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Minutes of the 42nd
NSC Executive Committee Meeting
June 14th, Aviemore, Highland, Scotland

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NSC Executive Committee Participants:

President	Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark)
Vice-President	Cllr Audrey Findlay (Aberdeenshire)
Vice-President	Cllr Peter Byman (SNN)
Danish Representative	Cllr Harry Jensen (Ringkøbing)
Dutch Representative	none
English Representative	Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly)
French Representative	none
German Representative	none
Norwegian Representative	Cllr Gisle Handeland (Hordaland)
Scottish Representative	Cllr Kathleen Matheson (Highland)
Swedish Representative	none
Executive Secretary	Lars Haukvik
Assistant Executive Secretary	Vibeke Jakobsen
Facilitator	Vivien Collie

NSC Chairs/Vice-chairs of Thematic Groups present:

Culture and Tourism	none
Economic Development	Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly)
Education and Research	Cllr Alexander Thomson (Fife)
	Cllr Christian Bach Iversen (Nordjylland)
Environment	Cllr Alison McInnes (Aberdeenshire)
	Cllr Henrik Ringbæk Madsen (Nordjylland)
	Cllr Andreas Lervik (Østfold)
Fisheries	Cllr Harry Jensen (Ringkøbing)
Transport	

NSC Thematic Group Co-ordinators present:

Culture and Tourism	Geir Sør-Reime (Rogaland)
Economic Development	Erik Lindboe (Rogaland)
Education and Research	Ann Brown (NSC)
Environment	none
Fisheries	Ann Bell (Aberdeenshire)
Transport	Jon Halvard Eide (Vest-Agder)

CPMR:

Carol Thomas, CPMR Secretariat



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Observers:

Richard Rockcliffe (Norfolk County Council)
Hugo Andersen (RAC)
Michelle Armstrong (East of England Regional Assembly)
Martin Brebner (Aberdeenshire)
Luc Depoorter (Flemisch Fleet Division)
Karen Gibson (Norfolk)
Toine Janssen (SNN)
James Knowles (Aberdeenshire)
Susy Lauesen (Nordjylland)
Bruce Manson (Fife)
Simone Melis (Noord Holland)
Kenn Bloch Mortensen (Nordjylland)
Gordon Summers (Highland)

Apologies:

Swedish Representative Cllr. Roland Andersson (Västra Götaland)
German Representative Cllr. Björn Thümler (Niedersachsen)
French Representative Cllr. Martine Filleul (Nor-Pas de Calais)
Chair Culture and Tourism Cllr. Annelie Stark (Västra Götaland)
Chair Fisheries Cllr. Sandy Clunes (Shetland)
Chair Economic Development Cllr Rinske Krusinga (Noord Holland)
Vice-Chair Culture and Tourism Cllr. Alan Livingstone (Perth & Kinross)
Vice-Chair Transport Cllr. Tor Ottar Karlsen (Buskerud)
Vice-Chair Fisheries Cllr. Anders Fasth (Västra Götaland)
Cllr. Albrecht Harten (Niedersachsen)
Cllr. Jeannine Marquaille (Nor-Pas de Calais)
Co-ordinator Environment Per Hörberg (Västra Götaland)
Peter Wieland (Niedersachsen)

The President started by welcoming everyone.

The Agenda for the meeting was approved.

1. Minutes of the 41st Executive Committee meeting, March 2nd 2006, Ipswich, England

Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) asked if representatives who attended the NSC Strategic Committee meeting in April had taken into account the decision taken at the March Executive Committee meeting on future structures for the NSC.

Decision:

It was agreed that this would be discussed later in the meeting.

The minutes was aproved



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2. Annual Reports

2.1 Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups

The Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups were tabled:

- Culture and Tourism
- Economic Development
- Education and Research
- Environment
- Fisheries
- Transport

Hugo Andersen (RAC) described the European Commission's recent decision to consider funding RACs under a new system (Organisations of European Interest). This funding system would be easier to administer and should help the continuation of RACs. Hugo also said that a study report on RACs is due in 2007.

Decision:

It was agreed to recommend the Annual Reports to the General Assembly.

2.2 Report from the Ad-Hoc Work Groups

2.2.1 Work Group Territorial Cooperation

Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) described the benefits arising from the North Sea Programme members working with the Baltic Sea Programme members. Cllr. Byman also requested that the NSC advocate reducing the match-funding level for Baltic Partners in the North Sea Programme to 25%.

Gordon Summers (Highland) backed the idea of supporting funding outwith the Programme areas, but suggested this should not just be limited to working with the Baltic Sea area. He emphasised the need to act quickly if the NSC wishes to influence the new Programmes.

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Aberdeenshire), Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly), Cllr Kathleen Matheson (Highland) and Cllr Alexander Thomson (Fife) all highlighted the complexity of this issue. They requested more written information and time to discuss this proposal.

Decision:

It was agreed that more time was required to make a decision on this matter and that the proposal should be put in writing. The subject would be discussed at the national meetings later in the day.



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2.2.2 Work Group on Maritime Policy Green Paper

Decision:

No Comments were made.

3. Report from CPMR

Carol Thomas reported on the CPMR's recent activities.

Financial Arrangements:

She informed the meeting that, after discussion, it has been decided that the CPMR intends to adopt an agreement at its meeting in October. This would result in a seven million population ceiling for membership subscriptions.

Energy:

Carol also outlined the increasing interest in the subject of energy, and said that a number of seminars had been held recently to identify key issues. Since then, the Commission has published a Green Paper. This requires a response from CPMR regions. A draft response was produced in May (available on the website). The final version will be tabled for approval at the meeting due to be held in October. The 'Energy and Periphery' conference will be held in Spain on the 6th of October. Experts and official representatives will be attending this event.

Maritime Policy Green Paper:

Carol outlined the recent work done to feed key ideas into the work of the Taskforce. A paper has recently been published and a press release produced. The consultation will end in June 2007 and it is important that any additional issues that need to be addressed are identified. Two areas of concern that have been identified are the lack of inclusion in the proposals and the need to include maritime transport and security issues. A draft position paper will be put to the AGM meeting.

Brussels:

Carol highlighted the importance of the new structural funding programmes and partnership arrangements. In recognition of the new challenges regionally and globally, the CPMR will be holding a meeting in June to look at improving links outwith the EU. They are hoping to develop a contract of co-operation, and to develop access to the work of the UN Development Programme.

Ann Bell (Fisheries Group Co-ordinator) also spoke on the recent CPMR Fisheries Group meeting. It was agreed at the meeting that the resolution to the CPMR GA should accept the need for protected areas, but that this should take into account the need for consultation, clear objectives, agreed timespan, a mid-term evaluation and involving the local community in the management of the area.



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Ann Bell also highlighted the CPMR seminar for the Oil, Gas and Fisheries Sectors that will be held later this year.

Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) stated that he was unhappy with the financial arrangements that had been put forward by the CPMR. He felt that the NSC members had been misled by the CPMR's statement last year that they would look at the introduction of a ceiling and some form of reimbursement to the NSC for projects. The proposed ceiling for subscriptions is so high it will only benefit one NSC member area. Kevan stated his concerns that these proposed subscription levels could have an impact on future NSC membership. Kevan requested that a formal meeting be held with the CPMR on this issue.

Cllr Henrik Ringbæk Madsen (Nordjylland) stated that an increasing number of NSC regions were finding difficulty raising funding. This is a matter that has been raised before with the CPMR and needs to be addressed.

Decision:

Carol Thomas agreed to take these comments back for discussion at the CPMR. It was agreed that a delegation from the NSC Executive Committee should meet with CPMR representatives at their event on 6th October.

4. NSC Work Plans 2006 – 2007

4.1. Executive Committee Work Plan

Cllr Alison McInnes (Aberdeenshire) highlighted the need for greater recognition of the Regions by national governments. This could be included in the Work Plan's Political Lobbying key activities. The President agreed that this could be discussed at the next meeting in August.

Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) asked why the North Sea Cycle Route was included in the Work Plan. The President explained that it had been included for further discussion, and to gather more information on costs, before any conclusions were made.

Decision:

The inclusion of activities to promote the Regions to national governments will be discussed at the next meeting.

The North Sea Cycle Route will remain in the Plan and a conclusion will be reached at the meeting in October.



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4.2. Work Plans of the Thematic Groups

4.2.1. Culture and Tourism

Geir Sør-Reime (Culture and Tourism Co-ordinator) said that many activities have changed since the Work Plan was produced and that it now needed to be reviewed and updated. This will be undertaken in time for the August meeting.

4.2.2. Economic Development

Cllr Kevan Lim (Vice Chair, Economic Development Group) stated that the Group's 2006-2007 Work Plan will depend on the decision due to be taken on the merging of the Economic Development Group with the Education & Research Group. It is proposed that the future Work Plan will have a more limited scope and will focus on a smaller number of activities. Decisions will still have to be made on the co-ordination and responsibilities of a merged group.

4.2.3. Education and Research

Cllr Alexander Thomson (Chair, Education and Research) described the group's existing substantial Work Plan, but said that this would have to be readdressed should the two groups merge.

Ann Brown (Education and Research Co-ordinator) gave a Powerpoint presentation on the NSC Food and Regional Development Conference (Dundee, August 2006) and described the opportunities offered by the group's schools project.

4.2.4. Environment

Cllr Alison McInnes (Chair, Environment Group) advised the Group that, after 10 years of participation, Per Horberg (Environment Group Co-ordinator) was to cease as Co-ordinator after 1st October 2006. Alison highlighted the high quality of Per's work, and said that his departure will result in a big change in the group's activities this year.

4.2.5. Fisheries

Ann Bell (Fisheries Group Co-ordinator) told the Committee about a DEFRA funded report that will be discussed at a RAC meeting in June. She also advised on an Oil, Gas and Fisheries sectors seminar due to be held in Rogaland County in September. This seminar will discuss the possibility of introducing the UK's FishSafe equipment throughout the North Sea. She also highlighted her work supporting the CPMR Fisheries Group. She described the recent promotion of employment training in the maritime sector. She also described recent discussions on the need to look at more efficient engines and use of biofuels in fishing vessels. Ann told the Committee about a joint meeting of NSC representatives planned for 4th July in Brussels with John Richardson (Head of the Maritime Policy Taskforce) to discuss the recent Green Paper. Ann described the work being carried out to focus on the joint resolution with the CPMR on closed and protected areas. She also talked about her continued work with the RAC.



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4.2.6. Transport

Jon Halvard Eide (Transport Group Co-ordinator) described the aims of the group's work plan. He also welcomed Cllr Leif Blomqvist (Vastra Gotaland) as the new Chair and Cllr Charles King (Highland Council) as a new Vice Chair of the Group. He expressed the hope that the group will gain more political involvement in the future. He described the group's involvement with Motorways of the Sea, joint work with the CPMR and Interreg projects, the Maritime Green Paper and the statistical mapping project.

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Vice President) stated the need for Groups to prioritise their activities within the work plans, to ensure that the key activities are retained during the restructuring and to encourage more political involvement in the work of the NSC.

James Knowles (Aberdeenshire) requested that rural aspects and issues be included in the Work Plans.

Decision:

Agreement that:

- **Culture and Tourism Work Plan to be reviewed.**
- **Economic Development and Education & Research Work Plans will require to be reviewed if the groups are merged.**
- **NSC representatives should attend meeting on 4th July in Brussels with John Richardson (Head of the Maritime Policy Taskforce) to discuss the recent Green Paper.**
- **The activities in the work plans should be prioritised.**
- **More political involvement should be encouraged.**
- **Work Plans should also make reference to rural aspects.**

5. Finances

5.1 Accounts 2006

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) gave a report on the accounts. He said that during the last 12 months there had been exceptional costs for Co-ordinators time and the internet site. He reported the increase in the membership fees charged this year (2.4% increase). He said that Suffolk County Council had resigned from the NSC but remained involved through the East of England Regional Assembly.

Cllr Harry Jensen (Ringkobing) advised the Committee that recent changes to local government in Denmark might result in a reduced membership of the NSC.



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Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) raised his concern about recent extra costs and the continued financial sustainability of the NSC.

Lars advised the Committee that most of the costs under 'meetings' were for NSC events such as the Trollhattan and Ringkobing conferences.

5.2 Budget 2007

The President and Cllr Audrey Findlay (Aberdeenshire) agreed that costs for the next year need to be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Decision:

Accounts agreed.

Future costs to be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

6 Elections of NSC Office bearers

6.1 Election of President

Decision:

Recommended that Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark) should be re-elected as President for a two year period at the NSC Annual Business Meeting on June 16th 2006.

6.2 Election of Vice President

Decision:

Recommended that Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) be re-elected as Vice President for a two year period at the NSC Annual Business Meeting on June 16th 2006.

6.3 Update of the Members and Substitute Members to the NSC Executive Committee, elected by the National delegations in 2005

Ann Bell (Fisheries Co-ordinator) advised the Committee that Cllr Anders Fasth (Västra Götaland) would be the new Chair of the Fisheries Group and Cllr Sandy Clunes (Shetland) would become a Vice Chair.

Decision:

Information noted.

Agreed to recommend at the NSC Annual Business Meeting on June 16th 2006 that the members of the Executive Committee should continue for one more year.



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7 NSC Organisational issues

7.1 Procedures for NSC

Decision:

Proposed procedures should be presented to the Annual Business Meeting.

7.2 The future organisation of NSC

Cllr Peter Byman (SNN) spoke on behalf of the Dutch representatives and asked why the proposal still contained the Thematic and Ad Hoc Groups. The Executive Committee must recognise the serious financial implications of maintaining this structure. Other structures should have been considered.

Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) suggested that alternative structures could be considered which would allow the NSC to work on projects rather than themes, and to work within identified resources.

Cllr Audrey Findlay (Aberdeenshire) advised that at the last Executive Committee meeting the Strategic Committee was asked to look at different options and report back to the June meeting. The Strategic Committee had looked at the benefits and drawbacks of different structures, and the proposed structure is the preferred solution.

The Committee members discussed the reasons for supporting the proposed structure, and the need to secure the resources to achieve its aims.

Members of the Executive Committee voted on the proposed new structure. Two members voted against the proposals. The majority decision was accepted.

Decision:

Agreed to adopt the new proposed structure.

The new terms of reference for the Thematic Groups should be drafted for discussion at the next Executive Committee.

More detailed monitoring of the budget is required.

Cllr Kevan Lim (East of England Regional Assembly) and Cllr Alexander Thomson (Fife) proposed that, if the decision is made to merge the groups, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of both groups should meet in September and start the merging process.

Decision:

Agreed.



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8 Resolutions and Political Statements

8.1 Resolution on Maritime Policy Green Paper

Geir Sør-Reime (Rogaland) requested amendments to the introduction of the resolution and changes regarding the Sellafeld issue.

Cllr Alison McInnes (Aberdeenshire) requested the inclusion of two additions on behalf of the Environment Group.

Jon Halvard Eide (Vest-Agder) requested changes to the final paragraph on the first page.

Decision:

The resolution was agreed with these amendments.

8.2 Resolution on the Northern Dimension

Decision:

Agreed

9 The 16th General Assembly

Members of the Committee discussed the format and proposed location of the NSC 16th General Assembly.

Decision:

It was agreed that the next General Assembly should be held jointly with the Interreg North Sea Programme in Norway.

10 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Committee was due to be the Netherlands on October 6th 2006. It was noted that this is the same date as the CPMR Energy event in Spain, which may involve Executive Committee members.

Decision:

It was agreed that a new date would be identified.



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Ann Bell (Fisheries Co-ordinator) advised the Committee of a meeting being held with John Richardson (Head of the Maritime Policy Taskforce) on the 4th July 2006 in Scotland House, Brussels. The meeting will discuss maritime policy and the NSC resolution, and will involve the Chairs and Co-ordinators of the NSC Environment, Transport and Fisheries thematic groups. She requested the Executive Committee's support for this meeting.

Decision:

Agreed.

Close of meeting

The prepared papers for the meeting is available on the NSC website;
http://www.northsea.org/nsc/executive_committee/0606_aviemore/agenda.html

VC/VJ/LH
22.06.06