



Working Together to Manage the Marine Resources of the North Sea Region and Channel (5.1), Thursday 20, 14:30-16:15

Chair: Ann Bell, North Sea Commission Marine Resources Adviser

Speakers: Brad Watson O.B.E., Vice President of the Channel Arch Manche Assembly; Ann Bell M.B.E., North Sea Commission Marine Resources Adviser; Haitze Siemers, Head of Unit for Maritime Policy (Baltic & North Sea), European Commission; Leo de Vrees, Policy Officer DG ENVI, European Commission; Christian Byrith, Director INTERREG North Sea Region Programme; Martin Brebner, North Sea Commission; J.L. Garcia Varas, WWF.

1. Three key messages

- Dialogue and engagement with stakeholders is key to marine management, perhaps through a stakeholder forum
- There is a need to identify and prioritise tangible objectives for the North Sea Region
- There is a need for improved co-ordination between stakeholders and policy makers.

2. Summary of the interventions from the panel

Brad Watson spoke about co-operation in the Channel area through the Arc Manche Assembly. A number of projects have been supported through INTERREG funding on climate change adaptation and the production of a Channel Atlas. Cllr. Watson welcomed the initiative of the Committee of the regions to look at macro-regional concepts, provided that these focus on economic, functional co-operation rather than just political statements.

Ann Bell reported on the findings of a stakeholder conference held by the North Sea Commission (NSC) to explore maritime governance in the North Sea. The key messages from the conference were the need to improve engagement, trust and dialogue between stakeholders. In order to achieve this, a stakeholder forum, co-ordinated by a relatively neutral organisation such as the NSC, should be set up.

Haitze Siemers agreed with the conclusions of the above conference and spoke about the European Commission's experience on implementing the European Maritime Policy at sea-basin levels. The North Sea and Channel could benefit from a sea-basin approach as they have some of the most concentrated maritime activities in the EU and is economically important. It is clear that any macro-regional

approach for the North Sea/Channel would need to have clear added value and a scoping paper will be issued over the summer and a consultation with stakeholders undertaken.

Leo de Vrees highlighted the urgent need to tackle sustainability in the North Sea, with the aforementioned intensive use of the sea having a negative impact on biodiversity. He spoke about the Marine Strategy Framework Directive adopted in 2008 which commits the EU to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in its waters by 2020. An ecosystem approach to implementation is required as is integration with other policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy.

Christian Byrith spoke about the different ways of defining a strategy and clarified that from an INTERREG North Sea Region perspective, a broad approach was preferred. He spoke about the challenges of developing strategies, which requires a lot of effort and commitment. In the North Sea area there is strong support from the local and regional level, but limited or no commitment from the Member State level. There needs to be a clear reason for setting up a strategy, i.e. to set clear directions for policy makers. The process of developing a strategy can be as important as the outcome. INTERREG could potentially support such a project if an application is put forward.

Martin Brebner spoke about the NSC's North Sea Region 2020 initiative, which will aim to be a development framework for the region. The purpose of the initiative is to better co-ordinate existing policies and funding streams. Five themes have been identified so far: Managing maritime space; Increasing accessibility and attractiveness; Tackling climate change; Innovation and excellence; and sustainable communities. The NSC is consulting stakeholders and its own members and will be looking to produce a more comprehensive position in the coming months.

J.L. Garcia Varas gave a perspective from the WWF, focusing on a Life + project on Maritime Spatial Planning for the Celtic Sea area – PICES. This project aims to clarify what ecosystem based management means in practice and to develop a common understanding of the Celtic Sea. The project involves a wide range of stakeholders, all with differing understandings/interpretations of the main issues. This highlights the need for an improved stakeholder engagement process which can help to implement policies.

3. Discussion: Key questions and messages from the floor, as well as responses given by the panellists.

Mike Park (Scottish Fishermen's Federation) highlighted a lack of co-ordination between Member States with regards to Maritime Spatial Planning. He also asked if the difficult

process of developing a strategy for the North Sea would lead to a lack of momentum and lack of enthusiasm for the initiative.

Haitze Siemers responded that the Commission was not dictating the need for a strategy but was instead looking for the best way of co-ordinating activities and adding value.

Leo de Vrees clarified that while the MSFD is a form of strategy, it needs to be linked to other policies.

Dr. Nico Nolte from Hamburg asked what degree of detail and analysis would be contained in the Commission's scoping paper.

A representative from the Dutch Government commented that the June target for publication would be ambitious if the scoping paper was to provide a comprehensive analysis of existing policies and strategies.

Haitze Siemers clarified that the scoping paper will aim to identify the main opportunities and challenges for the North Sea, rather than trying to build a comprehensive picture of all existing studies/policies. It will also provide an opportunity to focus efforts rather than trying to do everything.

Neil Mitchison (European Commission Office in Scotland) had attended the NSC stakeholder conference and highlighted the different perspectives of diverse stakeholders.

Bruno Thenail, Project Manager for the CAMIS project highlighted a lack of co-ordination between activities in the North Sea and Channel.

Martin Brebner agreed that there needed to be better co-ordination and that once the NSC had clarified its priorities for the North Sea area, this would become easier.

4. <http://northseacommission.org/north-sea-strategy.html>

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