



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

NSC PRESIDENT AND THEMATIC GROUPS ANNUAL REPORTS

Enclosed are the Annual reports for the Thematic Groups.

The Presidents report will be presented at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The NSC Annual Business Meeting of 22 June 2007 adopts the Annual Reports.



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22nd June 2007

Item 1

Culture & Tourism Group

The Culture & Tourism Group 2006-07 has been chaired by Cllr Annelie Stark, Västra Götaland Region, with Jacques Suurmond, Member of Executive Board, Province of Zeeland and Cllr Alan D. Livingstone (Perth & Kinross Council) as Vice-Chairs. When Cllr Livingstone was elected Chair of the Education & Research Group, Cllr Wendy Mawer (East of England Regional Assembly) was elected new Vice-Chair, in April 2007. Mr Suurmond stepped down as a Vice-Chair after the provincial elections, in May 2007.

Co-ordinator/advisor of the group has been Mr Geir Sør-Reime, Rogaland County Council.

Since last AGM, the Culture & Tourism Group has met 4 times: in Dundee (Scotland) 2 September 2006, in Gothenburg (Sweden) 25 November 2006, in Middelburg (the Netherlands) 9-10 February 2007 and in Stavern (Norway) 18-19 June 2007.

Three items have been high on the agenda for all meetings: the new terms of reference of the thematic groups, the input from the groups to the NSC response to the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy; and Cultural Tourism.

Reflecting new priorities of the EU Commission, our group has focused on cultural tourism for the last few years, and has worked together with the European Cultural Tourism Network and the Committee of the Regions in supporting the initiatives to put cultural tourism higher on the European Agenda.

The latest initiatives by the Commission in relation to the role of culture in relation to innovation and community development has also been noted by the Group, and its action plans will reflect this in the future.

The Group has also started working in relation to the new Interreg IV B North Sea programme and the opportunities it can offer for co-operation projects among the member regions of the NSC. At the moment, initiatives relating to film and food projects are being discussed, and upcoming meetings will include project presentations and discussions.

The new Culture 2007 programme also offers opportunities for co-operation projects, and the group has been given thorough information on the new programme by specialists.

The main event during last year was the NSC Food Event, held in Dundee in late August/early September 2006, and co-organised with the Education and Research and Economic Development groups. This conference was a great success in respect to organisation, contents and results. The outcomes present a good departing point for follow-up projects under the Interreg IV B.



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22nd June 2007

Item 1

Innovation & Education Group

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarise the work of the North Sea Commission's thematic group "Innovation and Education Group" (IEG).

2. IEG Chair, Vice-Chairs and Co-ordinator

- Chair: Cllr. Alan Livingstone (Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland)
- Vice-Chairs:
 - Cllr. Stella Duneufjardin (Region of Nor pas de Calais, France)
 - Cllr. Ole B. Sørensen (Region North Jutland, Denmark)
- Adviser: Erik Lindboe (Rogaland County Council, Norway)

Due to the Scottish elections in spring 2007, there is now a vacant position as chair of the IEG.

3. Background

The NSC General Assembly in June 2006 in Aviemore, Scotland, decided to merge the Education and Research and the Economic Development groups into one new group: "The Innovation and Education Group". Politicians and officers of the two groups got together during the Aviemore event to line out the work towards the new group. It was decided to have a joint planning meeting in September in Holland.

The co-ordinators of the two groups, Ms. Ann Brown and Mr. Erik Lindboe, had planning meetings in Stansted Airport in April and September to go through the work plans of the two groups to identify key areas of mutual interest, to develop fields of co-operation between the groups, and to prepare the Innovation and Education Group planning meeting in Haarlem (Noord-Holland) in September between the chairs, vice-chairs, co-ordinators and supporting officers of the two groups. The co-ordinators made a draft Terms of Reference and a draft Work Plan to be presented in the Haarlem meeting.

The planning meeting 13th September in Haarlem went through and developed further the draft documents presented by the co-ordinators. The draft Terms of Reference and Work Plan was presented to the NSC Executive Committee meeting 20th October. The ExCom meeting also elected office bearers of the new group, i.e. chair, vice-chairs and co-ordinator.

The IEG's Strategic Group (i.e. chair, vice-chairs, co-ordinator and supporting officers) met in Nor pas de Calais' offices in Brussels in December 2006 and January 2007 to go through the Terms of Reference and Work Plan, and to prepare the very first group meeting – the kick-off seminar.

The Strategic Group intends to get together whenever necessary to follow up the intentions as stated in The Terms of Reference and the Work Plan, as well as decisions made by the NSC ExCom and General Assembly.

4. The kick-off seminar

11th – 12th February 2007:

The kick-off seminar in Perth, Scotland, hosted by Perth and Kinross Council, was very well attended, around 30 group members joined the event, also the vice president of NSC, Cllr. Audrey Findlay.



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22nd June 2007**

Item 1

Some of the conclusions:

- There is support for a food project and the strategic group will move ahead and work with the ideas generated at the kick-off meeting. This may be a joint project between NSC thematic groups.
- There is an opportunity for a media industry project as proposed by Julie Craik at TayScreen.
- There was a call for partners for a Passive House project. We also identified a possible project which would develop a common set of standards for a passive house – “The North Sea House”. The Strategic Group will work on the idea.
- The North Sea Schools' Sustainability Network project is moving ahead:

Provisional Aims

“Learning to live with Climate Change”

- *To form a Network of schools in each country around the North Sea*
- *To explore issues of sustainability in the context of climate and environmental changes*
- *To share good practice and promote sustainability in education and in personal or lifestyle choices*
- *To promote the participation of pupils and students in the democratic process*

Schools involved

- *Saxmundham Middle School, Suffolk, England (Lead partner)*
- *Collège Curie, Liéven, Pas de Calais, France*
- *Nordsee-Gymnasium, Büsum, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany*
- *Teinå Skole, Stavanger, Rogaland, Norway*
- *Kannik School, Stavanger, Rogaland, Norway*
- *Donibristle Primary School, Fife, Scotland*
- *Inverkeithing High School, Fife, Scotland*

5. Co-operation

The IEG will co-operate with other thematic groups to identify topics of mutual interest. For instance, there are already talks about a joint conference in 2008 on Energy, led by the Sustainable Development Group.

The advisers of the Culture and Tourism Group and the Innovation and Education Group have started planning a follow-up event on Food, looking into the possibilities of developing an Interreg IV B program on Food.

And finally, the Innovation and Education Group will establish contact with the Baltic Sea Commission to find out what can be of common future interest for the North Sea / Baltic Sea regions.

6. Future IEG meetings

- June 2007: The Strategic Group/Innovation and Education Group will meet on Thursday 21st June in the Brunstad Conference Centre in connection with the North Sea Commission/Interreg joint event. The Strategic Group will line out the future work, and ways of working.
- October 2007: Group meeting 30th October in Lille, France.
- February 2008: Group meeting 12th February 2008 in Ålborg, Denmark.



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**Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
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Item 1

Marine Resources Group

1. Background

The aim of this report is to update the North Sea Commission General Assembly on the work of the NSC Fisheries Group between June 2006 and June 2007.

2. Meetings

The first meeting took place on **14 June 2006 in Aviemore**, Scotland and was called to discuss the proposed Fisheries Safety Workshop to be held during the Maritime Policy Conference in Stavanger in November.2006.

It was agreed that the aim of workshop is to highlight the importance, of all users of the North Sea, working in partnership. The SFFS have been working together with the oil & gas sectors for many years and through this work have developed "FishSafe", which has saved many lives. It is hoped that this equipment will be made available to all fishermen operating in the North Sea. However the equipment is only as good as the data that is fed into it. One major problem is the lack of Norwegian data. This it is hoped will be addressed at the workshop.

3. 4/5 October 2006 in Vastra Gotaland, Sweden, NSCFG Politicians Meeting.

The NSCMRFG Politicians meeting on day one took place in Ockero, an island outside Goteborg. We met with local politicians and the Manager of the Fisheries Centre.

The Fisheries Centre Manager gave a very interesting presentation on the work of the Centre and its future developments. It was very impressive and had students from as far away as Australia. Representatives of the Centre had visited the North Atlantic College in Shetland before developing the Centre.

We then went to discuss the future work of the NSCMRFG, in particular the new name and what it could mean to the work of the group. We felt the name was too all encompassing without the word Fisheries in it. After much debate it was agreed that the name should be North Sea Commission Maritime Resources and Fisheries Group, this would enable us to be more focused.

We also discussed the work of the Group and how it could be better organised. It was felt that to ensure that more members could be involved and influence the day to day work, they needed to have specific roles. As the work of the Group was becoming more politically focussed it was felt that role of the Co-ordinator was becoming more that of an Advisor. We felt it was important that Advisors (as is the case now) would need to have expertise in their field, to ensure that actions taken by the Group and advice passed to politicians was of the highest quality. The following is how we would like the NSCMRFG to operate.

- Maritime Resources & Fisheries Advisor (to organise the work of the group and to advise the politicians)
- Project co-ordinator (to be responsible for projects undertaken by the Group and



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22nd June 2007**

Item 1

- to advise Group of possible funding opportunities)
- Aquaculture and renewable energy specialist (As both these topics are felt to be very important, it will be necessary to have persons with expertise to be responsible for keeping the Group informed)
 - Liaison person (to ensure that there is co-operation between groups and the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group)
 - Web-page editor (to be responsible for ensuring our web page is updated)

We then went on to debate the draft new Terms of reference which included looking at the areas which be of interest to Group and agreed on the following:

- 1 Marine Resources and Fisheries policies and programmes of the European Union (and its individual member states and of Norway where relating to North Sea co-operation)
- 2 Fisheries policies and programmes of the European Union
- 3 Other programmes and initiatives of the European Union where Marine Resources and Fisheries are involved
- 4 Co-operation and exchange between the member regions of the NSC
- 5 Ensure fisheries is highlighted within EU Maritime Policy

Also was agreed that the work of the group would include the following Key Issues :

1. Coastal zone management
- 2 Fisheries strategies
- 3 Fisheries policies
- 4 Economic dependence
- 5 Aquaculture
- 6 Selectivity of fishing gear
- 7 Quality assurance including eco-labeling
- 8 Coastal fisheries
- 9 Working in partnership with other users of the North Sea.
- 10 Development of Science Fisheries Partnerships
- 11 Continue to support NSRAC
- 12 Inshore Fisheries Network
- 13 Safety at Sea

During the meeting we drew up a new draft Work Plan, we felt it was important to have a longer-term plan covering from 2006 – 2008.

The main priorities of this work plan will be:

Aquaculture

Users of the North Sea – Renewable Energy, oil, gas and cable etc

Fisheries – Inshore, Offshore and onshore.

Fishing Ports- Waste treatment & management, future developments

We also discussed future co-operation between the NSC & BS Fisheries Group, as it was felt that both areas had much in common.

It was agreed that we would also continue to work very closely with the CPMR Fisheries Group and would have more joint meetings them.



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22nd June 2007**

Item 1

The next item to be discussed was the NSC/CPMR Closed areas resolution. Harry Jensen led this item. He informed that his County had commissioned a legal firm to look into how e.g. Directives particularly those regarding closed or protected could be amended in line with our resolution.

A meeting with MEPs is to be arranged to discuss the above. Ann Bell is also to speak to Jean Didier Hache.

At the end of the meeting it was agreed that this Politicians had been a very useful in forming the Political focus for the NSCMRFG.

The Group had its second meeting in **Stavanger on 21 November** during the joint NSC/BSC Conference on Maritime Policy. The theme of the meeting was "Fisheries and other users of the North Sea" the following are the main points that came out of the meeting.

- **Partnership approach to marine spatial planning in North Sea**
This was highlighted by the presentation by the Oil & Gas and Fisheries sector, which have turned conflict into co-operation through working together. It was agreed that we should develop a concrete project, which will develop the above using the oil & gas and fisheries co-operation as an example of good practice. The NSC Maritime Resources & Fisheries Group will undertake to prepare a project proposal.
 - **Aquaculture**
Need for local management and area planning & dynamics at regional level
Consultation with all other stakeholders
Need for added value to be carried out at local level wherever possible to ensure communities gain maximum benefit
"Need for Viking Laws"
 - **North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network**
To bring together all stakeholders involved in inshore fisheries and communities to work together, to share best practice and to co-operate with all other users of the North Sea.
- Other Issues
- Ship to Ship transfer should be carried out in port wherever possible to avoid accidents
 - Closed and Protected areas (resolution by CPMR Fisheries Group which called for any planning of closed areas, should have clear aims and objectives, undertake thorough consultation, take account of local needs and cultures, be time bound and have ongoing evaluation)
 - Need to restore the North Sea Partnership of Scientist and Fishermen. To ensure the continued dialogue between scientist and fishers.
 - Eco system approach should include harvesting at all levels of the chain.
The best way to take care of the coastline is to let responsible people live there who understand and will take care of the coastline for future generation
 - Illegal Unregulated Unreported fisheries was also briefly discussed, it was agreed that colleagues from Troms Region would prepare a paper for the next meeting of the Group, where it would be formally debated. It was agreed that this was very serious issue.



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Item 1

4. **The next meeting of MRFG took place in Goteborg on 27/28 March.**
At this meeting Chairman Anders Fasth was delighted to welcome a new Political member to the Group, Cllr. Tom Christer Nilsen.

The following were the main issues on the agenda.

North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network

The one day Seminar, took place in the Glasgow Hilton Hotel on 23 May 2007. The Seminar was attended by around 80 participants from all around the North Sea. Attached is the programme and the report of the seminar.

One of the main aims of the Seminar was to form a North Sea Inshore Fisheries Network, which could then ask for a seat in the North Sea Regional Advisory Council. It would provide the opportunity to share best practice, highlight issues between inshore fisheries and other users of the North Sea.

Anders Fasth will attend the North Sea Regional Advisory Council Executive Committee meeting on 14 June, in Vienna, to present the report to the NSRAC.

Illegal Unregulated Unreported fishing (IUU)

The Troms Region presented a very comprehensive paper on IUU which was discussed thoroughly by the group. It was agreed that although the problem seemed to be mainly in the Barents Sea, the repercussion could be felt around the North Sea. Where for example some of the illegal fish can end up being processed, unknowingly by local companies and then end up in the retail sector and could cause real problems with consumers at local at National level.

It was agreed that the Troms paper be modified and made into a resolution, which will be presented to the NSC General Assembly.

The resolution has been prepared and will be presented to the General Assembly.

Removal of Mercury Tom Christer Nilsen informed the group about the very serious problem in Norway caused by a sunken World War 2 submarine (U 864) carrying a cargo of 65tonnes of Mercury. The submarine is now broken up and this very dangerous cargo, which is now leaking from the submarine. This will cause major problems if it gets into the ecosystem.

Tom explained the Norwegian Government had carried a study to see what would be the best solution. Two options were identified:

1. To remove the mercury from the seabed
2. To cover it with sand and rocks

The strong feeling in the region is that the mercury should be removed from the seabed. A similar problem occurred in Japan and caused major problems.

It was agreed by the Group that Tom Christer Nilsen would prepare a resolution, calling for the removal of the Mercury from the seabed, which would be considered by the Group and if agreed would be sent to NSC executive in Aalborg. This Resolution was approved by the Executive Committee and will be presented to the General Assembly.

Safety at Sea

We discussed the Safety at Sea issues, which was highlighted by the joint Scottish Fishermen's Federation Services/UKOOA presentation at the Maritime Policy Seminar



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22nd June 2007**

Item 1

held in Stavanger last November. This presentation explained the “FishSafe” equipment, which on board many UK Fishing Vessels. This equipment had saved many lives. Data for FishSafe was provide by all Oil operators in North Sea EU Waters, but no Data was available in Norwegian Waters.

Ann Bell is to prepare a draft Interreg Proposal, which she will circulate to all members. Tom Krister Neilsen will prepare a letter for Norwegian County Mayors to sign, requesting that the Norwegian Government make this important data available for FishSafe, to ensure the safety of all fishermen, including Norwegian.

Closed Areas

We discussed the resolution prepared by the Group on closed areas. This resolution was fully support by the NSC, CPMR General Assembly and a joint paper by the CPMR Fisheries and the CPMR Political Bureau at their last meeting in Florence also approved Energy Group. The next step is take the resolution is to present the Resolution to the EU Parliament Fisheries Committee.

We then had a discussion on what was considered to be a closed area or marine protected area.

Eco-labelling/tracability

Anders Carlberg gave a very interesting presentation on a pilot project they are carrying out in VG Region. (Presentation attached)

It was agreed that we would circulate examples of good practice form our Countries. We would then discuss during the Fisheries Study Tour at the General Assembly.

Executive Committee Agenda

We had a discussion on the different items on the agenda. The Group felt the name Maritime Resources and Fisheries Group, would be better as Marine Resources and Fisheries Group.

Maritime Green Paper

The Group discussed the Green Paper and also the NSC response. After some discussion it was agreed that Anders Carlberg would prepare the NSCMRFG input into the NSC paper.

Sellafield

The Group agreed in principle to support the Sustainable Development Group with regard to Sellafield.

Terms of reference and Annual Plan

We went through the Terms of Reference and agreed the changes to the way our Group should operate. We also discussed the Annual Plan:

- It was agreed that we should still take an active interest in the North Sea Women’s Network.
- Lena Soderholm to take the lead in preparing a paper on climate change with respect to aquaculture, which could then form the basis for a workshop on Climate Change.
- Small Fishing Ports Strategy – Workshop. Anders Carlberg and Ann Bell will carry out consultation on this issue during the NS inshore Fisheries Seminar in Glasgow. We will then report our findings to the Group



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Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

NSC General Assembly

We discussed the Programme for the Joint Conference and all were very concerned that there seemed to be **“too little politics and too much Interreg”**

It was felt that by having the Study Tours on Wednesday morning, split the NSC part of the Joint Conference up. It meant that those who wished to attend the Study Tours and the GA and Executive would have to arrive on Tuesday and stay until Friday with a gap in the middle (for those who did not wish to take in Interreg). There was wish for a two day event perhaps Wednesday/Thursday to enable our Swedish colleagues to return home in time for Midsummer. Perhaps a joint NSC/BSC Annual Conference, with an Energy theme, could be considered for next year.

Baltic Sea/North Sea joint meeting.

It was agreed that co-operation with the Baltic Sea was very important and should be strengthened. The NSCMRFG had planned to have a joint meeting with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group, however due to illness our colleague in the Baltic had been unable to arrange this. It is hoped that he might be able to attend the meeting Copenhagen.

Joint NSC/BSC Meeting in Copenhagen

The following are the issues, which the NSCMRFG would like to jointly consider with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group:

- 1 Illegal Unregulated Unreported Fisheries and how we could jointly address this serious issue. Also our industries image and consumer concerns
- 2 Science/Industry Partnership, building on the successful North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership
- 3 RACs how both Commissions could play an important role within both the North Sea and Baltic Sea RACs?

CPMR Fisheries Intercommission Group (CPMRFIG)

Also discussed was our on going work with the CPMRFIG, it was agreed that the Group would continue to play an active role within this Group and that both Lena Soderholm and Anders Carlberg would attend the meetings along with Ann, where possible. The value of our joint meeting with the CPMRFIG was highlighted and thought to be very valuable and should be repeated.

5. Visit to Japan

Ann Bell was invited to Japan, by Hideo Kojimoto, to give a presentation to the Japanese Sea Rim Association at their workshop on Regions and Sub Regions. Her presentation highlighted how a sub-region (the North Sea Region) can influence and change policy in a Region (Europe). It focused on how Aberdeenshire Council developed the North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership, in co-operation with Aberdeen City Council and the Moray Council, this led to the co-ordination of the North Sea Commission Fisheries Group. The North Sea Commission then supported the development of the North Sea Commission Fisheries Partnership, which in turn developed the North Sea Regional Advisory and the Inter –RAC Committee.

The presentation was very well received by the audience of mainly Professors from all over Japan. Ann Bell was then asked to sum up the Workshop. It was agreed that the co-operation that had been developed through Hideo Kojimoto and the North Sea Commission should be continued and strengthened.



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16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

6. Next Meetings

The next meeting of the Group will be a joint meeting the CPMR Fisheries Intercommission Group. This will take place during the CPMR General Assembly in 17/19 October 2007.

Prior to this meeting an NSCMRFG Political meeting will take place in Copenhagen on 10 October. Where the future political priorities of Group will be agreed.

A meeting with the Baltic Sea Fisheries Group will take place on Gotland, late Summer, this will be aimed at bringing forward joint NSCMRFG/BSCFG working plans.



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16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

Sustainable Development Group

2006 and 2007 saw many changes for the SD Group, no least a change in name, a change in Co-ordinator, a new Vice-Chair and most recently the stepping down of the Chair, Cllr. Alison McInnes. Cllr. Andreas Lervik will take over as Chair of the Group.

The following outlines the activities of the group over the past year.

New Vice-Chair, Chair and Co-ordinator

Cllr. Alison McInnes of Aberdeenshire Council stood down as Chair of the Group in March. She has become a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) in the recent Scottish elections. The group wishes her all the best in her new role.

Cllr. Andreas Lervik will now Chair the NSC SD Group which left an opening for a new Vice-Chair. This is now filled by Cllr. John Lamb. He will be representing the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). EERA covers the English counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire to the north of London. Cllr. Lamb is a councillor for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council in Essex.

After the departure of Per Hörberg as Co-ordinator in October 2006, Jeffery Kenyon from Aberdeenshire Council stepped in as Interim Co-ordinator until a more permanent appointment was made. The post of Co-ordinator has now been filled by Yasa Ratnayeke of Aberdeen City Council.

Meetings of the NSC SDG

There have been a number of meetings since October 2006:

14-15 December 2006: Swaffham, UK

This meeting was hosted by Norfolk County Council. Presentations on Norfolk County Council's involvement in Interreg projects was given, as was an update on the North Sea Schools Sustainability Network. The upcoming annual conference and Terms of Reference and Work Plans again dominated the meeting.

15-16 March 2007: Banff, UK (Annual Conference)

See information below

25 May 2007: Stockholm, Sweden

This was a joint meeting with the Baltic Sea Commission Energy Group (BSC EG) to discuss how the two groups could work together in future. Although the groups do have different themes there are a number of issues which could be pursued jointly. The possibility of the BSC hosting the Annual Conference 2008 on the topic of renewable energy was also discussed with positive steps made to ensuring a joint conference.



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22nd June 2007

Item 1

NSC SDG Work Plan and Terms of Reference

As a result of the changes made to the Thematic Groups the work plans and Terms of Reference are being reviewed. The Terms of Reference for the SD Group are completed and work is underway to finalise and slim down the work plan so that both documents can be agreed at the Executive Committee in April 2007.

NSC SDG Annual Conference

15-16 March 2007: Banff, UK

Preparations are well underway for the 2007 Annual Conference hosted by Aberdeenshire Council. The event, 'Delivering Change in Coastal Regions' will see c 50 delegates discussing issues that affect coastal regions under the four themes of physical change, spatial change, economic change and socio-economic change. A number of interesting speakers have been booked for the conference and it is hoped that it will be a success. The presentations and conference report are now available from the North Sea Commission website.

Meetings and Conferences

Sellafield-Nordic Joint Conference (The British Nuclear Group, Bellona and Guardians of our common sea), 21/22 May 2007, Sellafield, Cumbria, UK

Cllr. Andreas Lervik attended this event. This joint meeting was well attended. Cllr. Lervik made a number of comments at the meeting. Whilst there is a vast array of resources available in the North Sea these need to be managed in a sustainable manner as well as competitively. This is true of fisheries, transport, energy etc. Coastal communities and employment also need to be considered.

Concern were raised regarding the discharge of radioactive waste into the sea, particularly those at Sellafield; these have been consistently raised by the North Sea Commission. OSPAR and the NSC will continue to work towards ensuring that there are close to zero concentrations in discharges.

It was also acknowledged that there has been a reduction in TB99, highlighting that changes can be made.

'Energy for the Periphery' – CPMR Conference, 5-6 October 2006, Pamplona, Spain

The SDG Chair, Cllr. Alison McInnes, attended the event. It marked the emergence of the CPMR in the highly strategic domain of EU Energy Policy. The conference "Energy for the Periphery", informed on various technical or political issues presenting a particular interest for the maritime peripheries. Some of the areas addressed included the possibilities offered by the use of liquid hydrogen, the problems posed by grid access and the on-going conflicts surrounding the development of wind farms in certain regions.

For further information please see: <http://www.cpmr.org/en/index.php?act=5,3,7,66>

Joint North Sea Commission and Baltic Sea Commission Conference on EU Maritime Policy, 20-21 November 2006, Stavanger, Norway

The Sustainable Development Group were represented at the Joint NSC BSC meeting by Martin Brebner of Aberdeenshire Council who aided discussions in the Sustainable Development Group meeting.



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22nd June 2007**

Item 1

The Sustainable Development Group Workshop discussed key questions from the Maritime Policy consultation. The main findings of the group were that:

- The Marine Thematic Strategy will play a key role in ensuring sustainable maritime development.
- The environmental costs of maritime activities need to be taken into consideration.
- The economic costs of not dealing with environmental problems need to be highlighted.
- A global and holistic approach is required to solve environmental problems, but ultimate responsibility falls to all levels, down to the regions and individuals.
- Models for distinct ecosystems should be developed, based on reliable, comprehensive and compatible data, and taking account of economic activities.
- Linkages between coastlines, inshore waterways and oceans also need to be considered.
- Successful implementation of existing environmental legislation is required.
- The added value and economic benefits of improved environmental quality need to be recognized.
- Climate change is best mitigated against through investment in renewable energies and fuels.
- The potential for new renewable energies, such as solar, in a warmer northern climate should be recognized.
- The development of new renewable energy technologies should be adequately financed.
- The pros and cons of each renewable energy type need to be evaluated.
- Electricity transmission infrastructure between the periphery (suppliers) and the core (consumers) needs to be enhanced, but must also respect the local environment.
- Concrete examples of initiatives in member regions need to be fed into a North Sea Commission response. A website will be set up in collaboration with the Baltic Sea Commission to collate responses. All thematic groups will be encouraged to contribute.

Further information and presentations are available on the North Sea Commission website at: <http://www.northsea.org/nsc/events/stavanger/stavanger.html>

Network of Regional Planners

There has been another meeting of the Regional Planners Network. This was held on 28-29 September 2006 in Langesund, Norway. It is anticipated that the next meeting will take place in East Anglia in June 2007. For more information see the networks website: www.ntn.dk/planners_network.htm

A further meeting of the group will be taking place in Cambridge on 11/12 June. Jeffery Kenyon, the SDG Interim Coordinator gave a presentation on the work of the NSC SD Group to the members to inform them of how the group works and the activities it will be undertaking.

Information

For further information contact Yasa Ratnayeke (YRatnayeke@aberdeencity.gov.uk) or visit the NSC website at: www.northsea.org



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

Transport Group

Introduction

This report summarises the work of the NSC Transport group since the last NSC General Assembly in Aviemore in June 2006.

The Transport group in brief

The main aim of the group is to improve cohesion, accessibility and competitiveness in the North Sea Region (NSR) through the development of sustainable and efficient transport solutions.

Current key issues of the group:, Sea based intermodal transport corridors & Motorways of the Sea, influencing EU transport policies, developing projects for the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme, and exploring energy issues in the transport sector.

Leadership and administration

Chair: Councillor Leif Blomqvist, Västra Götaland region Sweden (appointed 1 March 2006)

Co-ordinator: Jon Halvard Eide, Vest-Agder Norway (appointed October 2000)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Tor Ottar Karlsen, Buskerud, Norway (appointed in October 2003)

Vice Chair: Charles King, Highland Council Scotland (appointed 1 March 2006)

Membership

The group has got about 30 registered members. In addition, a number of regions are on a correspondence list receiving information about the activities of the group.

Group meetings

The group has held three ordinary meetings since the last General Assembly:

- Groningen, Province of Groningen, 21 – 22 September 2006
- Aalborg, North Jutland Region, 8 - 9 February 2007
- Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, 23 – 24 May 2007

A thematic seminar on the development of projects under the new North Sea Region Programme was organised in conjunction with the meeting in Aalborg on 9 February. In conjunction with the meeting in Aberdeenshire on 24 May, the group organised a seminar on energy issues in the transport sector.

Attendance

On average, about 8 – 12 persons coming from member regions in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, England and Scotland have attended the meetings of the group, a



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**Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007**

Item 1

level of attendance fairly equal to the 2005 – 2006 season. No representatives from German and French member regions have attended any group meetings this season.

Participation in other NSC meetings, contribution to general NSC activities

- Co-ordinators meeting in Skien, Telemark, 22 August

The Co-ordinator attended a meeting between the NSC Secretariat and Co-ordinators in Skien, discussing revised terms of reference for the thematic groups in light of the restructuring of the NSC (i.e. merger of thematic groups).

- Analysis of roles and functions of NSC thematic groups in light of restructuring

The Coordinator drafted the above mentioned paper on assignment from the Secretariat as a basis for the Executive meeting in Amsterdam on 20 October.

- Executive Committee meetings

The Coordinator has attended and reported at two meetings of the Executive Committee – in Amsterdam on 20 October and in Aalborg on 13 April.

- Seminar on Maritime policy in Stavanger, 20 – 21 November

The Chair, Coordinator and some group members attended and contributed to the NSC Seminar on Maritime policy in Stavanger, 20 – 21 November.

- Co-ordinators meeting & preparations for 2007 General Assembly, Sandefjord, Vestfold, 10 – 11 January

The Co-ordinator attended a meeting between the NSC Secretariat and Co-ordinators in Sandefjord on 10 – 11 January, discussing issues of common interest for the thematic groups, as well as planning the 2007 General Assembly & Annual Conference.

- NSC – BSC meeting in Copenhagen, 12 April 2007

The Coordinator attended a meeting between the Baltic Sea Commission and the NSC in Copenhagen on 12 April, discussing possibilities for cooperation between the two Commissions.

Co-operation with other NSC thematic groups

The group co-operated with the other NSC thematic groups in conjunction with the preparation and organisation of the Maritime Policy seminar in Stavanger in November, as well as in the two mentioned meetings between the Secretariat and the Coordinators.

Involvement in “external” events of relevance to the group

- Attendance at meeting of Baltic Sea Commission Working group on transport, Klaipeda, Lithuania, 29 June 2006



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**Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007**

Item 1

- Presentations at 2 events of the SustAccess project, in Perth, Scotland, 26 – 27 September 2006 and in Gothenburg on 29 – 30 March 2007.
- Attendance at MSUO (Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation) conference on Motorways of the Sea, Helsinki, 2 – 3 October 2006.
- Attendance at 3 meetings of North Sea Motorways of the Sea Task Force, Brussels, The Hague, 11 October 2006, 1 March and 8 May 2007.
- Attendance & presentations at the Baltic Development Forum Summit in Helsinki, 31 October – 1 November 2006
- Attendance at 2 Meetings of High-level group on Transports for Sustainable Growth in the Baltic Sea Region, Helsinki, 31 October 2006 and Bodø 15 June 2007

Current issues & priorities of the group

Developing intermodal transport corridors, incl. Motorways of the Sea (MoS)

The group has been monitoring EU policies and processes on MoS.

The Co-ordinator has been attending 3 meetings of the North Sea Motorways of the Sea Task Force as an observer on behalf of the Northern Maritime Corridor II project. The Task Force consists of Government Ministry & Maritime Administration officials from all EU member states in the North Sea Region, as well as from Norway. The European Commission – DG TREN, and European stakeholder organisations related to ports and shipping are observers to the Task Force. The aim of the Task Force is to draw up a framework for the implementation of the MoS concept in the North Sea Region. The work of the Task Force concentrates on infrastructure, quality issues and horizontal projects of wider benefits, including environment, information systems, training and mapping of cargo flows. The Task Force is currently preparing a Joint call for tender for MoS proposals in the North Sea Region, including Norway and Russia, to be opened in the course of July. The call will aim to produce proposals for the EU call on MoS to be organised in late 2007.

Observership in this Task Force is regarded as an excellent opportunity to stay updated on the development of MoS in the North Sea Region, as well as for promoting NSC policy positions on the MoS directly towards representatives of the European Commission and the member states. In particular it has been argued that the Northern Maritime Corridor is a relevant framework for the prolongation of the MoS network further North along the Norwegian Sea up to the Barents Region (cf relevant paragraphs of previous NSC resolutions. We have also argued that all qualified ports in third countries like Norway and Russia should be eligible for participation in MoS projects on equal footing with ports in the member states (except for funding of course), without any pre-selection and limitation. Finally, we have also called for stronger emphasis on the cohesion objective in the European Commission application of the MoS guidelines, also opening up for MoS projects in peripheral areas characterised by weaker cargo flows and longer distances.



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Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

Influencing EU policies

Response to Mid-term review of EU Transport White Paper

The group drafted and submitted a preliminary response to the Mid-term review through the CPMR in mid July. The response builds upon previous responses to EU transport policy documents, and was also submitted to the Executive Committee meeting in October 2006.

In general the group endorses the profile of the Mid-term review as an orientation for the future EU transport policy. However, the group believes that the Mid-term review should focus more on the role of secondary ports and hubs, raise the ambition for the development of regional air ports & transport, should consider to adopt the Scandinavian "Vision Zero strategy" for road safety, work for more differentiated security schemes better adapted to the role & functions of ports and airports, ensure that future charging schemes are designed in such a manner that they do not function to the disadvantage of remote regions.

Input to NSC response to EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy

The group delivered an assessment of the Green paper from a transport perspective at the Maritime Policy seminar in Stavanger in November 2006, building upon and elaborating on a previous input from 2005. The group believes that the Green Paper is handling transport issues in a coherent and integrated manner, reflecting the importance of maritime transport and ports for competitiveness, accessibility and sustainable development, and at the same time highlighting environmental and social challenges and solutions. However, the group would like to see a stronger emphasis on the financial and environmental benefits of shifting freight from road to sea, and in line with this a stronger focus on how to facilitate modal shift away from road. The Green Paper also needs to strengthen the door to door perspective on maritime transport, also highlighting the importance of hinterland connections. It is furthermore seen as important to strengthen selected secondary ports with a potential to relieve congestion in and around major ports. Besides, the Green Paper should have put more emphasis on the significance of maritime transport for accessibility and cohesion. Finally, the Green paper needs to focus more on the external dimension of maritime transport, extending the Motorways of the Sea network further north along the Norwegian coast all the way up to the Barents Region

North Sea – Baltic Sea cooperation on transport issues

The Coordinators of the transport groups in the BSC and the NSC have on several occasions attended meetings in each others Commissions, exchanging information about the work of the groups and discussing relevant areas and forms of co-operation. The two groups have agreed to co-operate on the development of Motorways of the Sea, response to the EU Maritime Green Paper, regional air transport and sustainable surface transport. These areas of cooperation were also discussed at the joint NSC – BSC meeting in Copenhagen in April.

The Coordinator's attendance at the Baltic Development Forum Summit and involvement in the "High Level Group" on transport in the Baltic Sea Region are furthermore regarded as useful platforms for further developing North Sea – Baltic Sea cooperation in the field of transport. Given the high number and variety of regional organisations in the Baltic, the aforementioned fora also serve to supplement the NSC – BSC channel.



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Paper for the
16th NSC Annual Business Meeting,
22nd June 2007

Item 1

Developing project ideas for the Interreg IV North Sea Region Programme, 2007 – 2013

The group organised a thematic seminar on the above topic in conjunction with its meeting in Aalborg in February. The purpose of the seminar was to get a better understanding of the transport priorities under the new North Sea Programme, develop ideas & proposals for transport projects under the new programme, and to facilitate the formation of relevant partnerships for the development of concrete proposals. A lot of ideas for themes and projects, both within passenger and freight transport were presented at the seminar.

The seminar recommended that new projects should as a main rule build upon and further develop the results from current projects. Promoting sustainable modes of passenger transport (public transport, biking etc), improving intermodality and facilitating modal shift away from road traffic were common thematic denominators between the different project ideas. The seminar also heard presentations on cross-cutting themes like hydrogen as an alternative fuel and on Intelligent transport systems. The Transport group was encouraged to organise another event of this kind when the new North Sea Programme has been finally adopted and the different ideas have become more matured. The seminar is seen to illustrate the role of the NSC as a suitable arena for networking and involvement of relevant stakeholders in the development of new projects.

Energy issues in the transport sector

The Transport group has started to explore energy issues in the transport sector as a response to the decision of the Executive Committee to focus more on these issues in the time to come. The group organised a thematic seminar on this issue in Aberdeenshire in May 2007 with some external speakers and participants.

The seminar gave an update on the environmental impact of transport and on relevant policy objectives on the European and national levels. The seminar furthermore provided insight into the main platforms for cleaner fuel technologies, such as biofuel / methaene, hydrogen, natural gas and electricity, their potential contribution to reducing GHG emissions and other environmental problems. The seminar also explored requirements and obstacles (technological, commercial, political) for large scale uptake of cleaner fuels in the transport sector. It was assumed that the NSC could primarily contribute through awareness raising, facilitation of partnerships, development of relevant projects, dissemination of good practice and influencing EU and national policies. The outputs from this seminar could hopefully serve as a contribution to future NSC events on energy.