. 20 – 22, 2006. Decision on potential future contacts, possibly in North Sea network.
OSPAR observership	Take part in meetings of OSPAR Committees and working groups	NSC secretariat Specific responsibilities: ASMO , Assessment and Monitoring: Maria Pécseli County of North Jutland, DK amt.mape@nja.dk BDC , Biodiversity: Per Hörberg, Region Västra Götaland SE per.horberg@vgregion.se BDC, Env. Impacts of Human Activities (wind energy):	Ongoing	Time of staff from NSC member Regions and/or external institutions, expense funding from NSC Executive Committee	Various contributions to OSPAR policies and decisions

	Follow any further development in OSPAR on the issue of CO2 sequestering	<p>Michael Moll Suffolk County Council, UK michael.moll@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk</p> <p>(CO2 sequestering): Professor David Macdonald University of Aberdeen d.macdonald@abdn.ac.uk</p> <p>(Spatial planning) Jens Kurnol Interreg IIIB secretariat crbjk@vibamt.dk</p> <p>HSC, Hazardous Substances Formerly Monica Kørsen Ringkjøbing County, DK, now vacant</p> <p>RSC, Radioactive Substances: Sverre Fosse Aust-Agder fylkeskommune, NO sverre.fosse@aa-f.kommune.no</p>			
Follow-up on Ringkøbing Conference 2005, “The North Sea Today and Tomorrow”	Take forward issues, which emerged from this Conference, for instance the environmental impact of fisheries and the need for Integrated Coastal Zone Management, ICZM. Identify action for NSCEG and other Thematic Groups	PWG	2006 - 2007	PWG members’ time	NSCEG input to the EU Maritime Policy, both through CPMR Europe of the Sea project and through the upcoming EU public consultation on the European Commission’s Green Paper.
Follow-up on Energy Conference 2006	Examine the outcome of this conference and identify action for NSCEG and other	PWG	Ongoing	PWG members’ time	Various actions, jointly with other Thematic Groups

NSCEG Organisational and Administrative Action	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Resources & Comments	Output
	Thematic Groups				
Promote environmentally sound “sustainable” shipping Participate at North Sea Ministerial Meeting in Göteborg, MM06, May 2006,	Contribute as observer to North Sea Ministerial Meeting 2006 on Environmental Impacts of Shipping and Fisheries (MM06). Bring up issue of ship-to-ship transfer of oil (in addition to other NSC issues). Participate at MM06 with potential NSC activities. Report to NSC Executive Committee about MM06 and propose further work.	NSC Executive Committee and secretariat, NSCEG co-ordinator, Region of Västra Götaland NSC Executive Committee and secretariat, NSCEG chair and co-ordinator. (also: Fisheries Group chair and co-ordinator)	2006-2007	Co-ordinator’s time External experts provided jointly by NSC and Västra Götaland	Possible strong statement by North Sea Ministerial Meeting, MM06, in Göteborg, Sweden, May 4-5, 2006. NSC activities in connection with MM06 Start of “Clean Ship” process in the North Sea.
Compile examples of local/regional financing of environmental improvements	Compare efforts in various Regions or countries to raise funding locally or regionally for protection and/or improvement of natural resources. Identify “best practice”. (Possibly) organise meeting of interested parties in connection with PWG meeting.	Co-ordinator and PWG	2006-2007	Co-ordinator’s time. Support efforts by member regions. Co-operation with NSCEDG and NSCC&TG	Project ideas for local/regional financing of environmental improvements + potential project partners
Promoting Environmental Management Systems, EMS, in Regional Authorities	Exchange of experience regarding Environmental Management Systems	Co-ordinator and PWG	2006-2007	Group members’ time	More NSC Member Regions implementing Environmental Management Systems

Organise NSCEG Conference 2007	Identify topic, host, venue, etc for Conference in connection with the NSCEG Annual Meeting 2007 – if possible and relevant in co-operation with other NSC Thematic Groups.	PWG	2006	PWG members' time and staff time of hosting Region(s).	Successful Conference in line with earlier such efforts by the NSCEG.
Conference reports	Prepare reports from all events co-organised by the NSCEG, for publication on the NSC website and/or printed.	Co-ordinator and hosting Regions	Ongoing	Co-ordinator's time and staff time of hosting Regions	Reports
Member Profiles updates	Update NSCEG Member Profiles	Co-ordinator PWG Country Representatives	Annually	Consultant used. Members should provide updated info on contact persons, project interests, etc. Improved Member Profiles could include reference to Members' web pages.	NSCEG Member Profiles updated annually and put on NSC website.
Promotion of NSCEG	Attract new members to the group and increase activity among current members by creating promotional material and approaching new potential group members. Send letter to all NSC members with "popular version" of the Annual Report 2005.	NSCEG Chair and vice-chairs, PWG members/Country Representatives, Co-ordinator and NSC Secretariat.	Ongoing	EG Chair and vice-chairs, Co-ordinator and NSC Secretariat's time (to send mailouts and update and develop contacts on NSC database).	Addition of new members, more activity among current members
Increasing links with the other NSC Thematic Groups	Inform all Thematic Groups of NSCEG	Co-ordinator, PWG, NSC Secretariat and	Ongoing	Co-ordinator's time, PWG	List of topics of mutual NSC interest

	<p>planned PWG meeting September 14 – 15, 2006.</p> <p>Examine Action Plans produced by other NSC Thematic Groups in order to identify existing key areas of mutual interest and opportunities for joint activities.</p> <p>Create programme of joint initiatives in association with other Thematic Groups.</p>	other Thematic Group Co-ordinators.		members' time.	<p>for 2006-2007.</p> <p>Draft programme of joint NSC activities for 2006 - 2007.</p> <p>List of topics for future joint NSC events – for discussion at meetings of the NSC Co-ordinators.</p>
Sustainable Innovation	Keep the PWG informed of important developments in the Interreg IIIB project "Facilitating Sustainable Innovation, FSI".	Hans van Meerendonk Provincie Fryslân j.h.vanmeerendonk@fryslan.nl		This was the topic of NSCEG Conference 2004	
Water Framework Directive, WFD Report to the PWG on relevant activities regarding the WFD	<p>Keep the PWG informed of important developments in the Interreg IIIB project NOLIMP-WFD.</p> <p>Each country representative should follow up WFD work at home.</p>	PWG Country Representatives	Ongoing	NOLIMP-WFD is a pilot project on the practical consequences of the WFD, which could support other regions, in addition to present partners, over the next years.	
NSCEG requests to NSC Executive Committee	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Resources & Comments	Output
	Assume the full responsibility for the promotion				

	of Sustainable Development within the NSC and in the North Sea area.				
	Follow up on the implementation of the Porsgrunn Challenge among NSC members.				Recurring reports on the implementation of the Porsgrunn Challenge (or the most relevant parts thereof)
	Start a timetabled business planning process, implemented across thematic groups and integrated. Template for work agreed.				
	Produce corporate communication on paper/website				

Joint NSC activities (proposal)

Possible joint activities with the other NSC Thematic Groups during 2006-2007 include:

- Sustainable Energy Conference 2006, arranged on April 5-6 in Leeuwarden, Friesland, NL. Joint activity with NSCEDG.
- North Sea Food Event – building on the joint regional food event held in May 2004 – to be held in Dundee, Scotland, on August 31 - September 1st. Joint activity with NSCC&TG, NSCE&RG and NSCEDG.
- Energy Efficient Housing – working jointly on the environmental and education requirements linked to energy efficient and renewable energy applications. Joint activity w. NSCEDG

Note: NSC General Assembly Environment Study Tour in Aviemore, Highland, Scotland, Thursday 15th June 2006, will (preliminarily) deal with the role of forestry, agriculture and “landscape stewardship” in rural development.

More details of the Study Tour will be included in the official NSC General Assembly promotional material at www.northsea.org.

April 2006, Per Hörberg, Co-ordinator, North Sea Commission Environment Group, e-mail: per.horberg@vgregion.se