

26th NSC Annual Business Meeting, 28th June 2017, Göttingen

13.00-13.30 Opening session

Welcome to Lower Saxony *Mr **Stefan Wenzel**, Minister for the Environment*

Opening speech: State of the North Sea Region *Cllr **Kerstin Brunström**, NSC President*

1. Approval of the agenda
2. Approval of the minutes of the 25th Annual Business Meeting

13.30-14.30 Thematic Priorities

3. Managing maritime space *Cllr **Anders Fasth**, Chair of Marine Resources Group*
4. NorthSEE project *Mr **Lodewijk Abspoel**, Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment*
5. Increased accessibility and clean transport *Cllr **Preben Friis-Hauge**, Chair of Transport Group*
6. Tackling climate change *Cllr **Jimmy Gray**, Chair of Energy and Climate Change Group*
7. Attractive and sustainable communities *Cllr **Barney Crockett**, Chair of Smart Regions group*
8. Interreg projects relevant to NSR 2020 *Mr **Christian Byrith**, Director Interreg North Sea secretariat*

14.30-15.00 Coffee

15.00-16.30 Future of Europe, future of the North Sea

9. CPMR and the Future of Europe *Ms **Eleni Marianou**, Secretary General, CPMR*
10. Brexit and the North Sea *Cllr **Nienke Homan**, Chair of Brexit Task Force*
11. The North Sea and the European blue economy *Mr **Christos Economou**, Head of Unit, DG MARE tbc*
12. North Seas Energy Cooperation *Mr **Brendan Devlin**, Adviser, DG Energy tbc*
Discussion

16.40-18.10 Internal affairs

13. Annual report 2016-2017
14. Action plan 2017-2018 *Ms **Melissa Frödin**, NSC Assistant Executive Secretary*
15. Communication strategy and plan *Ms **Irma Ganibegovic**, NSC Assistant Executive Secretary*
16. New model for the NSC Secretariat *Mr **Magnus Engelbrektsson**, Executive Secretary*
17. Process for a North Sea Strategy post 2020 *Mr **Magnus Engelbrektsson**, Executive Secretary*
18. Finances *Mr **Magnus Engelbrektsson**, Executive Secretary*
 - a) Accounts 2016
 - b) Auditor's report on accounts 2016
 - c) Statement of accounts per 25th of May 2017
 - d) Budget 2018
19. Election of one Vice President 2017-2019
20. Confirmation of members and substitute members of NSC Executive Committee
21. Meeting plan 2017-2018

18.10-18.30 Closing session

22. Resolutions and policy positions
23. Final declaration
24. Next year's Annual Business Meeting
25. AOB
26. Concluding remarks *Cllr **Kerstin Brunström**, NSC President*



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

1. Approval of the agenda

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the agenda for the meeting***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

2. Approval of the minutes of the 25th Annual Business Meeting

Minutes of the 25th Annual Business Meeting 17th of June in Vejle, South Denmark, are enclosed.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the minutes of the 25th Annual Business Meeting 2016***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

25th NSC Annual Business Meeting,

17th June 2016

Vejle, DK

Draft Minutes

NORTH SEA



COMMISSION

FORMALITIES
Welcome 1. Approval of the agenda 2. Approval of the minutes of ABM 18 th June 2015
REPORTS
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 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
9. External Presentation by Dr. Irene McMaster – North Sea in Numbers
STRATEGIC ISSUES
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
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
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 26 th Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Assembly is able to vote if at least one quarter of its members are present. When decisions are to be adopted, the President, the vice-presidents and each member Region shall have one vote.

22 members were present to vote

The Region of Zeeland (NL) had given proxy to Nienke Homan, NL to vote for them.

Acting-President Kerstin Brunnström and Vice-President John Lamb each had one vote.

Attending:

Politicians		
Aust-Agder fylkeskommune	Jon-Olav	Strand
	Torunn	Ostad
Buskerud fylkeskommune	Anders	Wengen
Hordaland fylkeskommune	Daniel Charles	Hextall
Land Schleswig-Holstein	Anke	Spoorendonk
Møre & Romsdal fylkeskommune	Erik	Kursetgjerde
Region Halland	Dag	Hultefors
Region Nordjylland	Otto Kjær	Larsen
	Arne	Nielsen
Region Syddanmark	Preben	Friis-Hauge
Region Västra Götaland	Kerstin	Brunnström
	Anders	Fasth
	Birgitta	Adolfsson
Region Örebro County	Erik	Johansson
Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland	Nienke	Homan
	Tjisse	Stelpstra
Southend on Sea	John	Lamb
Telemark fylkeskommune	Hans Edvard	Askjer
Vest-Agder fylkeskommune	Tore	Askildsen
	Beate Marie	Johnsen
Vestfold fylkeskommune	Kåre	Pettersen
Østfold fylkeskommune	Andreas	Lervik
Presidency		
Acting President	Kerstin	Brunnström
Vice-President	John	Lamb
NSC Secretariat		
Executive Secretary	Kate	Clarke
Ass. Executive Secretary	Camilla	Stavnes

Administrative officer	Einar	Stokka
Officers		
Aberdeen City	Stuart	Bews
Bremen	Torsten	Raff
Buskerud fylkeskommune	Trond	Myrland
Buskerud fylkeskommune	Bard	Oyen
Hordaland fylkeskommune	Kathrin	Jakobsen
Hordaland fylkeskommune	Karen	Nybø
Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune	Birgit	Aaroenæs
Noord Holland	Joram	Snijders
Region Halland	Ulrika	Bertilsson
Region Midtjylland	Henrik	Jensen
Region Nordjylland	Karen Greve	Somerset
Region Syddanmark	Kia Sofie	Abildtrup
Region Syddanmark	Erik	Ørskov
Region Syddanmark	Mette	Bro Lund
Region Västra Götaland	Magnus	Engelbrektsson
Region Västra Götaland	Gustaf	Rehnström
Region Västra Götaland	Charlotta	Lundström
Rogaland fylkeskommune	Simon	Rimehaug
Rogaland fylkeskommune	Eli	Viten
Samenwerkingsverbank Noord Nederlands	Elmer	Koole
Samenwerkingsverbank Noord Nederlands	Martien	Haasjes
Samenwerkingsverbank Noord Nederlands	Paulien	Kooistra
Samenwerkingsverbank Noord Nederlands	Simon	Tijmsma
Schleswig Holstein	Eileen	von Elsner
Schleswig Holstein	Thomas	Pfannkuch
Sør Trøndelag fylkeskommune	Leif Harald	Hanssen
Telemark fylkeskommune	Vibeke	Jakobsen
Telemark fylkeskommune	Dawn Marie	Syvertsen
Vest Agder fylkeskommune	Siv	Hemsett
Vest Agder fylkeskommune	Jon Halvard	Eide
Vestfold fylkeskommune	Karen Anne	Kjendlie
Zuid Holland	Foky	Lamboo
Østfold fylkeskommune	Kjersti Helene	Garberg
Thematic Group chairs/vice-chairs		
Marine Resources Group	Anders	Fasth
Transport Group	Preben	Friis-Hauge



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

	Kaare	Pettersen
Energy and Climate Change Group	Jon Olav	Strand
Culture and Tourism Group	Otto	Kjær-Larsen
Economic Development Group	Apologies	
Thematic Group advisers		
Marine Resource Group	Camilla	Stavnes
Transport Group	Jon Halvard	Eide
Energy and Climate Change Group	Paulien	Kooistra
Culture and Tourism Group	not present	
Economic Development Group	Simon	Tijmsma
Observers		
North Sea Interreg Programme	Christian	Byrith
Strathclyde University	Irene	Thomas
Lower Saxony	Monika	von Haaren

Welcome

Welcome by Acting President Kerstin Brunnström

1. Approval of the agenda

Decisions and conclusions:

The agenda was approved

2. Approval of the minutes

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting approved the minutes of the Annual Business Meeting on 18th June 2015

3. Report from the Interreg North Sea Region Programme

Head of the North Sea Region Interreg Secretariat, Christian Byrith, presented a status report of the first year of the new programme period.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

4. President's Report

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström presented the presidents report. We are a unique organisation in the North Sea basin. 31 regional authorities working together to exploit the opportunities the North Sea has to offer. Our partners in the member states and in Brussels have high expectations with regards to us. We have local knowledge and we know the stakeholders in our regions. They expect us to be able to give input to important policy processes, develop projects and draw on our network of stakeholders around the North Sea to implement projects and processes. We can play an important part in the future of the development of our region if we truly exploit these opportunities. As an organisation we must be aware of these expectations and develop ways of working so that we can truly deliver under these expectations.

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström thanked all members for their hard work and important contributions during the past year.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the President's report.

5. Report from NSC Secretariat

Executive Secretary Kate Clarke gave a short presentation of the written NSC Secretariat report, highlighting the importance of the thematic groups, our network, important events and development of the organisation.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information.

6. Report from European Maritime Day

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström gave a report from her participation in the European Maritime Day 2016, focusing on her participation in the DG Mare event on blue growth and clusters.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information.

7. Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups

The thematic groups summarized their annual reports. The Transport group went more in depth presenting their report on alternative fuels.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting approved all the annual reports of the thematic groups

8. Report from CPMR

The agenda for the CPMR Political Bureau meeting in Finland 17th June and the Final Declaration from the CPMR General Assembly in November 2015 were sent out with the papers.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

9. External Presentation by Dr. Irene McMaster – North Sea 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.

Irene McMaster presented the results at the Annual Business Meeting.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

10. Status on the preparatory action for the North Sea Region

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström gave an update on the status of the preparatory action.

DG Mare is responsible for implementation of the preparatory action. They have decided to organise it in a form of a series of stakeholder conferences. The first one was organized in Edinburgh in January 2015. The next one is taking place in Den Haag 20th-21st June 2016; focusing on strategic cooperation regarding blue growth in the North Sea. The North Sea Commission have been continuously working on closer North Sea cooperation and the role NSC can play – both thematically and strategically. Acting President Kerstin Brunnström has been asked to make concluding remarks to sum up the conference.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

11. Resolution on landing obligation

The Marine Resources group has prepared a resolution on landing obligation, commonly known as discard ban. The paper comments on the implementation of the landing obligation under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). There is a general support of the landing obligation as a means to prevent overfishing. The changes are already in place, and there is a need to find efficient ways of implementation. The resolution outlines the concerns that need to be raised to European Commission and member states.

The Dutch members suggested additional remarks on survival rate and social impacts in the meeting, which will be included in the continued work.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the resolution

12. Political statement on transport

The transport group has prepared a policy statement on transport highlighting 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.

The Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland suggested to change point 5 in the statement to read:

'5 In order to ease the compliance with the EU Sulphur Directive for shipping, the European Commission should strengthen the support for alternative shipping fuel like LNG and Methanol''.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the political statement with the proposed changes from Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland.

13. Revised NSR 2020 Strategy

Ass. Executive Secretary Camilla Løvaas Stavnes summarized the revision process, highlighting the involvement, stakeholder engagement and the different milestones.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the revised North Sea Region 2020 strategy document.

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 plan shall be adopted on an annual basis and the proposal for action plan June 2016 – June 2017 was sent out with the papers. A few structural changes to the action plans were made during the revision process of the North Sea Region 2020. The groups have been challenged to highlight the role of the North Sea Commission in the activities and outcomes.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the North Sea Region 2020 action plan for June 2016 – June 2017.

15. Legoland declaration 2016

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. The declaration from the ABM is meant as a general statement for the Commission and other European bodies, as well as our national governments. The papers were sent out four weeks prior to the meeting. All members were invited to submit input to the paper up until 16th June.

A few amendments from the Norwegian regions and Dutch regions were sent within the deadline, a final draft with amendments were distributed to all members.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the Legoland declaration 2016 with the amendments from the Dutch and Norwegian members.

16. Model for a sustainable NSC Secretariat

President Kerstin Brunnström introduced the papers under agenda point 16.

Decisions and conclusions:

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

17. Proposal for reorganization of the groups

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 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. One could argue that the time is ripe to try to align the groups to the strategic priorities of the organisation. This is also a strong recommendation from the COWI evaluation from 2013.

Decisions and conclusions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting decided to close two of the working groups – Economic Development Group and Culture and Tourism Group by the end of 2016.
2. The Annual Business Meeting decided to set up a new thematic working group operative from January 2017, as outlined in the paper
3. The Annual Business Meeting 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. The Annual Business Meeting requests the advisors to report yearly to ABM on their financial expenses

18. Communication activity plan

Executive Secretary Kate Clarke gave a short presentation of the communication efforts carried out by the organisation the past year and the plans for the year to come.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the communication activity plan.

19. Election of NSC President

Acting President Kerstin Brunnström from Västra Götaland, SE was the only candidate that applied within the deadline

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting elected Kerstin Brunnström as the NSC President 2016-2018

20. Election of NSC Vice-President

Two candidates applied for the position as Vice-President within the deadline; Nienke Homan from Groningen, NL and Andreas Lervik from Østfold, NO. They were both given 3 minutes to present themselves to the meeting.

All member regions, NSC president and Vice-Presidents shall have one vote. 22 members were present to vote. The Region of Zeeland (NL) had given proxy to Nienke Homan, NL to vote for them. Acting President Kerstin Brunnström and Vice-President John Lamb had one vote each.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting elected Andreas Lervik from Østfold, NO as NSC Vice-President 2016-2018.

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

The current list of ExCom members were sent out with the papers.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the list

22. Accounts 2014

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the accounts for 2015.

23. Audited report of accounts 2014



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting approved the auditor's report for accounts 2015.

24. Financial status as of 30th April 2016

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting approved the updated financial status as of 30th April 2016

25. Proposed Budget 2017

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting adopted the budget under the understanding that the budget will need with reviewing pending the decisions made during the ABM meeting. An updated budget will be presented for the ExCom in October 2016.

26. Meeting plan 2016-2017

An overview of forthcoming meetings was sent out with the papers. The information will also be made available at the NSC website.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the listed meeting dates.

27. Information regarding the Annual Business Meeting 2017

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 NSC Secretariat is in dialogue with the North Sea Region Programme to try to find a solution. Hordaland, NO has offered to host NSC ABM in the event where no viable solution is found.

Decisions and conclusions:

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information.

28. Email from Lower Saxony

Decisions and conclusions:



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

President Kerstin Brunnström gave a special thanks to the host region for the hospitality and for a successful North Sea Conference, as well as to the Secretariat for excellent work and support.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

3. Managing maritime space

Managing maritime space is one of the priority areas of the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy. The Chair of the NSC Marine Resources Group, Cllr Anders Fasth, Västra Götaland (SE), will report on developments in the area.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

4. NorthSEE project

«A North Sea Perspective on Shipping, Energy and Environmental Aspects in Maritime Spatial Planning» (The NorthSEE project) is a cooperation project among national/regional authorities and universities in the North Sea Region to improve coordination in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). The project will run between May 2016 and May 2019 and is funded by the Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme.

The province of North Holland is a member of the project on behalf of the NSC Marine Resources Group.

Mr Lodewijk Abspoel from the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment in the Dutch government will give an update on the project.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

5. Increased accessibility and clean transport

Increased accessibility and clean transport is one of the priority areas of the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy. The Chair of the NSC Transport Group, Cllr Preben Friis-Hauge, South Denmark (DK), will report on developments in the area.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

6. Tackling climate change

Tackling climate change is one of the priority areas of the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy. The Chair of the NSC Energy and Climate Change Group, Cllr Jimmy Gray, Highland (UK), will report on developments in the area.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

7. Attractive and sustainable communities

Attractive and sustainable communities is one of the priority areas of the North Sea Region 2020 Strategy. The Chair of the NSC Smart Regions Group, Cllr Barney Crockett, Aberdeen City (UK), will report on developments in the area.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

8. Interreg projects relevant to NSR 2020

The Director of the Interreg North Sea Joint Secretariat, Mr Christian Byrith, will give an update from the programme, with a focus on ongoing projects of relevance for the priority areas in the North Sea Region 2020 strategy.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

9. CPMR and the Future of Europe

On the 1st of March 2017, the European Commission presented a white paper on the future of Europe, describing challenges and outlining five scenarios for how the Union could evolve in the next decade. The white paper is followed by a number of reflection papers (social dimension, EMU, globalisation, defence and finances).

Commission President Juncker's State of the Union speech in September will take these ideas further before first conclusions could be drawn at the December 2017 European Council.

The CPMR launched its own reflection process at the Political Bureau meeting in March 2017, which is supposed to result in a technical analysis report to the Annual General Meeting in October 2017, and a Manifesto to be adopted by the Annual General Meeting in 2018. The geographical commissions, including the North Sea Commission, are encouraged to take an active part in this process.

Ms Eleni Marianou, CPMR Secretary General, will report on the matter, which will also be followed up with a workshop in the North Sea Conference on the 29th of June.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Takes note of the information

10. Brexit and the North Sea

The UK withdrawal from the European Union will have a potentially large impact on the North Sea Region, and should therefore be monitored closely by the North Sea Commission. Whenever appropriate, the North Sea Commission should make its views heard to the negotiation process and in public.

The Brexit issue is relevant also in the framework of the Future of Europe discussions launched by the CPMR.

The NSC was asked in December 2016 to submit evidence on short notice to the UK House of Commons Select Committee on Exiting the EU. The evidence (<http://cpmr-northsea.org/download/evidence-by-the-nsc-to-the-house-of-commons/>) was delivered in written form after consultations with the President and Vice Presidents.

In order to follow the negotiations, to draft opinions and to propose NSC action, the NSC Executive Committee decided at its meeting in March 2017 to launch a Brexit Task Force in the North Sea Commission. Councillor Nienke Homan, Northern Netherlands, was elected Chair of the Task Force.

The Task Force will keep close contact with the CPMR secretariat and with a similar task force in the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission.

ClIr Homan will report on developments. Background information will be sent out shortly before the Annual Business Meeting.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

11. Blue growth in the North Sea

In April, the EU maritime ministers adopted a declaration on blue growth, reaffirming their political commitment to further grow EU's sustainable blue economy.

Mr Christos Economou, Head of Unit in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG Mare) will share his views on how the blue economy of the North Sea can be developed (tbc).

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the information***



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

12. North Seas Energy cooperation

In 2016, ten countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom) signed a political declaration to reaffirm their commitment to cooperation on offshore renewable energy, in particular wind, and on promoting interconnection between the countries.

The cooperation structure consists of a High Level Group and four Support Groups for the work areas:

- maritime spatial planning
- development and regulation of offshore grids and other offshore infrastructure
- support framework and finance for offshore wind projects
- standards, technical rules and regulations in the offshore wind sector

In March, NSC President Kerstin Brunnström was invited as a panellist in the first North Seas Energy Forum, a stakeholder forum linked to the cooperation.

Mr Brendan Devlin from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy will give an update from the work (tbc).

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. Takes note of the information



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

13. Annual report 2016-2017

The annual report is enclosed. No briefing is planned at the meeting, but the Secretariat and the Advisors of the thematic groups are available to answer questions.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the annual report 2016-2017***

North Sea Commission Annual report 2016-2017

The purpose of the NSC annual report is to inform about activities since the last Annual Business meeting. In this report you will find the following:

- Introduction
- Report from the NSC Action plan 2016-2017
 - Managing maritime space
 - Increased accessibility and clean transport
 - Tackling climate change
 - Attractive and sustainable communities
- Strategic Issues
- Governing bodies
- Other

Introduction

At the 2016 NSC Annual Business Meeting in South Denmark, **Kerstin Brunnström**, Västra Götaland (SE), was elected President, and **Andreas Lervik**, Östfold (NO), was elected Vice President, both until 2018. **John Lamb**, Southend-on-Sea (UK), remained as Vice President (2015-17).

The ABM adopted the **Legoland declaration**, calling for a formalized cooperation platform between European institutions, countries and regions around the North Sea, asking for concrete results and conclusions from the EU Preparatory action, and for European Territorial Cooperation to be continued post 2020. A resolution on **landing obligation**, raising concerns and challenges of fishery dependent communities, and a policy statement on **transport** were also adopted.

The **action plan** for 2016-2017 identified a number of activities under the NSC2020 key actions, on which we will report below.

Two **thematic groups have merged** into one – more about that in the Attractive and sustainable communities section below.

Most of the North Sea Commission member regions are active in at least one of the thematic groups, the Executive Committee, and/or CPMR task forces. We have had the pleasure to welcome a new member, **Lower Saxony**, in the NSC, and the total number of member regions is now 32.



Managing maritime space

This section is a report on the key activities from the NSC action plan 2016-17 priority “Managing maritime space” and the Marine Resources Group.

Key actions

- **Use maritime spatial planning as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders.**

Region Noord Holland participates in the NorthSEE project on maritime spatial planning (MSP) on behalf of the NSC/Marine Resources Group. The Noord Holland representative attends the Marine Resources Group (MRG) meetings and reports on the project. The group has had a thorough presentation of the project with prepared questions. The MRG will be more actively involved when relevant.

The MRG has initiated a discussion on land/sea interaction, resulting in a draft resolution to be presented at the Annual Business Meeting 2017.



- **Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources**

A workshop on Norwegian experience with a discard ban was organized in January in Bergen. The Norwegian Directorate of fisheries, Institute of Marine Research and a fishery organization were invited to give presentations and engage in discussion with group members. Member regions' experience of the discard ban has been a point on the agenda for the last couple of years.

- **Ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future and livelihood in coastal communities**

Member regions have presented project ideas for the mobility of teachers and students between maritime educational institutions. Contacts during group meetings have been followed up and further developed between partners in between meetings.

The work the MRG is doing on recruitment to the fisheries sector is closely linked to the EU Blue Careers initiative, and this initiative was discussed with the European Commission at the MRG meeting in april. The NSC co-organized a workshop with the CPMR at the European Maritime Days in Poole (UK) in May 2017, where this topic was in focus.

Other related activities

The NSC Marine Resources Group (MRG) has been working closely with the CPMR giving input to the CPMR Maritime Agenda, adopted at the CPMR General Assembly in November 2016. The CPMR is doing a thorough work on maritime projects and financing, fisheries and aquaculture, maritime spatial planning, etc, on the European level. The NSC attends meetings and contributes with input to questionnaires and reports.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

DG Mare has been asking for input regarding regional blue growth cooperation in the North Sea Region in their work with the Preparatory Action. The group discussed the matter during the full group meeting in Bergen January 2017 and sent input on behalf of the group.

The CPMR has recently applied, together with national bodies from the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Scotland, for a project (SEANSE) in the framework of a DG Mare call on maritime spatial planning in the North Sea. If the application is accepted, it will presumably involve a workshop with NSC regions next year.

There have been contacts with OSPAR, KIMO, Waddensee cooperation and North Sea Advisory Council about strengthening cooperation and exchanging knowledge.

The MRG has put forward a support letter to the Marine Planning Exchange; to underline the need for planning to be based on marine knowledge.

The potential impacts of Brexit on fisheries, maritime spatial planning, and other related areas will be an important topic for the coming years.

Marine Resources Group

Anders Fasth, Västra Götaland (SE) is the Chair of the Marine Resources Group. **Jonathan Wills** (Shetland, UK) has been Vice Chair until the Scottish local elections in May 2017. In October 2016, **Henk Staghouwer** from North Netherlands/Groningen (NL) was elected to the other post as Vice Chair. **Camilla Løvaas Stavnes**, Hordaland (NO), is appointed advisor.

The group has met three times since the last Annual Business Meeting: In October 2016 in Fredrikstad (NO), in January 2017 in Bergen (NO) and in April 2017 in Brussels (BE). 11 regions from four countries have attended the group meetings. A strategic meeting was held in December 2016 between Chair, new Vice Chair and advisor to inform the new Vice Chair about the work of the Marine Resources Group and the NSC.

Increased accessibility and clean transport

This section is a report on the key activities from the NSC action plan 2016-2017 priority “Increased accessibility and clean transport” and Transport Group.

Key actions

- **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)**

The advisor and several members of the Transport Group attended the TEN-T Days in 2016. Group members also attended meetings in the forums for the Core Network Corridors Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North Sea-Baltic, together with DG Move and transport authorities in involved member states.

In connection with the mid-term review of CEF (The EU programme for transport, energy and ICT), the CPMR made a territorial assessment to see how the concerns for accessibility and maritime

transport have been taken into consideration in the allocation of funding. The Transport Group provided input to the assessment.

The Transport Group also provided input to CPMR's response to an EU consultation on the CEF review, as well as input to CPMR's draft position paper which was adopted by the Political Bureau on 10 March.

Furthermore, the Transport Group presented a set of amendment proposals to the adjustment of CEF corridors through the CPMR.

- **Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea**

The Transport Group has been following EU policies for Motorways of the Sea (MoS) through the CPMR Transport Group. Group members took part in the discussions on the Detailed Implementation Plan for MoS (DIP) at a meeting of the CPMR Transport group, and also attended a MoS seminar organised by the SERICA intergroup and the CPMR in the European Parliament. The Adviser has also provided some reflections on CPMR's technical paper on MoS.



- **Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, including clean shipping**

The Transport Group advisor presented the group's report on the mapping of alternative fuels in public transport at a seminar organized in Brussels in November by the GREAT project under the CEF programme. The report was later sent to DG Move upon request. The report will be developed further.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

The advisor and the NSC Secretariat in Brussels met with DG Move in February to be updated on current issues within the CEF and other EU initiatives on low emission vehicles and clean transport. DG Move requested the NSC to raise awareness about funding opportunities and identify "front runners" within clean vehicles.

A seminar on funding opportunities for green transport was organized by the Interreg North Sea Region Programme back to back with the Transport Group meeting in Aberdeen. Several group members attended this event, and the Adviser presented the group's work on green transport.

Aberdeenshire Council is lead partner and several members are partners in an application to the North Sea Region Programme on the promotion of public transport in rural areas. The project application is utilizing findings from previous reports by NSC members.

Other related activities

The Transport Group has begun to explore the issue of autonomous vehicles at a seminar organized by Bremen in connection with the spring meeting.

Closer links have been established with the HyER network (Hydrogen, Fuel Cells and Electro-mobility in European Regions).

Advisor and group members represent North Sea interests at meetings of the CPMR Transport Group, and have provided input to CPMR response to the CEF consultation.

Transport Group

Preben Friis-Hauge, South Denmark, chairs the Transport Group with **Peter Argyle**, Aberdeenshire (UK), and **Kåre Pettersen**, Vestfold (NO) as Vice Chairs. **Jon Halvard Eide**, Vest-Agder (NO) is appointed advisor.

The group has met twice since last ABM, September 2016 in Bremen and March 2017 in Aberdeen, and will meet in Göttingen on 29 June. Representatives of 14 member regions from six countries have attended one meeting or both. The Bremen meeting included study visits on sustainable urban mobility. At the Aberdeen meeting, workshops were held on autonomous vehicles and on funding.

Tackling climate change

This section is a report on the key activities from the NSC action plan 2016-2017 priority "Tackling climate change" and the Energy and Climate Change Group.

Key actions

- **Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels**

During the Energy and Climate Change Group (ECCG) meeting in September the regions of Midtjylland, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Hordaland, Aust-Agder, Groningen and Drenthe presented their views, policies and practices. The project Topsoil was presented, and the group



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

visited a waste to energy plant at Wijster, Drenthe and the Energy transition center, EnTranCe in Groningen.

A group of 30 students from the Hanze University of applied sciences in Groningen developed a climate change campaign. This resulted in different instruments we could use. Also some useful material was developed for a brochure. Member regions have been asked to provide written input on adaptation measures in the respective regions. A brochure on climate change adaptation will be developed with input from the regions.

- **Promote energy efficiency as well as innovation and green growth in low-carbon technologies**

Input from Groningen and Hordaland was given on this topic during the ECCG meeting in September.

- **Foster strong regional, national and European support for the North Sea Grid**

The political declaration on offshore wind signed in 2016 by all North Sea countries has resulted in four workgroups on EU and member state level (maritime spatial planning; development and regulation of offshore grids; financial support; technical standards and regulations). Regions are not directly involved, but the NSC President was invited to speak in March at the first stakeholder forum under the declaration. The Dutch coastal provinces met in December 2016 to coordinate input to the national level. The advisor and the NSC secretariat met with DG Energy about the political declaration and input from NSC. The advisor met in September 2016 with the Benelux office, secretariat for the Declaration, and with WindEurope to stress the role of the regions. There are talks about a possible joint meeting with the Atlantic Arc Commission to exchange experience on offshore wind later in 2017.

- **Facilitate for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**

Several NSC members have joined the Climate Taskforce of the CPMR, launched in March 2017 at the initiative of Brittany Region. Among its main issues, the Task Force aims to focus on the role of regions in the implementation of the Paris Agreement; to understand the economic, social and environmental impact of climate change in peripheral maritime regions; to share experience on climate change mitigation and adaptation; and to ensure synergies with existing projects, as well as with the key objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

Other related activities

An NSC position has been prepared on the Energy Package of the European Commission. In December the European Commission published its “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package, more commonly referred to as the Winter Package, consisting of numerous legislative proposals together with accompanying documents, aimed at further completing the internal market for electricity and implementing the Energy Union. The Winter Package is part of an overall package of more than 40 planned measures, which was first announced in February 2015 and designed by the Commission to strengthen and standardize the European Union’s energy markets.

Energy and Climate Change Group

The Energy and Climate Change Group is chaired by **Jimmy Gray**, Highland (UK). Vice Chairs are **Tjisse Stelpstra**, North Netherlands/Drenthe (NL) and **Jon Olav Strand**, Aust-Agder (NO). **Paulien Kooistra** from North Netherlands/Drenthe is appointed advisor.

The group had a joint meeting with the Economic Development Group in Northern Netherlands (Drenthe and Groningen) in September, and another meeting in Kristiansand in April. A total of 15 regions from five countries have attended meetings.



Attractive and sustainable communities

This section is a report on the key activities from the NSC action plan 2016-2017 priority “Attractive and sustainable communities” and the Smart Regions Group.

Key actions

- **Promote knowledge transfer and cross-overs between different sectors in the North Sea Region**
- **Improve policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges**
- **Promote maritime clusters to continue to play an important role as provider of blue growth, jobs and innovation**
- **Support the development of a more sustainable 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**

Due to the reorganization of thematic groups, where the new group has only met once, it is still early to report activities under each point. Instead, group meetings are described below.

Culture and Tourism Group...

The group had its 55th and final meeting in Västra Götaland (SE) in October 2016. The transition to the new thematic group was a focal point, but the group also discussed the Seafood Route, cruise awareness, youth exchanges in culture, culture and inclusion of migrants, and there were several presentations from regional actors in Västra Götaland relating to these themes. Six regions from four countries were represented.

...and Economic Development Group...



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

The Economic Development group organized a seminar together with the Energy and Climate Change group 14-15 September 2016 on climate change and mitigation measures in the provinces of Drenthe and Groningen. The seminar exchanged information on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures as well as energy shift towards renewables, and had technical visits to selected sites.

...merged into Smart Regions Group

To make the group structure consistent with the NSR2020 priority areas the Annual Business Meeting in 2016 decided to merge these two groups into one.

The Executive Committee in October elected the Economic Development Group chair **Barney Crockett**, Aberdeen City (UK), to chair the new group. **Otto Kjær Larsen**, North Denmark, and **Birgitta Adolfsson**, Västra Götaland (SE), who were Vice-Chairs of the Culture and Tourism Group were elected Vice-Chairs of the new group, and **Geir Sør-Reime**, Rogaland (NO) from the Culture and Tourism Group was appointed as advisor.

The Chair, Vice-Chairs and advisor had a planning meeting in Gothenburg (SE) in the autumn.

The first group meeting was held in Aarhus (DK) in March 2017 with delegates from 11 regions from four countries. The meeting included a seminar with presentations on a number of the subjects that the new group will deal with: climate change adaptations, circular economy and bio economy, regional food initiatives, culture tourism and the European Capital of Culture, as well as discussing issues like smart specialization strategies and smart regional development, including economic diversification; and issues relating to the inclusion of refugees and migrants. Following the seminar, there were visits to the new museum building of the Moesgaard Museum, and to ARoS, the art museum of Aarhus.



ExCom decided in March, in line with the proposal from the group, that the name of the thematic group will be **Smart Regions – prosperous and sustainable communities**.

Strategic issues

This section is a report on the strategic issues of the North Sea Commission, such as new initiatives, ad hoc task forces the relation to CPMR.

Initiatives

- **Strategic cooperation in the North Sea Region – mobilizing EU institutions/member states in North Sea cooperation**

President Brunnström has had meetings with DG MARE, and with the Committee of Regions North Sea Channel Intergroup. Brunnström attended a meeting with the European Parliament's SEARICA group on the Preparatory action for the North Sea, took part in a panel at the North Seas Energy Forum, and opened a workshop at European Maritime Day.

- **Use of ad hoc task forces**

The task force for a **sustainable secretariat model** has met and prepared a proposal to this year's ABM. The task force had members from Aberdeenshire, Groningen, North Denmark, Östfold and the old and new secretariat (Hordaland and Västra Götaland).

Six days after last year's business meeting, UK citizens voted in a referendum to leave the European Union. The **Brexit** process formally started on 29 March when the UK government triggered article 50 of the Lisbon treaty, and started the two-year process of exit negotiations. Already in December 2016, the North Sea Commission was approached by the UK House of Commons Committee on Exiting the European Union, who asked us to give our evidence in written form. In March, the Executive Committee launched a Brexit Task Force in the NSC and elected Nienke Homan, North Netherlands/Groningen to chair the task force. Work is about to start, a first meeting on technical level was held in May, and contact is established with a similar task force in the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission.

- **Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR**

The NSC President has been a speaker in sessions at the CPMR General Assembly and Political Bureau meetings. She has also attended the Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly. North Sea regions are active in the CPMR Cohesion task force and the preparations of a position on future cohesion policy, where the Dutch regions have coordinated the work on territorial cohesion and Västra Götaland on partnership and multilevel governance. The secretariat and several member regions have attended and contributed in the Transport group, the work on macro-regions, the new Climate task force, the maritime work groups, and the emerging work on the Future of Europe and Brexit. NSC member regions met at the CPMR General Assembly in November, mainly to coordinate input to the Final Declaration.

Having a part of the NSC secretariat in Brussels means that there are almost daily contact with CPMR staff. The NSC secretariat has attended most CPMR staff & management meetings, and contributed to the CPMR newsletter. Directors from CPMR have attended NSC ExCom meetings. Discussions are under way between the NSC, the Atlantic Arc Commission and the CPMR secretariat on a coordinated approach to the English Channel.

Governing bodies

Executive Committee. The Committee met briefly after the ABM in Vejle, and twice more throughout the year. The October meeting was held in Brussels hosted by Region Västra Götaland, and the March meeting in Southend-on-Sea. In addition to reports from thematic groups and national representatives, the ExCom has had presentations by the CPMR, the Interreg Northsea, and listened to reflections on Brexit from Giles Merritt, a senior British Brussels journalist and think tank founder. Members of the committee in 2016-17 were – in addition to the President and Vice Presidents – Councillors **Preben Friis-Hauge** (South Denmark, DK), **Nienke Homan** (North Netherlands/Groningen, NL), **Marianne Chesak** (Rogaland, NO), **Dag Hultefors** (Halland, SE), **Anke Spoorendonk** (Schleswig-Holstein, DE – substituted at the March meeting by **Antje Grotheer**, Bremen, DE). The Scottish representative, **David Aitchison** (Aberdeenshire) has been unable to attend, but Scotland has been represented on officer level. Chairs of the thematic groups have attended the meetings. The **President and Vice Presidents** have had phone meetings every 4-6 weeks. They have also attended several of the thematic group meetings. In connection with group meetings, Vice President Andreas Lervik had separate meetings in Bremen and Aberdeenshire with representatives of the host regions.

The **Secretariat** moved with the Presidency in 2016 from Hordaland (NO) to Västra Götaland (SE). Västra Götaland decided to set up a secretariat in two locations, Gothenburg and Brussels. Two secretariat positions have been shared between three people, Executive Secretary **Magnus Engelbrektsson** and Assistant Executive Secretaries **Melissa Frödin** (Brussels) and **Irma Ganibegovic** (Gothenburg). The Secretariat has prepared ABM, ExCom and Presidency meetings. At least one representative of the secretariat has attended every thematic group meeting, as well as CPMR's General Assembly (where it coordinated NSC input to the final declaration), Political Bureau, staff meetings, and task force meetings. The Secretariat has coordinated the NSC task force for a permanent secretariat, and started preparing the work of the Brexit Task Force.

Advisor meetings. The thematic group advisors have met three times in Brussels with the secretariat to prepare upcoming ExCom/ABM and discuss matters of common interest.



Other

Members. The number of members has increased from 31 to 32 with Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) joining. We thank Lower Saxony for not only joining, but also immediately hosting the 2017 ABM and North Sea Conference. Almost all Scandinavian and continental North Sea regions from Sör-Tröndelag in the North to Hauts-de-France in the south are now members. With only 7 UK members, we still have a recruitment potential among county councils on the UK North Sea coast. The “Brexit” from the North Sea Commission happened several years ago due to severe financial constraints in the councils. We believe that the new developments with Brexit makes it even more relevant for councils in the UK to join the NSC, and we have started efforts to recruit members. We have also ongoing discussions on membership with a couple of more regions on the continental side of the North Sea. Most of the member regions are active in various ways in one or more of the thematic groups and/or ExCom.

Communication. In December, a new CPMR website was launched, including a new webpage for the NSC. Five newsletters have been issued and distributed to members and stakeholders. A twitter account is used for messages in between. Mailing lists have been updated. An information meeting with Brussels offices of the member regions was arranged in December with a view to involve them more in the NSC work.

Relations with the Interreg North Sea Programme. The NSC secretariat has regular phone meetings with the programme secretariat. Preparations have been made jointly for the North Sea conference in Göttingen. The programme secretariat is a regular guest at ExCom meetings, and arranged a workshop on transport in connection with the Transport Group meeting in Aberdeen.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

14. Action plan 2017-2018

A draft action plan is enclosed. It will be presented by Melissa Frödin, Assistant Executive Secretary. Thematic group advisors are available for comments on each priority area.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Discusses and approves the action plan 2017-2018***

North Sea Commission Action Plan 2017-2018

NSR 2020 Priority: Managing Maritime Space			
Key action area	Objectives	Key activities	Timeline
Use maritime spatial planning (MSP) as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders	Increase dialogue with relevant authorities on national level	Coordinate/contribute to NSC activities within the NorthSEE project	Continuous; NorthSEE is a 3 year Interreg-project
	Ensure that relevant EU institutions and member states have a high level of knowledge about the NSR and the NSC's priorities within the field.	Establish contact with the new desk officers at DG Mare	Continuous
		Regular meetings and/or contact with relevant officials and stakeholders to keep them up to date with NSR developments.	2-3 times/year, when Advisors are in Brussels
Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources	Establish a NSC position on Brexit to make sure regional interests are heard	Actively follow Brexit's potential implication on the marine sector	Continuous
	Establish a NSC position on environmental protection	Identify areas of cooperation with Waddensee cooperation and KIMO in field of environmental protection	Q 2, 2018
	Ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future and livelihood in coastal communities	Boost exchange of experience between member regions regarding maritime skills	Continuous, during working group meetings
		Contribute to the European Commission's blue careers initiative Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about relevant EU calls.	Continuous

NSR 2020 Priority: Increasing accessibility and clean transport			
Key action area	Objectives	Key activities	Timeline
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)	The revised and post 2020 CEF regulation is more beneficial for the North Sea Region in terms of accessibility and framework conditions for maritime transport.	Follow up input to revision of CEF-regulation through the CPMR and submit a response to the consultation on behalf of the NSC	Q 3-4 2017
		Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about upcoming CEF calls.	Continuous
	More CEF transport projects with involvement of stakeholders in, and/or of benefits to NSC member regions are generated.	Discuss project ideas and exchange information about members' involvement at group meetings.	2-3 times/year at working group meetings and other conferences
	More projects from the NSC member regions are included in the Core Network Corridors' project lists	Provide input and arguments at meetings of relevant Corridor Forums.	2-3 times/year, at Corridor Forum meetings
Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea	More funding and higher co-financing rates for MoS projects in the CEF	Provide views on EU implementation plan for MoS through the CPMR	Q 3-4, 2017 as part of input to CEF post 2020
	More favourable conditions for participation in the CEF of actors from peripheral regions and 3 rd countries	Collect views and input from, and possibly meet with maritime and rail transport stakeholders in the NSR	Continuous, at least 2-3 meetings/year in relation to working group meetings.
Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping	Better policy frameworks, funding opportunities and technological development in support of clean efficient and inclusive transport solutions	Further develop the survey on the use of alternative fuels in public transport and other transport services among NSC members, and keep DG move up to date – use survey as a basis for policy positions and project development	Finalise survey Q 1-2, 2018. Disseminate to dg move continuously.

<p>(cont.)</p> <p>Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping</p>	<p>(cont.)</p> <p>Better policy frameworks, funding opportunities and technological development in support of clean efficient and inclusive transport solutions</p>	<p>Disseminate information on relevant calls under CEF, Horizon 2020 and interreg and initiate/support/shadow projects</p>	<p>Continuous</p>
		<p>Organize and follow-up on project development seminar in cooperation with the NSR programme secretariat on 2 March 2017.</p>	<p>Continuous</p>
		<p>Investigate the possibility of using Financial Instruments to promote/develop projects on the greening of transport</p>	<p>Continuous</p>

NSR 2020 Priority: Tackling climate change			
Key action area	Objectives	Key activities	Timeline
Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels	Boost exchange of best practices within climate change and climate change adaptation	Distribute and communicate the brochure for the North Sea based on its best practices.	Continuous
		Develop and communicate factsheets within this brochure for participating regions	Continuous
	Adopt and disseminate a North Sea position on parts of Winter package Energy Union	Give continuous input to the relevant work of the CPMR Climate Taskforce	Continuous
		Develop and communicate the NSC position, in cooperation with the NSC regions and other stakeholders	Statement proposal in June 2017 ABM
			Q 3-4 2017 (communication and dissemination of position)
			Follow the next winter package closely and analyse if a NSC response is needed (expected in Nov 2017)
Facilitate for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	Monitor developments in the regions, stimulate exchange of best practices.	Exchange of best practices between regions in the group. Focus on reduction of emissions from industries	2-3 times/year Exchange of activities during working group meetings.
		Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about relevant EU calls.	Continuous
Promote energy efficiency as well as innovation and green growth in low-carbon technologies	Monitor developments in the regions, stimulate exchange of best practices	Exchange of best practices between regions.	2-3 times/ year Activities during working group meetings

Foster strong regional, national and European support for the development of the North Sea Grid	Visibility of NSC positions in relevant statements and documents.	Follow up on participation in Stakeholder Conference Political Declaration in March 2017	Continuous
	Promoting the role of regions in the work related to the MS political declaration off shore wind.	Follow, take part in or contribute with written input to the working group meetings within the countries' cooperation on energy around the NS	MS WG meetings are expected approx. 2 times a year.
	Establish the NSC and its member regions as an active partner in the energy cooperation around the North Sea	Exchange of practices of regional cross border grids interconnections	2-3 times/year at ECCG meetings.
		Meeting with Atlantic Arc Commission of the CPMR on off shore wind.	Q 4, 2017

NSR 2020 Priority: Attractive and sustainable communities			
Key action area	Objectives	Key activities	Timeline
Support the development of creative and sustainable economic diversification in North Sea communities	Raise awareness of digital economy opportunities and challenges with focus on e-commerce, collaborative economy/digital platforms, broadband connections and creative business development.	Exchange of practice between members, visits to relevant businesses during group meetings	Continuous
	Raise awareness of the circular economy with focus on waste management and industrial opportunities		
	Exchange good practices on tourism development, focus on new types of offers, culinary tourism, activity tourism and health tourism	Continue work on creating a North Sea Seafood Route	
Support the development of permanent networks for cultural actors	Support youth networks in culture	Ensure broad youth representation at Norwegian Youth Culture Festival 2017, and at the 2017 Cultural Summit on Mors	Q 3-4, 2017
Improve policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges	<u>Exchange knowledge and experiences</u> on migration and work	Arrange a seminar in Aberdeen on migrants and work opportunities - combined with technical visits to selected businesses	Q 4, 2017
Promote maritime clusters to continue to play an important role as provider of blue growth, jobs and innovation.	Joint NSC seminar/conference on Blue Growth	Prepare a 2018 conference on this theme together with the marine resources group and other relevant partners, place to be confirmed, probably Brussels	2018



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

<p>Promote knowledge transfer and cross-overs between different sectors in the North Sea Region</p>	<p>Increase knowledge among all member regions about each other's activities and practices in promoting smart development of blue and green growth, infrastructure, climate adaptation, sustainable tourism, inclusion and culture.</p>	<p>Presentations, exchanges and discussions at meetings, presentation of project ideas</p>	<p>Continuous</p>
--	---	--	-------------------

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	Objectives	Key activities	Timeline
Strategic cooperation in the North Sea Region	Promote regional interests in EU actions for the North Sea Mobilising EU institutions/MS in North Sea cooperation	Follow-up on the EU North Sea Energy cooperation (see above)	Continuous
		Follow-up on preparatory action	Q 3-4, 2017
		Organise a North Sea stakeholder Conference	Q 2, 2018
		A combined NSC-BSC Brussels offices meeting, prior to the CPMR ABM 2017	Q 3, 2017
		Start process for a revised NSR Strategy post 2020	Q 3, 2017
Interreg North Sea Post 2020	Ensure the continuation of interreg B programmes post 2020.	Follow the post 2020 cohesion policy process	Q 3, 2017 - 2018
		Organise a conference on innovation and smart specialisation strategies in the NSR	Q 2, 2018
Use of ad hoc task forces	Ensure that interests of the North Sea Region are heard in the Brexit process	Create and maintain a Brexit task force	2-3 meetings/ year
		Follow Brexit negotiations from a North Sea perspective	Continuous
		Prepare NSC positions and activities when appropriate	Continuous

Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR	Promote the North Sea perspective in the work of the CPMR	Promote participation of NSC member regions in CPMR working groups and task forces	Continuous
	(cont.)	Speak for North Sea interests in the Future of Europe process and other CPMR position papers	Process with deadline
	Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR	Promote the North Sea perspective in the work of the CPMR	Promote NSC members as speakers in meetings of the CPMR governing bodies
Attract new members and keep the existing	Strengthen NSC legitimacy as a representative for the entire North Sea region	Building relations with potential new members	Meetings in UK and Schleswig-Holstein 3-4, 2017
	Increase income in order to cover more secretariat costs from the budget	Contact with member regions after elections and mergers	Meetings with Danish members and Trøndelag in Q 1-2, 2018 Meetings with Flevoland and with Belgian regions when appropriate
	Separate the functions of Presidency and Secretariat (subject to ABM:s approval)	Issue call for a member region to host the NSC secretariat 2018-2021	Q3 2017



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

15. Communication strategy and plan

Please find enclosed a draft communication strategy for 2017-2019, and a communication activity plan for 2017-2018. It will be presented by Irma Ganibegovic, Assistant Executive Secretary. The documents were supported by the Executive Committee at its meeting in Southend-on-Sea in March.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the communication strategy 2017-2019***
- 2. Approves the communication activity plan 2017-2018***

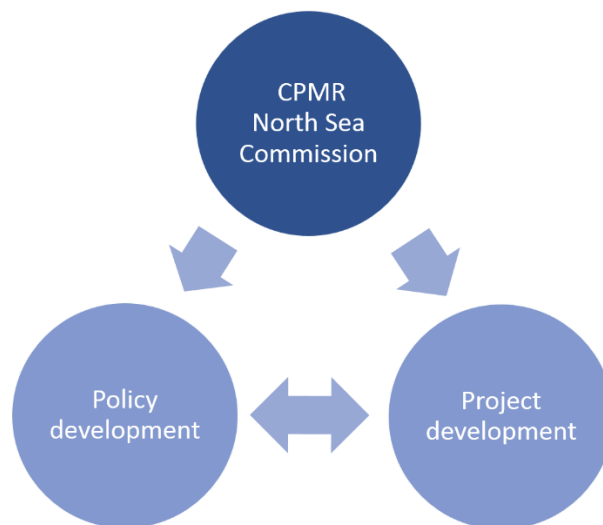
North Sea Commission Communication Strategy 2017-2019

The North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation platform for regions around the North Sea, reflecting the needs, interests and expectations of its member regions. The NSC's mission is to further partnerships between regional authorities that face challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea.

Objectives and aim

The main objectives of the North Sea Commission are:

- To promote and create awareness of the North Sea region as a major economic entity within Europe through political lobby work
- To be a platform for exchange of experience and for developing and obtaining funding for joint development initiatives



Communication is an essential part in fulfilling the main objectives. An evaluation of the North Sea Commission made in 2012, indicated that the NSC needs to strengthen its profile as a platform for policy development, lobbying and transnational project development and increase its visibility towards internal and external stakeholders.

This will be achieved through closer links and better communication between the North Sea Commission and internal and external stakeholders.

The purpose and aim of the Communication Strategy

The communication strategy serves as a roadmap, guiding the North Sea Commission to ensure a strategic communication that is effective and achieves desired results. The communication strategy is revised every other year, and attached to it is a communication activity plan that is revised every year.

The aim of the North Sea Commission's communication strategy is to support implementation of the North Sea Region 2020 strategy and other policy documents. This will be achieved by:

- **Member involvement:** Ensure that member regions are informed of the work done by the organization and that they are involved in relevant events and consultations,
- **Keeping a close contact with European policy makers and relevant stakeholders:** Make sure that relevant decision and policy makers at all levels are informed about NSC official strategies and policy positions,
- **Promoting projects and project results:** Communicate involvement in the North Sea region projects and the results and output.

Stakeholders

The North Sea Commission communicates and cooperates with a number of stakeholders, both internal and external, where the communication varies depending on stakeholder and objective.

Internal stakeholders

- **Member regions**
To ensure that the NSC represents the interests of member regions and keeps them well informed of its activities, the NSC needs to communicate with all members, irrespective of how involved they are in the NSC structures.
- **CPMR**
The NSC is a part of the CPMR, and should promote NSC interests and visibility in the overall work of the CPMR. In 2017 and 2018 focus will be on the Future of Europe discussions, Brexit and the work on EU post-2020 policies and programmes.

External stakeholders

- **Non-member regions around the North Sea**
The NSC has the ambition to increase the number of members, as this would strengthen the NSC's voice for the North Sea regions. During 2017-2019 the NSC will focus its efforts at recruiting new members from the United Kingdom and Belgium.
- **North Sea regional stakeholders**
In order to represent the entire North Sea Region, the NSC will maintain and develop close connections with regional stakeholders in academia, industry, governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- **North Sea Region Programme**
A close cooperation and good communication with the North Sea Region Programme is vital for the NSC's ambition to develop cooperation among members.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

- **National state ministries and agencies**

NSC needs to lobby towards member states in order to achieve consensus on challenges and solutions for the North Sea Region.

- **EU institutions**

The NSC should communicate directly, and through the CPMR, with the institutions of the European Union. Important target groups are:

- Officers in relevant DG's of the European Commission
- Committee of Regions (CoR) members from the North Sea Region, and the North Sea-Channel Intergroup
- Members of the European Parliament from the North Sea region, relevant committees and the Intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas.

Communication tools

Webpage

Central to all communication is a well-functioning website that can act as a cooperation and knowledge sharing platform for members and a source of relevant and up-to-date information for both internal and external stakeholders.

A new webpage has been launched in 2016. It will be updated on a regular basis with news about NSC activities such as thematic group meetings and Executive Committee meeting. The focus will be to make the webpage work as an amplifier that will reinforce the most important policy topics of the NSC. This will be done through news at the front page and making relevant documents accessible.

Social media

Social media, in this case Twitter, is a good tool for short updates that in relevant cases lead the reader to the webpage for more information. This gives the NSC the opportunity to be more visible with short messages on positions and statements. It's a way for the NSC to have a more informal contact with member regions, MEP's and other stakeholders, and at the same time Twitter is a way to get an overview of events, views and current topics in the North Sea region and in Europe.

Newsletter

A newsletter will be sent out every other month to member regions and external stakeholders to reach those who do not actively follow the website.

Mailing lists

An essential part of good communication is contact lists that are updated on a regular basis.-The Secretariat will, in cooperation with the thematic group advisors keep member lists updated, and also create a list with contact information to external stakeholders, such as EU institutions.

Events and meetings

The most effective way to communicate positions and statements is by meeting the stakeholders. Arranging and attending events, either at existing conferences or through separate events, and arranging bilateral meetings is an essential part of the NSC work.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Printed information

NSC communication will, for several reasons, mainly be digital, but there are occasions where printed material can be used as a complement, e.g. in connection with events, meetings and workshops.

NSC Communication Activity Plan 2017-2018

The Communication Activity Plan serves as a guide of activities necessary for the NSC to implement to achieve the overall purpose and aim of the Communication Strategy 2017-2019. The activity plan is revised yearly, and the strategy every other year.

More information about the aim of the NSC communication, target groups and communication tools can be found in the NSC Communication Strategy 2017-2019.

Communication activities 2017-2018	
Activities	Target group(s)
1. Update list with the member regions' contact information	- Member regions
2. Create list with external stakeholders' contact information	- Regional stakeholders - National stakeholders - EU institutions
3. Continuously update the webpage www.cpmr-northsea.org and Twitter-account with news about the NSC, thematic groups, policy positions, NSC documents (as NSR 2020) and other relevant information	- Member regions - Regional stakeholders - CPMR - Non-member regions - Relevant decision makers - EU institutions
4. Send out a newsletter every two months	- Member regions - CPMR - Regional stakeholders
5. Specify and inform about the added value of being a NSC member	- Member regions - Non-member regions
6. Map and target British regions with information about the added value of being a NSC member and how to get involved in the NSC	- British non-member regions

<p>7. Arrange and attend relevant meetings, events and workshops with stakeholders to inform about NSC activities, positions and good practice examples, e.g. European Maritime Day, and events within the EC processes on energy cooperation and on blue growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member regions - Regional stakeholders - CPMR - Non-member regions - Relevant decision makers - EU institutions
<p>8. Inform about NSC activities and policy positions in EU decision processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brussels Offices of members and non-members from the North Sea Region
<p>9. Continuously inform CPMR about NSC activities, policy positions and other relevant information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPMR
<p>10. Monitor and spread information about relevant calls for project cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member regions - Regional stakeholders
<p>11. Keep members of the Committee of Regions from the North Sea Region informed about NSC activities and policy positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU institutions (Committee of Regions)
<p>12. Keep members of the European Parliament from the North Sea Region informed about the NSC activities and policy positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU institutions (European Parliament)

16. New model for the NSC Secretariat

The Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in 2016 asked the NSC secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work was to be carried out with the existing task force. The Annual Business Meeting also asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

The Secretariat will present the enclosed proposal, which it has prepared together with the task force, including representatives from Aberdeenshire, Groningen, North Denmark, North Netherlands and Ostfold. The proposal was supported by the Executive Committee at its meeting in Southend-on-Sea in March.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the new model for the NSC Secretariat***
- 2. Asks the Executive Committee to call for a member region willing to host the Secretariat from June 2018 to December 2021 and concludes an agreement with that region***
- 3. Dissolves the task force for a permanent secretariat***

A new model for the North Sea Commission secretariat

This paper summarizes discussions so far on a new secretariat model, and tries to outline a way forward. It is prepared by the Secretariat, together with a task force including representatives of Aberdeenshire, Hordaland, North Denmark, North Netherlands, and Östfold.

0. Executive summary

The Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in 2016 asked the NSC secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work was to be carried out by working with the existing task force. The Annual Business Meeting also asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

The main concern has been to move the costs for running a secretariat away from the President's region for democracy reasons. Any member region, irrespective of financial situation, should have the possibility to nominate a President of the NSC.

There is room in the NSC budget to support the host region to some extent, but not to cover the entire cost of a secretariat. The NSC should not lower its ambitions, and should continue to be present in Brussels, while keeping a close cooperation with the President, the thematic groups and the member regions.

The task force recommends that

1. the political and administrative responsibilities of the NSC (i.e. the President and the Secretariat) are separated.
2. if this principle is accepted by the Annual Business Meeting, the ABM should ask the Executive Committee to issue a call for a member region willing to administer, host *and finance* the secretariat for a year period from the Annual Business Meeting in 2018, when the mandate of the current President expires, until the 31st of December 2021, with an option to extend.
3. a new budget line 'Secretariat support' is added to the NSC budget to contribute partly to the costs for running the secretariat.
4. the tasks of the secretariat is clearly defined in an agreement between the Executive Committee and the host region.
5. the secretariat should consist of at least two persons, and it is strongly recommended that one of them is based in Brussels.

1. Introduction and background

The need for a permanent secretariat for the North Sea Commission has been discussed at every meeting of ExCom and ABM since 2014. Several proposals have been presented by the secretariat and by national groups of members. So far it has not been possible to reach consensus.

To summarize discussions so far:

1. The NSC wants a new way to fund the secretariat for **democracy reasons**. The role of President must be open to any member region. Today this is not the case, since the President's region carries the entire staff costs for the secretariat, something not all members can afford.
2. The current model is extra challenging when the NSC President **resigns in the middle of a mandate period** as a consequence of council elections in his/her region (which happened to the last two Presidents). The resigning President's region will still carry with the costs for the secretariat until the next Annual Business Meeting.
3. The **NSC budget cannot pay the entire cost** of the secretariat, unless we increase the total budget substantially. Savings have been made, and the current budget has a surplus, but still far from the sum needed to fund a secretariat.
4. We should keep the financial support to those regions that coordinate the **thematic groups**.
5. **Raising membership fees** is not an option, according to the ABM decision in 2016. It would probably lead to a loss of current members and prevent us from recruiting new ones.
6. The NSC secretariat **should not be part of the CPMR financial structures**, according to ABM. Members are keen to keep a strong North Sea identity.
7. The NSC secretariat should, however, be **frequently present or based in Brussels** in order to follow the EU agenda, work with officers from European institutions, the CPMR secretariat and the offices of the NSC member regions.
8. **Continuity** is important. Two years, the mandate period for a President, is a short time for a secretariat to get organised, develop routines, get involved in all issues, build networks and get something done. In the NSC history, Presidents have been re-elected several times, and secretariats have worked for longer periods. But that is situation-dependent. Thematic group advisors and long-serving officers in member regions represent the institutional memory.
9. The secretariat must work **close with the President**.

These specifications are, for obvious reasons, not easy to merge into one model. Some kind of compromise has to be worked out.

The 2016 ABM adopted the following decision:

3. The Annual Business Meeting asked the NSC Secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work is to be carried out by working with the existing task force.
4. The Annual Business Meeting asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

2. Role and tasks of the secretariat

a. According to the Charter

The Charter for the North Sea Commission does not mention a “secretariat”, only an Executive Secretary. The Charter does not give any guidance about location or funding of the Executive Secretary. The responsibilities are described in three bullet points:

- The North Sea Commission shall have an Executive Secretary whose responsibility is to ensure the day-to-day organisation of its work and implementation of its decisions.
- The Executive Secretary assists the President in his/her tasks and under his/her authority.
- The duties of the Executive Secretary are carried out with the support of the CPMR General Secretariat.

b. In practice

The “day-to-day organisation” includes the following:

- Support the President and Vice Presidents in their tasks
- Prepare, arrange and follow-up meetings (ABM, ExCom, Presidency, advisor meetings, Brussels network)
- Attend and report at thematic group meetings
- Follow and lobby within strategic issues and policy development, incl meetings with EU institutions and stakeholders
- Manage communication and member relations (web, newsletter, twitter, contacts with members and potential members)
- Represent the North Sea Commission in CPMR’s work
- Actively encourage and facilitate member regions’ participation in the CPMR’s work groups and task forces
- Liaise with the Interreg North Sea programme, plan for the annual North Sea conference
- Manage the accounts

(for a more detailed description, see attached document)

5. Current organisation

The region of the NSC President hosts the secretariat and employs the staff. At present, during the Västra Götaland presidency, the secretariat consists of

- Executive secretary, 100 %, based in Gothenburg
- Assistant executive secretary, 70 %, based in Region Västra Götaland’s Brussels office
- Assistant executive secretary, 30 %, based in Gothenburg
- Support from a financial officer on ad hoc basis

It is still early to evaluate all aspects of the current arrangement with a secretariat shared between Brussels **and** the President's region, since it started only in mid-September 2016, but initial experiences are positive. The secretariat maintains strong links to the President, while developing relations to CPMR staff and EU institutions. From an organisational point of view it works smoothly. A reason for that could be that the Brussels office is an integral part of the external relations team of Region Västra Götaland, which means that all three staff members belong to the same structure, although they are in two separate geographic locations.

6. Budget

It is worth mentioning that the President's region today pays more for the North Sea Commission than all the other members do together over the NSC budget.

The current President's region has an annual budget of approximately **175,000 euro** for the Secretariat. This includes salaries and other payroll expenses. There is no budget figure for rent or other office costs. This is offered for free by the host region.

Together with the NSC budget expenses of **113,000 euro**, this leaves a total annual budget today of **288,000 Euro** for running the North Sea Commission, office cost and President's travels not included.

	NSC	Pres	
Salaries + other staff costs		175 000	Ex Secr full time, 2 Assist Ex Secr part time
Advisor's support	48 000		€ 12 000 each for four groups
Secretariat's travel/accomodation	36 000		Probably less with staff in Brussels
Joint annual conference	20 000		Support to host region
Thematic groups, meetings	5 000		
Promotional expenditure	4 000		
Office		?	No charges
Total	113 000	175 000	

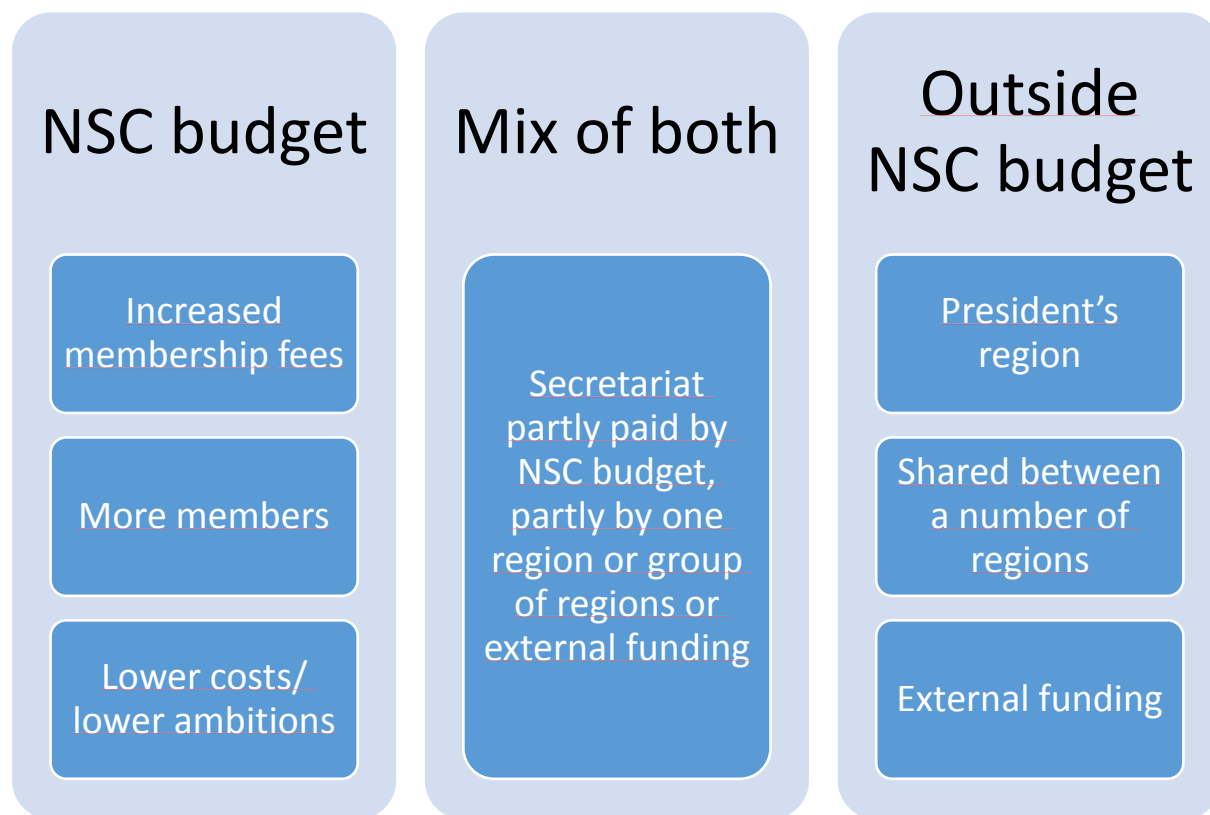
The 2017 NSC budget has a **total income of 133,850 euro** (all from membership fees), which gives a **surplus of 20 850**. With Lower Saxony joining, the total income will be approximately **140 000 euro**.

The NSC has reserves of more than 200 000 euro. According to an earlier ExCom decision 100 000 euro should be tied up as an insurance for bad times, while the rest is a free reserve that the ABM can decide to use for special purposes.

7. Way forward

There is a number of alternative solutions for funding, location, ambitions, staff mandate periods, recruitment/employment, etc. All of them raise new questions, and the decision on one element has implications for the others.

a. Funding



Making room in the North Sea Commission's budget for the secretariat's salaries, or at least parts of them, will require higher incomes and/or lower costs/ambitions.

Increased membership fees

On the income side, **increasing membership fees** is not an option, according to the ABM decision.

More members

Increasing the number of members should always be an ambition, as long as there are non-member regions around the North Sea. This is not only, not even primarily, a budget issue, but a way to strengthen our work and our legitimacy. In the hypothetical situation that all coastal regions bordering the North Sea would join the NSC, we would have about 30 more members and another 125,000 euro in the budget. A more realistic ambition is to attract a few more members and 10,000-15,000 more in membership fees over the coming years. However, the NSC is also vulnerable to sudden political and economic changes in member regions.

Lower costs/lower ambitions

Cost reductions in the NSC budget have already been done, and the annual accounts show a surplus. Parts of the **free reserve** could be used during a transition period, but not as a long-term solution.

The number of **thematic groups** has gone from five to four, while the support for each advisor is still 12 000 euro. The groups are crucial for our work, and we want them to be coordinated by permanent group advisors. Without a financial support to their regions, it will be harder to recruit advisors.

The **travel budget** could probably be lower with permanent staff in Brussels – there is less need for travel to Brussels, and travel connections between Brussels and member regions are in general better and cheaper than intra-regional North Sea connections.

The NSC could give less support to the annual **North Sea conference**, which is organised jointly with the Interreg North Sea secretariat and a host region back to back with the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). For 2017, the conference probably would not have happened at all without the NSC support of 20 000. The question would be if we want to continue to have an annual conference where NSC meets the projects. If not – how much money should be spent on the ABM only? Should the ABM cost be entirely on the host region? And would it then be possible to find a host?

Is it possible to **reduce the secretariat staff** to less than two persons? Yes, certainly, but this would also require a reduction of ambitions and activities. The end result would be less action, less visibility, and less added value for the members.

Staff costs can be reduced by partly replacing full-paid staff members with **trainees** for some tasks. But that would also reduce continuity, efficiency and access.

A down-scaled secretariat would have to reduce its presence at thematic group meetings, and **thematic group advisors** could possibly take an increased responsibility for overall NSC work.

Communication could be less ambitious, and maybe partly outsourced to the CPMR secretariat.

President's region

Status quo – a secretariat entirely funded by the President's region – is not considered sustainable for the future.

Shared between a number of regions

Could then the costs, at least partly, be **shared between several regions**, depending on the current level of engagement in the organisation – President's and Vice President's region, or all ExCom member regions? There are examples in the past where the costs have been shared by regions in the President's country, but this must be based on a voluntary agreement, and not as part of a general NSC solution.

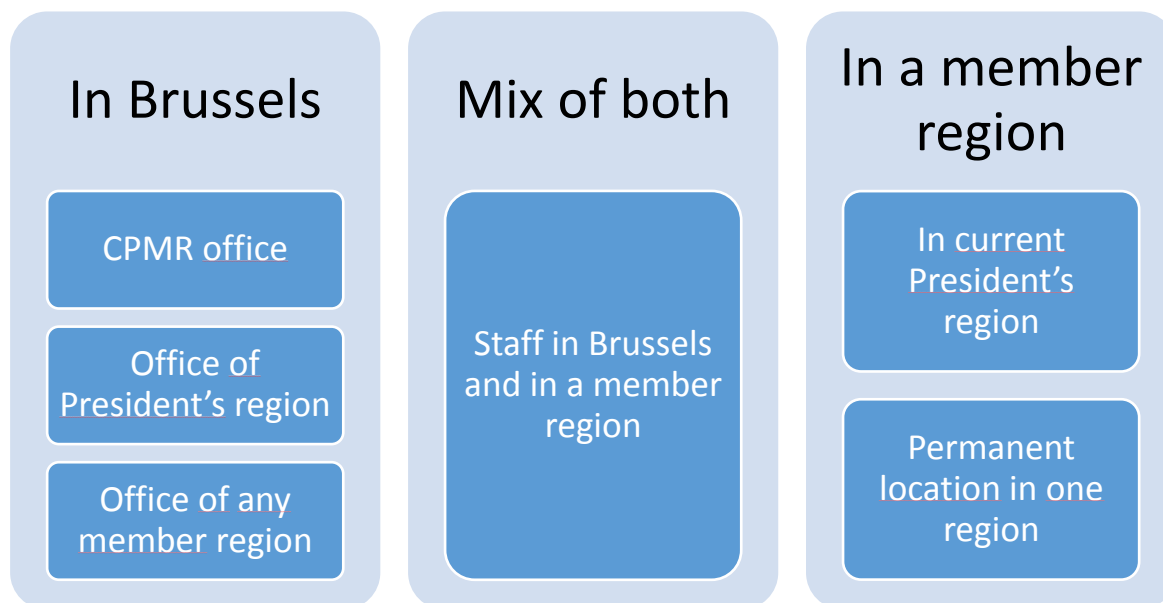
External funding

Could the NSC be a coordinating part in a possible future **EU agenda/strategy for the North Sea**? Given the slow progress of the preparatory action, this seems unlikely to happen.

Could the secretariat involve in **project coordination**? NSC is not a legal entity, and cannot formally be a project partner – at least as long as it is not integrated in the CPMR financial structures. Funding the ordinary secretariat work with project money does not seem possible.

The solution will probably have to be a combination of several of these measures. Even with more members and some additional cost reductions, the NSC budget will probably only sustain a part of the secretariat. This will still reduce the current burden for the President's region.

b. Location



In Brussels

The obvious advantage of a **Brussels-based secretariat** is the proximity to the European institutions and the CPMR secretariat. It will also make it easier to involve member regions' Brussels offices in policy discussions, and in general increase the visibility of the North Sea Commission.

It is probably easier to build and maintain a North Sea network from Brussels, where most regions are represented and where many North Sea stakeholders are frequent visitors, than from any city in any region around the North Sea.

A Brussels-based secretary could have his/her office in the **CPMR secretariat**, in the **President's regional office** or in **any member region's office**. What is most important is that office space and other office costs are offered for free by the host – otherwise costs will be higher than today.

In a member region

The main advantages of being **in one of the North Sea regions** is the proximity to the President (as long as the secretariat is based in the President's region), and maybe a better knowledge and understanding of the regional perspective and the North Sea perspective.

The same condition – avoid office costs! – applies if the office were to be located somewhere in the North Sea region, in a permanent location, decoupled from the President's region. It then has to be a location that is easy accessible from all member regions.

Mix of both

A Secretariat with one (permanent?) officer in Brussels **and** one (temporary?) officer in the President's region will probably be the most workable solution. It could work well also with the funding outlined above. A remaining question is then which one of them should be the Executive secretary and which one should be the assistant.

c. Employment and financial management

If the secretariat is financially and administratively separated from the Presidency, who would then recruit, employ and administer the secretariat? Which legal entity would manage the finances?

The North Sea Commission itself is not a legal entity. The CPMR is – and they manage these functions for most of the geographical commissions. But, according to the ABM decision from 2016, the NSC secretariat should not be part of the financial structures of the CPMR.

The remaining option then seems to be that there is a member region willing to host the secretariat, manage the finances, provide the human resources needed, and cover the costs – or at least most of the costs – and to do this without having the Presidency. An agreement between this region and the Executive Committee will be needed to specify the tasks of the secretariat. The agreement should be for more than two years, maybe four, with an option to extend. At least one of the staff members should be based in Brussels.

To make it slightly more attractive to host the secretariat, a support could be given from the NSC budget to the host region, in line with the support paid to the advisors' regions. The level of support for hosting the secretariat will be subject to budget decisions, but an indication is that the planned surplus in the 2017 budget is 20,850 euro. If the ABM so wishes another € 10,000 could be added annually for a number of years from the free reserve. If more members will join, and the total of membership contributions will increase, the additional income can also be used to support the secretariat.

Why would any region want to pay for a secretariat, without having the Presidency? One reason could be the value for the host region in terms of visibility, networks and influence that comes with a secretariat, both on North Sea level and within the wider CPMR.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

To find a more long-term solution for the secretariat, while at the same time supporting the democratic principle of a Presidency which is not required to have the financial muscles for running a secretariat, it is suggested that the **functions of Presidency and Secretariat are separated**.

If this model is accepted by the Annual Business Meeting, the Executive Committee should issue a **call for a member region willing to administer, host and finance the secretariat for a four year period**¹ – or rather for three and a half years, from the Annual Business Meeting in 2018, when the mandate of the current President expires, until the 31st of December 2021 (in order to have the next change of secretariat in the end of a budget year and separate from the change of President).

To somewhat reduce the financial burden for the host region and make it more attractive to host a secretariat, it is recommended that **'Secretariat support' is introduced as a new budget line** in the NSC budget.

The tasks of the secretariat should be clearly defined in an agreement between the Executive Committee and the host region. The ambitions of the North Sea Commission should not be reduced.

¹ It would be possible to share the responsibilities between two or more regions. Formally, one region would then be the contracting part in relation to NSC. Other regions could contribute with money and/or time as "sub-contractors".



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

Nor should the staff. The secretariat should consist of **at least two persons**. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that **at least one of them should be based in Brussels**.

Role and tasks of the secretariat (detailed)

Support the President and Vice Presidents

- Initiate and coordinate external meetings
- Briefings, speaking notes, draft speeches and presentations

Prepare and arrange NSC meetings

(agenda, documents, practical issues, contacts with host region, minutes, follow-up on decisions)

- Annual Business Meeting (1/year)
- Members meeting at CPMR GA (1/year)
- Executive Committee (3/year)
- Presidency skype meetings (every 4-6 weeks)
- Advisor meetings (skype every month, physical meetings 2/year)
- Participate and report at thematic group meetings

Strategic issues and external relations

- Follow up on North Sea Region 2020 strategy and action plan
- Draft annual action plan
- Prepare and follow up declarations, resolutions
- Develop cooperation with Interreg North Sea program
- Develop cooperation with European institutions (EC, EP, CoR)
- Develop cooperation with national authorities/government offices
- Follow specific issues (e.g. preparatory action, North Sea grid, Brexit)
- Act as an intermediary for project proposals

Member relations/communication

- Follow up and revise communication strategy/communication plan
- Keep mailing lists updated
- Newsletter (every two months)
- Web update, web development
- Twitter update
- Network of Brussels offices of member regions
- Recruit new members

CPMR relations

- Attend General Assembly and Political Bureau
- Coordinate NSC input to CPMR documents
- Attend meetings with CPMR management team (every two weeks)
- Day-to-day contact with CPMR secretariat on various matters
- Encourage member regions' participation in CPMR work groups and task forces
- Develop relations with other geographical commissions

Finances

- Follow up on accounts
- Draft budget

17. Process for a North Sea Strategy post 2020

The North Sea Region 2020 strategy was adopted in 2011, and a revised version was adopted in 2016. A strategy of this kind has several functions, internal and external:

- The process to develop the strategy helps member regions define and achieve a common understanding of challenges and opportunities for the North Sea Region
- The strategy, once it is adopted, provides the guidelines for the activities of the North Sea Commission
- The strategy is a powerful tool in our external communication with EU institutions, national governments and stakeholders in the North Sea Region

It is now time to start a process to develop a new strategy for the time after 2020, to be adopted by the Annual Business Meeting 2019 or 2020 at latest.

Important elements in this process will be:

- An evaluation of the current strategy and a summary of lessons learnt. Has it served us well? Has it helped to develop the North Sea Region? Is it a good tool for our work? Is it useful for our communication with stakeholders, with the EU and with national governments? Which elements from the old strategy should be kept in the new one? It has to be decided if the evaluation should be done internally or with the help of external consultants.
- An analysis of the situation in the North Sea Region and external factors with a strong impact on the North Sea Region's economy, environment, etc. When the NSR2020 was revised, a statistical report, *North Sea in Numbers*, was produced by an external consultant. This work could be developed further. Important external processes like Brexit negotiations, discussions on the future of Europe and the EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework post-2020 should be taken into account.
- A broad discussion on what we want to achieve with the new strategy. This discussion should involve not only the NSC member regions, but also stakeholders in the North Sea Region. It could be an important element for next year's North Sea conference, if there will be one.
- A drafting process where members are actively involved.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Asks the Executive Committee to start the process to form a post-2020 strategy for the North Sea Region**



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

18. Finances

Financial documents are enclosed.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Approves the accounts for 2016***
- 2. Takes note of the statement of accounts per 15 May 2017***
- 3. Approves the budget for 2018***

a) Accounts 2016

	Budget 2016	Accounts 2016	Difference
	Euro	Euro	Euro
INCOME			
Membership subscription	133 850	131 100	-2 750 ²
TOTAL INCOME	133 850	131 100	-2 750
EXPENDITURE			
Joint annual conference expenses	16 256	16 256	0
Promotional Expenditure	4 572	1 137	3 435
Travel, Accommodation, etc.	37 592	23 955	13 637
Thematic Groups, meetings	10 160	6 046	4 114
Advisor's Support	61 011	60 000	1 011
Tlf. adm, internet, etc	4 064	1 998	2 066
NSR 2020 revision expenses ³	30 000	14 576	15 424
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	163 655	123 967	39 688
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	-29 805	7 133	36 938

DISPOSAL	
Transferred reserve from 2015	218 300
This year's surplus/deficit	7 133
RESERVE	225 433
Free reserve	125 433
Tied up reserve	100 000

² Includes the 2015 fee for Buskerud. No payment for 2016 has been made by Hauts-de-France.

³ In the budget, this cost was supposed to be covered from the free reserve. For the sake of clarity, it is reported here within the total expenditure.



**26th NSC Annual Business Meeting
28th June 2017
Göttingen**

b) Auditor's report on the accounts 2016

Two auditors' reports are enclosed:

- one by Deloitte in Bergen covering the accounts of the outgoing Hordaland secretariat from the 1st of January to the 24th of August 2016
- one by Deloitte in Gothenburg covering the accounts of the incoming Västra Götaland secretariat from the 22nd of August to the 31st of December 2016

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 financial statement of the North Sea Commission, which comprise the expenses and income statement covering the period January 1, 2016 to August 24, 2016. 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, 2016 to August 24, 2016 shows income of EUR 117.077, which is membership subscription paid in the period, and expenditure of EUR 54.698, exclusive EUR 13.105 of NSR 2020 revision expenses.

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, 2016 to August 24, 2016 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, September 14, 2016
Deloitte AS



Bjarne Ryland
State Authorised Public Accountant

Report on actual findings for CPMR North Sea Commission regarding the accounting for the period 22 August 2016 – 31 December 2016

We have performed the review procedures agreed upon, please see below, regarding the accounting for CPMR North Sea Commission for the period 22 August 2016 – 31 December 2016. We have performed our engagement according to the standard for related services applicable for review engagements according to special agreements. The purpose of our review procedures performed is only to simplify your work in assessing the accurateness of the expenses and is summarized as follows:

1. Verify that the financial records for the period 22 August 2016 – 31 December 2016 are true and fair – that the expenses are in accordance with actual expenses and that the expenses are specific and spent for CPMR North Sea Commission.
2. That the financial records are in compliance with the adopted budget for CPMR North Sea Commission for the period 22 August 2016 – 31 December 2016.

Our performed review procedures and findings:

1. We have verified the costs in CPMR North Sea Commission's income statement for the period 22 August 2016 – 31 December 2016, which has been reconciled with underlying invoices. In addition we have reviewed that expenses are related to CPMR North Sea Commission.
2. By reviewing the invoices and discussion with a representative for CPMR North Sea Commission we have verified that the expenses are in compliance with the budget, i.e. costs for joint annual conference expenses, promotional expenditure, travel, accommodation, thematic groups and meetings, advisor's support, telephone, Internet and administration and NSR 2020 audit expenses.

Since our above performed review is neither an audit according to ISA nor a review engagement according to ISRE other circumstances might had come to our attention and been reported to you.

The purpose of our report is only according to the first paragraph above and only for your information. Our report shall not be used for any other purpose or be disclosed to other parties. Our report only concerns the procedures stated above and does not comprise any of CPMR North Sea Commission's financial statements as a whole.

Deloitte AB

Gothenburg 29 May 2017


Harald Jagner
Authorized public accountant

c) Statement of accounts per 25th of May 2016

	Budget 2017	Accounts 25 th of May 2017
	Euro	Euro
INCOME		
Membership subscription	133 850	85 337 ¹
TOTAL INCOME	133 850	85 337
EXPENDITURE		
Joint annual conference	20 000	0
Promotional expenditure	4 000	634
Travel, Accommodation, etc.	36 000	8 299
Thematic Groups, meetings	5 000	140
Advisor's Support	48 000	36 000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	113 000	45 073

¹ The CPMR has announced that another transfer of € 33 466 is on its way. By the 25th of May, 27 out of 32 member regions had paid their dues for 2017

d) Proposal for budget 2018

	Accounts 2016	Budget 2017	Budget 2018
	Euro	Euro	Euro
INCOME:			
Membership subscription	131 100	133 850	142 215 ¹
TOTAL INCOME	131 100	133 850	142 215
EXPENDITURE:			
Joint annual conference expenses	16 256	20 000	20 000
Promotional expenditure	1 137	4 000	1 215
Travel, accommodation, etc.	23 955	36 000	30 000 ²
Thematic groups, meetings	6 046	5 000	5 000
Advisor's support	60 000	48 000	48 000
Tlf. adm, internet, etc	1 998	0	0
NSR 2020 revision expenses	14 576	0	0
Secretariat support	0	0	48 000 ³
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	123 968	113 000	152 215
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	7 132	20 850	-10 000⁴

¹ Compared to previous year's budget, this includes membership fee for Lower Saxony and higher fee for Hordaland, where the population has increased above 500,000 inhabitants

² With the secretariat partly based in Brussels, travel costs are lower than previously

³ Subject to ABM decision to support hosting region

⁴ It is recommended that money from the free reserve is used to support the secretariat. The total free reserve is now more than 125 000 €

19. Election of one Vice President 2017-2019

The President and one of the Vice Presidents of the North Sea Commission were elected last year for 2016-18. The other Vice President will be elected this year for the period from the ABM 2017 to the ABM 2019.

The current position holder, Councillor John Lamb, Borough Leader in Southend-on-Sea (UK), has declared his will to stand for re-election. No other candidates have been announced.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Elects one Vice President for 2017-2019***

20. Confirmation of members and substitute members of NSC Executive Committee

According to the NSC Charter

- The members of the Executive Committee shall consist of the President, two Vice Presidents and the national elected regional representatives from each member country of the North Sea Commission.
- Each member country shall nominate one representative and one substitute representative

The following national representatives and substitute representatives are nominated by the 30th of May. Member regions in the other countries are encouraged to send in their nominations as soon as possible.

	Representative	Substitute representative
Denmark	Preben Friis-Hauge, South Denmark	Otto Kjær Larsen, North Denmark
England		
France		
Germany		
Norway	Marianne Chesak, Rogaland	Åshild Kjelsnes, Sogn og Fjordane
Scotland		
Sweden		
The Netherlands	Nienke Homan, North Netherlands	Cees Loggen, North Holland

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Confirms the members and substitute members of NSC Executive Committee for 2017-2018**

21. Meeting plan 2017-2018

Event	Date	Venue
NSC Brexit Task Force	6 September	Brussels
Marine Resources Group	26-27 September	Flekkefjord
Smart Regions Group	4-6 October	Aberdeen
75 th ExCom	18 October	Helsinki
CPMR General Assembly	18-20 October	Helsinki
76 th ExCom	March 2018	Schleswig-Holstein
27 th Annual Business Meeting	June 2018 (date tbc)	tbc

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Takes note of the meeting plan 2017-2018**

22. Resolutions and policy positions

By the 30th of May, the following resolutions and policy positions have been proposed (see attached):

- Resolution on **land/sea interaction** by the Marine Resources Group
- Resolution on **shore power and the cruise industry** by Vest-Agder County Council
- Policy position on the **Energy package “Clean energy for all Europeans”** by the Energy and Climate Change Group

Amendment proposals should be sent to the Secretariat no later than 26th of June to be presented and voted at the ABM.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. ***Discusses and decides on the resolution on land/sea interaction***
2. ***Discusses and decides on the resolution on shore power and the cruise industry***
3. ***Discusses and decides on the policy position on the Energy package “Clean energy for all Europeans”***

Draft resolution on land/sea interaction

To the ABM from the NSC Marine Resources Group

The Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) directive was adopted by the Council and European Parliament July 2014. The Marine Resources Group (MRG) had been actively involved in lobbying prior to this. Based on concerns and interests from member regions, a resolution on MSP was put forward and adopted by the North Sea Commission (NSC) Annual Business Meeting in Aberdeenshire June 2014. Although competence and responsibility for marine planning differ in the different North Sea countries; regional development in maritime regions are very much connected to the notion of blue growth. Coastal regions have the advantage of proximity and interaction with stakeholders and the actual opportunities and challenges they face relating to blue growth.

The focus for the MRG in the implementation phase of the directive has been to engage in active dialogue with national level. The group is an observer in the NorthSEE-project, where member region North Holland is a formal member. The project gathers national authorities, universities and one regional authority (North Holland). The project aims to develop coherent marine planning in the North Sea basin within environment, energy and shipping. 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.

Land/sea interaction is one of the issues that still needs to be addressed in a holistic work with maritime spatial planning. Regions have competence to contribute in a dialogue between the different governmental levels and users of the sea. The North Sea Commission urges the following points to be part of the future dialogue on land/sea interaction.

- Multi-level governance. *Looking at the role of the regions in relations to local and national authorities in marine planning; as geography is overlapping and there is an unexplored potential for better coordination. .*
- The skills gap at local level. *While many local authorities have the authority to plan in the coastal zone, especially small municipalities face a skills gap in marine planning due to size and priorities.*
- Political commitment. *Marine planning is a highly technical area, but it also has to do with political priorities about use of space and facilitation for different areas of business or environmental protection. The interactive MSP game developed by the Dutch government is mentioned as one practical solution to involve politicians in the thinking of marine planning.*
- Vertical and horizontal integration. *The North Sea Commission is a suitable arena to exchange information and best practice of models on how to deal with the vertical integration (between different governmental levels) and horizontal integration (between different users of the sea).*
- Dynamic sector, how can plans follow suit? *Regional planning is a rather lengthy procedure to facilitate for process and involvement. The marine sectors on the other hand can be highly dynamic, and therefore there is a risk that marine plans are outdated as soon as they are completed. A more dynamic planning system and involvement from users of the sea seems to be part of the solution.*

- How to do business within marine protected areas. *There are different practices of whether it is possible to do business or not within marine protected areas. There is a potential to learn from each other in order to develop systems of a sound balance between economic development and environmental protection in marine areas.*
- Cross border cooperation. *The international dimension is interesting and relevant to look at in light of the cooperation in the North Sea basin. While several North Sea countries share a marine border with a neighboring country the different national rules need to be able to adapt to each other, international cooperation and common solution can also be found between local and regional authorities.*

The North Sea Commission recommends:

- The link between terrestrial planning and sea planning needs to be addressed, taking into account multi-level governance and the balance between environmental protection and blue growth.
- Regional authorities should be actively involved in the processes as they have knowledge about local conditions and challenges, in addition to close dialogue with stakeholders.
- The North Sea is one of the most intensively used sea basins in the world. A cross-country approach is needed to address the competition between different users of the sea and between activities at sea and on land.

Shore Power and the Cruise Industry – draft resolution from Vest-Agder County Council to the NSC Annual Business Meeting in Göttingen 28 June 2017

Introduction:

Making shore power available for cruise ships during port calls will reduce emissions significantly. One single cruise ship is equivalent to the energy usage of approximately 1500-2000 standard apartments.

DIRECTIVE 2014/94/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 22 October 2014 on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure requires that ports on the core network must offer shore side facilities by 2025, but this won't help if vessels are not equipped for applying those facilities.

The resolution is only concerning cruise ships because both the challenges and the benefits are considered to be greatest in this market. The same applies for regular ferry calls. For other segments, the market for shore side equipment is functioning satisfactory already, and for container vessels with much shorter port calls, it would not be commercially viable to invest in shore side equipment.

However, there are some major challenges to overcome before shore power will be mainstream technology in the cruise industry. First and foremost the challenges are related to a lack of international standards and regulations.

International regulations:

Individual ports have minimal influence on the cruise the industry as a whole. If we want to succeed in achieving a more environmental and sustainable cruise industry we need a common framework and a set of regulations directed toward the industry rather than port specific requirements.

International cooperation and regulations have proven to be an effective way of reducing emissions from the shipping industry with the Sulphur Emission Control Area (SECA) as one of the most recent examples. SECA includes the North Sea and the Baltics and has set requirements on vessels calling at their ports and to vessels transiting the waters of the North Sea SECA:

- The sulphur content of fuel oil used on board ships on a SOx emission control area shall not exceed 1.5% m/m;
- To use an approved exhaust gas cleaning system or other verifiable, enforceable technological method

The same method of requirements and regulations toward all cruise ships sailing within the North Sea and the Baltics would provide effective incentives to make the necessary investments in ships, and enabling them to connect to shore power from the port.

The North Sea Commission is therefore calling upon the IMO and relevant EU institutions to develop and implement a common set of regulations for the use of shore side power supply in the cruise industry as a way of reducing emissions, and to motivate ship owners to make the necessary investments to accommodate their ships for connecting during port calls in the Sulphur Emission Control Area (SECA) in the North Sea Region and other SECAs.





Picture 2: SECA

Picture 1: A future region of shore power regulations and framework?

Draft Position Paper North Sea Commission on Energy Package: “Clean Energy for all Europeans”

From the Energy and Climate Change Group

The regions in the North Sea Commission welcome the Energy Package “Clean Energy for all Europeans”, published by the European Commission at the end of 2016. The package consists of measures to further develop the European Energy Union and specifies targets and measures related to the production of Renewable Energy, increasing Energy Efficiency and the design of the power market. The European Commission aims to put the consumer in the centre of the European energy market.

The North Sea and its surrounding regions and countries are a hotspot for energy transition. Energy activities are shifting more and more towards the coastal areas, oil and gas platforms in the North Sea are being dismantled and major investments are made in off and on shore wind energy parks, solar and bio-energy and necessary infrastructure.

Renewable energy in the North Sea Region plays an essential role in meeting the renewable energy targets of the EU. In its communication “Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond”, the European Commission acknowledges the energy production capacities in the Northern Seas. Furthermore, it proposes that an off shore grid in the northern seas with connections to the Northern as well as Central Europe is among the priority corridors which will make Europe’s electricity grids fit for 2020. In 2016 a political declaration on energy cooperation between the North Seas Countries was signed, here the emphasis lies on coordination at member state level.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission support the European Commission’s emphasis on the importance of the measures proposed in the transition towards a fully decarbonised European Energy Supply by the year 2050. Still the Regions in the North Sea Commission would prefer to have more ambitious targets for renewable energies and energy efficiency for 2030.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission emphasize the economic impact this transition could have for their regional economies. Traditional energy-related sectors will have to reform, which might cost jobs in the regions where they are situated. Nevertheless, the economic opportunities that emerge from the transition are possibly even bigger than the threats. The Regions in the North Sea Commission are convinced that they are in the best position to take full advantage of the transition.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission are convinced that social acceptance is crucial in reaching the goals that are mentioned in the Energy Package, mainly the targets regarding Renewable Energy and those regarding Energy Efficiency. Without social acceptance, the Energy Union can never be a success story. In this respect, the regions in the North Sea Commission are concerned about the spatial effects the energy transition will have, and the negative consequences this has for the social acceptance of the energy transition. In some of the regions there is growing resistance for example towards the planning of windfarms on land (Drenthe) and resistance to overhead cabling in Lower Saxony, Germany.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission call upon the European Commission to unlock their potential as frontrunners in renewable energy in the European Energy Union. Primary production from renewables in the EU28 has increased by 72,5 % in the decade between 2003-2014. In 2012 80 % of the EU offshore capacity was

installed in the North Sea. The regions in the North Sea Commission are ambitious in their targets, however, they do want to achieve them with the support of the citizens.

Critical in achieving social acceptance is the role of consumers as producers and the way that renewables interact with the overall supply and demand balance. There are numerous examples of where supply and demand is out of balance but from a social acceptance point of view, badly managed excess solar capacity has potential to undermine the reputation of all renewables. The example of Groningen where excessive solar production went unused and installations were switched on and off frequently damaged inverters and undermined the confidence of consumers investing as generators. These issues are relatively easily resolved through distributed batteries and communication which will enhance the role of citizens, will further reinforce the role of renewables but will require local engagement to be successful.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission therefore do consider the role of the sub-national regional authorities should be emphasized in the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plans. It is in the regions where the European citizens live, that the citizens feel the consequences of the transition, either economic or spatial, or otherwise. On the other hand citizens are both producers and consumers (prosumers) at the same time and take their own responsibility when it comes to energy transition. The decisions on the implementation of the Energy Union, should therefore be taken as close to the citizens as possible.

The European Commission proposes that the Member States should come up with Integral Climate and Energy Plans. The Regions in the North Sea Commission call upon the European Parliament and the Council to give a clear role of the sub-national regional authorities in this process, where they are empowered to take tailor made decisions with their citizens.

Integrated governance is necessary for the Energy Union to ensure that all energy related actions at European, national, regional and local level contribute to its objectives. A regional approach of the Energy Package is necessary for its successful implementation and will create a greater social acceptance for the Energy Union.

23. Final declaration

Please find enclosed a draft final declaration.

Amendment proposals should be sent to the Secretariat no later than 26th of June to be presented and voted at the ABM.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

- 1. Discusses and adopts the Final declaration***

Final declaration

The regions of the CPMR North Sea Commission (NSC) met in Göttingen (Lower Saxony, DE) on the 28th of June 2017 for the 26th NSC Annual Business Meeting. On behalf of its members, the North Sea Commission wishes to convey the following messages:

The North Sea Commission:

1. Welcomes the international cooperation on offshore wind and grids in the North Sea resulting from last year's political declaration between the North Sea countries. Marine renewable energy and hydro power plays an increasingly important role in the European energy balance, and the major part of Europe's production comes from the North Sea. Better interconnections, including the installation of fibre optic cables, cooperation on legislation, technical standards, financing, and spatial planning are necessary elements to use the full potential. The North Sea Commission, long-time advocate for a North Sea grid, is grateful for the invitation to speak at this year's stakeholder event, and remains committed to further involvement in the process. We are also urging the EU and the member states to keep up momentum.
2. Regrets the lack of progress on the Preparatory Action for the North Sea. The aim of the Preparatory Action, and the budget allocated to it by the European Parliament in 2013, was to discuss how to unlock the growth potential in the North Sea region as well as the added value of a coherent strategy for this sea basin. The Preparatory Action process has produced two stakeholder conferences with much food for thought, but we still wait for a report from the European Commission drawing conclusions on the way forward.
3. Reiterates its call for a cooperation platform for the North Sea involving the EU, the North Sea states, regional/local authorities, and relevant stakeholders from the business community and the R&D sector. The North Sea is one of the busiest sea basins in the world, used for fisheries, oil and gas production, windfarms, shipping, military purposes, and leisure. The North Sea Region would benefit from a permanent forum for cross-sectoral, multi-level discussions on the development of the sea-basin and the adjacent regions.
4. Recalls that in the lack of a macro-regional strategy, the North Sea Commission adopted several years ago its own North Sea Region 2020 strategy, defining key actions within the areas Managing maritime space, Increased accessibility and clean transport, Tackling climate change and Attractive and sustainable communities. We invite European institutions, national governments and relevant stakeholders to join us in this work, and in the process of drafting a strategy for post 2020.
5. Expresses great concern for the impact of Brexit on the North Sea Region and on the North Sea itself. About 30 per cent of UK export goes to North Sea countries. The UK is among the top 5 export markets for all other North Sea countries. New trade barriers in the North Sea are likely to change this balance, and have a negative economic effect on the entire North Sea region. Coastal regions and port cities might suffer more than others. In particular, the NSC is concerned about how Brexit will affect the conditions for creating growth and jobs in the North Sea Region, as well as the impact on the management of the maritime space, maritime resource, and the implementation of the TEN-T. More cooperation, not less, is needed to balance the many and conflicting interests in the North Sea, one of

the busiest sea basins in the world. The North Sea Commission has initiated a Brexit task force, and intends to monitor Brexit developments and potential effects from a North Sea perspective.

6. Calls upon the European institutions and the British government to negotiate a Brexit deal that causes as little harm as possible to the North Sea basin and the North Sea Region. The NSC further wishes to:
 - Invite UK member Regions to join the NSC, which will remain relevant and useful to them, whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations;
 - Express support for UK member regions who wish to maintain access to the internal market and continue to be involved in the implementation of relevant EU directives.
7. Calls for Cohesion Policy to be continued post 2020 as a key component for promoting investments in support of growth and sustainable development, and covering all European regions. European Territorial Cooperation is an integral part of European cohesion and should be strengthened. Our views on Cohesion Policy are reflected in the position paper adopted by the CPMR Political Bureau in Stavanger on the 22nd of June 2017.
8. Welcomes the discussion on the Future of Europe, initiated by the white paper from the European Commission in March 2017, and will contribute to this discussion in our respective regions as well as on a North Sea regional level.

24. Annual Business Meeting 2018

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Annual Business Meeting

1. *Welcomes the invitation from ... to host the Annual Business Meeting 2018*
2. *Asks the Executive Committee to set a date for the Annual Business Meeting 2018 in coordination with the host region and the CPMR*