

**Draft Agenda
25th NSC Annual Business meeting
17th June 2016 – 09.00 –13.00, Billund**

FORMALITIES
<p>Welcome</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval of the agenda 2. Approval of the minutes of ABM 18th June 2015
REPORTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Report from the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme 4. President's Report 5. Report from NSC Secretariat 6. Report from European Maritime Day 7. Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Culture & Tourism b. Economic Development c. Marine Resources d. Energy and Climate Change e. Transport Report on alternative fuels in transport 8. Report from CPMR
PRESENTATION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. External Presentation by Dr. Irene McMaster – North Sea in Numbers
STRATEGIC ISSUES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Status on a Preparatory Action for the North Sea Region 11. Resolution on the landing obligation 12. Political statement on transport 13. Revised NSR2020 strategy 14. NSR2020 Action Plan 2016-2017 15. Legoland Declaration – “Building blocks for the future” from NSC ABM 2016
NSC ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Model for a sustainable NSC Secretariat 17. Proposal for reorganization of the thematic working groups 18. Communication Activity Plan 19. Election of NSC President 20. Election of NSC Vice-President 21. Confirmation of Members and Substitute Members to the NSC Executive Committee 2015-2017
FINANCES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Audited accounts 2015 23. Auditor's report of accounts 2015

24. Statement of Accounts as per 30th April 2016
25. Proposed Budget 2017

AOB

26. Meeting plan 2015-2016
27. Information regarding the 26th Annual Business Meeting

1. Approval of the agenda

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. *Approves the agenda***

2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Business Meeting 18th June 2015

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves *the minutes of the Annual Business Meeting on 18th June 2015***

3. Report from the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme

Head of the Interreg Secretariat, Christian Byrith, will present a status report of the Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme at the meeting.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. *Takes note of the information*

4. President's report

North Sea Commission Acting President, Cllr Kerstin Brunnström, will present her report at the meeting.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Adopts the President's report

5. Report from the NSC Secretariat

Enclosed is the activity report from the NSC Secretariat summarising activities since the last Annual Business Meeting in June 2015.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. *Takes note of the information*

Activity Report NSC Secretariat

June 2015 – June 2016

Presidency

Presentations and speeches

- Scottish ExCom member Martin Kitts-Hayes addressed the ENSEA Final Conference in Edinburgh 1st September 2015
- Vice-President Brunnström gave a presentation at the CPMR/DG Mare Blue Invest event in Brussels 22nd September
- Vice-President Kerstin Brunnström gave a presentation about North Sea Grid during the CPMR GA in Florence 6th November 2015.
- President Tom-Christer Nilsen moderated a break out session during the NSCOGI Conference in Oostend 23rd October 2015
- Vice- President Kerstin Brunnström gave a speech during the transport section on CPMR Political Bureau in Haarlem 19th February 2016.
- Acting President Kerstin Brunnström attended the Sea, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (SEARICA) intergroup in the European Parliament 20th April 2016
- Vice President John Lamb gave a presentation about the North Sea Commission at the Europe and International Panel East of England meeting 15th April in Chelmsford
- Acting President Kerstin Brunnström gave a speech under the thematic session on blue growth at European Maritime Day 2016 in Turku

Meetings

- Monthly presidency telephone meetings
- President Tom-Christer Nilsen chaired the ExCom and internal workshop in Brussels 27th and 28th October
- The President Tom-Christer Nilsen attended the NSCOGI Conference in Oostende 23rd October 2015
- Vice-President Kerstin Brunnström chaired the NSC meeting during the CPMR GA in Florence 5th November.
- Vice- President Kerstin Brunnström attended a workshop on maritime investment organised by CPMR and the Dutch presidency 18th February in Haarlem, the Netherlands
- Vice- President Kerstin Brunnström attended CPMR PB in Haarlem, The Netherlands 19th February 2016
- Acting- President Kerstin Brunnström chaired the ExCom meeting in Gothenburg 2nd March 2016
- Vice President Kerstin Brunnström attended the transport group meetings in October

and February, and the joint meeting of the ECCG and EDG in Inverness 13th-15th April 2016,

- Acting President Kerstin Brunnström attended the adviser meeting and revision group meeting in Bergen end of April
- Telephone meetings between the Secretariat and the Acting President every second week

Secretariat – meetings attended

- Conference on legal barriers for a North Sea Grid in Amsterdam 26th June 2015
- Thematic Group meetings:
 - Energy and climate change group: 13th-15th April in Inverness,
 - Culture and tourism group 19th October in Aalborg, Strategic meeting 22nd January in Stavanger, 15th-16th February in Sandnes
 - Transport group 5th-6th October in Billund, 3rd-4th February in Gothenburg
 - Marine resources group, 28th-29th Sept at Frøya, 11th-12th January on Shetland
 - Economic Development group, 8th-9th October in Aberdeen, 13th-15th April in Inverness
- ENSEA Final Conference in Edinburgh 1st-2nd September 2015
- Administrative revision group in Brussels 21st September 2015
- CPMR/ DG Mare seminar “Blue Invest” in Brussels 22nd September 2015
- Meeting with Haitze Siemers and Christine Ratel, DG Mare about preparatory action 21st September 2015
- Meeting with CPMR Secretary General about new model for secretariat 21st September 2015
- Attended planning meeting for North Sea Conference in Billund 7th October and 25th November 2015
- Organised NSC workshop during Open Days October 2015
- Attended CPMR GA including CPMR working group/task forces meetings
- Monthly skype meetings with CPMR management team
- Regular telephone conferences with CPMR Secretariat
- Extended management meeting CPMR in Brussels 21st-22nd January 2016
- CPMR Political Bureau Haarlem 18th-19th February 2016
- Workshop on maritime investment organised by CPMR and the Dutch presidency 18th February in Haarlem, the Netherlands
- ExCom meeting in Gothenburg 1st-2nd March 2016
- Planning meeting North Sea Conference 9th March 2016
- Streaming DG Mare info day about Blue Growth calls
- CPMR maritime working groups in Brussels 19th April 2016
- Sea, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (SEARICA) intergroup in the European

Parliament 20th April 2016

- Meeting with Scottish Enterprise regarding Blue technology call 19th April 2016
- Europe and International Panel East of England meeting 15th April in Chelmsford
- Adviser meeting 27th April
- Administrative revision group 28th April
- Executive Secretary attended North Sea Region Programme Steering Committee Nov 2015 and Monitoring Committee May 2016
- Participation EMD and preparing speech and input for Acting President

Secretariat – operational

- Restructuring NSC website
- Working on new models for the NSC secretariat
- Coordination of revision NSR2020
 - Questionnaire to member regions as part of the revision process
- Preparation of President's meetings, speeches and presentations
- Establishing social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn as communication channels
- Preparation of a message to the Dutch presidency
- Planning and preparation for a workshop during Open Days
- Planning for the Excom and workshop in Brussels 27th and 28th October 2015
- Distribution of policy papers to national governments/EU institutions; Assen Declaration and North Sea Grid Statement
- Dialogue with European Commission about second stakeholder event under preparatory action
- Planning and preparation for CPMR GA in Florence 4th-6th November 2015
- Attended workshop to learn about new website in Rennes 14th-15th December 2015
- Prepared a consultation response to the open consultation on amendments of the Norwegian Energy Act concerning ownership of interconnectors
- Attended the extended management group meeting before the CPMR PB
- Planning and preparation for the ExCom in Gothenburg 2nd March 2016
- Facilitate for task force on new model for secretariat
- Participate in task force regarding DG Mare call "blue technology"
- Working with DG Mare on 2nd event under Preparatory Action
- Planning for North Sea Conference workshops and ABM in Billund

6. Report from European Maritime Day 2016

The ExCom decided in October 2015 to use the European Maritime Day 2016 as an important networking event to promote the North Sea Commission. Being involved in the Maritime Days is a good opportunity to give the NSC a stronger profile towards relevant stakeholders and for dialogue with the European Commission.

European Maritime Day 2016 takes will take place in Turku 18th-19th May. The event is an annual meeting point for Europe's maritime community to network, discuss and forge joint action. The theme of this year's event is: Investing in competitive blue growth – smart and sustainable solutions.

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström has been asked by DG Mare to speak under the plenary session on "Investing in blue growth". The session will address some of the key drivers for competitiveness and economic transformation such as the circular economy, digitisation and service innovation. It will highlight successful investments in smart and sustainable solutions and explore how to invest in new value chains.

An oral update after the events will be given at the Annual Business Meeting.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Takes note of the information

7. Annual Reports from the thematic groups

Attached are the annual reports from the NSC thematic groups summarising activities since the last Annual Business meeting in June 2015.

At the meeting the chairs of each thematic group will present the most important issues from their report.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Discusses and approves the thematic groups' annual reports***

Annual Report Culture and Tourism Group

Introduction

Ever since the 2015 AGM, the plans to close down the Culture and Tourism Group has naturally had a marked impact of the work of the group, although the group has also continued its work with culture and tourism issues throughout the last 12 months. The group plans a final meeting in October 2016 to celebrate more 21 years of work and to prepare for a new group that hopefully will follow up much of the work initiated by the Culture & Tourism Group.

The group in brief / Chair, Vice-Chair and advisor

Councillor Frederikke Stensrød of Østfold County Council, Norway, was elected Chair of the group in June 2015, but left the county council during the autumn of 2015. Vice-Chair Otto Kjær Larsen from North Denmark Region took over as acting Chair and Councillor Birgitta Adolfsson from Västra Götaland Region was elected the other Vice-Chair in October 2015.

Mr Geir Sør-Reime from Rogaland County Council, Norway, has acted as adviser of the group since the autumn of 1997.

Issues / activities

Since the last AGM, two issues have dominated the agenda of the group: stimulating and assisting co-operation between cultural actors in the member regions of the NSC; and the Youth Festival of Art 2017 with participation from all North Sea countries.

In addition, the work with a North Sea seafood experience project has continued.

Group Meetings

The group had an informal meeting linked to the 2015 AGM in Assen, and in Assen, the group's members also participated in the founding conference and study tour of the CCOne network of cultural actors in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea regions.

Two ordinary meetings have been held: the 52nd meeting in Aalborg, Denmark 19 October 2015, with 13 delegates and a focus on linking cultural actors, including discussions with several cultural institutions in Aalborg.

The 53rd meeting was held in Sandnes, Norway, 15 February 2016 with 18 delegates, and here, the focus was the Youth Festival of Art to be held in Sandnes in June 2017 and the planning of participation of youth delegations from other North Sea countries. Visits to the festival venues were included in the program.

The 54th meeting will be held on the 14th June 2016 in Billund. Here, the group will finalize the Youth Festival of Art participation and prepare the final, 55th meeting on Tjörn, Västra Götaland, in October.

Cooperation (other groups+ external)

The major co-operation since last AGM was with the CCOne (Cultural Co-operation Northern

Europe) network prior to, and during the AGM in Assen 2015. The group followed this up by choosing co-operation between cultural actors as the main focus of work during 2015, and making this the main theme of the 52nd meeting in Aalborg.

Next meeting

There will be a meeting on 14 June 2016 in Billund, and the final meeting of the group will be held on Tjörn 13-14 October 2016.

Annual Report Economic Development Group

Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarise the work of the economic development group during the period from June 2015 to June 2016

Mission Statement of EDG: Through engagement with our members we look to develop innovative economic activity and R & D within the North Sea Region.

From that Mission Statement we have developed a work plan which places emphasis upon several areas of interest:

- Cluster development in various sectors (maritime, tourism, energy, food, biotech)
- Address urban-rural divides and immigration
- Foster stakeholder cooperation in labour market, education and research policy
- Explore LLL to improve skills and employability

In corporation with other TG's:

- Develop catalogue and action plan for climate
- Promote innovations and growth in low-carbon tech. in various sectors

The group in brief / Chair, Vice-Chair and advisor

Chair; Councillor Barney Crockett. From Aberdeen City Council, Scotland
Vice chair Councillar Drew Ratter. Shetland Islands, Scotland
Councillor Patrick Brouns, province of Groningen, The Netherlands
Advisor: Simon Tijmsma, province of Friesland, The Netherlands

Issues / activities

Idea generation
Project development. (within the context EU 2020 policy)
Project submission
Project execution (e.g. Erasmus: How Children Learn and 3d in education)
Sharing best practices (mostly part of project development)
Several meetings on project level.

Group Meetings

On project level (e.g. Interreg ,Horizon and Erasmus)

A meeting of the EDG on 13th – 15th april 2016 in Inverness in Scotland , together with the Energy and Climate Change Group

A meeting of the EDG in Aberdeen on the 8-9th of October 2015. The topic of this meeting was: "The

Creative Sector as a catalyst for Economic Development.

In this meeting we also said goodbye to councillor Ellen Solheim, Rogaland County Council, who has been chair of the Economic Development Group and its successors for many years

Cooperation (other groups+ external)

A common meeting on 13th – 15th april 2016 in Inverness in Scotland

In autumn a group meeting in Groningen about the topic circular economy

tbc

Next meeting

In autumn 2016 on the topic of circular economy in the Northern Netherlands (together with the energy and climate group)

Spring 2017 blue growth/ blue city in Leeuwarden

Annual Report Marine Resources

Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarise the activities of the Marine Resource Group from June 2015 to June 2016

The group in brief / Chair, Vice-Chair and advisor

Chair: Anders Fasth, Västra Götaland, SE

Vice-chair: Martin Kitts-Hayes, Aberdeenshire, SCO

Vice-chair: Jonathan Wills, Shetland Islands, SCO

Adviser: Camilla Løvaas Stavnes, North Sea Commission Secretariat

Issues / activities

Fisheries and aquaculture:

One unanswered question for fisheries dependent communities in the aftermath of the CFP reform is the socio-economic impact of the landing obligations. This has particular practical complications in implementing a discard ban in mixed fisheries. This was discussed in depth at the group's meeting on Shetland in January 2016. The group put forward a draft resolution on discard ban to the ExCom in March. The paper was sent to all members for an open consultation. A final draft will be put forward to ABM in June.

Maritime spatial planning:

The Maritime Spatial Planning directive was adopted by the Council and European Parliament July 2014. A NSC political statement on implementation of the directive was adopted by the Annual Business Meeting in Aberdeenshire June 2014. National marine plans should be in place by 2021.

The representatives in the Marine Resource group share best practice, showing activities at local, regional and national level. As the directive is adopted it is up to the member states to implement. The group will be involved in the North Sea Interreg project NorthSEE activities through Noord-Holland as formal member. The project aims to develop coherent marine planning in the North Sea basin. The project was approved during the Interreg North Sea first application round; it is a great opportunity for the NSC to engage directly with national level authorities regarding MSP. The adviser and group members attended the informal kick-off meeting and the kick off meeting of the NorthSEE project in Hamburg in February and April 2016.

Maritime skills:

The ABM in June 2015 adopted a message on maritime skills from the group. A list of suggested areas for continued cooperation was concluded on during the group meeting at Frøya September 2015. The group will focus on career opportunities in the fisheries sector, with an opportunity to broaden the scope in the next phase. The chair and adviser of the group were invited to an ad-hoc expert group in Brussels organised by DG Mare 16th December 2015. It was a good opportunity to communicate outputs from discussions in the group and to engage with relevant stakeholders. The discussions were followed up during the meeting on Shetland January 2016.

Group Meetings

MRG meeting – Assen 17th June 2015

The full group met for a short meeting during the North Sea Conference in Assen, NL. Representatives from the Dutch government were invited to summarise the MSP Challenge Game Day prior to the conference and give a presentation of their activities within MSP. A discussion about the focus areas under the “Managing Maritime Space” part of the North Sea Region 2020 was carried out as a part of the revision process.

MRG meeting – Trondheim/Frøya 28th-30th September 2015

The full group met at Frøya end of September 2015. The study trip was totally memorable. We visited world class aquaculture industries; seeing the whole process of fish farming in 24 hours. Maritime training was the main topic during our group meeting, a list of areas for future cooperation was concluded in the meeting.

MRG meeting - Shetland Islands 11th-12th January 2016

The full group had a very inspiring meeting on Shetland in January 2016. The main output of the meeting was a resolution on discard ban. We also had very good discussion and presentations from stakeholders on Shetland on maritime spatial planning and maritime skills. The discussions are important input to the action plan and future work.

Strategic group

The strategic group (chair, vice-chairs, adviser and officers) has met prior to ExCom meeting to plan ahead and discuss more in-depth.

Cooperation (other groups+ external)

Marine Planning Exchange in Aberdeen 2nd July 2015

The adviser and administrative representative from Aberdeenshire attended a workshop hosted by University of Aberdeen. The workshop gathered a broad range of stakeholders involved in marine planning. The University of Aberdeen has initiated a project to gather all relevant information on marine planning at one place; a one stop shop. They have started off with Scotland and England and are looking into expanding to other North Sea countries. The initiative is related to other MSP projects and initiatives.

CPMR General Assembly 2015

Vice-chairs, advisers and group members attended the **CPMR GA** in Florence November 2015. Vice-chair Wills, adviser and group members attended the CPMR Maritime Working Group during CPMR GA in Florence; presenting the new focus on maritime skills.

Adviser meetings

The thematic group advisers had a meeting during the CPMR GA in Florence to discuss outcomes of the discussions during the ExCom and how to develop a North Sea Region in numbers.

The advisers attended the second planning meeting for the North Sea Conference in Billund 25th November 2015.

Open Days October 2015

The adviser and members of the group attended the **Open Days**; an important networking event for the North Sea Commission.

NorthSEE

The adviser and members of the group attended the informal and formal kick off meeting of the

NorhtSEE project. The adviser of the group was invited to give a presentation from a regional level in an ICES workshop “conflicts and coexistence in MSP” in Hamburg 9th February.

Next meeting

Billund, DK 16th June 1600h-1800h

Annual Report Energy and Climate Change Group

Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarise the work of the Energy and Climate Change working group in the period from June 2015 to June 2016

The group in brief / Chair, Vice-Chair and advisor

Chair: Jimmy Gray

Vice Chair: Jon Olav Strand

Vice Chair: Ard van der Tuuk

Advisor: Paulien Kooistra

Issues / activities

Preparing workshops on Oceans energy and Transport for the annual North Sea Conference in Assen.

Preparing a brochure on North Sea Grid and preparing input for the Assen declaration

Preparing of climate change activities

Generate input for the NSR revised strategy.

Preparing several interreg projects: Icope, NORTHsee.

Preparing participation of the NSC in the High Level group Energy meeting at 3rd of February, Amsterdam as part of the Dutch presidency of the EU (January – June 2016), “Regional Cooperation towards a European Energy Union”. Organising input on the North Sea Grid issue.

Setting up a meeting with the Dutch and German TSO TENNET to discuss amongst others the NSC position on North Sea Grid, discussing the Doggers Bank Project.

Preparations for the working group meeting in Inverness, April 2016, Billund and Netherlands (circular economy) and a workshop with the Atlantic Arc Commission of the CPMR (October).

Group Meetings

-June 2015, Working group meeting in Assen, North Sea Conference

-November 2015, Working group meeting in Schiphol Amsterdam

-13-15th of April working group meeting in Inverness, Scotland

A combined group meeting of the ECGG group and the Atlantic Arc CPMR group together with the EDG group was held on the 13th until the 15th of April.

Cooperation (other groups+ external)

Cooperation with the Economic Development Group, the CPMR Energy group and the Atlantic Arc Group. Cooperation with the Economic Development group in the working group meeting in Scotland and in the Netherlands, September 2016 about circular economy.
Planning of a meeting together with the Transport group.

Next meeting

16th of June 2016, Billund, Denmark

21, 22 September 2016, Netherlands, Drenthe and Groningen

Annual Report Transport Group June 2015 – June 2016

Introduction

This report summarises the work of the NSC Transport group since the last NSC Annual Business Meeting in Assen in June 2015

The group in brief / Chair, Vice-Chair and adviser

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

Leadership and administration

Chair: Cllr. Preben Friis-Hauge, South Denmark Region, elected on 31 October 2011

Adviser: Jon Halvard Eide, Vest-Agder (NO) (appointed October 2000)

Vice-Chair: Cllr Peter Argyle, Aberdeenshire Council (SCO) (elected 8 March 2013)

Vice-Chair: Cllr Kåre Pettersen, Vestfold County Council (NO) (elected 4 March 2015)

Delegates to the CPMR Transport Working group

Fabian Ilgner, Örebro region (SE)

Philip Smart, Aberdeenshire Council

Jon Halvard Eide, Vest-Agder

Issues / activities

- Participation of NSC member regions in the TEN-T Core Network Corridor Forums
- Involvement of member regions in Interreg and CEF projects
- Contributions to NSC transport seminar at Open Days in Brussels (see separate section below)
- Participation and contributions to CPMR events on transport
- Survey among NSC member regions on the use of alternative fuels in the transport sector (will be presented at the Annual Business Meeting on 17 June)

Group Meetings

Billund (DK) 5 – 6 October

The meeting was attended by 18 participants from 5 countries (SE, DK, NO, NL and SCO), including representatives of the NSC Presidency and Secretariat. Also several politicians without positions in the group attended the meeting. The first day was dedicated to a seminar with presentations of projects to relevant EU programmes (Interreg, Horizon 2020 and CEF) having participation of actors from NSC member regions. The seminar also discussed project ideas to upcoming calls and role of the Transport group as a platform for project development and dissemination.

The ordinary group meeting on 6 October addressed participation of NSC member regions in the TEN-T Core Network Corridor Forums, and discussed the 1st edition of a survey on the use of

alternative fuels in public transport and other transport services among the member regions. The meeting also provided input to the revision of the transport priority in the NSR 2020 strategy.

Gothenburg 3 – 4 February 2016

The meeting was very well attended with +20 participants from member regions in 5 countries (SE, DK, NO, NL and SCO), including representatives of the NSC Presidency and Secretariat. Also several politicians without positions in the group attended the meeting. The first day was devoted to presentations of transport projects and actors in Västra Götaland Region. The ordinary group meeting on 4 February addressed regular issues in the Work plan on TEN-T & CEF, sustainable transport and clean shipping. Group members from South Denmark and Örebro reported from the last series of meetings in the TEN-T Core Network Corridor Forums. A 2nd edition of the survey on the use of alternative fuels among NSC member regions was presented and discussed. The meeting also heard updates on the outcome of the 1st call in relevant Interreg programmes, and discussed a draft revised version of the transport chapter in the NSR 2020 strategy.

Billund 15 June

The Chair will give an update from this meeting in his oral report to the ABM on 17 June.

Attendance at other NSC meetings

On 25 November, the Adviser attended a meeting in Billund for the planning of the 2016 Annual Conference, together with representatives from the Interreg North Sea Region Programme Secretariat, South Denmark Region, fellow Advisers and the NSC Secretariat.

The Adviser attended meetings in the Administrative group for the revision of the NSR 2020 strategy on 21 September and 28 April.

The Chair and the Adviser have attended and reported to the Executive Committee meetings in Brussels on 27 – 28 October and in Gothenburg on 1 – 2 March.

Cooperation (other groups+ external)

TEN-T Days in Riga 22 – 23 June

The Adviser and group members from Aberdeenshire, South Denmark, Örebro and Drenthe attended the annual TEN-T Days in Riga organised by the European Commission, and with participation of the EU Transport Commissioner and national transport ministers. There were sessions on the governance and coordination of the 9 Core Network Corridors (CNCs), horizontal issues like intelligent transport systems, alternative fuels and innovative financial instruments like loan guarantees and bonds.

Participation and contributions to CPMR events

Group members from Aberdeenshire, Nord-Pas de-Calais (NPdC), Örebro and the Adviser attended a meeting of the CPMR Working group on Transport in Brussels on 15 September. Representatives of DG Move gave an update on recent TEN-T & CEF developments, new financial instruments and maritime transport. The NPdC Vice President chaired the session on maritime transport. The delegate from Aberdeenshire gave a presentation of tools developed to facilitate the involvement of regions in CEF projects and to identify projects located in the NSR, and the Adviser mentioned some of the selected CEF projects covering NSC member regions.

A group member from Aberdeenshire represented the group at a meeting of the CPMR Working group on Transport in Brussels on 19 May, dedicated to the EU implementation plan for Motorways of the Sea (MoS). The meeting provided an opportunity for CPMR regions to ask questions, state needs and provide recommendations to the European Coordinator Brian Simpson on the implementation of the MoS scheme in the TEN-T and CEF.

The Adviser submitted specific amendments to the transport chapter of the final declaration from the CPMR General Assembly in Florence on 6 November which were adopted.

The Adviser provided input and speaking notes for NSC Vice President Kerstin Brunnström to her participation at the accessibility session of the CPMR Political Bureau in Haarlem (NL) on 19 February.

Transport workshop at Open Days in Brussels 13 October

The Transport group was involved in the planning and implementation of a workshop in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on 13 October organised by the NSC Secretariat. The workshop had the title *Emission Impossible? – Linking policy and low-carbon transport projects*. The Chair moderated the workshop. Four successful Interreg projects lead by NSC member regions were presented, followed by a panel discussion between regional politicians highlighting the role of transport in the transition to low-carbon society. Apart from South Denmark Region, this panel also comprised politicians from the NSC member regions in Drenthe and Østfold. The panel examined the motivation for participating in these projects, their results and links to regional policies.

Participation at meetings of CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) Transport Working group

The Adviser and a group member from Örebro have represented the Transport group at three meetings of the BSC Transport Working group in Riga (LV), Kymenlaakso (FI) and Örebro (SE) respectively.

International conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in Bremen on 12 – 13 April

The Adviser and some group members attended this conference, organized by representatives of the NSC member region in the City of Bremen. The conference, with +400 participants from more than 40 countries, demonstrated a vast number of good practice solutions and explored the requirements for sustainable urban mobility. We believe that the presentations from this conference could provide valuable inspiration and practical guidance for urban mobility planning in NSC member regions. The conference also launched a declaration on sustainable urban mobility. The Adviser represented the NSC at a dedicated roundtable for political representatives moderated by the European Commission DG Move.

The presentations from the conference are available for download here:

<http://eltis.org/resources/promotional-materials/3rd-sump-conference-presentations-0>

Declaration: : <http://www.eltis.org/discover/news/3rd-european-conference-sustainable-urban-mobility-plans#sthash.JJSWeOxm.dpuf>

Upcoming group meetings

- Billund 15 June
- Bremen 12 – 13 September

8. Report from CPMR

CPMR Director Nicolas Brookes presented the work of CPMR at ABM 2015 in Assen and presented the ideas behind the CPMR Final Declaration at the ExCom in October.

The CPMR declaration is adopted each year by the General Assembly (GA) of CPMR in November. The declaration presents the main messages to the European institutions from the CPMR member regions/geographical commissions and is the culmination of the year's technical papers and meetings as well as the decisions from CPMR Political Bureau. NSC coordinated input for amendments to the declaration from NSC regions to the final declaration at the GA in Florence. NSC Secretariat and member regions contributed to the writing group during the CPMR General Assembly.

The final declaration from the CPMR General Assembly in Florence in November is attached to the papers as annex 8a. The agenda for the Political Bureau which is being held concurrently with this meeting is also attached as an appendix 8b.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the CPMR Declaration from GA in Florence and the agenda for the Political Bureau June 2016***

9. External presentation by Dr. Irene McMaster – North Sea Region in numbers

The necessity to establish a common evidence base for the North Sea Region was identified early in the revision process of the North Sea Region 2020 strategy document. There is a need to establish North Sea specific statistics and information in order to support our argumentation for more structured cooperation in the North Sea region.

10 000 €, of the 30 000 € set aside for the revision process, will be spent developing a North Sea Region in numbers statistical document. We have asked Dr. Irene McMaster from EPRC, Strathclyde University to do the work. She has been involved in the work developing the new North Sea Interreg Programme, and has in-depth knowledge and understanding of the North Sea Region. Dr. Irene McMaster has compiled information about the North Sea Region both at a general level, as well as more specific information under each of the strategic priority areas. The list of requirements is developed in cooperation with thematic group advisers and revision administrative group.

Irene McMaster will present the results at the Annual Business Meeting.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Takes note of the information

10. Status on the Preparatory Action for the North Sea Region

Background

The European Parliament granted 250 000 euros for a preparatory action for the North Sea end of 2013, based on lobby work of the North Sea Commission and then President, Ole B. Sørensen. The original aim of this Preparatory Action (PA) was to analyse the North Sea region's growth potential and use the findings to investigate the added value of having a future shared macro regional strategy for the North Sea area.

European Commission DG MARE is responsible for implementation of the Preparatory Action which has taken the form of a series of stakeholder events. The first event was organised in Edinburgh on 29th January 2015. The event focused on maritime spatial planning and offshore renewable energy and was organised in cooperation with DG ENERGY. These are two of the areas where NSC sees a clear added value of cooperation and stakeholder involvement. More than 150 participants from all countries around the North Sea participated in the conference, representing different governmental levels, academia, industry and NGOs. The event gave a boost to the Preparatory Action and the work NSC has focused on for several years, laid down in NSR2020 strategy for the region. The North Sea Commission has been pushing for the second Preparatory Action stakeholder event to bring matters further.

Regional cooperation and Dutch Presidency

It was hoped that there would be a high level political North Sea event linked to the Dutch Presidency. The Dutch presidency seems like an ideal occasion to bring member states around the table. Ahead of their Presidency, Netherlands had launched their strategic North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda. The Assen Declaration, adopted at the ABM in June 2015, was a direct response to this document and contains a message requesting the Dutch Presidency of the European Union to take a leading role in driving the process for closer strategic cooperation between the member states and Norway on a "North Sea Agenda".

A high level meeting was indeed held between the member states under the Dutch Presidency in February this year. This meeting discussed the role of regional energy cooperation and we are informed will culminate in a Memorandum of Understanding between the member states, to be signed

during the Energy Council meeting 6th June. This can be seen as a follow-up step on the North Sea Countries' Offshore Grid Initiative (NSCOGI).

NSC strategic work and the Preparatory Action

The North Sea Commission has retained a close dialogue with DG MARE regarding PA and has constantly reminded them on the need for development and implementation. Executive Secretary has met twice with Haitze Siemers Head of Unit at DG Mare since the first event under the Preparatory Action in Edinburgh, most recently as a brief discussion in Florence during CPMR General Assembly in November. Here the need for information, action and results was stressed as a direct message following discussions between the members at the ExCom meeting in October in Brussels.

In the interim between stakeholder events under PA, NSC strategy has been to utilise opportunities to discuss and present the Preparatory Action to various audiences at European, national and regional level. We place the Preparatory Action into a policy and thematic context whenever we can, where we call for coordinated cooperation around North Sea. An example of this is the work on promoting North Sea Grid by President Nilsen. CPMR are also instrumental in this strategic work and back NSC wherever relevant by putting the Preparatory Action on the agenda at their meetings and events.

We are much in line with DG Mare on this issue. Commissioner Vella opened the DG Mare/CPMR Blue.Invest seminar in Brussels on 22nd September 2015 by calling for investments in the region of € 100 billion to realise energy security and a North Sea grid. The new Juncker plan was offered as a possible way to secure investment projects. Vice-President Kerstin Brunnström held a speech at this event outlining the NSC position on maritime clusters and skills and the North Sea Grid.

The "NorthSEE" project application lead by the German Federal Ministry under North Sea Region Programme was approved at the first Steering Committee meeting last year. The project includes a partnership of national level ministries from several countries responsible for MSP. The project includes work packages on energy infrastructure, shipping and environmental aspects of MSP and is a golden opportunity to test out national level cooperation in the North Sea.

Information on progress under the Preparatory Action has been presented at each Executive Committee meeting since October 2013 and at each ABM. The focus has been on reporting how the strategic work of the Secretariat and other political processes directly connect to the Preparatory

Action, following the first event in Edinburgh in January 2015. The work on North Sea Grid has been used a primary example of what can be achieved through formalised cooperation.

Next event now planned

DG MARE has now planned the next event under PA in the form of an interactive workshop. This will take place 20th-21st June 2016 in Den Haag. The host region is NSC member South Holland. NSC Secretariat has been instrumental in the choice of location for the event and has worked to place the event under the official Dutch Presidency umbrella. NSC has also been consulted on the content of the workshop.

The idea of the workshop is to explore the way forward for strategic transnational cooperation on blue growth in the North Sea. The event will “foster a discussion on a broad set of economic opportunities related to the blue economy, the European Commission aims to bring together selected stakeholders for a day and a half of structured discussions. The event will be focused on challenges and opportunities for strategic transnational co-operation and in particular, what needs to be done to facilitate and accelerate strategic public-private initiatives that can maximise joint business opportunities in blue growth areas/value chains in the North Sea region. The workshop will be organised in a participative and inclusive way, as to identify the collective ideas and needs of the stakeholders.”¹

As part of the preparation for the event DG Mare conducted an online survey for interested parties to submit their areas of interest and asked for information on barriers and drivers for closer cooperation. DG Mare have informed that “Three broad topics have been selected for the workshop, based on the survey results, in order to ‘focus’ the discussions in parallel sessions:

- Marine aquatic / food products
- Short sea shipping (ship building, shipping technologies, port infrastructure, and logistics)
- Blue biotechnology (including marine - pharmaceutical products)

The three topics will be used to structure the discussions with the aim of arriving at operational recommendations for future co-operation. However, the workshop will be organised as an open

¹Registration email 29.04.16 from DG Mare: Open Registration - Workshop on strategic cooperation on Blue Growth in the North Sea - The Hague, 20-21 June 2016

discussion and participants are encouraged to propose alternative topics or cross-cutting themes of relevance to their region or organisation.”²

Acting President Brunnström has been invited to take on the role of harvester and rapporteur for the group sessions at the event.

The Legoland Declaration will be a useful tool at the event in Den Haag at the end of June since it calls for the collection of the results from the PA in a clear overview in order to establish focus areas for further work and cooperation.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. *Takes note of the update on the Preparatory Action***

² See above footnote

11. Resolution on the landing obligation

The Marine Resources group has prepared a resolution on discard ban; attached as appendix 11a.

The paper comments on the implementation of the landing obligation under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The landing obligation was applied to pelagic fisheries in the North Sea on 1 January 2015 and to demersal fisheries from January 2016.

There is a general support of the landing obligation as a mean to prevent overfishing. The changes are already in place, and there is a need to find efficient ways of implementation. There is however a few concerns that need to be raised to European Commission and member states. Fishery-dependent communities fear a rigid, inflexible and heavy-handed implementation of the landing obligation, especially as it is being introduced before necessary changes to fisheries management systems. Most concern is connected with demersal fisheries, as the pelagic fisheries are mostly single species catches. Mixed fisheries represent a particular challenge in implementing a landing obligation.

These and other serious, unresolved difficulties lead us to suggest that a flexible and workable landing obligation must be implemented in close cooperation with stakeholders.

The CFP reform and landing obligation in particular is a debated question also in the North Sea Region. A draft resolution was put forward to the ExCom in March, following an open consultation for all members until 1st March. The topic has been discussed in the Marine Resources Group. Further input has been received from Shetland Islands, Region Västra Götaland, Møre og Romsdal & Sogn og Fjordane, Schleswig Holstein and Aberdeenshire. The North Sea Advisory Council Advice from February 2016 has also been taken into account.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Discusses and adopts the resolution on discard ban

11a. North Sea Commission Resolution on landing obligation

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is a set of rules for managing European fishing fleets and for conserving fish stocks. Stocks may be renewable, but they are finite. Some of these fishing stocks, however, are being overfished. As a result, EU countries have taken action to ensure the European fishing industry is sustainable and does not threaten the fish population size and productivity over the long term. At the same time the scientists will get the best possible data in order to give better advice for future fisheries and quotas. The CFP was first introduced in the 1970s and went through successive updates, the most recent of which took effect on 1 January 2014.

One of the more debated areas of the reform process has been the landing obligation, commonly known as the discard ban. It was applied to pelagic fisheries in the North Sea on 1 January 2015 and to demersal fisheries from January 2016. Fishery-dependent communities fear a rigid, inflexible and heavy-handed implementation of the discard ban, especially as it is being introduced before necessary changes to fisheries management systems. Most concern is connected with demersal fisheries, as the pelagic fisheries are mostly single species catches. Mixed fisheries represent a particular challenge in implementing a landing obligation.

The more practical and socio-economic effects of the landing obligation are still to a large degree uncertain at the regional level. The North Sea Commission's Marine Resource Group had a meeting on Shetland January 2016. Shetland Fishermen's Association gave a presentation about the practical problems certain to be caused by the phased introduction of the new EU ban on demersal fish discards. Shetland is one of the NSC member regions where a strong fishery sector is important for jobs and growth in the region. This is not unique in the North Sea Region; messages from Shetland are comparable with those from other fishery dependent regions in the EU. Norway, on the other hand, has practiced discard ban since the late 80s.

The NSC Marine Resources Group wishes to draw the attention of the following urgent concerns when the landing obligation for demersal fisheries now is coming into force:

- The fishing industry needs time to restructure the quota system to enforce the necessary measures regarding landing obligation.
- If rigorously implemented without changes in the way multi-species fisheries are managed, the changes are very likely to bankrupt many demersal fishing vessels. This is because of the presence of so-called 'choke species', these being locally abundant fish for which quotas could quickly be exhausted. This situation could force vessels to cease fishing well before they have caught their quota allocations for their target stocks;
- Further financial penalties may be incurred in disposing of over-quota fish which cannot be sold or which attracts a price less than the cost of catching it;
- The regulation appears to ignore the fact that adult commercial fish of different species regularly caught together in mixed fisheries vary widely in size, making selectivity extremely difficult - for example, when all whiting are able escape a net mesh size which traps the much larger hake;

- The Norwegian government has extensive experience of implementing a no discard policy in similar mixed fisheries over the past 30 years; the potential for European authorities to learn from that experience is not fully explored;

The North Sea Commission recommends:

- The North Sea Commission sees the landing obligation as an important mean to prevent overfishing and maintaining a sustainable marine environment. However there are unresolved problems which need to be addressed and brought to the attention of the European Commission, particularly concerned mixed fisheries.
- Unresolved difficulties, especially in fishery dependent communities, lead us to suggest that a flexible and workable landing obligation must be implemented in close cooperation with stakeholders, mainly through the North Sea Advisory Council
- A cooperation forum between fisheries organisations and authorities from Norway and EU countries should be established to exchange good practice, as Norway has 30 years' experience with a discard ban
- The North Sea Commission therefore asks for incentives for the fishing sector to apply technology which reduces the bycatch. It is important that the fishermen are allowed to implement and adjust their gear over time. Rules and regulations should be harmonized simultaneously throughout the whole EU – in order to avoid a situation of distorted competitiveness between fishermen from different member states.
- The North Sea Commission encourages the fishing sector in the member regions to make use of the services provided by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).”

12. Policy statement on transport issues/priorities in the North Sea Region

The transport group has prepared a policy statement attached as appendix 12a.

This statement intends to highlight some core requirements for the promotion of accessibility to peripheral and maritime regions and for sustainable transport solutions, in line with the NSR 2020 Action Plan. The policy messages in this statement are targeting relevant services of the European Commission, national transport authorities, the CPMR Secretariat and to some extent also our member regions.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Discusses and adopts the policy statement***

12a. Policy Statement on Transport

This statement intends to highlight some core requirements for the promotion of accessibility to peripheral and maritime regions and for sustainable transport solutions, in line with the NSR 2020 Action Plan. The policy messages in this statement are targeting relevant services of the European Commission, national transport authorities, the CPMR Secretariat and to some extent also our member regions.

Since the adoption of the new guidelines for the TransEuropean Transport Network and the funding instrument Connecting Europe Facility in 2013, the need to ensure better access to funding for projects in peripheral and maritime regions have become apparent. The governance framework for the TEN-T Core Network Corridors should also be made more inclusive, transparent and holistic.

To succeed with the ambition of moving freight from road to sea, it is furthermore required to improve the funding opportunities for maritime transport services at EU level, as well as to facilitate for a smooth compliance with the EU Directive for Sulphur emissions from shipping.

In order to exploit the big potential for greater uptake of low-emission vehicles & technologies there is a need to harmonise regulatory frameworks across borders and to apply state aid rules in a flexible manner - allowing for necessary public support and incentives.

Finally, the statement supports the "Bremen Declaration on Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning in Europe", and is encouraging the NSC member regions to take full advantage of the recommendations contained therein, as well as of the many practical solutions presented at the big international conference there on 12 -13 April.

Ensure better access to the TransEuropeanTransport Network (TEN-T) and the funding instrument Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for peripheral and maritime regions

1. In the context of the upcoming review of the EU multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, the NSC is calling for increased financial allocations to the comprehensive network of the TEN-T, and more favourable co-financing rates for projects on this network. The selection of projects on the core network corridors should also be assessed against their impacts on accessibility to peripheral regions outside the core.
2. The CPMR Secretariat is, in cooperation with the geographical commissions, requested to start the preparation of concrete proposals for adjusting the definition of the TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Network in the review of the TEN-T guidelines which is due to take place by 31 December 2023. The proposals should have an ambition of including more ports and transport corridors in peripheral regions in the core network and strengthen the links between the different layers [core-comprehensive] of the network. In this context it is also important to analyse how projects on the core network could benefit the concern for improved accessibility to peripheral regions.
3. The implementation framework for the TEN-T Core Network Corridors should be made more inclusive, also allowing for the involvement in corridor forums of regions, ports and transport hubs not located directly on the corridors. Furthermore, the current approach whereby each corridor is treated like a closed circuit without addressing transport flows from the outside is artificial and should be changed.

Strengthen territorial cohesion and improve environmental performance of maritime transport

4. The NSC believes that EU instruments for maritime transport, such as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) should be strengthened by re-introducing support for the start-up of maritime services, also including financial incentives for road transport operators who opt for maritime transport, in line with the so called eco-bonus principle. CEF calls for Motorway of the Seas (MoS) should be made more favourable for projects in peripheral areas in terms of co-financing rates and eligibility rules with a view of enabling more core-periphery connections, as well as connections between ports on the comprehensive network. It is also important to enable connections with non-EU ports in shared sea basins.

5. In order to ease the compliance with the EU Sulphur Directive for shipping, the European Commission should strengthen the support for greater uptake of Methanol as a shipping fuel. Methanol has technical and financial advantages compared with LNG, and equally good environmental performance.

Support clean, efficient and inclusive mobility

6. In order to facilitate a large-scale roll out of low-emission vehicles & technologies, the NSC believes that relevant regulatory frameworks should be better harmonised across borders in terms of technological specifications and density of charging systems and filling stations for alternative fuels.

7. It is also important that the application of state aid rules allow for necessary public support and incentives to support the development and operation of low-emission transport solutions, e.g tax exemption schemes for bio gas and hydrogen in public transport services

8. The NSC supports the "Bremen Declaration on Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning in Europe", launched at the 3rd European Conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in Bremen on 13 April 2016. The conference focused on an efficient and people-centred approach to Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP) in the context of European guidance documents. The NSC believes that the declaration and presentations from this conference could provide valuable inspiration and practical guidance for urban mobility planning in our member regions, and is encouraging them to take advantage of the knowledge contained therein.

The declaration is highlighting:

- The space-efficiency and low congestion levels in cities facilitated for walking and cycling.
- The importance of combined urban and mobility planning
- That vehicle technologies should be used as a tool to achieve goals, not as a driver or as a goal in itself
- The need for city and regional authorities to take better account of technological developments towards autonomous vehicles in the planning of urban transport systems
- That shared mobility concepts, such as ride-, bike- and car sharing can help improve transport efficiency, save street space and reduce transport-related emissions
- The importance of involving as many groups and individuals as possible in urban mobility planning

The presentations and the declaration from the conference are available for download here:

<http://eltis.org/resources/promotional-materials/3rd-sump-conference-presentations-0>

<http://www.eltis.org/discover/news/3rd-european-conference-sustainable-urban-mobility-plans#sthash.JJSWeOxm.dpuf>

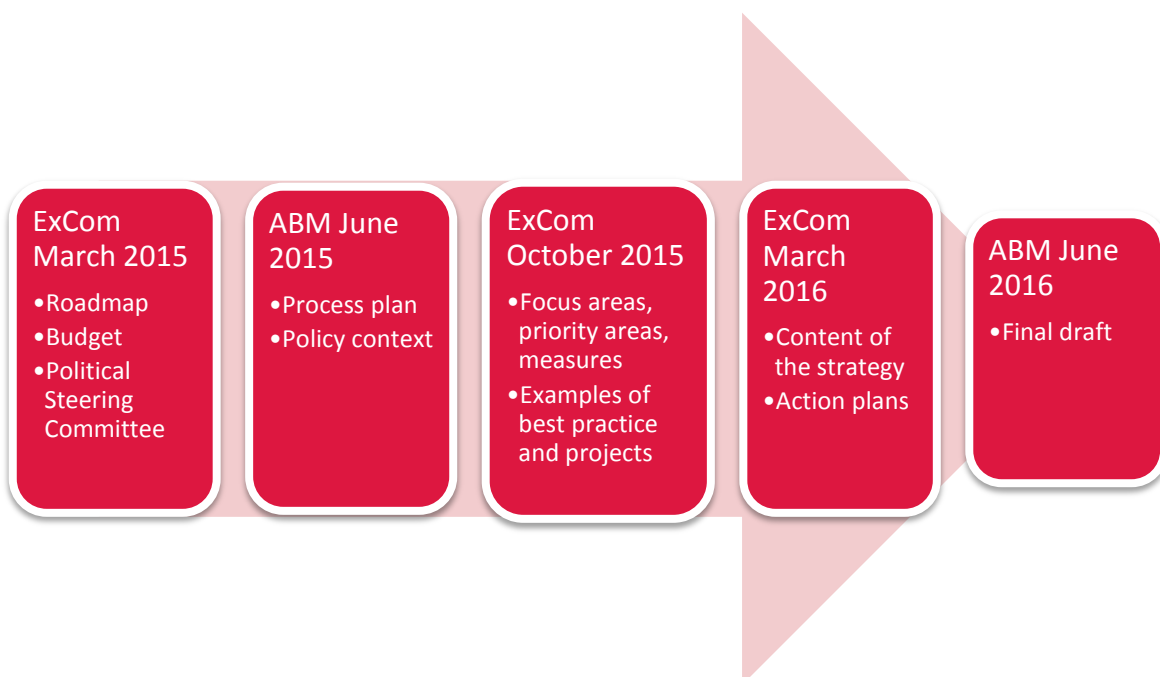


**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016
Appendix 12a**

13. Revision NSR2020 strategy

A revised North Sea Region 2020 strategy document is presented as appendix 13a.

The Executive Committee (ExCom) asked for a revision of the North Sea Region 2020 strategy document October 2014. A timeline for the process was approved at the following ExCom meeting in Bergen March 2015. ABM and ExCom meetings have been milestones for the work.



1. Why make a revision?

The North Sea Region 2020 was adopted for a 10 year period. The half way marker is a good opportunity to analyse what we have already achieved, what is outstanding and how we can close the gap.

The NSR 2020 is a good document. It has helped us to structure our own work and to give a direction for North Sea cooperation. It has also made us more visible in Brussels. When initiating the strategy process back in 2009, the ultimate goal was to develop a North Sea Macro Regional Strategy where different governmental levels would contribute to follow up. This is reflected in the measures and follow -up action points listed in the strategy. The North Sea is a successful region with successful ongoing cooperation. The North Sea Commission argues that a more structured and strategic cooperation is needed to realise the full potential in and around the North Sea basin. Macro-regional or sea basin strategies are currently being developed in a number of other European sea basins. Member states are still reluctant to initiate a North Sea strategy. This makes it crucial for the North

Sea Commission as an organisation to look at which of the measures we can follow up ourselves, and where we need to lobby EU institutions and member states to take action.

2014 was the start of a new European funding and programming period, and a new European Commission and European Parliament took office. A revision of North Sea Region 2020 will have to take into account the new political reality.

2. Political steering group and administrative working group

The presidency was chosen to be a political steering group. They have monthly telephone meetings and delegated powers to make decisions in between the ExCom meetings. The NSC Secretariat was asked to lead and form an administrative working group. The administrative working group is set up by the thematic group adviser and a few key resource people from member regions to give a better geographical balance. The administrative working group has met three times and commented on drafts electronically.

3. Budget

The ExCom has set aside € 30 000 for the revision process from the free reserves. This should cover both internal expenses and external expertise. A total of € 14684 has been spent until April 2016. Expenses related to the last administrative working group has not been included, nor expenses to layout/print or proof reading. This will be reported at the Annual Business Meeting.

4. External expertise

The administrative working group decided to carry out most of the revision work within the group; a representative group of officers knowing the organisation and the opportunities/challenges of the North Sea Region. This has also kept the expenses lower than expected.

A need to establish North Sea specific statistics and evidence base was concluded early in the process. Dr. Irene McMaster from the European Policies Research Centre at Strathclyde University was assigned to make the report. She has valuable experience from both evaluation of the North Sea Interreg programme and the process leading up to the UK House of Lords report on EU Regional Marine Cooperation. Dr. Irene McMaster was also asked to do a comprehensive proof reading of the first draft.

5. Involvement

It was not set aside a budget for big stakeholder conferences. External events such as European Maritime Days, the North Sea Conference and Open Days were made use of to engage with important stakeholders. A designated workshop was organised during the North Sea Conference 2015 to inform and gather input from member regions and stakeholders.

Member regions have also been kept informed about the process during ABM and ExCom meetings. All members were invited to give their input through an online questionnaire sent out immediately after the Annual Business Meeting June 2015.. Members were asked to rate the importance of the focus areas from their own regional perspective. A number of open questions gave each member an opportunity to give input on best practice, the horizontal priority and the process in general. 19 out of

31 members responded. Input from member regions together with discussions with member regions have been fundamental for the revision of the strategic priority areas.

The NSC Secretariat has attended all thematic group meetings to give updated presentations on the revision process, and get input on the different deliverables. The papers and finalised product put forward to the different ExCom and ABM meetings is made based on input from the groups.

6. A revised document: changes made

The text in the document has been updated to match the current reality and to reflect conclusions of internal discussions carried out during the revision process. The text under strategic priority areas have been updated in cooperation with the thematic group advisers. It has been done in an attempt to shorten the text and make it more targeted towards the aim of the strategy document. A few technical changes have been made to the structure of the document; based on the experience of working with the strategy since 2011. The current focus areas and key measures are proposed to be merged to key action areas to simplify the structure. The horizontal principles are renamed to guiding principles to reflect their nature. They are also widened after decisions in the October 2015 ExCom meeting; they will be integrated in the work of the four strategic priority areas. Challenges and opportunities have been updated based on conclusions from the workshop prior to the ExCom in October 2015. Examples of best practice will be added as an appendix to make it easier to update them regularly. The same counts for a “North Sea Region in numbers” statistical document and the updated action plan; they will be added as addendums to the strategy paper.

7. NSC follow up – NSR 2020 action plan

A proposal to merge the existing overall action plan and the thematic group work plans are proposed based on experience from the thematic groups. It has been difficult to tell the different plans apart, and the merge will avoid a continuously updating of plans. One document makes it easier to streamline level of action points and reporting from the thematic groups. The groups have been challenged to highlight the role of the North Sea Commission in the activities and outcomes, and to put forward achievable activities and outcomes. The document will be updated annually. The proposed action plan for 2016-2017 is listed as agenda point 14.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Adopts the revised North Sea Region 2020 strategy document

13a. Draft Revised North Sea Region 2020 Strategy document

Foreword

This strategy document demonstrates how the North Sea Commission aims to contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The North Sea Region 2020 strategy was adopted in October 2011. The Strategy signalled a commitment to supporting Europe 2020 objectives and set out key areas for joint action and engagement in the North Sea Region. Since 2011 work to meet the Strategy's goals has been on going. Five years on from the adoption of the Strategy and in the context of rapidly changing policy and economic conditions, it is now important to revisit, review, and refresh the Strategy.

A 'bottom-up' Strategy review process has involved NSC members and other regional authorities in the North Sea Region, as well as stakeholders from NGOs, industries and academia. The NSC has also received advice from partners in Brussels, from EU Commission Directorate-Generals, and relevant regional offices. I would like to thank all who contributed to the process. Particular thanks go to the North Sea Commission's internal work groups, who through their efforts show the added value of working together.

I am proud to present the revised North Sea Region 2020 Strategy – a strategy designed to: meet the challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities, the North Sea region offers; and provide a coherent strategic framework for how we can address the development of the Region together

Photo and signature:

Kerstin Brunnström
Acting President
North Sea Commission

North Sea Commission in brief:

The North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation platform for regions around the North Sea. Our mission is to further partnerships between regional authorities which face the shared development challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea. Through dialogue and formal partnerships the NSC seeks to promote common interests, especially in relation to European Union institutions, national governments, and organizations dealing with issues relevant to the North Sea. The North Sea Commission is one of six geographical commissions under the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). The CPMR brings together 160 regions from 28 states, both

members and non-members of the European Union, and thereby represents almost 200 million people. It campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory, and is also working towards the delivery of an integrated maritime policy designed to contribute towards Europe's economic growth.

1. Introduction:

The North Sea Region (NSR) is a functional area defined by the North Sea, covering the North Sea regions of Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, France and Norway. North Sea regions share strong historical and cultural ties and a long history of exchange through intensive trade and tourism. The NSR comprises leading European regional economies, covering major urban centres and rural, peripheral communities. The region is an engine for growth in Europe, with concentrations of sectoral strength, skills, know-how, best practice and centres of excellence. Significant opportunities remain to not only promote balanced development within the region but build on the leading European and global position of North Sea Region economies.

The NSR 2020 Strategy was developed to help address the challenges and opportunities the region faces, and ensure a NSR contribution to long-term EU strategies and goals, in particular the Europe 2020 Strategy. Europe 2020 is the European Union's growth strategy, which aims for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It sets five key targets on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy to be met by 2020. In line with these goals, the potential for growth in the maritime economy is identified as a key strength in the European economy. The North Sea Region (NSR) includes a number of strong economies and is one of the most successful regions in Europe. Its unique character builds on strong ties, shared cultures and closely related languages. The NSR therefore has the potential to act as an engine for growth in Europe by sharing best practices and acting as a centre of excellence for the wider EU issues. Great opportunities exist in the NSR which need to be unlocked, and it is therefore important to acknowledge that not only less advantaged regions need to catch up; successful regions need to improve to stay competitive globally. The NSR 2020 strategy is designed to address the challenges and opportunities the region faces and to ensure NSR contribution to long-term EU strategies and goals.

The maritime sector is at the heart of economic development in the NSR. North Sea fisheries provide high quality fish and shellfish, and sustain associated industries. Oil and gas are major industries in regions around the North Sea. The North Sea has some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, making it a global hub for maritime transport and trade. As a source of renewable energy the North Sea, with its strong winds, waves and currents, is a vital resource not just for the region but for Europe as a whole.

Policy, economic and environmental contexts in the region are dynamic and changing. As a result, there is a need to continually diversify and adapt. For example, opportunities for future economic growth exist within highly specialized maritime clusters with cutting edge technology in various fields, notably geared to the environment and favoring green growth. Through regional cooperation and collaboration, these opportunities can be better developed, better connected and made more mobile throughout the region, advancing the North Sea Regions position as a centre for innovation, excellence and best practice.

The North Sea Region 2020 Strategy's overall goal to help ensure and maintain an attractive and prosperous North Sea region in which to live, work, visit and invest for its citizens. The North Sea Region 2020 aims to help foster and develop an attractive and international area for citizens,

businesses and organisations and a better governed region, with improved cooperation and coordination between all levels of government and sectors. In doing so, the NSR 2020 supports the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and contributes to the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth for Europe. Strategy aims to provide a framework for greater policy integration and coherent development through coordination and cooperation in the North Sea Region.

2. Purpose and objective

To effectively meet development opportunities and challenges in the North Sea Region there is a recognised need to improve the coordination of funding sources and cooperation efforts. The region's numerous existing cooperation programmes, projects and initiatives are extremely valuable. However, there is a risk that they can operate in isolation and miss opportunities to share know-how, broaden their impact, and extend results. The North Sea Commission therefore prepared the NSR 2020 as a means to facilitate more 'coordinated cooperation', providing a framework for greater policy and practical exchange, integration, and coherent development.

The idea of developing area-based strategies to address shared challenges within a defined geographical area is well-tested. There are EU macro regional strategies for the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic-Ionian Sea, the Alpine Region and the Danube Region. A sea basin strategy has been developed for the Atlantic area. Experience from existing strategies demonstrates that a strategic approach and prioritized actions can offer a framework for bringing together complimentary but fragmented actions across levels and sectors, lead to the development of new platforms for policy innovation, develop sustainable growth, improved competitiveness, and innovation.

It is important to emphasise that the rationale for the NSR 2020 is distinct from that of existing EU strategies; which are primarily motivated by a need to improve socioeconomic cohesion, competitiveness and environmental performance. The NSR 2020 is designed to ensure that the strength and competitiveness of the North Sea Region is maintained, and the region further develops as a sustain-able and attractive region which is an engine for growth in Europe. Thus, the objective of the strategy is to focus on transnational issues, where there is added value in working collaboratively.

3. Scope

The North Sea Region is more than the sea basin which physically links the region. Geographically, the region covers the North Sea regions of Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, France and Norway. It is important that the Strategy is relevant for, engages with, and benefits all communities in the region. The geographic scope of the Strategy is not closely defined. This allows the Strategy to remain flexible and relevant on specific themes, e.g. issues to be tackled may involve inland and hinterland areas, as well as coastal regions, e.g. transport, environmental issues and water management.

The thematic scope of the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy is based around four priority areas, which are shared regional development concerns, are in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy and relevant national policy priorities, and have the scope to benefit from joint/collaborative actions. The Strategy

aims to support sustainable growth and improve the quality of life for the regions' citizens by addressing:

- tapping into 'blue' resources
- promoting a more environmentally friendly and efficient transport sector,
- energy and climate issues facing the region, and
- promoting local businesses and partnerships in order to help create vibrant local communities.

In pursuing these aims the Strategy will promote innovation and seek to support a skilled and relevant workforce for the future.

4. Challenges and opportunities:

The North Sea 2020 strategy addresses key perceived challenges and opportunities for the regions around the North Sea. These challenges and opportunities are reflected in the four strategic priority areas. In these areas, greater strategic cooperation between different governmental levels and with a range of stakeholders offers the potential to make best use of resources to address shared strategic objectives and deliver concrete benefits for the region and its people.

Challenges:

Accessibility: Both physical and digital connectivity are challenges. The most peripheral regions around the North Sea need better access to the markets. Time improved framework conditions are needed to facilitate a modal shift from road transport to rail and sea. Broadband and digital connectivity are still poor in many North Sea regions. Improvements in these areas are seen as crucial to fostering economic development.

Energy transition: Dependency on oil and gas is a challenge for many North Sea regions. A shift to renewable energy sources would contribute to diversifying the economy, and addressing climate change. Given the rapid expansion of offshore wind farms, common standards for their construction, safety, noise and visual pollution must be agreed. A prerequisite for climate adapted utilization of these energy resources will be an interconnected grid, which can help the transition to renewable sources with optimal use. Such cooperation requires formalization, as well as national level leadership and participation. To cope with these changes investment in network infrastructure is needed both onshore and offshore.

Pollution/emissions: Economic development and increasing pressure from human habitation have greatly compromised the North Sea's ecosystem and led to major environmental problems. The Sea and its beaches are affected by plastic waste contamination, eutrophication, pollution of waters with chemicals and heavy metals from industry, shipping and the extraction of natural gas and oil. Data on environmental management and conditions is held by hundreds of different institutions; making it difficult to get a comprehensive picture. Better coordination and exchange of data is key to knowledge based decision making.

Climate Change: Sea level rise and the increased danger to coastal areas from flooding caused by climate change will have an effect on the countries around the North Sea. Climate change can also put a further burden on the marine ecosystem through warming, water acidification, and the influx of new species. Regions have an important role to play in climate mitigation and adaptation.

Managing maritime space: The maritime space faces pressures from competing activities in the region. For example, over coming years the anticipated increase in the number and size of offshore wind farms and increases in shipping and size of ships will lead to increased competition for space between users of the sea. A successful implementation of the MSP directive, with coordinated effort from different governmental levels and stakeholders will be important for a balance between environmental protection and blue growth.

Human resources: The North Sea Region faces a long-term demographic challenge, creating pressure on key services, such as health, transport and leisure. The region must continue to be an attractive place to live, with good jobs and a vibrant cultural life. Many regions in the North Sea area have been negatively impacted by the economic decline and unemployment. The region must remain competitive, attractive to highly skilled labour in key sectors, and responsive to a changing economic climate and recovery in key sectors, such as maritime transport and offshore operations.

Opportunities:

Interconnectivity and infrastructure: The comprehensive trade in the NSR and access to major international ports is a significant resource for the further development of efficient and sustainable freight transport by sea. Short sea shipping and motorways of the sea can be further developed and better connected with inland waterways in the region.

Energy transition and renewables: The natural environment in the North Sea Region offers great potential for renewable energy, the expansion of which is crucial to meeting climate change targets and to future economic growth and jobs in the region. Energy from wind, wave, tide, hydropower and biomass can be further developed, researched and promoted. Planning for a North Sea Grid – a comprehensive energy network - has been set in motion to realise the full potential of renewable forms of energy. Collaboration between NSR States, regions and private partners could foster the necessary progress towards a fully functioning North Sea Grid. Fibre optic cables adjacent to the interconnectors are also seen as a great opportunity for spin off for local development for the North Sea Grid.

Natural resources: The sustainable use of natural resources will continue to be a significant opportunity for the region. This can be tackled collectively and must be coordinated in order to prepare the basis for future sustainable development of natural resources. Robust, strategic planning and good governance increases the opportunity to build and maintain sustainable development. For ex-ample, joint and collaborative efforts in spatial planning can make sure that the space and resources available are used in the best possible manner.

Creative industries and innovation: Innovation, research and development and the creative industries are key features of the region. Future development relies on knowledge sharing in order to create new products and services. With improved cooperation and combined efforts, this position of strength can be reinforced and further developed to make the North Sea Region a centre of excellence.

Skilled and educated work force: The creative and cultural economy in many regions of the North Sea Region will assume increasing importance for growth and employment. Coastal regions around the North Sea have been closely connected through migration flows, close trade relations and shared maritime traditions for centuries. Cross-thematic research initiatives for the region could be launched,

geared to gather knowledge about the North Sea Region from all disciplines to underpin the innovation culture and the economic development.

5. Strategic priority areas:
 - a) Managing Maritime Space

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)

The North Sea is a complex and open marine ecosystem, providing a nursery for fish and a migratory and wintering area for many species of birds. It is also one of the most heavily used seas, supporting fishing, shipping, trade, energy, sand mining/dredging, defense, and recreation activities. Increasing economic activity in the sea, such as growing shipping traffic and the development of offshore wind farms, leads to increasing competition between users of the sea. The key challenge for marine planning is to find a balance between different user interests, and between 'blue growth' and ensuring good environmental standards. A coordinated approach, taking cross border issues into account is needed to ensure effectiveness of national and EU policies.

The EU's Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) directive came into force in September 2014. Harmonized plans and policies aim to ensure effective use of space and the available resources. Close integration and coordination between MSP and integrated coastal zone planning (ICZM) is also paramount as coastal zones are the "hinges" between terrestrial and maritime systems. If a truly Integrated Maritime Policy is to be achieved, dialogue between all users of and regions around the North Sea is needed. Being one of the most heavily used sea basin in the world, the North Sea is an ideal area for piloting systems for stakeholder involvement. Within this process, regions have a key role to play as they have knowledge about local conditions and challenges and are in close dialogue with key stakeholders.

Marine Resources

The sustainable management and exploitation of marine resources is vital to the future of the North Sea Region. Covering the North Sea, the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) sets rules for managing European fishing fleets and for long term and sustainable conservation of fish stocks. One of the more debated areas of the recent reform is the landing obligation. The socio-economic effects of the landing obligation are still to a large degree uncertain at a regional level. Most concern is connected to bottom feeding demersal fisheries, as the pelagic fisheries are mostly single species catches. Fisheries-dependent communities fear a rigid, inflexible and heavy-handed implementation of the landing obligation, with no changes to the management system. The industry is parallel to this developing selective gear to avoid unwanted catch.

The European Commission's blue growth communication identifies aquaculture as one of the areas with highest growth potential. Wild fish alone cannot meet the global demand for healthy seafood. Development of sustainable aquaculture activities can contribute to food security, growth and employment. In order to develop the industry in a sustainable manner issues relating to environment and health must be top of the agenda.

Key action areas:

- o Use of maritime spatial planning as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders
 - o Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources
- b) Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport

Ensure good access to the TEN-T Core Network for peripheral and maritime regions

The North Sea Region is positioned as a central transport and trade hub for Europe. The countries around the North Sea constitute a potential market of over 250 million consumers. Industry and consumer demand creates large flows of both imports and exports to and from the region. The efficient movement of goods and passengers depends upon well-functioning transport corridors and effective interconnections across transport modes, e.g., from road to rail to sea.

The core network corridors of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) will provide an important platform for coordinated infrastructure development in the NSR. Concepts like Motorways of the Sea (MoS) and short sea shipping can reduce congestion by transferring the transport of goods from road to sea, improve the accessibility of peripheral regions and stimulate regional competitiveness.

The southern part of the NSR is generally well integrated into core European networks, and is therefore also eligible for funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) instrument. Ports and transport corridors in peripheral areas of the NSR, e.g. Northern Scotland, Northern Denmark and Norway, are however usually not included in the core network and have limited access to funding for transport infrastructure. It is therefore important to ensure that more ports and corridors in peripheral areas are included in the core network in future revisions of the TEN-T policy. It is also vital that regions and ports outside the core network corridors are entitled to fully participate in and contribute to the forums that have been established for their implementation.

Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea

The competitiveness of maritime transport is vital to ensure transfer of cargo from road to sea and to improve accessibility to peripheral areas. In order to facilitate a modal shift from road to sea, it is even more important to allow for incentives to minimize the financial risks in starting up and operating sea transport services for stakeholders in the sector, e.g., port authorities, ship owners, freight forwarders and other haulage companies. CEF funding for Motorways of the Sea should be increased and the eligibility rules should be better adapted to the needs of stakeholders not located on the Core network.

The Sulphur directive has forced the shipping industry to implement costly solutions for cleaner engines to comply with the requirements of the Directive. It is feared this could contribute to a reverse modal shift by making road transport relatively cheaper and more attractive – contrary to the objectives of EU and national transport policies. Environmental solutions must operate within a global market where costs and competition are paramount.

The removal of regulatory barriers in line with the EU Railway Package and major infrastructure investments are vital to achieve this ambition. It is also important that rail infrastructure complies with relevant technical standards such as the ERTMS (European rail traffic management systems).

Clean, efficient and inclusive transport, including clean shipping

A mix of different measures is required to make transport cleaner. Demand and mobility management and the optimization of multimodal logistic chains may reduce people's travel need, and minimize distances and volumes for freight. The introduction of greener fuels from electricity, bio-sources and hydrogen will reduce GHG emissions. It is therefore important, with good funding programmes and incentive schemes on the European and national levels, to promote technological development and increased uptake of cleaner fuels in the transport sector. Relevant solutions must be tested, harmonised across borders, and made affordable to ensure large scale take up. In rural areas where there is no market for conventional public transport it is necessary to develop demand-responsive services. It is also important that the transport system is adapted to the needs of different population groups, including elderly and people with disabilities.

It is important that shipping becomes more environmentally friendly in line with relevant international and European regulations. The North Sea is a prime location for maritime pilot projects with global implications for improved environmental and safety standards for maritime transport and the promotion of Short Sea Shipping. With its network of ports and commercial shipping, as well as public agencies operating in national contexts, the North Sea is an ideal testing ground for solutions which can be applied world-wide through collaboration with maritime stakeholders. The EU and the Member States in the NSR must make continuous efforts to offset the increased costs incurred by the Sulphur directive.

NSR 2020 key action areas:

- o Ensure good access to the TEN-T Core Network for peripheral and maritime regions through funding instruments (the CEF) and governance mechanisms (Core Network Corridor Forums)
- o Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea
- o Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping

c) Tackling Climate Change

Adaptation and Mitigation

One of the major challenges facing the North Sea Region is climate change, and the related adaptation and mitigation measures that this will require. The impacts of climate change vary by region. Rising sea levels and the increased danger to coastal areas from flooding at times of extreme weather conditions are a shared threat to countries bordering the North Sea. Climate change will add stress to fisheries, agriculture and aquacultures sectors, as well as have severe effects on coasts and marine ecosystems. The coastal zones erosion rate will increase and existing coastal defense mechanisms may prove inadequate. For the North Sea, these are all important issues which impact key sectors of the economy. These wide ranging, complex, interrelated issues frequently require common or coordinated strategies and approaches developed across policy and geographic areas.

While all the countries in the NSR have, or are planning to adopt separate national climate strategies, as foreseen by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), there is an opportunity for coordination and the development of a collaborative approach to address climate change in the common resource that is the North Sea. Developing the knowledge base through joint research, sharing data, cross border studies etc. will be paramount to the development of a common and innovative approach to adaptation and mitigation.

Low Carbon Economy

Dealing with climate change also means investing in the development of the low-carbon economy, promoting innovative ideas and solutions to promote energy efficiency, and developing green technologies. A related issue is to raise awareness amongst the public and business communities in the region to the issues involved and options available. With these challenges also come opportunities. The NSR can position itself in a way that supports adaptation to changing climate and the development of new 'green' practices, industries and technologies.

Geographical conditions mean the North Sea Region has a huge potential for renewable energy. As fossil fuel resources become depleted and taking advantage of a shift towards renewable energy, the NSR can capitalise on its natural, technological and skills resources to explore large scale wind, wave and tidal energy projects. The cost of renewable energy technologies remains high and joint approaches could be keys to boosting their development and competitiveness.

Such steps complement wider policy initiatives. The EU Directive on renewable energy sets ambitious targets for all Member States, i.e. the EU will reach a 20 % share of energy from renewable sources by 2020. EU countries have already agreed a new renewable energy target of at least 27% of final energy consumption in the EU as a whole by 2030. This target is part of the EU's energy and climate goals for 2030. Renewable energy in the North Sea Region will play an essential role in meeting these targets. In its communication "Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond", the European Commission acknowledges the energy production capacities in the Northern Seas and proposes that an offshore grid in the northern seas with connection to Northern as well as Central Europe is among the priority corridors which will make Europe's electricity grids fit for 2020. Member States have chosen a regional approach and developed agreements with the objective to coordinate offshore wind and infrastructure developments in the North Sea. The 2009 Memorandum of Understanding between nine North Sea Countries will be re-confirmed during the Dutch presidency.

NSR2020 key action areas:

- o Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels
 - o Promote energy efficiency as well as innovation and green growth in low-carbon technologies
 - o Foster strong regional, national and European support for the development of the North Sea Grid
 - o Facilitate for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- d) Attractive and sustainable communities

Diversified economies

Many regions and municipalities/communities around the North Sea are heavily dependent on one key economic activity – for some it is the oil and gas industry, for others, traditional sectors like fisheries or agriculture still dominate local and regional economies. An important challenge for all regional authorities around the North Sea is to develop more diversified local economies. By increasing the diversity and knowledge base of the economy, the North Sea Region can better compete globally. Major changes in the economic structure should be met by innovation, diversification and growth in green and blue sectors.

For example, the digital economy offers major potential which must be further explored and exploited

by regional authorities around the North Sea. Linking into the development of broadband connections and taking advantage of the opportunities the new opportunities it offers is a key action that regions can take to promote new areas of economic development and grow others. Other actions include skills and competence development, research activities assisting the development of new products and industries, and the formation of cross-sector clusters to create regional and local environments for innovation and transfer of knowledge, technology and other solutions from one sector to others. Within established sectors there is also potential for promoting diversification. For example, the NSR has considerable strengths in its maritime sector. With shipping and maritime products and services as a core, high quality suppliers of technology, maintenance and services for the marine and off-shore industries represent important area of new innovation and engineering skills in the North Sea Region that have been able to establish themselves and grow in global markets. Previous experience of the North Sea as a working environment with oil and gas can help companies to establish them-selves as important contributors to development of renewable energy utilities that have already started their ocean operations.

Culture and Tourism

Culture and tourism around the North Sea is an important sector which can contribute to the development of the region, e.g. through the development of different kinds of tourism: historical/cultural, ancestral tourism, experience tourism, and business tourism. The further development and promotion of the sector will require a better understanding of cultures and histories in order to strengthen NSR identity and profile the region. An increase in competitiveness will require European and North Sea tourism industries to offer sustainable and high-quality tourism. Tourism also depends on the development of other sectors, and it is therefore important that tourism concerns are integrated into strategic processes and planning as other sector policies and initiatives are developed. Joint development of tourism, culture and creative industries, with innovative products, services and common branding of the region will be needed to compete in the global market.

Demographic change

The NSR has a very diverse and complex demographic pattern, covering some of the most sparse and densely populated areas in the EU. Despite this diversity, regions in the NSR share many of the same pressing challenges with regard to general demographic trends, declining and ageing populations, migration to metropolitan areas, and rapidly rising immigration. Potential areas for action include greater diversification of work life in the villages and smaller towns through even greater emphasis on skills and knowledge development. In addition, in light of recent increases in migration, the integration of large number of migrants entering the NSR coastal areas must include the development of skills to support the stability and sustainability of the communities they move into.

Stable populations and sustainability also depends on quality of life. Economic growth and attractiveness of the region's communities need to be promoted to sustain 'liveability'. Besides economic and social safety, quality of life also relies on leisure, culture and sport offers and activities. Such activities are also essential in integrating and enhancing populations in villages and towns.

NSR 2020 key action areas:

- o Promote knowledge transfer and cross-overs between different sectors in the North Sea Region
- o Promote maritime clusters to continue to play an important role as provider of blue growth, jobs and innovation.

o Support the development of more sustainability in the tourism sector; Support the diversification of tourism offers in coastal areas as well as in cruise tourism; Support the development of cultural heritage based tourism, nature, outdoor and health tourism in coastal areas; Support the development of permanent networks for cultural actors
Improve policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges

6. Guiding principles

In addition the priority areas identified by the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy, a number of horizontal issues are identified that run as common themes through all four strategic priority areas. The horizontal issues are integrated in the implementation of all policy areas.

Innovation and excellence:

The future challenges for economic development will be to capitalise on the region's excellence and to promote and maintain innovation in existing and up-coming sectors. This means stimulating exchange of knowledge and experience between regions, developing innovative clusters (of knowledge and excellence). A focus should be on promoting and supporting innovation across regions at a transnational level.

Sustainability:

Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Future development in the NSR must balance economic growth, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Skills & R&D

Progress towards a knowledge based society and a strong research base has already enabled excellence in sectors such as ICT, renewable energies, transport, marine technologies and creative industries. Access to high quality human resources to meet the labour market demands is important across the strategic priority areas. This challenge can best be managed by a close cooperation and intense coordination between the different regions of the NSR in the fields of: recruitment, education and training, cross-border mobility of labour, language acquisition, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, cooperation with the social partners, and learning from examples of best practice. Learning together and sharing knowledge can be enhanced by well-developed transnational networks.

Stakeholder involvement

A holistic approach to common challenges and opportunities requires the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders; cross-sectorial, cross-country and from different governmental levels. To address these issues and implement the strategy, it is necessary to improve regional cooperation in the NSR and the regional role in a multi-level governance framework. Governance mechanisms should satisfy the concerns for bottom-up involvement and 'quadruple helix' involvement.

Visibility

An important part of the work is to communicate and make the work visible, throughout the process

and to a wide range of stakeholders. The main objective of the North Sea Commission is to promote and create awareness of the North Sea region as a major economic entity within Europe. This will be elaborated further in the communication activities accompanying the action plan.

7. Implementation, Cooperation and Coordination

An action plan has been developed to implement the Strategy. This will be reviewed annually, meaning that the most relevant actions are included and/or replaced as they are completed. The action plan focuses on the role of the North Sea Commission, its thematic groups and its member regions in implementing the strategic priority areas. The North Sea Commission has a unique role representing the regional political level; with close dialogue with local stakeholders and citizens as well as broad knowledge of local conditions.

To reinforce the integration of the NSR, the NSR 2020 aims to strengthen policy and legislation implementation in the area. It aims to provide political support to current initiatives and raise their visibility. This work will be driven by the NSC Presidency and the Executive Committee. Annual reports will be provided to the Annual Business Meeting.

Good governance of the North Sea Region requires cooperation and coordination between different governmental levels and with a broad range of stakeholders. Areas where cooperation or lobbying efforts are necessary to get results will be highlighted in the action plan.

Important policies, strategies and organisations to ensure coordination with:

- Europe 2020 Strategy is the key EU commitment to jobs and smart, sustainable, inclusive growth, which the strategy will support the implementation of. It has five headline targets: promoting employment; improving the conditions for innovation, research and development; meeting climate change and energy objectives; improving education levels; and promoting social inclusion in particular through the reduction of poverty, and addressing the challenges of ageing.
 - Coordination with National Strategic Reference Programmes existing in all of the EU members states.
 - Consistency with EU legislation and policies is at the core of the NSR 2020 such as:
 - Strategy for the Single Market (Single Market Act) and the Digital Agenda
 - TEN-T , White Paper on Transport, Energy (TEN-E) networks, Connecting Europe Facility Instrument, Sulphur directive, European Sustainable Shipping Forum, Clean Power for transport package and directive
 - The EU post-2010 biodiversity target and strategy, with its 2050 vision and a 2020 target, is also reinforced;
- Water Framework Directive
- Integrated Maritime Policy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Maritime Spatial Planning, Blue Growth; Common Fisheries Policy

- Energy policy: Renewable Energy Directive; Communication on Offshore Wind Energy; CCS, Energy Union, EU 2030 Framework for climate and energy.
- EU Strategy for more growth and jobs in coastal and maritime tourism
- Complementarity with EU programmes
 - Interreg V B North Sea Region Programme
 - Relevant INTERREG cross-border programmes, e.g. Two Seas Programme (Belgium, France; Netherlands, UK); ØKS/KASK (Denmark, Norway and Sweden)
 - Other EU programmes such as Erasmus +, Horizon 2020, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
 - National and regional operational programmes
 - Regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation,

Other international cooperation such as KIMO; NSAC; OSPAR, IMO, Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, et al.

14. NSR2020 Action Plan 2016-2017

The first action plan for the North Sea Region 2020 strategy paper was approved by the Annual Business Meeting in June 2013 and the NSC Executive Committee and the NSC thematic groups have since then worked on implementing the action plan. It has been decided that a new action shall be adopted each year and the proposal for action plan June 2016 –June 2017 is attached in appendix 14a.

A few changes have been made during the revision process of the North Sea Region 2020. A proposal to merge the existing overall action plan and the thematic group work plans are proposed based on experience from the thematic groups. It has been difficult to tell the different plans apart, and the merge will avoid a continuously updating of plans. One document makes it easier to streamline level of action points and reporting from the thematic groups. The document will be updated annually. The groups have been challenged to highlight the role of the North Sea Commission in the activities and outcomes.

The Executive Committee discussed the new set up at its meeting 2nd March 2016 and decided to present it to the Annual Business Meeting for adoption.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Discusses and adopts the North Sea Region 2020 Action Plan 2016-2017***

North Sea Region 2020
 Draft action plan

June 2016 – June 2017

NSR 2020 Priority 1: Managing Maritime Space

NSR 2020 key action	Key activities	Expected outcomes	Instrument	Status
Use maritime spatial planning as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coordinate/contribute to NSC activities within the NorthSEE project ○ Compiling data on land/sea interaction in the North Sea Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dialogue with member states ○ Resolution concerning the land/sea interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Compiling of data ○ Exchange of best practice 	
Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate a conference in Bergen to facilitate for exchange of good practice from Norwegian experience in implementing the discard ban to fishery dependent regions in the EU ○ Compiling experience from member regions on implementation of the discard ban 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Present regional interests in cooperation forums at member state/EU- level ○ Resolution on discard ban 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Compiling of data ○ Exchange of best practice 	
Ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future and livelihood in coastal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate for mobility of teachers and students between maritime educational institutions in member regions; ○ Follow the European Commission's blue career initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects and mobility schemes between member regions ○ Representation in EU forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Project development 	

NSR 2020 Priority 2: Increasing accessibility and clean transport				
NSR 2020 key action	Key activities	Expected outcomes	Instrument	Status
Ensure good access to the TEN-T Core Network for peripheral and maritime regions through funding instruments (the CEF) and governance mechanisms (Core Network Corridor Forums)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide input to studies, work plans and project lists of relevant TEN-T Core Network corridors (CNC) ○ Develop/shadow relevant CEF-and Interreg projects in the NSR ○ Study how CEF-projects are affecting accessibility in the NSR ○ Draft input to revision of CEF-regulation through the CPMR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participation of NSC member regions in relevant CNC forums ○ Projects ○ Position paper (s) ○ Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project development/monitoring ○ Policy generation 	
Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide views on EU implementation plan for Motorways of the Sea (MOS) through the CPMR ○ Participate in meeting between the European MoS-coordinator and the CPMR with a view of higher funding and better co-financing rates for MoS projects in the CEF, and more favourable conditions for participation of actors from peripheral regions and 3rd countries ○ Explore conditions for facilitating modal shift from road to rail through stakeholder cooperation and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects ○ Position paper (s) ○ Reports ○ Stakeholder involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Policy generation ○ Project development/monitoring 	
Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further develop survey on the use of alternative fuels in public transport and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practices and solutions on alternative fuels transferred between NSC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compiling of data ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Project 	

inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping	<p>other transport services among NSC members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop projects and/or capitalize on results from relevant projects ○ Monitor implementation of EU Directive(s) on alternative fuels in transport ○ Monitor impact of EU Sulphur Directive for shipping 	<p>member regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects ○ Reports ○ Recommendations for policy measures and funding instruments & compensation schemes 	<p>development/monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Policy generation 	
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NSR 2020 Priority 3: Tackling climate change

NSR 2020 key action	Key activities	Expected outcomes	Instrument	Status
Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practices within climate change and climate change adaptation. Focus is on the risks of flooding and the effects of sea level rise: How to cope with the risks, what are the consequences for the water systems and water safety: innovative water retention, effective water use in agricultural areas (for example drip irrigation), managing wet soils (paladi culture) and smart sediment. ○ Stimulate exchanging activities around 'building with nature involving tourism, recreation and culture. Focus on what governments, cities and regions can learn from each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A brochure for the North Sea based on its best practices. ○ Transfer of good practice examples between member regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Collection of data ○ Stakeholder involvement 	

Promote energy efficiency as well as innovation and green growth in low-carbon technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practices and development of projects for example in Tidal and Wave Energy, bio energy, wind and PV. Focus on energy efficiency in industry and households. Smart cities and communities (smart grid technology) and energy cooperatives in the Icope project. Present the North sea as a power house of Europe, living lab for green growth towards the Energy Union. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Best practice guide ○ Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Project development 	
Foster strong regional, national and European support for the development of the North Sea Grid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activities following Dutch Presidency, lobby activities towards EU presidency and the EC after June 2016. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visibility of NSC positions in relevant statements and documents ○ Active role of NSC in the preparatory action ○ Higher awareness and increased cooperation at EU and member state level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lobbying ○ Stakeholder involvement 	
Facilitate for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitor development and stimulate exchange of best practices between member regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update overview best practice ○ Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Project development 	

NSR 2020 Priority 4: Attractive and sustainable communities

NSR 2020 key action	Key activities	Expected outcomes	Instrument	Status
Promote knowledge transfer and cross-overs between different sectors in the North Sea Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Raise awareness and exchange good practice on diversification of economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects ○ Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Project development ○ Policy generation 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ promote quadrupel helix involvement in projects ○ Involve creative sectors in projects 			
Improve policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange good practice on healthy and active ageing ○ Lobby for better digital connectivity, including broadband connections, to make peripheral areas more attractive ○ Stimulate the use of cultural offers and cultural activities to promote integration of migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practices transferred between member regions ○ Resolution/policy paper ○ Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation ○ Project development 	
Promote maritime clusters to continue to play an important role as provider of blue growth, jobs and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project development based on maritime clusters (DG Mare call “blue technology – mobilise stakeholders”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project proposals ○ Policy document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practices ○ Project development ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Policy generation 	
Support the development of a more sustainable tourism sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange best practice on the use of circular economy practices in the tourism industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated overview best practice ○ Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Collection/compilation of data ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Project development 	
Support the diversification of tourism offers in coastal areas as well as in cruise tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate stronger stakeholder involvement in the following projects: 1.Seafood Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Project development 	

	2.Cruise Awareness			
Support the development of cultural heritage based tourism, nature, outdoor and health tourism in coastal areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coordinate stakeholder involvement from member regions to promote cultural heritage as an creative source of innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects ○ Updated best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exchange of best practice ○ Policy generation ○ Stakeholder involvement ○ Project development 	
Support the development of permanent networks for cultural actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stimulate cooperation between cultural actors in the member regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ North Sea participation in Youth Festival in Sandnes 2017 and Kulturmøde 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder involvement 	

NSR 2020 Guiding principles

Innovation, excellence, sustainability, stakeholder involvement, skills and R&D and visibility are horizontal priorities and are therefore included in all the other priorities.

Strategic issues				
Initiative	Key activities	Expected outcomes	Instrument	Lead
Strategic cooperation in the North Sea Region	Follow-up work on Preparatory action events	Participation in minimum three relevant events	Lobbying Stakeholder involvement Exchange of best practice Policy generation	NSC Secretariat
Mobilising EU institutions/ms in North Sea cooperation	Cooperation with EU institutions and member states	Raised awareness of need for strategic cooperation in the North Sea Region		
	Follow up on the Billund Declaration	NSC positions widely communicated		

**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016
Appendix 14a**

<p>Use of ad hoc task forces</p>	<p>Facilitate for project development DG MARE blue technology</p> <p>Develop sustainable model for permanent NSC secretariat</p>	<p>North Sea project application under DG Mare call “blue technology”</p> <p>Permanent model for NSC Secretariat to be presented to ABM 2017</p>	<p>Project development Lobbying Stakeholder involvement</p>	<p>NSC Secretariat/member regions</p>
<p>Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR</p>	<p>Active participation in CPMR work on relevant post 2020 issues</p> <p>Coordinate NSC input to Azores declaration</p> <p>Using CPMR (human) resources/staff to assist the NSC</p>	<p>North Sea perspective in CPMR communication to EU institutions</p>	<p>Policy generation Stakeholder involvement</p>	<p>NSC Secretariat</p>

15. Legoland Declaration – “Building blocks for the future” from NSC ABM 2016

There is a red line through our work and the declaration from the ABM should reflect this and be seen as point of culmination. As a political organisation we produce policy positions and contribute under open consultations, we are present in different fora and participate in meetings, moderate workshops and deliver at conferences, either through the Presidency or the working groups and their Chairs. This past year is no exception and the intention is to gather the momentum of the past year and produce a declaration which looks back on the past year but which is also forward-looking with a clear message.

The Legoland Declaration has its starting point in the Assen Declaration from last year. Here the message had a clear recipient since it was directed to the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which has run from January to June this year. The Netherlands then continues as part of the trio, setting the agenda for strategic policy work for the rest of the year.

The 2016 declaration gathers the input we have had at various events and meetings starting with the CPMR Blue.Invest conference in Brussels in September where Vice-President Brunnström gave a speech. President Nilsen joined the Energy Union tour with Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union, Maros Sefcovic, in October where he was able to deliver NSC messages directly in a one-to-one meeting. Vice-President Kerstin Brunnström gave a presentation about investing in a North Sea Grid during the CPMR GA in Florence in November and the President moderated a break out session during the NSCOGI Conference in Oostend in October. Other events include the workshop and thematic session during European Maritime Day in Turku where Acting President Brunnström was invited by DG Mare to speak on the scope for growth in maritime clusters and innovation, our own planned workshops on smart specialisation, blue growth and investments here in Billund and our findings through the revision of the strategy. All of these elements contribute to the declaration from the organisation’s Annual Business Meeting.

At time of writing we have become aware of plans for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the member states around the North Sea on energy cooperation. This will be signed during the Energy Council meeting on 6th June and can be seen as a follow-up to the NSCOGI cooperation.

In addition, the event which will take place 20th-21st June in The Hague, which is financed under the Preparatory Action, also fits nicely into this red line.

The declaration from the ABM is meant as a general statement for the Commission and other European bodies, as well as our national governments. This makes the document a flexible document which can be built on further. It will be an important tool for the Preparatory Action workshop in The Hague.

All member regions are invited to send their comments or input, if they so wish. The deadline for input to the document is 16th June 2016 at 09.00h. This is in order to be able to truly reflect the messages from the North Sea Conference in Billund; including the NSC political workshop on the afternoon of Wednesday 15th June and to include comments and input from members. An updated document taking contributions into account, will be presented to the ABM 17th June. Paper copies will be made available.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. *Adopts the Legoland Declaration – “building blocks for the future”*

15a. Legoland Declaration - “Building blocks for the future”

North Sea Commission declaration from the Annual Business Meeting and North Sea Conference in Billund June 2016

“North Sea Region 2020, North Sea Commission Strategy – Contributing to the Europe 2020” (NSR 2020) has been revised at the half way mark in June 2016. The strategy identifies challenges and opportunities in the North Sea Region and promotes several tools which can be used to tackle the challenges we face:

- Cooperation – increased cooperation and multi-governance
- Innovation – tapping into and fostering innovation
- Building clusters – strong sectoral collaboration, also transnationally
- Promoting new sectors – both blue and green

In order to ensure the region takes advantage of these tools the **North Sea Commission (NSC)** **recommends** that the EU Member States and Norway, together with the European Parliament and the European Commission take necessary steps **to formalise a cooperation platform** for the countries and regions around the North Sea. The review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in 2016 and the work on the post 2020 MFF are key decision points in order to achieve this. NSR 2020 is a good starting point for such a platform and we identify two additional tools for future strategic cooperation:

1. Concrete results and conclusions must be drawn up from the events under the Preparatory Action for the North Sea Region. A report should be presented to the European Parliament and the Member States, outlining concrete action points and/or recommendations to ensure better coordination for future investments, skills and partnerships based on the activities under the Preparatory Action.
2. European Territorial Cooperation, and in particular Interreg A and B programmes, must be continued post 2020. This is where ideas are formulated and tested. Long-term results point to investments as important effects and spin-offs and are crucial results of these types of projects. Interreg is an important funding opportunity and acts as a springboard for other funding and financing instruments for regions and their partners.

Formalised cooperation - tools as building blocks

The NSC Assen Declaration 2015 contained three clear messages for the Dutch Presidency. The declaration from the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in Billund builds further on these messages. NSC wishes to thank the Dutch Presidency for work which has brought about closer cooperation between the North Sea Countries including the high level event on energy and regional cooperation in February 2016.

The strengths of the North Sea Region (NSR) are inherent at sea basin level. Strengths lie in the natural resources the region has to offer. Our manufacturing base adds value and our services sector forms the basis for our standard of living. Our common culture and historical ties makes transnational cooperation a strong tool to face these common challenges. To establish and maintain the region's position globally and in Europe, investment in infrastructure for business, new and relevant skills sets and job creation are needed. Multi-governance and coordinated cooperation are needed to overcome existing barriers and to enhance drivers. There are many examples where this can play a role including the standardisation of new technologies in transport and energy sectors.

Large scale investments such as the development of an integrated North Sea electricity grid is an example of how such coordinated cooperation can work to remove barriers to investments in a new energy sector. This type of investment will create jobs, boost cooperation and produce innovative spin-offs through new clusters and projects. The Energy Union further underpins this position. North-West Europe is now the global leader in offshore wind and this could be considered as a new industrial revolution. However there is a continued need to boost private sector innovation, backed with pro-active governmental support in order to build the necessary framework conditions. Incremental steps seem to be the way forward for such large scale investments and this will, more than ever, require coordinated support and drivers.

The North Sea Commission requests the EU Member States and Norway to work towards a formalised cooperation platform where coordinated and streamlined actions can be promoted in order to create the level playing field for private investments.

1. Concrete conclusions from Preparatory Action

The European Parliament granted 250 000 euros for a Preparatory Action for the North Sea at the end of 2013, based on lobby work by the North Sea Commission and its then President, Ole B. Sørensen. The aim of this Preparatory Action was originally to analyse the North Sea region's growth potential and use the findings to investigate the added value of having a future shared macro regional strategy for the North Sea area.

The revision of the North Sea Commission strategy, North Sea Region 2020 (NSR 2020), has in consultation with member regions, defined the current challenges and opportunities facing the regions around the North Sea¹. The strategy gives a framework for future collaboration and is placed in close proximity to the North Sea Region Programme V-B.

Falling investments, restructuring of the energy sector, clean shipping and transport, protection of our vital resources, an aging population and increased immigration, as well as the need for an adapted and modern skilled workforce are crucial drivers to achieve growth and prosperity for the citizens of the North Sea Region. The challenges we face offer enterprising opportunities for the region and its people.

The activities under the Preparatory Action compliment the NSR 2020 revised strategy and NSC sees a clear need to capture the results from the events funded by the Preparatory Action. What are the conclusions from the work and how can we make use of this information? Which sectors can drive growth and innovation and how should we approach these issues? What kind of cooperation levels do we need to achieve the results we need? We hope that the Preparatory Action will give us some answers and guidelines on future cooperation projects and tools.

North Sea Commission requests DG MARE to collect and collate the results from the Preparatory Action in a format that can be further developed and acted upon.

¹ Annex to Legoland Declaration (extracted from North Sea Region 2020 revised version June 2016)

2. Interreg post 2020

SME support, strengthening of R&D, supporting product and service development are common themes in the national cohesion policy programmes for the countries around North Sea².

Regional access to funding will be crucial in the development of new and sustainable business models and products in both new and traditional sectors.

North Sea Commission sees Interreg as a key tool for project development within the identified challenges and opportunities within the NSR 2020 strategy. The NSR 2020 strategy requires tools to deliver its goals, today it is well aligned with the North Sea Region V-B programme. The development of a possible VI-B programme, as well as cross-border programmes will be crucial for the delivery of the strategy and for boosting transnational projects in the regions.

Interreg projects are a catalyst for innovation, they can sometimes act as 'seed projects' to test innovative or high risk projects, these may in the long term attract private investment or investment from other initiatives such as Juncker Plan or other funding sources. An example is the project Pro-Tide from the North West Europe Programme IV-B where the regions of Zeeland and Zuid Holland were able to scope and pave the way for Tidal Power projects. A Tidal Technology Centre will be opened in 2017. The planned long-term investment for a large scale tidal power plant is deemed viable and is looking for further financial support. The combination of loans and grants (from Structural Funds for instance) is a very powerful tool for regional projects and investments where Interreg plays a crucial role.

North Sea Commission requests DG REGIO to ensure that the benefits of regional funding from Interreg are clearly set out in the 7th Cohesion Report next year with a view to continued Interreg funding post 2020.

² North Sea in Numbers: North Sea Region 2020, Irene McMaster, March 2016

Challenges:

Accessibility: Both physical and digital connectivity are challenges. The most peripheral regions around the North Sea need better access to the markets. Time improved framework conditions are needed to facilitate a modal shift from road transport to rail and sea. Broadband and digital connectivity are still poor in many North Sea regions. Improvements in these areas are seen as crucial to fostering economic development.

Energy transition: Dependency on oil and gas is a challenge for many North Sea regions. A shift to renewable energy sources would contribute to diversifying the economy, and addressing climate change. Given the rapid expansion of offshore wind farms, common standards for their construction, safety, noise and visual pollution must be agreed. A prerequisite for climate adapted utilization of these energy resources will be an interconnected grid, which can help the transition to renewable sources with optimal use. Such cooperation requires formalization, as well as national level leadership and participation. To cope with these changes investment in network infrastructure is needed both onshore and offshore.

Pollution/emissions: Economic development and increasing pressure from human habitation have greatly compromised the North Sea's ecosystem and led to major environmental problems. The Sea and its beaches are affected by plastic waste contamination, eutrophication, pollution of waters with chemicals and heavy metals from industry, shipping and the extraction of natural gas and oil. Data on environmental management and conditions is held by hundreds of different institutions; making it difficult to get a comprehensive picture. Better coordination and exchange of data is key to knowledge based decision making.

Climate Change: Sea level rise and the increased danger to coastal areas from flooding caused by climate change will have an effect on the countries around the North Sea. Climate change can also put a further burden on the marine ecosystem through warming, water acidification, and the influx of new species. Regions have an important role to play in climate mitigation and adaptation.

Managing maritime space: The maritime space faces pressures from competing activities in the region. For example, over coming years the anticipated increase in the number and size of offshore wind farms and increases in shipping and size of ships will lead to increased competition for space between users of the sea. A successful implementation of the MSP directive, with coordinated effort from different governmental levels and stakeholders will be important for a balance between environmental protection and blue growth.

Human resources: The North Sea Region faces a long-term demographic challenge, creating pressure on key services, such as health, transport and leisure. The region must continue to be an attractive place to live, with good jobs and a vibrant cultural life. Many regions in the North Sea area have been negatively impacted by the economic decline and unemployment. The region must remain

competitive, attractive to highly skilled labour in key sectors, and responsive to a changing economic climate and recovery in key sectors, such as maritime transport and offshore operations.

Opportunities:

Interconnectivity and infrastructure: The comprehensive trade in the NSR and access to major international ports is a significant resource for the further development of efficient and sustainable freight transport by sea. Short sea shipping and motorways of the sea can be further developed and better connected with inland waterways in the region.

Energy transition and renewables: The natural environment in the North Sea Region offers great potential for renewable energy, the expansion of which is crucial to meeting climate change targets and to future economic growth and jobs in the region. Energy from wind, wave, tide, hydropower and biomass can be further developed, researched and promoted. Planning for a North Sea Grid – a comprehensive energy network - has been set in motion to realise the full potential of renewable forms of energy. Collaboration between NSR States, regions and private partners could foster the necessary progress towards a fully functioning North Sea Grid. Fibre optic cables adjacent to the interconnectors are also seen as a great opportunity for spin off for local development for the North Sea Grid.

Natural resources: The sustainable use of natural resources will continue to be a significant opportunity for the region. This can be tackled collectively and must be coordinated in order to prepare the basis for future sustainable development of natural resources. Robust, strategic planning and good governance increases the opportunity to build and maintain sustainable development. For example, joint and collaborative efforts in spatial planning can make sure that the space and resources available are used in the best possible manner.

Creative industries and innovation: Innovation, research and development and the creative industries are key features of the region. Future development relies on knowledge sharing in order to create new products and services. With improved cooperation and combined efforts, this position of strength can be reinforced and further developed to make the North Sea Region a centre of excellence.

Skilled and educated work force: The creative and cultural economy in many regions of the North Sea Region will assume increasing importance for growth and employment. Coastal regions around the North Sea have been closely connected through migration flows, close trade relations and shared maritime traditions for centuries. Cross-thematic research initiatives for the region could be launched, geared to gather knowledge about the North Sea Region from all disciplines to underpin the innovation culture and the economic development.

16. Model for a sustainable NSC Secretariat

Background

The North Sea Commission has been examining a sustainable financial solution for an NSC Secretariat for some time. The issue is well known to the members and has been on the agenda at each Executive Committee meeting since the Ålborg meeting in March 2014. All background information can therefore be found in the archive of meeting papers and minutes for Executive Committee and Annual Business Meetings since Ålborg. If any members would like these papers sent to them separately as a package then we request that you please send an email request to the Secretariat. The arguments for and against the reorganisation of the Secretariat can be summed up as follows:

The advantages:

- A more transparent process for selection of NSC President
- A sounder democratic institution
- Closer links to CPMR and other networks in Brussels should the Secretariat be based in Brussels
- Stability and permanent structures - experience and own networks remain within the organisation when the President changes
- Continuity in processes and strategies – long term perspective
- Financial stability (presuming a model for sustainability is found)
- Reduction of working groups from five to four to facilitate delivery of NSR 2020 strategy
- A Secretariat in a member region maintains closer ties and networks in the region
- A more streamlined and accountable organisation

The disadvantages:

- Changing and moving the Secretariat often introduces fresh and new ideas, a permanent structure would lose this
- Physical distance between Executive Secretary and President
- Business as usual model is based on a large financial contribution from one member region, or several members, which helps to finance an active and highly operative organisation
- Necessary budget cuts would lead to an inevitable lower level of activity
- Reduction of number of working groups from five to four as one possible budget cut (see agenda item 17.)

A proposal was put forward to the Executive Committee in October 2015 which outlined an NSC Secretariat as part of the CPMR financial structure, hosted in Brussels at their headquarters. This would have involved integrating NSC finances into the overall CPMR finance and budget structures. The proposal also entailed a deficit of about € 60 000 and therefore as a possible solution, proposed a rise in membership fees to cover half of this. CPMR were able to act as guarantee for the remaining € 30 000 while other income was generated.

A workshop for Executive Committee members, Chairs, Vice-Chairs and advisors was held in Brussels in October 2015. A new financing model for the Secretariat was discussed as part of the workshop as an introduction to the Executive Committee meeting the following day. The issue was discussed in some detail amongst the participants. Here it emerged that several members were not in favour of a permanent Secretariat under CPMR in Brussels, despite the offer from CPMR to act as financial guarantor. Other members expressed that they did not wish to move the Secretariat to

Brussels in any form. At the same time it was made clear that raising membership fees was not an option. These were therefore important and enlightening discussions.

The proposal to move the Secretariat to Brussels under CPMR was an agenda point for the 69th Executive Committee. The agenda item included a budget proposal which had been set up in cooperation with General Secretary of CPMR. The advantages and disadvantages of moving the Secretariat were also presented in the papers. The Presidency expressed the need for consensus on this issue and it was made clear that several members were against moving the Secretariat in this way. Since no such consensus could be reached it was decided not to pursue this solution any further.

The 69th ExCom meeting laid two clear principles:

- 1) NSC is not to be driven as an integral financial part of CPMR
- 2) Raised membership fees cannot be part of a new financial solution

However several members expressed a need to continue to investigate other possibilities or solutions for a permanent Secretariat since the current model is not sustainable and has definite weaknesses. The decision from the 69th ExCom meeting was as follows:

“The ExCom members agreed to check out positions with members in their countries before the next ExCom meeting and ask members for suggestions on alternative models for financing the organisation in the future.”

Therefore the Secretariat will recommend that ABM reach an agreement on the principle of reorganising the Secretariat by finding a permanent (or at least more long-term than a two year period) and financially sustainable model (not part of CPMR financial structures).

Members' Proposals

At ABM in June 2015 the Dutch members presented a proposal for budget cuts in order to facilitate a permanent Secretariat under CPMR, without increasing the membership fees. The original proposal to move to CPMR had included a rise in membership fees to cover part of the budget deficit under this model. Subsequently the proposal to move the Secretariat to CPMR has been rejected. However since the ExCom members expressed an intention to find a sustainable solution the Dutch proposal and their suggestions for budget cuts, have proven useful and have been integrated into possible scenarios for a new model. This would include reducing the number of working groups from 5 to 4 and reducing the advisors' fees to € 10 000pa.

The Scottish members submitted a proposal for a permanent Secretariat to ExCom in March 2016 (without integrating NSC as part of CPMR). The proposal outlines a model where income and expenditure are balanced but would still require extra input (€ 40 000) from the host region each year. However a few shortcomings were discovered in the proposal which changed the picture somewhat (see ExCom agenda item 15, 70th ExCom for full details). The Scottish proposal is enclosed as agenda item 16a. Due to the shortcomings in the proposal, it was deemed a useful step forward in the process, needing further work.

The 70th Executive Committee approved the use of ad hoc task forces in the North Sea Commission which allows specific issues to be focused on outside the ExCom meetings and work of the working groups. A task force can move an issue along faster and allow the involvement of members in issues of importance to them, where they can contribute resources and/or expertise. A task force was set up to examine a new model for the Secretariat consisting of the following members: Aberdeenshire,

North Jylland, Drenthe (later changed to Groningen), Østfold, Västra Götaland and Secretariat/Presidency. The role of the task force is to advise the Secretariat and to present a new proposal to the ABM in June. The task force has given specific input to this paper.

Financing models

It is a challenge to finance a Secretariat without increasing the membership fees. A possible solution lies in several approaches which include:

- 1) An increased membership base
- 2) Income from other and new sources
- 3) Reduction in costs in running the organisation
- 4) Extra support/part finance from a host region or regions

It should for good order be stated that there is one Presidential candidate for the next presidential period 2016-2018. The candidate's region is willing and able to finance the Secretariat for this period. This gives the organisation stability for the coming period and time to pursue these solutions.

The current Secretariat has started some of the above processes.

- 1) Work to attract new members has concentrated around increased visibility by lifting the political profile and importance of the organisation through political statements, the Assen Declaration, active participation of NSC Presidency at high level events and contributions under open consultations/hearings. The aim has been to ensure that the organisation continually gives clear added value to its members in addition to the valuable work in the groups where the organisation builds regional networks, develops joint projects and exchanges solutions, ideas and learning as well as following up on the NSR2020 through annual workplans.
The revision of NSR2020 hopefully brings the organisation more up to date in relation to the challenges and opportunities in the region and the current political background we are operating in.
- 2) The Secretariat has also worked to involve the organisation in projects. One example is the work that was done to include NSC as a partner in North Sea Region Programme V-B project "NorthSEE". A solution for partnership was not found since NSC has no legal status. Participation is now through an NSC member, Noord Holland. The Marine Resources Group will shadow the project without project funding. Work is also under way to set up a project under the DG Mare Blue Growth Blue Technology call. Any NSC participation would have to be through CPMR. More work will be needed in order to find how NSC can directly benefit financially from project participation when working with CPMR in this way. Project work is time consuming and requires resources both in the development phase and, if realised, the execution phase. A discussion would therefore be needed on priorities and tasks of the Secretariat.
- 3) Some small budget cuts are presented under 2017 budget. Further cuts will be possible if the organisation reduces the number of groups from 5 to 4, as proposed under the next agenda item. This has meant that the 2017 budget is presented with a surplus. The surplus can be used for future funding in projects as match-funding or as a guarantee for future deficits as part of the free reserves. Should the proposal to reduce the groups to 5 to 4 be adopted a revised budget will be put to ExCom in October.

The task force has also pointed out that a new budget or financing model should also include a clear definition of the role and tasks of the Secretariat. This will give a clearer picture of what resources are required to run the Secretariat. The experience of the regions within the task force points to a minimum of two full time positions as a requirement to run the Secretariat at the current level.

However other geographical commissions with a similar membership budget manage with fewer resources. This is perhaps due to their close connection with CPMR which gives them certain resources through close contact with other colleagues as well as administrative support from existing CPMR personnel. Costs for overheads and administration, as well as day to day office management are shared at CPMR. Annex to this paper, under agenda item 16b, shows 2014 accounts from three other CPMR geographical commissions. When examining these figures we must bear in mind that NSC is the only geographical commission which remunerates the advisors of the working groups.

NSC budget examples

Below are two budget set-ups which show how a future NSC Secretariat could be financed. The proposals are based on the work done by the Scottish members, the Dutch members' budget cuts, and CPMR accounts 2014 for other geographical commissions. The models presume the reduction in the number of working groups from 5 to 4 and a reduction in advisors' fees to € 10 000 pa, which will be voted on later in this meeting.

Brussels model: An Executive Secretary and part-time administrative staff would have to be employed by the hosting Brussels region or possibly another member region. NSC cannot employ personnel in Brussels due to the organisation's non-legal status. NordJylland Brussels office has given a very interesting price quotation for office space and overheads, which will be hard to match. Discussions regarding how to employ staff in Brussels have not been examined.

Hosting region or regions: The proposal where one member region hosts the Secretariat involves extra support in the form of staffing and overheads/equipment, as outlined by the Scottish members. In such a case employees would be employed by the host region.

The task force has suggested that a mix of these two models could be a further option. One full or part time member of staff would be based in Brussels while the other member of staff is hosted by a member region, not necessarily that of the President.

It should be noted that both these examples are based on a reduction in the current and former staffing levels of the Secretariat and a discussion around the role and activities of the Secretariat would need to be carried out.

Examples of possible NSC budgets for 2018:

€	Hosting in Brussels	Hosting in member region
Membership fees	133 850	133 850
Extra administrative support		40 000 ¹
Total income	133 850	173 850
Salaries	120 000 ²	90 000 ³
Travel expenses ⁴	15 000	15 000
ABM / annual conference ⁵	15 000	15 000
Advisors' support ⁶	40 000	40 000
Rent and overheads	8 000 ⁷	8 000 ⁸

¹ As suggested under the Scottish members' proposal, see 16b. Extra administrative support from the host region

² This salary post is based on a staffing level including 100% Executive Secretary and 40-50% administrative support. Figures are roughly based on 2014 CPMR accounts. It should be noted that salary costs in Brussels are somewhat high and correlate closely to salary costs in a member region

³ Salary here is for Executive Secretary only since the host region will give extra administrative support for € 40 000

⁴ Based on figures from CPMR 2014 accounts, travel expenses for Executive Secretary only

⁵ NSRP does not have financing for a North Sea Conference each year, this budget post will finance the ABM meeting and dinner

⁶ 4 advisors @ € 10 000 each pa

⁷ Quote from NordJylland Brussels office, other quotes collected by the task force are higher

Telephone/internet	2 000	2 000
Misc overheads ⁹	2 000	0
Meetings ¹⁰	3 000	3 000
Equipment ¹¹	3 000	0
Total expenditure	208 000	173 000
Result	- 74 150	850

The option of hosting a Secretariat at a member region includes extra support from specific member region or regions and therefore this model undermines the goal of achieving a permanent Secretariat, since only regions willing and able to fund extra administrative support would be eligible.

One can conclude that the process of achieving a completely independent Secretariat will be extremely difficult unless other sources of income are found.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Asks the Secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work is to be carried out by working with the existing task force**
- 2. Asks the Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organisation**

⁸ Host region could claim some overheads and telephone expenses

⁹ Unforeseen costs

¹⁰ Hosting meetings

¹¹ For example pc and phone, host region would finance in this example, would not be needed every year

North Sea Commission Secretariat – Draft Scottish Members Proposal

At the North Sea Commission Executive Committee on 28 October 2015, it was decided that no changes would be made to the present way of funding and providing the Secretariat. This was due to the fact that there was not unanimous agreement over how to fund a permanent secretariat.

The Scottish Members are concerned that the status quo of funding the Secretariat – whereby the President’s region and neighbouring regions heavily subsidise the Secretariat – will not always be an option. There is a real risk that when the present President stands down in the future, there will be no region able or willing to take on the Presidency due to the associated costs. This could mean the end of the North Sea Commission as an organisation.

This proposal is based on the assumption that there can be no increase in income from membership fees, but there is complete flexibility in terms of expenditure within the overall budget. It proposes that provision is made in the budget for the funding of an Executive Secretary. This would either be hosted by the CPMR if costs can be negotiated downwards; one of the North Sea Commission member regions (at home or in their Brussels Office) permanently; or act as a contribution towards staff costs in the President’s region:

	Present	Proposed	Narrative
Income:			
Membership subscription	131 742	131 742	Increase will not be accepted by all
Host region Contribution	0	40000	Ensures that host region has organisational support rather than just single member/officer
Income Total	131 742	171 742	
Expenditure:			
Executive Secretary	0	92742	
Joint annual conference expenses	24 000	5 000	Should be restricted to cost of ABM and ExCom on day 3 as all other costs would be covered by host and INTERREG
Promotional expenditure	5 000	1 000	Greater use of website instead of printed materials
Travel, accommodation etc.	37 000	25 000	Travel for Secretary and President, reflecting actual costs in 2015 statement
Meetings, conferences, seminars	10 000	3,000	.
Advisor’s support	60 000	40 000	4 x 10k payments for four thematic groups
Telephone, administration, internet etc.	5 000	5 000	

Total Expenditure:	141 000	171 742	
Expected surplus/deficit	- 9258	0	

Members may wish to revise the individual budget headings depending on the actual cost of the Executive Secretary, but the organisation has to be realistic and live within its means. This will mean doing things differently and focussing activities, rather than continuing indefinitely what has always been done. The risk of not doing so is potentially no President, no Secretariat and no North Sea Commission.

Scottish Members therefore propose that:

- 1) Provision is made for the salary of an Executive Secretary in the NSC budget ;
- 2) The Executive Secretary is hosted by a Member Region (either permanently or in rotation with the Presidency) who will make an annual financial contribution of €40,000;
- 3) The budget is balanced by reducing expenditure in other areas, not increasing income through fees .

16b. Accounts 2014 for CPMR geographical commissions

Table shows 2014 accounts for three of CPMR's geographical commissions hosted at CPMR

Accounts 2014 €	Atlantic Arc Commission	Islands Commission	Inter-Mediterranean Commission ¹
Membership fees	90 054	135 457	174 373
Salaries ²	69 980	82 215	118 503
Travel expenses	8 000	10 000	17 000
Rent	6 776	6 776	6 776
Office supplies	680	680	680
Postage	680	680	680
Telephone/internet	5 200	5 200	5 200
Photocopying	1 508	1 508	1 508
Misc overheads	4 585	4 585	4 585
Documentation	628	628	628
Publications	2 452		
Translation	6 700	3 000	8 160
Meetings		2 382	
Equipment	4 880	4 880	4 880
Total expenditure	112 069	122 534	168 600
Result 2014	- 22 015	12 923	5 773

¹ Offices of Inter-Med Commission are in Barcelona

² Atlantic Arc Commission - Remuneration of an Executive Secretary at 80% of a full-time post and a part-time Assistant (approx. 40% of a full-time post)

Inter-Mediterranean Commission - Remuneration of a full-time Executive Secretary and of a part-time Assistant (approx. 40%)

Remuneration of a part-time Policy Officer (from 16/6/2014 to 31/12/2014)

Islands Commission - Remuneration of the Executive Secretary at 50% of a full-time post and of a part-time Assistant (approx. 40%)

Part-time assistants in these cases are CPMR staff

17. Proposal for the reorganisation of the thematic working groups

An organisation must be prepared to be flexible and to adjust to new realities and external pressures in order to remain vital, relevant and viable. This is not necessarily problematic but rather a natural and necessary part of any organisation's development, growth and survival. However it is important to retain an organisation's strengths and main areas of interest while undergoing such change. Therefore broad dialogue is needed in order to ensure the strengths of the organisation are not compromised in a process of change. This principle must lay the foundation for any organisational changes in North Sea Commission.

The decision to reorganise the thematic working groups has arisen as part of the recent discussions on a new model for the Secretariat. A decision was reached at the ExCom in October 2015 not to set up a permanent secretariat in Brussels under CPMR. However the issue is far from resolved since the current model has several disadvantages and is not sustainable. It was made clear that members are not able or willing to incur increased costs in the form of raised membership fees in order to finance a permanent secretariat.

The Dutch members put forward a proposal at the ABM in June which outlined several budgetary cuts in order to facilitate a new financing model which would allow for a permanent secretariat in Brussels under CPMR. Despite members' conclusion not to place NSC Secretariat under CPMR there is still a need to find a sustainable solution for financing the Secretariat and the budget cut proposals from the Dutch members are still of interest. An ideal model which is attractive to the members has yet to be found, but in any case will require that the organisation makes budget cuts.

The reorganisation of the thematic working groups was discussed in some detail at the workshop prior to the ExCom in Brussels in October as part of the budgetary exercises. A compromise was reached by the participants following group work and discussions. The conclusions from the workshop were presented to the ExCom the following day with a clear recommendation to reduce the number of working groups from five to four. The Secretariat has, at the same time, continued to examine how reorganising the groups can contribute to budget cuts. The Dutch proposal has been the starting point.

The process to revise the NSR 2020 strategy has been running simultaneously and several issues have arisen which have given some direction to a new organisation of the groups. It has been seen as somewhat problematic that there are five working groups and four strategic priority areas in the strategy. One could argue that the time is ripe therefore to try to align the groups to the strategic priorities of the organisation in order to facilitate the revision process. Indeed the evaluation of the organisation by an external evaluator, COWI (Feb 2013) clearly states that this would be an ideal way for the organisation to systematically follow up the strategy areas and states:

“The thematic structure of the TGs is one of the key reasons identified by stakeholders when asked whether the NSC is properly organised to implement the NSR 2020. Although no clear picture/solution emerged, on who deals with what part of the NSR 2020, it is clearly an issue which has to be addressed. There was in general a wish to organise the TGs along the lines of the priorities of the NSR 2020. The issue which concerned most was the horizontal priorities, and how to deal with these. Whichever solution is chosen, close collaboration between TGs will be key to NSR 2020 implementation.”¹

This also concurs with the Dutch proposal and the workshop outcomes.

If we are to follow this reasoning we see that the work of three of the groups is closely related to three of the priority strategic areas in the strategy:

Marine Resources Group – Managing Maritime Space

Transport Group – Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport

Energy and Climate Change Group – Tackling Climate Change

However the fourth priority area “Attractive and Sustainable Communities” has been covered by the Culture and Tourism Group while the Economic Development Group has taken on the responsibility for following up the horizontal issues of innovation and excellence.

This is an incorrect interpretation of the strategic focus of the strategy and the role of the horizontal priorities. There are for example issues under “Attractive and Sustainable Communities” that are not the remit of the Culture and Tourism Group, for example the question of demographic change. At the

¹ Cowi, February 2013 - Evaluation of the North Sea Commission Final Report

same time the horizontal issues are intended as baseline principles which are relevant for all priority strategic areas of the strategy. In other words, horizontal actions will be relevant under all themes of each of the strategic priority areas. The horizontal areas have been adjusted and added to under the revision process and now include stakeholder involvement, skills and R & D.

In order to ensure that the work outlined under the Attractive and Sustainable Communities priority area is satisfactorily followed up the Secretariat now proposes that a new group is formed which will specifically work with these areas. The focus of Economic Development Group is well covered under the horizontal priorities and can otherwise be lifted into the new group as part of their remit along with the work of the Culture and Tourism Group. The workshop in Brussels also discussed the possibility of setting up ad hoc task forces to deal with specific issues with a time restriction. This was adopted by the ExCom in March 2016. Such task forces can be led by specific member regions and would be complimentary to the thematic groups. In this way a member can commit themselves to specific tasks or policy areas for a limited time.

The Secretariat therefore proposes to close the Economic Development Group and the Culture and Tourism and to set up a new group with a working name “Attractive Communities” since this matches the Priority Strategic Area “Attractive and Sustainable Communities”. The work and priorities of the two groups to be closed must be followed up in the new group. Some issues could also be lifted into specific task forces.

If the ABM agrees to the proposal the Secretariat will issue calls for candidates for the position of Chair, 2 Vice Chairs and Advisor for the new group at the ExCom meeting in October in the hope that the current active politicians and advisors will apply.

The new group would cover somewhat differing thematic areas so that meeting agendas and member participation could be a challenge, especially in the start-up phase. Good planning and communication work will be necessary in order to attract participants and ensure the group follows up the work under the strategy, at the same time ensuring that issues from the two former groups are followed up.

Both the two groups that are proposed for closure have planned meetings in the autumn 2016. These final group meetings can be used to prepare for the new group (should the proposal be adopted) and secure transfer of activities and networks.

The Dutch refinancing proposal also suggested that the advisor's fees be reduced from € 12 000 a year to € 10 000 a year. We are all well aware that the financing of the Secretariat will be a challenge for the organisation in the near future and therefore the Secretariat also proposes that advisors' fees be reduced in this way. In so doing the organisation reduces the budget for 2017 by € 20 000. This is in no way a reflection on the quality of the work of the advisors or the groups but part of necessary future budget cuts.

The budget cut proposals will be discussed and decided upon during the discussions under agenda point 24 on Budget 2017.

Currently the advisors report on their activities throughout the year, the Presidency has also requested that these reports also include an overview of the advisor's expenses.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Adopts to close two of the working groups – Economic Development Group and Culture and Tourism Group***
- 2. Decides to set up a new thematic working group operative from 2017, as outlined in the paper***
- 3. Requests the newly elected Chair, Vice-Chairs and newly appointed advisor to suggest a possible name for the new group, to be decided on by ExCom in March 2017***
- 4. Requests the advisors to report yearly to ABM on their financial expenses***

18. Communication Activity Plan 2016-2017

The Annual Business Meeting 2015 in Assen adopted the Communication Strategy 2015-2017. The document is a two year strategy with an annual Activity Plan which is revised every year and presented to ABM.

The evaluation of NSC in 2013 recommended the creation of a communication strategy and identified two main challenges that the NSC needed to address:

- Strengthen its profile as a platform for policy development, lobbying and transnational project development
- Increase its visibility towards internal and external stakeholders

As Appendix 18a Report Communication Activities 2015-2016 shows, the NSC has completed a wide range of communication activities directed towards several target groups. The main target groups include NSC members, National level ministries and directorates, Committee of the Regions, Members of European Parliament, and Non-member regions. Although all planned activities have been carried out, several of the activities are a part of a long term processes and need to be continued in the next period.

The Communication Activity Plan 2016-2017 (Appendix 18b) keeps the same target groups as the current period, with the exception of the addition of Regional Stakeholders. The activities continue to work to promote the NSC, and to strengthen its profile as a platform for policy development, lobbying and transnational project development. This is especially done through the communication work on Preparatory Action, NSR 2020 revision, and North Sea grid at different levels.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Adopts the Communication Activity Plan 2016-2017

18a Report on NSC Communication activities 2015- 2016

Below follows an overview of the activities that were highlighted as important for the period June 2015-June 2016. The activities that have been implemented are marked in the color green.

1. Internal member communication 2015-2016

Target group		
NSC member regions		
Goal		
To improve the communication of NSC activities and priorities to all members		
Activity 1 *	Activity 2	Activity 3
Reconstructing the NSC webpage with more news and easier access to documents and events	Send a news flash to member regions after each ExCom meeting highlighting the 2-3 most important decisions and discussion	Arranging member workshops at the North Sea Conference and in Brussels 27 th Oct.

*The NSC webpage was reconstructed within the current portal, with focus on making the front page more intuitive and up to date. The last six months the NSC Secretariat has worked together with CPMR on a new shared web portal that will be released before ABM 2016.

2. Selected external target groups 2015-2016

The selected target groups for the period were:

- **National level ministries and directorates**
- **Committee of the Regions**
- **Members of European Parliament**
- **Non-member regions**

Target group		
National level ministries and directorates		
Goal		
Lobby activities for a closer North Sea cooperation		
Activity 1*	Activity 2	Activity 3
Use next event under preparatory action to communicate NSC position.	Declaration to Dutch Presidency at ABM 2015.	Communicate NSC policy positions to national level.

*The NSC has worked consistently with DG MARE to push the process forward, communicating the NSC position on the way. The NSC President will participate during the next event in Den Haag 21st-22nd June 2016.

Target group Committee of the Regions		
Goal Better liaison with other regions especially North Sea regions represented in CoR		
Activity 1*	Activity 2	Activity 3
Building relations through our communication channels, in cooperation with CPMR.	Participating at the Open Days CoR Meeting Place in Brussels, arranging workshop on low carbon transport projects.	Make a general leaflet, informing about NSC organization, members and policy work.

Target group Members of European Parliament		
Goal Building alliances with parliamentarians from the North Sea region		
Activity 1	Activity 2*	Activity 3
Involvement at Intergroup meetings, informing about NSC policy and lobbying.	Select and inform specific MEPs for closer collaboration on NSC issues.	Active use of social media channels, linking up with NSC MEPs.

Target group Non-member regions		
Goal To increase the membership base of The North Sea Commission		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Make printed info packages about the NSC for potential members.	Make an information spot on the website specifically for new potential members.	Targeting UK regions as a follow up to the House of Lords recommendation.

18b NSC Communication activities 2016- 2017
North Sea Commission 2016

1. Internal member communication 2016-2017

The level and form of participation differs for each member region. It follows that those regions that are actively involved in the Executive Committee or the thematic groups have more knowledge of the ongoing work and activities than those that are not. Consequently, there is a need for more actively communicating the work and results of the NSC to all member regions allowing them to be updated on current issues regardless of their degree of involvement.

Target group		
NSC member regions		
Goal		
To improve the communication of NSC activities and priorities to all members		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Update and create system for maintaining contact lists, both for members and thematic groups	Send a news flash to member regions after each ExCom with the most important decisions and discussion	Make members and thematic groups more visible on the new NSC/CPMR website

2. Selected external target groups 2016-2017

This communication activity plan will focus on a few target groups for the coming year, and define goals and associated actions that are realistic within available resources and will lead to positive effects in support of the overall goals:

- To strengthen the NSC's profile as a platform for policy development, lobbying and transnational project development
- To increase the NSC's visibility towards internal and external stakeholders
 - ***Non-member regions***
 - ***Regional Stakeholders***
 - ***National level ministries and directorates***
 - ***Committee of the Regions***
 - ***Members of European Parliament***

3. Activities in 2016-2017

Below are proposed NSC communication activities for the next year targeted at a selection of stakeholder groups mentioned above. The activities each support a goal which in turn supports the overall aim of the communication strategy. Focus is limited to a selected number of goals.

Target group Non-member regions		
Goal To increase the membership base of The North Sea Commission		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Build relations to North Sea-Channel InterGroup, CoR	Building relations to MEPs from non-member North Sea regions	Continue the targeted work on getting more English regions as members

Target group Regional Stakeholders		
Goal To get regional stakeholders more involved in NSC and in project/strategic work		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Monitoring and spreading information about relevant calls for project cooperation	Publish and update the NSR2020 best practice overview	Cooperation with CPMR on mapping of Maritime S3.

Target group National level ministries and directorates		
Goal Lobby activities for a closer North Sea cooperation		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Communicate results from next event under preparatory action to national level	Distribute and follow up Legoland Declaration to national level.	Follow up and send out revised NSR2020.

Target group Committee of the Regions		
Goal Better liaison with North Sea regions represented in CoR		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Distribute info package to relevant representatives, informing about NSC.	Develop partnership on strategic issues, in cooperation with CPMR	Quality check and update the contact list on members from North Sea regions

Target group		
Members of European Parliament		
Goal		
Building alliances with parliamentarians from the North Sea region		
Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Involvement at Intergroup meetings, informing about NSC policy and lobbying.	Distribute relevant policy positions and statements to relevant MEPs	Select and inform specific MEPs for closer collaboration on NSC issues.

19. Election of NSC President

Since Tom Christer Nilsen left NSC in January to become Junior Minister in Norway, Vice-President Kerstin Brunnström has acted as president for the North Sea Commission.

A call for new candidates was sent out to all NSC member regions, and by the deadline the NSC Secretariat has received one application. This was from Cllr. Kerstin Brunnström, region Västra Götaland. Her application, CV and letter of support are attached in Appendix 18a-c.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Elects the candidate as President of the North Sea Commission for the period 2016-2018

Gothenburg 25th of April, 2016

North Sea Commission
c/o Region Hordaland
N – 0000 Bergen
Norway

Nomination to position of President for the North Sea Commission

Further to the decision to launch a call for candidatures for the position of President of the North Sea Commission by the Annual Business Meeting in Billund, Denmark on 17th June 2016, I am pleased to declare my candidacy for named office.

The Region Västra Götaland is a strong supporter of the important work that is being done within the framework of the North Sea Commission. Throughout the years the Region has actively participated and contributed to the work in the Executive Board as well as in various working groups. It is my intention to continue strengthening the North Sea Region 2020 strategy and the continuation of the work on the Preparatory Action. I will also do my best to contribute to an even more influential, communicative, attractive and effective North Sea Commission. The organisational changes being discussed during this last year will need time and care for good decisions and implementation, and my region stands prepared to invest in a secretariat that will carry on supporting that process during the two years to come.

I am a member of the Regional Council and vice President of the region's Tourism Council. Being a chemical engineer from Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, I have long experience of working with policies, studies, planning, licensing, projects, education and leadership on a local, regional, national and international level, mainly concerning environmental management but also health care and local and regional government.

My candidacy is supported by the Region Västra Götaland, and the Region will provide the required administrative support for the position as President.

Please find enclosed my curriculum vitae.

Yours Sincerely,



Kerstin Brunnström
Regional Councillor
Phone: +46 70 527 57 45
E-mail: kerstin.brunnstrom@vgregion.se



CURRICULUM VITAE

Kerstin Brunnström

06 April 2016

Born 1953

Position M.Sc. Chem. & Environmental Eng.

Academic Qualifications - 1977, M.Sc. Chemical Engineering, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden

Language	Reading	Writing	Speaking
English	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
French	Excellent	Very good	Excellent
German	Very good	Good	Good
Spanish	Very good	Fair	Good
Swedish	Mother tongue	Mother tongue	Mother tongue

Main focus Long experience of work with policies, studies, planning, licensing, projects and education within all fields of environmental protection

Employment

1995 - 2015 , ÅF-IPK AB, Gothenburg, Sweden

Manager of the Gothenburg Environmental Section and Senior Consultant

1996 - 1998, Swedish Ministry of Environment,

(leave of absence from ÅF-IPK)Project Manager and adviser to the Minister

1990 - 1995, County Administrative Board of Gothenburg and Bohuslän, Gothenburg, Sweden

Director of Environmental Protection

1989 - 1990, City Council of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

Political Secretary

1986 - 1989, County Administrative Board of Gothenburg and Bohuslän, Gothenburg, Sweden

Senior Staff Officer, Environmental Protection

CURRICULUM VITAE

2(4)

Kerstin Brunnström

06 April 2016

1987- 1989, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
Project Manager, Information and External Contacts

1980 - 1985, National Environmental Protection Agency,
Senior Staff Officer, Environmental Protection

Assignments/
Consulting

1999 - - Councillor of Västra Götaland Region

2015 - -Vice President of the Tourism Council of West Sweden

2003 - 2014, Västra Götaland Region, Göteborg and Vänersborg
Assignment as member of Regional Council and deputy member of Regional Executive Board. President of the Board of Sahlgrenska University Hospital 2007-2014. President of Health Care Committee in Gothenburg 2003-2006. Member of environmental committee 2007-10 and internal auditor of the Executive Board 2007-13. (Part time leave from ÅF).

2005 - 2006, Sida, Stockholm
Evaluation of Sida's work with sustainable development

Jan - Oct 2005, The World Bank, Washington D.C., USA
Development of key documents for solid waste management in Argentina

May 2005 - 2006, TeliaSonera AB, Stockholm
Support in contacts with authorities for development of telephone networks

2004 - 2005, ÅF, Gothenburg/Stockholm
Environmental Manager of the ÅF Group

Mar - Apr 2004, ASDI/Cámara de la Industria, Bolivia
Support and education in environmental auditing of local and national consultants for environmental protection

2002 - 2005, Flextronics Network Services, Gothenburg
National coordinator of authority relations, permits, EIA, public contacts etc for the roll-out of 3G telephone systems.

May - Sep 2002, ASDI/Philippine Development Bank, The Philippines
Development of legal and authority structure (ordinances, planning, education) for self-regulation in the Philippines

2001 - 2001, SSAB Tunnbrått AB, Borlänge, Sweden
Environmental Impact Assessment

CURRICULUM VITAE

3(4)

Kerstin Brunnström

06 April 2016

2001 - 2001, Bostadsbolaget, district area Kortedala, Göteborg, Sweden
Optimising of waste handling

1999 - 2000, Quito Metropolitan District, Ecuador
Project Manager for elaboration of Environmental Management Master Plan.

1999 - 1999, Swedish government cabinet,
Introduction of EMS

1998 - 1999, Swedish industries,
Courses concerning the New Swedish Environmental Code to the industry

1997 - 1998, Swedish Government,
Co-ordinator of sustainable development in the government

1997 - 1997, Swedish state agencies,
Introduction of EMS

1996 - 1996, Saab Automobile AB, Södertälje, Sweden
Application for permit regarding a motor assembly plant

1996 - 1996, SÖDRA Skog (forestry)Renhållningsverket, Gothenburg (waste separation)Svensk Pappersindustri AB (paper products)Tarkett AB (plastic carpet production),
Environmental reviews for introduction of EMS

1994 - 1995, Province of Gothenburg and Bohuslän,
Project leader for development of a strategy for environmental adaption of the transport system

1993 - 1994, The World Bank,
"Hazardous Waste Management Algeria" - a World Bank project

1993 - 1994, Swedish Ministry of Civil Service,
"Management by evaluation of results in the Provincial Administration", a project in co-operation with the Ministry of Civil Service

1992 - 1992, National Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden
Project on Guidance for Regional Environmental Strategies

1988 - 1990, National Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden
Projects "Industry Fact Sheets" and "Control Guidelines"

1987 - 1987, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
Report on the employment situation of biologists

CURRICULUM VITAE

4(4)

Kerstin Brunnström

06 April 2016

1983 - 1984, National Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden

Representative for the National Environmental Protection Agency in the Helsinki Commission Lead Country Work with Cadmium

Publication

Sida Evaluation , 06/42, 2006 - Integrating the Environment? Environmental Considerations in Sida's Work .

Shorter educations/courses

1979, Post-graduate program in Environmental Engineering, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland

Västra Götaland, 20160426

Support for Kerstin Brunnström as president of the North Sea Commission (NSC)

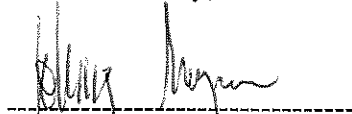
The Regional Executive Committee in Västra Götaland (regionstyrelsen) hereby endorses the nomination of Kerstin Brunnström, Region Västra Götaland, Sweden, to the position as president of the North Sea Commission.

The nomination is supported by all the Swedish member regions: Region Västra Götaland, Region Halland and Örebro Regional development Council.

Kerstin Brunnström is an experienced and gifted politician and has served for many years as a highly acknowledged representative of her home region. She has been an excellent vice president of the North Sea Commission since 2014, which has given her further knowledge and experience concerning European regional policy and the North Sea Commission.

We feel assured that Kerstin Brunnström will be a dedicated president of the North Sea Commission and that she will inspire and develop the important tasks performed by North Sea Commission in coming years.

Yours sincerely,



Johnny Magnusson

President of the Regional Executive Board

Region Västra Götaland

20. Election of Vice- President

All political positions in the North Sea Commission are elected for a period of two years. John Lamb was re-elected as Vice-President for the period 2015-2017. The second vice-president post is up for election for the period 2016-2018. Two candidates have applied for the vacant position:

Cllr Nienke Homan, Regional Minister Province of Groningen (The Netherlands)

Cllr Andreas Lervik, Chair of the County Council Committee for Industry and Culture in Østfold County Council (Norway)

Applications, CVs and Letter of Support are attached in the Appendix.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Elects one of the two candidates for the position as Vice-President (2016-2018)**

**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016**

Appendix 20a1

The North Sea Commission Secretariat received an application from Cllr Nienke Homan by email Saturday 30th April:

Dear Excom Members,

With reference to the e-mail of the North Sea Commission secretary (15 March 2016 -North Sea Commission - call for candidates), I forward my name as a candidate for the vacant position of Vice President of the North Sea Commission. My candidacy has the full support of the six Dutch coastal provinces.

My current position is member of the Executive Board of the Province of Groningen. In the provincial Executive Board I am responsible for Energy Transition and the Environment.

In addition, I am member and national representative for the Netherlands in the Executive Commission of the North Sea Commission.

The North Sea Commission has many important and highly relevant tasks on the agenda. Should I be elected, I am looking forward to actively help progress the excellent work which has already been carried out by the Executive Committee in close co-operation with the president and the vice-president.

Yours sincerely,

Nienke Homan

Regional Minister Province of Groningen, The Netherlands

Curriculum Vitae

Personal information

Surname Homan- Brinkman
Christian name Nienke
Date of birth 10-05-1979 Groningen
Marital status Married, three children
Sex Female
Nationality Dutch

Adress Martinikerkhof 12
9712 JG Groningen, The Netherlands

Postbus 610
9700 AP Groningen, The Netherlands

Mobile +31(0)6-52761547
Telephone +31-(0)50-3164707
E-mail N.homan@provinciegroningen.nl



Helping the North Sea Regions towards 'the next economy' with sustainable economic growth by combining forces.

Professional experience

- '15- today Member of the Executive Board of the province of Groningen, the Netherlands
 - Energy Transition, Environment, Staff, Facility Management, ICT
- '12- '15 Democratic member (chairman) of the parliamentary party GroenLinks in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands
 - Spokesperson
 - Portfolio Governance, Finance, Environment, Energy
- '14- '15 Member of the board of the cooperation De Raffinage, Groningen the Netherlands
 - Cooperation of more than 40 sustainable companies
 - Succeeded in several partnerships regarding social and environmental partnerships
- '13- '14 Quality functionary Maternity Care Het Groene Kruis BV, Groningen
 - Implementation of a PDCA- quality system
- '12-'15 Member of the advisory Council of Quality Coaching, Groningen
 - Strategic advisor
- '10-'15 Quality-system-specialist, Het Keurmerkinstituut te Zoetermeer
 - Control and advice in PDCA-system in Juvenile Prisons
- '99- '12 Several functions in Juvenile prisons and youth care

Education

- '13-'14 Masterclass Dutch Administrative Law, University of Twente
- '03-'05 Social Science, University of Groningen
- '06-'07 Middle Management, Scheidegger Leeuwarden
- '97-'03 Social Academics, Hanzehogeschool Groningen, Bachelor
- '91-'97 Pre-university education, Ubbo Emmius Lyceum te Stadskanaal

North Sea Commission,
Hordaland fylkeskommune
Postboks 7900
5020 BERGEN

Vår ref.: 46307/2016 - 2015/15113

Deres ref.:
Dato: 25.04.2016

Application for the Position of Vice-President of the North Sea Commission

I, Councillor Andreas Lervik, of Østfold County Council, herby apply for the post of Vice-President of the North Sea Commission.

Through two periods, from 2001 until today, I have actively participated in the North Sea Commissions work. I have been vice chair and chair of the earlier Sustainable Development Group and I have participated in CMPRs working group for energy. This past year I have been a Norwegian member of the NSC Executive Committee. I have enjoyed this work and now look forward to taking this to the next level and assist the NSC to develop / influence EU policy to the betterment of the North Sea Basin.

The interregional work around the North Sea basin has always been very important for our regions. It is even more important today as many of us are facing common challenges. Coastal zones planning, fisheries, tourism and more importantly energy are examples of areas in which we need to work together and ensure that the members of the North Sea Region get the benefits of all EU Policy and EU funding programs. I therefore wish to continue the work for a better understanding between the regions around the North Sea basin in these matters. A strong regional cooperation, through the North Sea Commission, will be a strong voice to work with national governments, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions - I would like to contribute to this.

The North Sea Commission also faces major issues concerning the future structure. My opinion about this issue is that I want a debate that will enable us to emerge stronger from it. I therefore believe that we must resolve these issues within todays financial framework. Many of our members currently have a tough financial time - I want these members to be listened to. Moreover, I believe that we must have a proper operation. It's my wish that we continue the work that already has been initiated and that we get the most work for the funds we already have.

My political career dates back Thurs 1995 and includes experience of local, regional and national politics. I have been a member of the City Council of Sarpsborg for eight years, and I

Sentraladministrasjonen

Postadresse: Postboks 220, 1702 Sarpsborg
Kontoradresse:
Telefon: 69 11 70 00

E-post: sentralpost@ostfoldfk.no
Internett:
Org.nr.: _____



have been a deputy to the Norwegian Parliament for eight years. In 1999 I was elected to the County Council and I have been a member ever since. I have had several positions and today I am the chair of the County Council Committee for Industry and Culture. I am also a member of the County Council Executive Committee.

I have greatly enjoyed my time in the North Sea Commission and look forward to continue our work for regional development around the North Sea basin and added value for all North Sea regions.

Yours Sincerely

Andreas Lervik
Councillor
Chair the County Council Committee for Industry and Culture

Attachment:

- Curriculum Vitae, Andreas Lervik

Curriculum Vitae

Andreas Lervik

Born: Nov 28th 1969
Address: Storgata 5, 1723 Sarpsborg
Tel: (+47)934 34 698
Email: andler@ostfoldfk.no



Professional Career

2015 - Østfold County Council, Chair Committee for Industry and Culture
2014 - 2015 City of Fredrikstad, Special Adviser,
2009 - 2014 Norsk Grønnkraft AS, Head of Communications,
2007 - 2014 Norsk Grønnkraft AS, Project Developer,
2003 - 2007 Østfold County Council, Chair Committee for Infrastructure-, Environment- and Industry
1999 - 2003 Councillor Østfold County Council
1996 - 1999 Stens Trykkeri AS, Shift Leader in a print shop
1994 - 1996 LS Offset, Printer in a printshop

Military

1990 - 1991 Compulsory military service

Political Career

2012 - Energy Forum Østfold, Chair
2011 - 2012 Norwegian Gas Forum, Board Member
2007 - 2012 Gleng Property Development, Board Member
2006 - 2007 Østfold Museum, Vice-Chair
2005 - 2008 NSC Executive Committee, Accending member
2002 - 2008 NSC, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of Sustainable Development
2001 - 2009 Norwegian Parliament, Deputy member
2001 - 2007 Østfold Energi, Board Member
1999 - Various Interreg projects, Forum Skagerrak II / Pipe / Innovation Circle
1999 - Østfold County Council, Councillor

1995 - 2011 Sarpsborg City Council, Member and deputy member,

Education

2003 - Bachelor studies, Economy and Management degree

- Project I and II 30 credits ECTS
- European Programme - Regional Development 15 ECTS
- Didactic for Entrepreneurship 30 credits
- Communications, Rhetoric and Management 30 credits
- Economics 12 ECTS
- Marketing 6 ECTS
- Macroeconomics 6 ECTS
- Organizational Psychology and Management 6 ECTS,
- Basic Course spatial planning 15 ECTS

1992 - 1994 Apprentice, Offset printer

1989 - 1991 Media and Communications - Graphic production,

1987 - 1989 General, and Business Studies - Business and administration,

North Sea Commission,
Hordaland fylkeskommune
Postboks 7900
5020 BERGEN

Vår ref.: 41797/2016 - 2015/15113

Deres ref.:

Dato: 20.04.2016

Saksbehandler: Kjersti Garberg

Letter of support

To who it may concern,

Østfold County Council received on the 7th and 18th of April e-mails from the North Sea Secretariat concerning information about the elections at the Annual Business Meeting in June 2016 and the vacant positions in the North Sea Commission.

Østfold County Council hereby supports the application of councillor Andreas Lervik, Østfold County Council, for the vacant position as Vice-President of the North Sea Commission.

Cllr Lervik is an experienced politician who has served as a regional politician for several years. He has also showed great concern for the development of our common coastline and as well for other interregional issues. I feel confident that Cllr Lervik will be a highly motivated and devoted Vice-President of the North Sea Commission.

On behalf of Østfold County Council,

Best regards


Ole Haabeth
Chairman of the



21. Confirmation of Members and Substitute Members to the NSC Executive Committee 2015-2017

Each national delegation elects a member and a substitute member of the Executive Committee every two years. The current period is from June 2015 until June 2017.

Appendix 21a shows the list of current members and substitute members of the NSC Executive Committee.

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Take note of the information

21a. Members of North Sea Commission Executive Committee and Substitute Members for 2015 - 2017, North Sea Commission

President	Vacant
Vice- President	Cllr. John Lamb, Southend (2015-2017)
Vice-President	Vacant
Denmark	Cllr. Preben Friis-Hauge, Region Syddanmark <i>Substitute Member</i> , Cllr. Otto Kjær Larsen, Region Nordjylland
England	see Vice-President. <i>Substitute Member</i> , Vacant
France	Vacant <i>Substitute Member</i> , Vacant
Germany	Cllr. Anke Spoorendonk, Land Schleswig-Holstein <i>Substitute Member</i> , Vacant
Netherlands	Cllr. Nienke Homan, Province of Groningen <i>Substitute Member</i> , Cllr. Cees Loggen, Noord-Holland
Norway	Cllr. Cllr. Andreas Lervik, Østfold fylkeskommune <i>Substitute Member</i> , Marianne Chesak, Rogaland fylkeskommune
Scotland	Cllr. Martin Kitts-Hayes, Aberdeenshire Council, <i>Substitute Member</i> , Cllr. Richard Greene, Highland Council
Sweden	Cllr. Dag Hultefors, Region Halland <i>Substitute Member</i> , Cllr Per Persson, Region Halland



**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016**

Appendix 21a

22. Audited account 2015

The NSC accounts for 2015 are as follows:

		Budget 2015	Accounts 2015	Difference
		Euro	Euro	Euro
	INCOME:			
	Membership subscription	131 742	128 448	-3 294 ¹
A	TOTAL INCOME	131 742R²	128 448	
	EXPENDITURE:			
	Joint annual conference expenses	24 000	15 725	8 275
	Promotional Expenditure	5 000	368 ³	4 632
	Travel, Accommodation, etc.	37 000	35 537	1 463
	Thematic Groups, meetings	10 000	4 923	5 077
	Advisor's Support	60 000	60 000	-
	Tlf. adm, internet, etc	5 000	6135 ⁴	-1 135
B	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	141 000	122 688	
C (A-B)	Planned deficit 2015	-9 258	5 760	
	Disposal			
D	Transferred reserve from 2014		212 540⁵	
C	This year's surplus/deficit		5 760	
E (D+C)	Reserve		218 300	
	Free reserve		118 300	
	Tied up reserve		100 000	

¹ All members have paid their 2015 dues. Dues for Buskerud fylkeskommune were transferred from CPMR early 2016 and therefore appear on accounts for 2016

² Budget for income from membership fees was reduced due to unforeseen loss of two members in 2015.

³ Underspend on promotional expenditure can be explained since Secretariat has not invested this year in any promotional material. Any printing has been carried out in house

⁴ Overspend under this budget line is due to an update of NSC website

⁵ € 30 000 has been set aside from the free reserve in 2015-2016 for the revision process. See agenda item 6 fra 67th ExCom Bergen March2015.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. *Approves the accounts for 2015***

23. Auditor's report of accounts 2015

The North Sea Commission's accounts for 2015 have been audited and the independent auditor's report is attached as appendix 23a

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Adopts the independent auditor's report of the accounts 2015***

To the North Sea Commission

Tlf.: +47 55 21 81 00
Faks: +47 55 21 81 33
www.deloitte.no

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

We have audited the accompanying financial statement of the North Sea Commission, which comprise the expenses and income statement covering the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015. The financial statement has been prepared by the management (secretariat) of the North Sea Commission based on the financial reporting system of Hordaland County Council. The financial statement for the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015 shows a net income of EUR 5.760.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statement

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of this financial statement in accordance with the reporting provisions of Hordaland County Council for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statement based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statement is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statement. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statement, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statement in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates, if any, made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statement.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statement of the North Sea Commission for the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015 is prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the financial reporting provisions of Hordaland County Council.

Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution and Use

Without modifying our opinion, we emphasise that the financial statement is prepared solely to assist the North Sea Commission to comply with the financial reporting provisions needed by its member organisations. As a result, the financial statement may not be suitable for other purposes. Our report is intended solely for the North Sea Commission and its member organisations. The included budget of the financial statement has not been audited.

Bergen, May 9, 2016
Deloitte AS



Helge-Roald Johnsen
State Authorised Public Accountant



CPMR **NORTH SEA
COMMISSION**

**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016**

24. Statement of Accounts as per 30th April 2016

The NSC statement of accounts for 2016 as per 30th April is as follows:

		Budget 2016	Statement of Accounts 30th April	Difference
		Euro	Euro	Euro
	INCOME:			
	Membership subscription	133 850	73 574 ¹	60 276
A	INCOME TOTAL:	133 850	73 574	60 276
	EXPENDITURE:			
	Joint annual conference expenses	16 256	0	16 256
	Promotional Expenditure	4 572	0	4 572
	Travel, Accommodation, etc.	37 592	7 055	30 592
	Thematic Groups, meetings	10 160	0	10 160
	Advisor's Support	61 011	0	61 011
	Tlf. adm, internet, etc	4 064	820	3 244
B	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	133 655	125 780	
C (A-B)	Expected surplus (+) /deficit (-)	195		
	Disposal			
D	Transferred reserve from 2015 ²	218 300	218 300	
E	Tied up reserve	100 000	100 000	
F	NSR 2020 revision expenses	30 000	10 732³	
C	Surplus/deficit			
G (C+D-E-F)	Free reserve		107 568	
H (E+G)	Reserve		207 568	

¹ These dues include dues from Buskerud fylkeskommune for 2015 which were received early 2016

² See agenda item 22. Audited Accounts 2015

³ A separate project account has been set up for the revision expenses.



CPMR
**NORTH SEA
COMMISSION**

**25th NSC Annual Business Meeting
Billund, 17th June 2016**

Notes

- Promotional expenditure includes publications
- Thematic groups and meetings includes expenses for ExCom meetings. Expenses for ExCom meeting in Brussels October 2015 have recently been invoiced in May 2016.
- Advisor's support will be paid in June 2016
- ExCom in March 2015 agreed to set aside up to € 30 000 from the free reserve to cover expenses for the NSR2020 revision process

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

- 1. Approves the statement of accounts as of 30th April 2016**

25. Budget proposal 2017¹

		Accounts 2015	Budget 2016	Proposed budget 2017
			Euro	Euro
	INCOME:			
	Membership subscription	131 742	133 850	133 850
A	TOTAL INCOME	131 742	133 850	133 850
	EXPENDITURE:			
	Joint annual conference expenses	15 725	16 256	20 000 ²
	Promotional Expenditure	368	4 572	4 000
	Travel, Accommodation, etc.	35 537	37 592	36 000
	Thematic Groups, meetings	4 923	10 160	5 000
	Advisor's Support	60 000	61 011	61 011 ³
	Tlf. adm, internet, etc	6135	4 064	-
B	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	122 388	133 655	126 011
C (A-B)	Planned surplus (deficit)	5 760	195	7 840⁴

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. **Adopts the budget for 2017 with possible review to be presented to ExCom in October depending on the outcome of agenda item 17. on the reorganisation of the groups**

¹ This budget should be reviewed depending on the outcome of the agenda item 17 on the reorganisation of the groups

² Although no annual conference is planned for 2017 it may be a good idea to set aside funds for some kind of event and/or dinner for members and to facilitate for the ABM

³ Based on 5 working groups and advisors' fees of € 12 000pa

⁴ The budget proposed gives the organisation a planned surplus due to ongoing process to reduce costs.

26. Meeting plan 2016-2017

For your information please find an overview of dates and venues for forthcoming meetings in the North Sea Commission. Dates of meetings are also announced on the NSC website.

Event	Date	Venue
Culture and Tourism Group	14 th June 2016	Billund
Transport Group	15 th June 2016	Billund
North Sea Conference	15 th -17 th June 2016	Billund
Marine Resource Group	16 th June 2016	Billund
Energy and Climate Change Group	16 th June 2016	Billund
25 th Annual Business Meeting	17 th June 2016	Billund
71 st ExCom	17 th June 2016	Billund
Transport Group	12 th -13 th September 2016	Bremen
Economic Development/Energy and Climate Change group	14 th -16 th September 2016	Groningen/Assen
Culture and Tourism	13 th -14 th October 2016	Tjörn
72 nd ExCom	21 st October 2016	Brussels
73 rd ExCom	March 2017	tbc (host region requested)
26 th Annual Business Meeting	June 2017	Bergen, Norway (tbc)
74 th ExCom	June 2017	Bergen, Norway (tbc)
75 th ExCom	October 2017	Brussels
76 th ExCom	March 2018	Schleswig-Holstein

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Takes note of the information

27. Information regarding 26th Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting has, for several years, been arranged in conjunction with the annual North Sea Conference. The conference has traditionally been hosted by a North Sea Region and funded by this host region and the North Sea Region Interreg Programme (NSRP). The North Sea Commission has made an annual contribution to the host region of € 15 000 and as such has co-hosted this annual event.

Due to budget restrictions the NSRP is not able to fund an event on this scale each year in the current programming period 2014-2020. Without the Interreg funding no region has been able to offer to host an event on this scale.

The North Sea Commission Secretariat has discussed the idea of finding some solution for the conference and the NSC ABM with NSRP. NSRP is now looking into other options whereby an event in some form could be held, if not on such a large scale. If a solution is found, the Secretariat has expressed the wish for the NSC to continue to work with the NSRP and contribute with the funds set aside from 2017 budget (€ 20 000) to this joint event. A proposal for this will be put forward to the next NSRP Monitoring Committee meeting in October. NSC Secretariat will therefore discuss more details with NSRP this autumn.

In the event of no such solution being found then the NSC member region of Hordaland has offered to “host” NSC ABM in Bergen. The condition is that the ABM budget for the ABM 2017 covers the costs for the meeting. This at least ensures a location for the ABM in 2017.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***