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Draft Minutes for the 18th NSC Annual Business Meeting June 26th, Noord-Holland Provinciehuis, Haarlem, The Netherlands

North Sea Commission Annual Business Meeting

Cllr Rinske Krusinga (Provincie Noord-Holland) welcomed the delegates to Noord Holland and gave some background to the history and recent restoration of the Provinciehuis.

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark Fylkeskommune), President of the North Sea Commission (NSC), welcomed everyone and thanked the region of Noord Holland for hosting the Annual Conference and General Assembly in 2009.

Agenda

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) outlined the agenda for the meeting.

Decision:

The agenda was adopted unanimously.

1. Annual Reports

1.1. President's Report

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) reviewed the NSC's previous year's activities and described some of the issues for the future. She thanked the Vice Presidents, the Executive Committee members and the Thematic Groups for all their work over the last 12 months. She passed on her thanks to the two political members from England who had been lost to the NSC due to local election results. Gunn Marit highlighted the NSC's successful cross sectoral work, its good co-operation with the Baltic Sea Commission and strong links with the Interreg North Sea Programme Secretariat. She talked about the impact of the recent global economic changes and the future economic forecasts for the EU. This situation creates a need to face the future, demonstrate strong political leadership and decision-making, encourage more co-operation, and have the courage to make changes. Gunn Marit mentioned the outcomes of the recent political seminar on the need for a new North Sea Strategy. There is an opportunity for the NSC to drive the proposed new North Sea Strategy. The North Sea has a model for co-operation and democracy within Europe that can be used elsewhere – and there is a need for the NSC to share its knowledge and take a leading role in developing a new Strategy. Gunn Marit



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thanked everyone for their hard work and encouraged them to have even more involvement in the future.

1.2 Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups

1.2.1 Culture and Tourism

Cllr Harry van Waveren (Province of Zeeland), Chair of the Culture and Tourism Thematic Group presented their annual report. He stated that their group wished to contribute to the Lisbon Agenda and ensure that tourism is high up in the agenda. Tourism is an increasingly important part of our economies. Cultural heritage is a very important part of tourism in our areas, at a national and regional level. Harry described the meetings that had been held during the last 12 months and plans for the future.

The importance of culture and tourism was supported by the delegates.

1.2.2 Innovation and Education

Cllr Ole B Sørensen (North Denmark Region), Chair of Innovation and Education Thematic Group highlighted that innovation and education are two key sectors in the current economic crisis. Ole described the work of the group over the last twelve months. This time has been used to produce a new mission statement for the group. Members are looking to develop innovative economic activity. The group has started to map the research and development status in the Region. Through this they can then identify common goals, needs and actions. He thanked the Vice-Chairs, Adviser and other active members. A new Vice-Chair will be required later this year. The next meeting of the group will be re-arranged due to a clash of dates with a CPMR meeting. Ole encouraged more people to become involved in the work of the group.

1.2.3 Marine Resources

Cllr Anders Fasth (Region Västra Götaland), Chair of the Marine Resources Thematic Group gave thanks to his Vice-Chairs and Adviser. He highlighted a few parts of the annual report including various meetings, the Maritime Week Seminar in Aberdeen, the Study Tour meeting in Kiel, the group's lobbying to remove the World War II submarine wreck, the discussions on the 'Clean Baltic Shipping Strategy' at the Kiel meeting, and the Group's co-operation with the Baltic Sea Commission and participation at their General Assembly. Anders also described the recent Marine Resources Group paper on a proposed Maritime Policy Pilot Project. Anders concluded that the Group had achieved good work, and good ways of working, and wanted to take an active role in developing the proposed North Sea Strategy.

The delegates discussed the Baltic Sea 5 point action plan on Clean Shipping. This is to form an Interreg project application. There are a number of areas of best practice around

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the North Sea (eg natural gas for fast ferries in Norway, ship waste projects in Gothenburg). It was agreed that it was important to share best practice around the North Sea, and that any future Clean Shipping Strategy for the North Sea should include recreational boats as well as large ships. The Adviser requested that all the other thematic groups identified a group member to join the Marine Resources Group on this project.

1.2.4 Sustainable Development

Cllr John Lamb (East of England Regional Assembly), Chair of the Sustainable Development (SD) Thematic Group stated that sustainability must be part of all work undertaken by the NSC thematic groups. The SD Group, therefore, wanted to be involved in all the NSC thematic groups. The group lost a Vice-Chair during the last year. John welcomed new proposed Vice-Chair (Cllr Marten Wiersma, Provincie Noord Holland) and thanked his other Vice-Chair (Cllr Henrik Ringbæk Madsen, North Denmark Region).

The group has had a number of meetings and is keen to get more involved in Sustainable Energy issues and the work of the CPMR. Henrik is already involved in the CPMR group and will retain this link for the group. Over the next year the group hopes to continue its work with the CPMR, and to be agreeing the new East of England representative soon.

John highlighted the increasing difficulty of finding and paying for Advisers. Yasa Ratnayeke (Aberdeen City Council) was still acting as Group Adviser, but his future in this post has still to be confirmed. It is important that the NSC addresses these issues.

1.2.5 Transport

Jon Halvard Eide (Vest-Agder Fylkeskomme), Adviser to the Transport Thematic Group, summarised the work undertaken over the last twelve months. This included group meetings, attending other NSC and Interreg meetings, attending the CPMR Aquamarina group, Maritime Policy and other CPMR activities, attending the Baltic Sea Commission Working Group on transport, drafting responses to EU Green Papers and contributing to CPMR responses. These are important processes. In addition, the group has co-operated with the Baltic Sea Commission on transport issues, and was involved in monitoring and developing Interreg project ideas. The group has also started to collect best practice information on energy issues (eg sustainable fuels, efficiency etc), and is involved in statistical mapping exercise for the transport sector. Jon Halvard stated that there was scope for co-operation with the Sustainable Development Group and the Marine Resources Group, and encouraged the German members to take an active role in the future work of the Transport Group.



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1.3 Other Activity Reports

1.3.1 North Sea Commission (NSC) – Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) Co-operation

Cllr Annelie Stark (Region Västra Götaland) reminded delegates of the strategic decision that was made to establish the NSC-BSC co-operation. She was pleased to see that the outputs of this co-operation are now very visible in the work of all the NSC thematic groups. Other benefits from this co-operation can be seen in Interreg working, greater knowledge about each other and the development of other useful friendships.

The Secretariats of both Commissions have been working together more, and outputs can now be seen through good strategic decisions. Over the last twelve months, meetings have been held between representatives of both organisations. Decisions have been made on topics such as the Northern Dimension, and the Maritime Policy. Ongoing discussions are still required on the new Fisheries Policy and the new Territorial Cohesion Policy.

The North Sea Region can also learn from the recent development of the Baltic Sea Strategy. This experience can also be used as an example when approaching the European Commission for support in developing and implementing a North Sea Strategy.

Annelie stated that this strategic co-operation gave the NSC a chance to be involved in future joint discussions and joint policies.

The President thanked Annelie for her report. She thought the co-operation was a good opportunity to identify our similarities and differences – and chance to learn from each other.

1.3.2 Maritime Policy Update

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) gave the delegates an update on the Maritime Policy. She followed up the comments made by Joe Borg (European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) in his plenary presentation the previous day – that there will be a meeting on 6th July on Maritime Policy. The NSC will actively try to influence this report. It is a high level meeting and they want input from the Regions. The President invited e mail comments in advance of the meeting in July.

1.3.3 Territorial Cohesion Update

Cllr Sandy Cluness (Shetland Islands Council), Vice-President NSC reported that this is a difficult concept to tackle. Essentially, however, it is about fairness. In the future we need



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to ensure that everyone in the EU is treated equally, and that we all benefit in the same way. Much work has been done on producing the response on this subject. The internet was used (rather than meetings) in order to maximise efficiency in gathering comments. In addition Dr Barca (from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Italy) was appointed to produce a report identifying key issues. This report will be taken to the new Commission. The key factors identified in the report will have implications for each of the NSC Thematic Groups. It should be used as a tool for ongoing work.

Sandy thanked everyone who had contributed to this work, and the NSC Secretariat for co-ordinating the input.

1.3.4 Report from the Committee of the Regions

Cllr Rinske Krusinga (Provincie Noord-Holland), Vice-President NSC is the link between the NSC and the Committee of the Regions. A written report has been produced and is available under this item.

1.4 Reports from co-operating organisations

1.4.1 Report from the CPMR

Damien Périssé, Director responsible for Innovation and Competitiveness at the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) reported on the work of the organisation. His report covered issues discussed at the last CPMR Political Bureau, and the CPMR thematic activities expected over the coming months.

He stated that the Secretary General of the CPMR had established two new working groups – one for external co-operation and one for research policy. He said that research activities are already happening at a technical level – including work with ESPON on a proposed project. Damien said that there had also been a debate on CPMR membership (following applications from two regions) but a decision was postponed.

Damien talked about the thematic activities and actions being undertaken by the CPMR. These included the important analysis of questionnaires currently still being received from the CPMR Regions. He encouraged more areas to take part.

Damien talked about the political process being undertaken to create a manifesto. He encouraged more Regions to support the manifesto or suggest amendments to it. He spoke about the parallel political process. He said they would have participation from politicians from different areas like the North Sea - and a meeting was planned for the 16th of July in Brussels (Political Workshop: "The Regions facing the crisis"). He said there was



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still an opportunity for participation by elected members and encouraged the North Sea area to take part.

There will also be a seminar for politicians on 27th November in Marseille (“European responses to the crisis: what do the Regions expect?”) where there will be discussion on the impact of the current economic crisis in different Regions. The seminar will provide input to European thinking on the global crisis, and will influence policies under the new EU Presidency.

Damien advised delegates that the CPMR General Assembly in Göteborg (30th September, 1-2 October) would debate the future Cohesion Policy, but there was a need to work initially on the issue of the global economic crisis.

Damien also highlighted a Conference on Innovation due to be held on the 16th and 17th of September. The CPMR will be organising a seminar on EU support for Innovation at this event and is keen to interact with the various Sea Commissions on this – especially the North Sea Commission.

Damien concluded his report by mentioning other key activities identified under the CPMR Spanish Presidency. These included three seminars on the themes of the future of the CAP, Transport/Trans European Networks and External Co-operation and Development. There may be more events during the new presidency.

In discussion following Damien’s report, the delegates requested clarification on the purpose of the meeting due to be held on the 16th of July. They were advised that the meeting will be about the economic crisis and the impact of the crisis. The CPMR were looking for political representation at the event. It will be followed by the EU and is a key political issue.

John Lamb (EERA) advised that the NSC Sustainable Development Group would attend the CPMR Energy Group meeting in Cornwall in October.

Damien also told delegates that DG Research had invited the CPMR join a high level working group on Marine issues.

It was agreed that attendance of the CPMR on the 16th of July would be discussed at the NSC Executive Committee Meeting.



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1.4.2 Report from the North Sea Regional Advisory Council

Hugo Andersson, Chair of the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (NSRAC) reported on the Council's work over the last year. He thanked for the NSC for the good co-operation and co-ordination between the two organisations since his last report.

Since last year a number of reports have been prepared, adopted and sent to the European Commission regarding different parts of the Common Fisheries Policy. He described two areas of particular interest – (1) the contribution made to the Green Paper adopted by the Commission issued in April 2009 - this will start the discussion and debate on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy for 2012 and (2) a paper with advice on the Proposals for Control Regulation.

Activities over the last twelve months included:

- A seminar held in France with three other Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) which discussed long term management plans and maximum sustainability. There is a need to agree the best approach to these issues. A pilot plan for Nephrops has now been started, and it should lead to a long term management plan for the species.
- Marine Protected areas and EU Natura 2000 areas: A NSRAC Spatial Planning Working Group has been established. There is a recognised need for co-ordination between different member states in some key areas (eg the 'Dogger Bank'). The NSRAC has offered to be the forum for different member states and stakeholders to meet and agree an action plan for specific areas.

The Green Paper on the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy will remain a priority over the next 2 years. The Common Fisheries Policy will be decided in 2012 and will last for the next 10 years. Discussion will start with the Green Paper. This gives the NSRAC two years to work towards this important Policy.

Before the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002 there was a lot of discussion about Regional Management. This resulted in the creation of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). The RACs have almost five years experience and it is considered that now is the time to review the organisations. The NSRAC will arrange a meeting in November this year with other RACs in order to discuss various responsibilities and roles and the new Common Fisheries Policy.



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1.4.3 Report on the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme

Carsten Westerholt, Interreg North Sea Region Programme, presented the report on behalf of Christian Byrith, Head of Secretariat. He said it had been a busy and very important year for the new Interreg Programme.

Due to the financial crisis the original Interreg IIIB Programme period had been extended. All 70 approved projects are now all closed and finalised, and a new web-based tool has been developed to share best practice. A recently launched results and outcomes section has also been created on the website.

The new IVB Programme has been promoted through development workshops and thematic seminars. The Programme Secretariat has also developed closer co-operation with the NSC through staff attending a number of the North Sea Commission thematic group meetings. There has also been close co-operation with the NSC Secretariat. The joint General Assembly and conference had also been useful for discussing project ideas.

39 projects have been approved under the IVB Programme, and the target is for a minimum of 50 projects. Most of the money has been allocated under many of the priorities. The next Call for Applications has been postponed until 2010. The decision about the dates will be taken at the next Monitoring Committee in October 2009.

Carsten said that the move from the IIIB Programme to the IVB Programme had seen transnational co-operation become more important. Joint planning, joint infrastructure, joint implementation and clusters are all themes under this new programme

He said that, at the recent NSC Seminar for Politicians there appeared to be interest in developing and updating the existing plans and strategies for the Region.

Carsten also emphasised some points made by Joe Borg (European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) in his recent presentation. There will be a database created on the co-operation programmes. There will be a chance to input to these, and the NSR has a lot to offer in terms of pilot and demonstration projects eg on water management and protection.

1.4.4 Report on the NSC Annual Seminar for Politicians

Audrey Findlay (former Vice President of the NSC) reported on the Annual Seminar for Politicians, and its very topical workshop theme - 'Do we need a new Strategic Vision for the North Sea?'

The seminar (jointly hosted by Audrey and Viv Collie) was constructed in two parts. The first part required an assessment of existing strategic documents for the North Sea Region



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(‘NorVision’ - produced in 2000, and the Interreg IIB North Sea Programme Synthesis Report – produced in 2005). The second part of the seminar addressed recent and likely future changes in the Region, and whether a new strategic vision is required for the area.

The seminar discussions had identified a number of reasons for considering a new strategy. These included the recent EU ‘Blue Book’ on Maritime Policy, climate change issues, energy strategy, the global economic recession, recent work by the Committee of the Regions, and the recent development of a Baltic Sea Strategy.

The conclusion had been that, although NorVision still has a value there is a need to now update and upgrade the document. The time is right to start the process of creating a new vision and strategy for the North Sea.

The participants concluded that a new North Sea strategy could use elements of NorVision and develop them. Any new document, however, must be cross-sectoral, professional, comprehensive, convincing, concise and deliverable.

These outcomes, said Audrey, were supported by comments made by Joe Borg (European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) in his plenary presentation the previous day when he said that the future development of a North Sea strategy is worth considering.

The Annual Seminar for Politicians had concluded there is a need to consult stakeholders, and to lobby for EU, national, regional and other stakeholder support to implement a future North Sea Strategy. The participants agreed that the North Sea area has many years experience of successfully working together, but lessons could be learned from the recent development of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

It was agreed at the seminar that the NSC Executive Committee should decide on the initial steps in the process of developing a new North Sea Strategy.

Audrey concluded that the seminar had identified a great opportunity to focus on the needs of the North Sea Region – and that now is the time for the NSC to act.

Decision:

The President’s Report, the Thematic Group Annual Reports, and the continued support of the work of the NSC were adopted unanimously.

The Activity Report and the Reports for information from the co-operating organisations were adopted unanimously.



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2. Election of Office Bearers

2.1 Election of Vice-President of the North Sea Commission

The posts of Vice-President of the North Sea Commission were due for election, as Vice-President Cllr Rinske Krusinga (Provincie Noord-Holland) and Vice-President Cllr Sandy Cluness (Shetland Islands Council) had finalised their two year period. Cllr Rinske Krusinga and Cllr Sandy Cluness were the only candidates for the position of Vice-President for the period 2009 - 2011.

2.2 Members of the Executive Committee

Members of the Executive Committee were elected in 2007 for a two year period. (A list of members was included in the papers).

Each National delegation elects their National representative and Substitute member for the NSC Executive Committee for the period 2009-2011. The NSC Annual Business Meeting confirms this membership.

The meeting was advised of three changes to the existing list of members:

- Cllr John Lamb (East of England Regional Assembly) would be the new member for England
- Cllr Wulfran Despicht (Region Nord-Pas de Calais) would be the new member for France
- Cllr Tom Christer Nilsen (Hordaland Fylkeskommune) would be the new member for Norway

Decision:

Cllr Rinske Krusinga and Cllr Sandy Cluness were unanimously re-elected as Vice-Presidents of the North Sea Commission for the period 2009 – 2011.

The members of the NSC Executive Committee were confirmed for the period 2009 – 2011.



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3. NSC Thematic Group Work Plans 2009-2010

The delegates were invited to adopt the work plans with the following amendments:

Sustainable Development Group Work Plan:

Delegates were advised that the SURF project has now been approved and is being taken forward.

Marine Resources Group Work Plan:

The Marine Resources Group has two additional projects to its Work Plan:

- The Maritime Spatial Planning Project in co-operation with the New Wave Project
- A Five Point Plan Action Plan

Decision:

The Thematic Group Work Plans for 2009-2010, including the two changes to the Marine Resources Work Plan and one change to the Sustainable Development Work Plan were adopted unanimously.

4. Finances

4.1 Accounts for 2008 and Auditor's Report

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) reported on the financial status of the NSC (Enclosure 1) and the Accounts for 2008 (Enclosure 2). These followed the budget for 2008 with a small surplus (2,930 Euros). He reported that everyone had paid their fees, but the overall income was lower than expected due to the currency exchange rates.

The delegates discussed the need for the NSC to have financial reserves and to budget carefully. There is still a need, however, to look at how to provide additional resources if required for the NSC Advisers. This would need to be discussed at the Executive Committee.



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Decision:

The 2008 Accounts (Enclosure 2) were approved unanimously.

Decision:

The Auditor's Report of 15.05.09 was approved unanimously.

4.2 Proposed budget for 2010

Lars outlined the proposed budget for 2010 ('Enclosure 3' in his report). The budget is based on last year and adjusted by the inflation rate of 1.2% (as agreed in 2005).

The total budget for 2010 (based on the graded membership fees) is 142,075 Euros (compared with 140,390 Euro in 2009).

Cllr John Lamb (East of England Regional Assembly) advised delegates that the Regional Assemblies in England will cease to exist in 2010 and this could impact on NSC membership and budget (although individual local councils may join). Lars advised that a letter had been received from EERA after the budget had been set and, therefore, this hasn't been calculated in. There are, however, also local memberships in the area.

Decision:

The NSC budget for 2010 (as presented in Enclosure 3) was approved unanimously.

4.3 Members

Lars stated that the NSC had a new German member (Bremen).

Decision:

The NSC membership information was noted.



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5. Resolutions and Political Statements

5.1 Draft resolution from the Marine Resources Group 'Effects of Cod Recovery Plan':

Cllr Anders Fasth (Region Västra Götaland), Chair of the Marine Resources Thematic Group told the delegates about the updates that had been made since the meeting held earlier that week, and requested that the final, revised, version was adopted.

There followed a debate on the urgency of the situation, and how more innovation could be brought into fisheries to help support economic activities at a local level in small coastal communities.

Anders advised that the resolution was intended for the EU level of decision making.

There was discussion on the need to protect both local fishing communities and cod stocks. This included the points made by Joe Borg (European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) during his presentation the previous day on the need to urgently address the issue of discarded fish.

Decision:

Resolution 5.1 'Effects of Cod Recovery Plan' – revised version was agreed for adoption with one vote against and 3 abstentions.

6. Invitation to the 19th General Assembly

Cllr Ellen Solheim (Rogaland Fylkeskommune), invited the NSC to hold the 19th General Assembly in Stavanger, Norway on 16-18 June 2010.

Decision:

It was agreed that the next General Assembly should be held in Stavanger, hosted by Rogaland Fylkeskommune, Norway 15-18 June 2010.

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) thanked Cllr Ellen Solheim for her invitation to Rogaland. She talked of her pride in the work of the NSC and the strength and inspiration it brings. She thanked everyone for all their efforts in the work of the organisation.

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Gunn Marit thanked Cllr Rinske Krusinga and staff for their hard work and hospitality in hosting this year's General Assembly.

She closed the meeting by emphasising the organisation's strength through co-operation, the need for innovation, and the important role the NSC can play in the future of the North Sea Region.