



Fylkeshuset,  
3706 Skien, Norway  
Tel.: +47 35 56 42 00  
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44  
nsc@northsea.org  
www.northsea.org

## **Draft Minutes for the 19<sup>th</sup> NSC Annual Business Meeting June 18<sup>th</sup>, Sola Strandhotel, Rogaland, Norway**

### **North Sea Commission Annual Business Meeting**

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (Telemark Fylkeskommune), President of the North Sea Commission (NSC), welcomed everyone and thanked Rogaland County Council for hosting the Annual Conference and General Assembly in 2010.

## **Agenda**

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

### **Decision:**

*The agenda was adopted unanimously.*

## **1. Annual Reports**

### **1.1. President's Report**

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) said that this was her sixth annual report and she described the close relationships that have been formed over many years of working together. She said that a lot has happened since her election, and together the NSC had achieved a lot. There is a solid foundation for the work required for North Sea Region 2020.

The President reminded delegates that the NSC is a political organisation, and the contributions from all politicians are essential. She thanked everyone, including the Executive Committee and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Thematic Groups, for their contributions, support, and work to continue the progress of the NSC.

The President highlighted the need for people to work together, more active involvement of politicians, and encouragement to all regions to appoint political members to the NSC Thematic Groups. She emphasised the important work of the groups, their discussions and enthusiasm, and the hours worked to make the right decisions. This is voluntary, and it is very good to have so many skilled people involved in the work of the NSC.

The President said that the last year had been the most active in her presidency including the Strategy launch in Brussels in October. This year there had been a North Sea stakeholder conference in Newcastle, and other major events in Brussels and Spain. Reports of all meetings, she said, could be found on the NSC website.

The President referred to Europe 2020, and how the NS region can contribute. She said that the new concept adopted for this year's General Assembly had been interesting, with people sitting together and discussing very important items. This did not involve a lot of speakers giving lessons – but used all the expert brains of the people sitting in the audience, bringing them together, and letting them find solutions. Gunn Marit said that it had been an inspiration to meet together this time.

She said that over the last 12 months there has been important collaboration with stakeholders, and people have to help each other and be focussed for the future. Through active participation, the NSC would benefit - and achieve outcomes where it puts efforts in.

The President concluded her report by thanking the hosts.

Cllr Lenie Dwarshuis-van de Beek (Province of Zuid-Holland) asked if the NSC was intending to pass a resolution or statement on the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, as it has relevance to activities in the North Sea.

The delegates discussed the importance of this situation, the need to learn from it and to ensure it doesn't happen in the North Sea. It was agreed that a statement should be produced:

**Statement on the prevention of oil spills in the North Sea Region:**

*'The General Assembly of the North Sea Commission expressed their real concerns in respect of the oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The General Assembly urges all governments to urgently investigate the risks which exist in the North Sea.'*

*The North Sea is of fundamental importance to the lives of its inhabitants and the economies of all the countries around the North Sea'.*

The President agreed to take this issue up at various meetings in Europe in July.

## **1.2 Annual Reports from the Thematic Groups**

### **1.2.1 Culture and Tourism**

Geir Sør-Reime, Advisor to the Culture and Tourism Thematic Group presented the annual report. He highlighted that the group intended to have greater future political involvement. He outlined the key European cultural policies. He mentioned European Tourism Day in September and the group's future focus on tourism.

### **1.2.2 Innovation and Education**

Cllr Ole B Sørensen (North Denmark Region), Chair of Innovation and Education Thematic Group outlined the work of his group and how active the group had been. He described the different approaches they had developed for the two areas of interest (innovation and education), and the future focus on 2020.

### **1.2.3 Marine Resources**

Anne Bell, Advisor to the Marine Resources Thematic Group outlined the outcomes from the previous day's meeting. This included progress on the Clean Shipping Action Plan. She described the successful conference Study Tour. She also reminded delegates of the crucial role played by the local councils who employ the NSC Advisors.

Anja Schmid (Schleswig-Holstein) thanked the Marine Resources group and the North Sea Commission for the support of the new approved INTERREG project "Clean North Sea Shipping".

### **1.2.4 Sustainable Development**

Cllr John Lamb (East of England Regional Assembly), Chair of the Sustainable Development (SD) Thematic Group thanked Rogaland County Council for the conference Study Tour. He stressed the importance of Sustainable Development throughout the work of all the Thematic Groups.

### **1.2.5 Transport**

Jon Halvard Eide, Advisor to the Transport Thematic Group, reported on the input he has provided for CPMR meetings and the TEN-T review, and the requirement for statistics for NSR 2020 and Europe 2020.

## **1.3 Other Activity Reports**

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

Cllr Annelie Stark (Region Västra Götaland) reported on the Baltic Sea Commission Annual Business Meeting in May. There has been a change in Presidency and the Secretariat. The new President is from Region Västerbotten in Sweden and the Vice Presidents are from Osterbotnia in Finland and Pärnummaa in Estonia. The Secretariat will be hosted by Region Uusimaa in Finland. She talked about discussions relating to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

### **1.3.2 Maritime Policy Update**

Martin Brebner (Aberdeenshire Council) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the CPMR Aquamarina Group. He outlined its remit, actions, survey responses and the case for continuation. A decision will have to be made about an extension of its mandate, and whether it will continue. There will be an opportunity to discuss this at the CPMR General Assembly in Aberdeen.

## **1.4 Reports from co-operating organisations**

### **1.4.1 Report from the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme**

Because of the security strike in Norway there was no report from the Secretary of Interreg, but it was reported that he was satisfied with the annual meeting and is eager to co-operate very closely with the North Sea Commission. A short report will be provided on the website.

Cllr Lenie Dwarshuis-van de Beek (Province of Zuid-Holland) mentioned that the Committee of the Regions will be discussing the North Sea and the English Channel at their meeting in Spain next month. She asked if the European Commission should make a Green Paper on Macro Regions in general.

The President suggested this could be put on the agenda for the next General Assembly.

### **1.4.2 Report from the North Sea Regional Advisory Council**

Anne Bell, Executive Secretary of the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (NSRAC) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the background to the NSRAC, their Work Plan for 2009-2010 and the links with the NSC Marine Resources Group and the CPMR Fisheries Group. She described the content and importance of the North Sea Fishers Survey. She talked about the NS Stakeholder Conference, the Position and Advice Papers and the Internal Review. She advised that this year the NSRAC will have a new Chairman and Executive Secretary – although it is understood that the administrative post will still be hosted by Aberdeenshire Council.

Cllr John Lamb stressed the need for more work to be done on the issue of discards, and the importance of inshore fisheries. Anne Bell advised that they had recently been approached by an inshore fishery.

### **Discussion:**

There was a general discussion about the work and focus of some of the groups, and whether the Executive Committee needed to cut out some information that is not needed, reflect on the work being done, look at the commitment of Chairs and Vice Chairs on some occasions, and seek more active politicians in the groups.

The President said there are now five focus areas for North Sea Region 2020 instead of three, and it had been the members who decided that the focus was too narrow. That is why there are five focus areas instead of three, and together the NSC has to decide the route. She said that she had never before seen so many politicians being active in terms of the North Sea strategy. She said that she welcomed the discussion, because people have to help each other to be focussed. The simple motto, she said, is that you get out what you put in, and if you are not there, you don't get anything.

### **Decision:**

*The NSC Annual Business Meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010 unanimously adopted the Presidents report and the Thematic Groups Annual Reports and continues to support the work of the NSC.*

*The NSC Annual Business Meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010 unanimously adopted the other reports for information.*

*The NSC Annual Business Meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010 unanimously agreed the statement on oil spills in the North Sea Region*

## **2. Election of Office Bearers**

### **2.1 Election of President of the North Sea Commission**

The post of President of the North Sea Commission was due for election.

There was one candidate for the position of President of the North Sea Commission for the period 2010-2012: Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen was re-elected as President. She thanked the meeting for the confidence expressed.

### **2.2 Members of the Executive Committee**

Members of the Executive Committee were elected in 2009 for a two year period. (A list of members was included in the papers).

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

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

- Cllr Henning Gjellerod (Region Midtjylland) would be the new member for Denmark
- Cllr Ole B Sørensen (North Denmark Region) would be the new substitute member for Denmark

The meeting was advised that there was no substitute member for Cllr John Lamb because the East of England Regional Assembly has been disbanded.

**Decision:**

***Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen was unanimously re-elected as President of the North Sea Commission for the period 2010 – 2012.***

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

### **3. NSC Thematic Group Work Plans 2010-2011**

The delegates were invited to comment on, and approve, the work plans for the NSC Thematic Group Work Plans for 2010-2011.

**Marine resources:** Ann Bell advised that this group normally produces a two year work plan. Unfortunately they did not have enough time at their last meeting to complete their plan. They propose to submit their 2010-2012 Plan by written procedure, and it will be ready for the next Executive Committee meeting.

**Sustainable development:** Cllr John Lamb advised that the Group wants to get working on the Water Framework Directive and will develop a discussion paper.

The President advised that the Commission's main focus will be to continue the work on North Sea Region 2020. This will be continued at the next Executive Committee meeting and at other future meetings.

**Decision:**

***The Thematic Group Work Plans for 2010-2011 were adopted unanimously.***

## **4. Finances**

### **4.1 Accounts for 2009 and Auditor's Report**

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) reported on the financial status of the NSC of 31.05.10 (Enclosure 1), the Accounts for 2009 (Enclosure 2) and the Auditor's report of 26.05.10. The accounts for 2009 show a surplus of 37,670 Euros. This gives the NSC disposal of 184 693 Euros by 01.01.10. All members paid their membership in 2009.

**Decision:**

***The 2009 Accounts (Enclosure 2) were approved unanimously.***

***The Auditor's Report of 26.05.10 was approved unanimously.***

### **4.2 Proposed budget for 2011**

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) outlined the proposed budget for 2011 ('Enclosure 3' in his report).

The total budget for 2011 (based on the graded membership fees) is 144,916 Euros (compared with 142,075 Euro in 2010).

The delegates discussed whether an additional 1,000 Euros should be made available to each of the Thematic Group advisers to help the host regions with costs, and whether such a big disposal was required.

The President said that a balance is always required between the fee the members have to pay, and how much the NSC can pay its advisers. She also thought it was wise for the organisation to have at least a small financial buffer. The Executive Committee has to discuss its plan, and what it will need for 2110-2011.

**Decision:**

*The NSC budget for 2011 (as presented in Enclosure 3) was approved unanimously.*

*It was agreed that the issue of Thematic Group costs, and the required size of the organisation's disposal, would be discussed by the Executive Committee*

### **4.3 Members**

Lars Haukvik (NSC Executive Secretary) stated that by 01.01.10 the NSC had 35 paying members.

Lars advised on the two memberships gained (Bremen and Zuid-Holland) and the loss of East of England Regional Assembly over the last 12 months – but it is understood that Southend Borough Council will be applying for membership. It is understood that the membership of East Midlands Regional Assembly in England will also be lost due to reorganisation.

**Decision:**

*The NSC membership information was noted.*

## **5. North Sea Region 2020**

### **5a. North Sea Region 2020**

Martin Brebner (Aberdeenshire Council) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the results of the North Sea Region 2020 survey.

He explained the macro-regional approach being taken by the European Commission towards funding and co-ordinating policies. It related to the integrated maritime policy in addition to the regional policy approach. Discussions have already taken place in the Strategic Committee and there was agreement to set up a Writing Group and planning group to take forward this work.

North Sea Region 2020 is an initiative to co-ordinate existing policies, target different funding streams much more effectively, and implement the EU's up coming policy agendas in the fields of maritime policy, territorial cohesion, and regional policy.

Martin outlined the timetables and themes and additional priorities, and the consultation period. The aim is to work up a more detailed position paper, and once there is a clearer idea of what the NSC wants it will be put to relevant stakeholder organisations with a view to having a proposal or decision at the 2012 council meeting with the Danish Presidency.

Martin explained that initially three themes had been identified (Managing Maritime Space, Increasing Accessibility and Attractiveness, Tackling Climate Change), but following the Strategic Committee meeting in January, two additional themes were agreed (Promoting Innovation and Excellence, and Sustaining Communities).

At the Executive Committee Meeting in April it was agreed that the name 'North Sea Region 2020' rather than 'North Sea Strategy' should be used to reflect the long term challenges to the area.

Following the Stakeholder conference in Newcastle in March, a consultation exercise with NSC members and thematic groups has been carried out.

Martin reported that there had been a number of responses to the consultation (16 out of 36 member regions). Every Dutch region had responded and, apart from France, at least one response had been received from each North Sea country, and four responses had been received from the NSC thematic groups. All those who responded are positive and supported the concept of North Sea Region 2020 in principle.

The survey had captured a range of comments. All information will be available on the NSC website.

The survey concluded that there was wide support for North Sea Region 2020, there should be a region-wide focus (not just sea based activities), there was broad agreement on the main themes (but more work was required on sub-priorities) and that stakeholder engagement is key.

Martin also outlined the planned three-stage approach to progress North Sea Region 2020 – including Sea Basin, Interreg and Macro Region responses.

There then followed a series of questions and debate on the timescales for this approach and the benefit of being part of the Writing Group.

Anja Schmid (Schleswig-Holstein) said that the North Sea Region consists not only of coastal areas, but also hinterland areas that may not be part of North Sea Basin Strategy. She also stated that, from her point of view, the order of the recommended three-stage approach is not completely coherent. For effective lobbying towards the new programme, it is of great importance to have a macro-regional strategy until at the latest 2012.

Anja Schmid made the proposal to use the current financial surplus to foster the further development of the macro-regional strategy e.g. by mandating an external consultant or by employing an additional assistance with a fix termed contract.

After questions, the President said the main issue is that there is support for North Sea Region 2020 from most of the people responding to the questionnaire. In this there are five focus areas. The main focus is North Sea Region 2020, how it should be part of the Europe 2020 process, and what the NSC's contribution should be.

## **5b. Conclusions from the Annual Conference and General Assembly Cluster Cafés 16-17 June 2010**

Audrey Findlay (former Vice President of the North Sea Commission) spoke to the delegates about the conclusions from the Cluster Café sessions.

She advised that over the two days there had been mixed comments about the new format. Overall, however, in the end it was seen to be successful. The concept was good, but in future there needs to be a longer planning period and greater clarity. There was initial confusion among some of the delegates about what they were participating in.

Audrey emphasised that the NSC is a political and a membership organisation, and that it is extremely important to keep members happy. The North Sea Region Programme is based on very tight rules and protocols that have to be followed about the way funding is allocated.

She said that some people come to the Annual Conference and General Assembly because they want to influence and access funding for projects. Other people come wanting to influence policy, to network and to achieve best practice. There is no reason why these two objectives should not work together.

She agreed with the President that the NSC has dared to innovate, and has had the courage to enter new territory in terms of greater participation. She asked NSC members to be patient, this was the first step in a new way of working - and it can be improved and developed. The chance to work in groups and share ideas can only be good. The café style workshops ensured good debate and discussion. It has been shown that it can work - and the NSC will gain from this experience.

The President advised that the outcomes would be put on the website and discussed at the Executive Committee.

### **Decision:**

#### **5a.**

***The NSC Annual Business Meeting of June 18th 2010 agreed unanimously to include the additional two priorities added to the corporate paper.***

***The NSC Annual Business Meeting of June 18th 2010 agreed (with one objection) to rename the 'North Sea Strategy' to 'North Sea Region 2020' to reflect the long term challenges for the North Sea Region and to link the work with the ongoing European processes.***

***The NSC Annual Business Meeting of June 18th 2010 agreed unanimously to include in future work the priorities and recommendations from the North Sea Region questionnaire presented at the meeting.***

***The NSC Annual Business Meeting of June 18th 2010 agreed unanimously the North Sea Region 2020 work is led by the Strategic Committee and is for discussion at Executive Committee and Annual Business Meetings..***

#### **5b.**

***The conference outcomes will be put on the NSC website and discussed at the Executive Committee***

## **6. Resolutions and Political Statements**

### **6.1 Draft resolution from the Sustainable Development Group, adopted by the Executive Committee 27<sup>th</sup> April: ‘The Challenge of Mainstreaming Energy Efficient Buildings in the North Sea Region and Significance of Existing Building Stock’**

No discussion.

### **6.2 Draft resolution from Region Västra Götaland: ‘Creative Industries in the North Sea Region’**

This resolution was produced in response to the EC Green Paper ‘Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries’

Cllr Rinske Krusinga (Province Noord-Holland) spoke on behalf of the Dutch delegation. They did not fully agree to adding more about tourism to the Green Paper. The creative industries are a new economy and should be supported in many ways. They are not a support system for our tourism industry – and therefore the Dutch delegation does not agree with including them in this resolution. The two sectors should be treated separately. The Dutch delegation requested withdrawal of the resolution.

Lisa Belfrage (Region Västra Götaland) put the case for the resolution and the wish for the North Sea Commission to be part of this consultation.

The delegates debated and voted on whether to approve, amend or withdraw the resolution. The majority vote (10) was to withdraw the resolution.

The President suggested the resolution should be re-written in the hope of finding a text agreed by everyone.

#### **Decision:**

***Resolution 6.1 – ‘The Challenge of Mainstreaming Energy Efficient Buildings in the North Sea Region and Significance of Existing Building Stock’ was agreed unanimously for adoption***

***Resolution 6.2 - Draft resolution ‘Creative Industries in the North Sea Region’ was withdrawn***

## **7. Invitation to the 20th General Assembly 2011**

#### **Decision:**

***It was agreed that the next General Assembly should be held in Bruges, West Flanders, Belgium in June 2011.***

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen (NSC President) thanked members for their participation, and stated that this General Assembly was the most active she had attended. She thanked everyone for their active participation. She said that the NSC liked people with strong opinions putting forward their proposals – and that this was the only way to develop the NSC as an organisation, to develop a policy, and do what the citizens expect the NSC to do. “We dare to disagree, and we compromise to move forward.” she said.

Cllr Gunn Marit Helgesen thanked Rogaland County Council for hosting and arranging a wonderful event. She closed the meeting saying that we have a clear vision for the future and will work to influence strategy in the North Sea.