

# NSC Newsletter

## Volume 10, September 2001

### The 10th NSC General Assembly

The North Sea Commission held its 10th General Assembly in North Jutland, Denmark on 20-22 June 2001 with more than 200 delegates attending. The General Assembly was very successful and North Jutland County Council had made much effort at making it a success. Similar to previous years, the delegates could choose between 6 different study tours, which gave them the opportunity to see some interesting initiatives in the region.

The main speaker was Svend Auken, Danish Minister of Environment and Energy. He gave a very interesting speech, which gave both support and encouragement to the work of the NSC. He raised the issues of pollution and maritime safety in the North Sea.

“Rules at sea ought to be stricter, some of the things which happen at sea, would never be allowed on land” said Svend Auken.

Svend Auken also mentioned that the 5th International Conference for North Sea Ministers will take place in Bergen in March 2002 and that the NSC was invited to give proposals for the ministerial declarations and point out what the ministers should prioritise from a long list of possible items for their agenda. Svend Auken invited the Danish regions to be part of the Danish delegation in Bergen, as he felt it would be advantageous to have regional representatives there and he would also encourage his ministerial colleagues to invite their own regions.

#### Resolutions

Three resolutions were also adopted by the General Assembly dealing with:

- the problems of non-indigenous organisms being let out with ballast water, which can then change the original ecosystem
- the risk of accidents with ships carrying dangerous radioactive materials through the North Sea waters
- the implementation of maritime safety measures in the Pentland Firth and The Minch in Scotland.

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#### NSC Newsletter

Published by the NSC Secretariat, Viborg Amt, Skottenborg 26, DK-8800 Viborg, Denmark

Phone: +45.87.27.17.00 Fax: +45.86.62.68.62

Editors: Karen Greve Somerset & Ellen Ric-Hansen

E-mail: [nsc@northsea.org](mailto:nsc@northsea.org)

Homepage: <http://www.northsea.org>

## **A new NSC Charter**

A new charter was also approved, which now brings it into line with CPMR's charter. Some of the main changes are:

- the President and the two vice-presidents are elected for two years at the time
- the former Technical Groups are now referred to as Thematic Groups
- Members of the NSC also have to be members of CPMR
- Norwegian regions now has the possibility of having the post of President.

## **Action plan for the future work of the NSC**

Another important item at the General Assembly was the introduction of a draft for a "Political Vision" document, which will act as an action plan for the future work of the NSC.

It states that the NSC should develop into becoming a united voice for local and regional authorities around the North Sea and lists ways in which this can be achieved:

- The organising of conferences and thematic meetings together with the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

Themes may be environment, transport, the use of natural resources and the local and regional consequences of the development in fishing in the North Sea.

- The running of projects, under, for example, Interreg IIIB

Some elements of the project could be uncovering the regional competences of the North Sea region, the North Sea region as a global area for investment, co-operation among universities and research institutions, as well as co-operation between other educational institutions.

- The organising of seminars and workshops in handling international projects.

It must be stressed that the paper is still in a draft form and that it is likely to change

over the next few months. A working group consisting of members from all the North Sea countries has been established to progress the paper before it is presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting in December.

## **Elections**

As usual, there was also the election of office bearers and the President, Bent Hansen, Viborg, and the two vice-presidents, Gunn-Marit Helgesen, Telemark, and Anne McGovern, Fife, were all elected for 2 more years. Please see page 4 for details of the new Executive Committee, which was also elected for two years. In addition, the new NSC Executive Secretary, Henrik M. Jensen was also accepted by the General Assembly.

## **General Assembly 2002**

The General Assembly will next year take place in the beautiful old city of Norwich, England, with Norfolk County Council as host. The dates will be 19-21 June 2002 so please make a note in your diaries now.

## **Interreg Programme North Sea Directoria**



On the 20 June 2001, over 300 delegates from the countries around the North Sea came together for the fifth North Sea Directoria in Aalborg, Denmark. At the conference, the latest news about the Interreg programmes was presented by Esben Poulsen, head of the Interreg unit in the Directorate General for Regional Policy.

The importance of the Interreg programmes both now and in the future was the topic presented by Peter Melbye, a Spatial Planning consultant based in Brussels. Roy Boulton, Head of Sustainable Development at Northamptonshire county council, made a presentation on linking Interreg to national and regional policy.

The delegates were also invited to attend seminars on the four priorities of the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme, during which there were presentations by some of the project leaders who are working on ideas for forthcoming Interreg IIIB submissions.

In the afternoon, 370 partner search meetings took place, mostly connected with the 400 ideas presented in the Project idea book.

Finally in the evening there was a dinner to celebrate the achievements of the Interreg IIC North Sea Programme and to launch the new IIIB Programme. The President of the North Sea Commission Bent Hansen, presented the "Order of the Starfish" award to the leaders of three of the projects which have been 'spotlighted' by the Programme Secretariat as being outstandingly successful under the Interreg IIC programme. These awards were presented and received with much laughter and applause.

The first was awarded to Hans van Meerendonk from Leeuwarden in the Netherlands for writing the most concise and comprehensible project application for "Water City International". The application had the minimum number of attachments and left the secretariat and committee members in no doubt about the content and purpose of the project. The second award was made to Eli Viten from Stavanger, Norway the project leader of the "North Sea Cycle Route".

The Starfish award was made for the most transnational project in the North Sea Programme with more than 70 local and regional authorities involved. The third Starfish award was made in absentia to Rudi Veldscholten the leader of the project "Uniform Archiving and Harmonisation of Electronic Data" who is from Norden in Germany. The award was given to this project for the extreme accuracy and high quality of the financial and activity reports.

Since the Directoria, a negotiation meeting between the European Commission, the national representatives and the secretariat has taken place regarding some of the finer details of the CIP document. Since then the North Sea Programme secretariat has been redrafting parts of the CIP document. When all is complete the document will then be sent back to the Commission for formal approval which it is hoped will take place before the end of the year. Members of the North Sea Commission can anticipate that the first call for applications will be early in 2002.

**At the General Assembly in June the Executive Committee was elected  
and now comprises of the following**

<b>President</b>	Cllr. Bent Hansen	Viborg, Denmark
<b>Vice-President</b>	Cllr. Gunn Marit Helgesen	Telemark, Norway
<b>Vice-President</b>	Cllr. Anne R. McGovern	Fife, Scotland
<b>Country</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
Scotland	Audrey Findlay Aberdeenshire	Kathleen Matheson Highland
England	Ros Scott Suffolk	Evelyn Collishaw Norfolk
Belgium	Laus Coppoolse Provincie Zeeland	Marc De Buck Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen
Netherlands	Joop Boertjens Samenwerkingsverband Noord- Nederland	Gerard van Klaveren Samenwerkingsverband Noord- Nederland
Germany	Wolfgang Senff Niedersachsen	Wilfrid Adam Niedersachsen
Denmark	Harry Jensen Ringkjøbing	Aage Koch-Jensen Viborg
Sweden	Jan Hallberg Västra Götaland	Evalisa Birath Lindvall Västra Götaland
Norway	Gisle Handeland Hordaland	Thore Westermoen West-Agder

### **Report on the NSC Fisheries Partnership**

At the General Assembly Professor Tony Hawkins gave the background to this very successful initiative and presented the first report publishing the findings of the three first meetings of the NSC Fisheries Partnership.

The Fisheries Partnership has made much progress in bringing together the scientists and fishermen who work around the North Sea. The Fisheries Partnership has together with the NSC forged a better understanding between those who advise government on the management of fisheries, the scientist and those most affected by that advice, the fishermen. It has given the NSC much publicity across Europe through the results, which it has received.

The report was dedicated to the late Lord Mackay, who was chairman of the Fisheries Partnership and who suddenly died earlier in the year.

## **NSC Thematic Groups**

### **NSC Culture & Tourism Group**

The group held their last meeting on 3 June. Key items discussed were *North Sea Youth Festival of Art* and *North Sea Sports Challenge*. For each of these events a revised plan was forwarded to the Executive Committee for approval.

#### *North Sea Festival of Youth*

It was suggested that each region participating should send a group of ten youth with leaders, and that the selection of the group must be different from region to region.

#### *North Sea Sports Challenge*

It was recommended to go ahead with the planning and that contact to TV companies should be made, as much of the layout depends on whether there will be TV coverage or not.

### **Reports and updates on projects.**

Several of the ongoing projects were discussed and there were given an update. Among these were:

*Destination Viking*. The main problem here is seed money, money to develop the project further and to develop the partnership.

*North Sea Cycle Circuit*. The opening ride had been a great success, and a new project is under consideration.

*Waves of Culture*. The group is still in want of partners although several regions have expressed their interest in joining. It was also expressed that the project should be more concrete and that possibly a seminar to finalise the objectives and goals of the project should be organised.

The next meeting is scheduled for 4-7 October in Västra Götaland, Sweden.

### **NSC Business Development Group**

The NSC Business Development Group (BDG) has met once since the last NSC Newsletter: in Brussels, Belgium on 4 May 2001.

The meeting was arranged to take place in Brussels to try and ease travel arrangements and also to facilitate the involvement of an EC speaker. 17 BDG members attended the meeting.

The meeting began with a presentation by Telemark County Council of a comparative analysis of economic planning systems in: Telemark, Norway; Fife, Scotland; Suffolk, England; and Viborg, Denmark. Similarities and differences were highlighted and these were related to the different national and local government

systems in each respective state.

A speaker from EC DG Research then explained to the BDG the Commission's current programmes on research and innovation, and gave an early indication of how the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme is likely to be shaped.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to further development of the Group's proposed Interreg IIIB bid, which was distilled into 4 work packages, namely:

SME365 (internet business co-operation tool) and international trade  
E-business  
Innovation  
Regional business development

These packages are being developed and can be viewed at [www.SME365.com](http://www.SME365.com)

A presentation on SME365 was made at the NSC General Assembly in Aalborg, Denmark in June 2001.

### **NSC Environment Group**

The NSCEG held a meeting of its Project Working Group (PWG) in Brugge, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium, on May 11. The meeting was coordinated with a preparatory seminar for a Conference on Sustainable Transport, held jointly with the NSC Communication Group.

All NSC countries except Germany were represented. Discussions focused on issues like the NSCEG Conference 2001, future Interreg IIIB projects, the conference on sustainable transport, and the Sustainability Questionnaire 2001, etc.

The NSCEG Conference 2001 will be focusing on changes in agriculture and food preferences and the opportunities and possible threats these will bring to the NSC regions (See article on page 8).

It was agreed that efforts would be made to increase the participation of regional politicians in the group's activities. Therefore there will be special emphasis on the "political side" of the Conference 2001. The

political visioning workshop will be used to discuss a.o what the regions can/should do when agriculture is changing, and maybe formulate conclusions to be adopted and taken further within the NSC. Also, the agenda for the Annual Meeting on October 5 should explain more clearly than usual what issues will be dealt with, and what is of particular interest to regional politicians.

It was noted that there have been some difficulties in getting enough replies for the Sustainability Questionnaire 2001. A reminder was made to all delegates at the General Assembly in Aalborg.

At the General Assembly, several members of the Environment Group took part in the study tour on the Limfjord. Two interesting presentations were made by the North Jutland hosts: the environmental situation in the fjord, and the problem of fisheries management with many stakeholders involved.

Due to the weather conditions, the planned workshops on these topics turned into an informal discussion below deck,

accompanied by delicious steamed mussels from the Limfjord, prepared by the ship's crew and our North Jutland colleagues.

The environmental problems in the fjord are to a large extent caused by agriculture and the mussel fisheries. Participants provided examples from their home regions on how such issues had been tackled there. The difficulty of getting the farming and fishing communities actively involved in solving these problems was ventilated. (The environmental study tour is described in more detail on the NSC website, under "News".) Ideas for possible co-operation projects in these areas were identified. Other project ideas had also been discussed at the Interreg IIIB Directoria the day before.

## **NSC Communications Group**

The NSC Communications Group has set up new terms of reference. The reason being a wish to follow a broader and more integrated approach to communication issues. These issues are amongst others: urban transport, safety in transport and the impact of ICT on transport volumes and pattern. There was also a wish to put greater emphasis on sustainability.

On 10 May, the group organised a seminar on Sustainable Transport in co-operation with the NSC Environment Group. The purpose of the seminar was as follows:

- To develop a better and common understanding of the concept of sustainable transport and define the most important issues in the promotion of this concept.
- To devise a platform/proposal for a joint conference on sustainable transport in 2002 with a broader scope and attendance. (This conference is described on page 8). In addition to this the group is in progress with many different issues:
  - The Strategic Transport Study
  - Work towards Interreg IIIB
  - Ways of influencing EU policies on transport

(Further details on:  
[www.northsea.org/News](http://www.northsea.org/News))

Next meeting of the NSC Communication Group will be held on 8-9 October in Narvik.

## **Education & Research Group**

Several members of the Education & Research Group attended the Interreg IIIB Directoria in June this year and had the opportunity to hear about a range of projects of potential use to the group.

After the day's business was concluded those members available met for an update and a brief exchange of ideas. One of the outcomes of this meeting was a proposal that a project already planned as a demonstration of good practice in our regions should become the focus of next year's Education & Research Study tour at the General Assembly 2002.

The meeting of the group originally planned for 28-29 June was postponed and will now be held on 11-12 October in Ipswich, Suffolk. Details of this are currently being distributed and are available from the co-ordinator. One of the aims of this meeting is to provide group members with a broader overview of the work of the North Sea Commission by having brief reports from members of some of the other thematic groups. This will also help members identify which Education & Research projects might benefit from a link with the work of the other thematic groups.

## **Fisheries Group**

The NSC Fisheries Group Conference on predation in the North Sea was held at Vedersø Klit, Ringkjøbing on 13-14 September.

50 delegates from 8 countries around the North Sea and Canada attended, including scientists, fishermen's representatives and NGOs.

Bent Hansen, President of the NSC, opened the conference with the keynote speech being given by Niels Wichmann, Danish Fishermens Association.

The aim of the conference was to provide a forum for open and frank discussions about predators. It was also an opportunity to exchange information about predation and its effects on North Sea stocks.

The delegates agreed that it was a good initiative and that there is a need to continue the discussion.

It was agreed that another meeting would be arranged in the future.

## **NSC Environment Group Conference 2001:**

### **Food and environment – opportunities for North Sea regions?**

Will great changes in agriculture bring difficulties and threats to the regions around the North Sea? Or could consumer demand for high quality food and a better environment become an opportunity for us?

For a long time the problems of negative environmental impact from agriculture have been well known. But lately this has been overshadowed by increasing concerns over food quality and food safety. No one can remain unaffected by reports of disease, bad treatment of animals – and dramatic changes in consumer preferences.

The NSCEG Conference 2001 will take a close look at food production. It will offer a chance to discuss the political consequences of rapid change in agriculture. Do the regions have a responsibility to act? What can we do?

There will also be the chance to develop the political view of the new strategy for the North Sea Commission one step further.

In addition to the political debate there will be a number of workshops, offering an exchange of experience to

those involved in environment and rural development. Last – but not least – there will be time set aside for project development and partnership search - and for interesting study trips to places and projects in Halland and Västra Götaland.

The NSCEG Annual Meeting & Conference 2001 is hosted by Landstinget Halland and Västra Götaland in Sweden, and held in Varberg, October 4-6.

Further information: <http://www.northsea.org/Groups/Environment/environment.html> or Per Hörberg, co-ordinator of NSCEG, +46-33 17 48 26, e-mail: [per.horberg@vgregion.se](mailto:per.horberg@vgregion.se)

### **Conference on Sustainable Transport, Aarhus, Denmark, April 18-19, 2002**

The NSC Communication and the NSC Environment Thematic Groups have convened a conference on Sustainable Transport, to promote sustainable transport and the practical measures which regional authorities can take within this field.

The aim of the conference will be to provide regional politicians and planners with a “toolbox” of best practice examples across the spectrum of sustainable transport solutions from around the North Sea Region. These can be used to enable members to deliver sustainable transport in

their own regions and assist to positively influence others at the national and European levels.

The conference will:

- Raise the levels of awareness of sustainable transport issues and their associated impacts on the environmental situation around the North Sea,
- Stimulate debate amongst regional politicians and practitioners as to improving the sustainability of transport and hence the quality of the environment of the North Sea region,
- Introduce a range of options to current practice,
- Produce a toolbox of best practice examples for use by regional authorities and business,
- Lead to project development for delivery via the North Sea INTERREG Programme.

Further information:

Brian Sørensen, Aarhus Amt,  
+45 89 44 69 33,  
e-mail: [ag.erh.brs@ag.aaa.dk](mailto:ag.erh.brs@ag.aaa.dk)

## **North Sea Culture Conference**

**Aberdeenshire, Scotland, 31 May – 1 June, 2001**

The NSC Culture & Tourism Group organised a NSC culture conference in co-operation with Duff House, the Grey School of Arts and with the support from a number of sponsors. The conference, “On the Edge”, with the focus on cultural activities in rural areas, attracted in excess of 100 participants from a number of European countries. There were participants from outside the North Sea region as well.

The title of the conference was “On the Edge, the benefits and challenges of cultural development in remote areas”. A number of speakers delivered papers from different countries on how culture has contributed to economic and social growth and regeneration.

“On the Edge” was a very successful conference that will be a point of reference in future discussions and developments of cultural activities around the North Sea.

A book on this subject, financed by the Grey School of Art, will be published in the autumn.

Further information:  
Geir Sør-Reime, co-ordinator,  
+47 51 51 68 55, e-mail:  
gsr@rfk.rogaland-f.kommune

## **Interreg IIC – Regional Economic Development Strategies and their Spatial Implications**

This project, run on behalf of the NSC Business Development Group by a partnership comprising: Fife; Suffolk (lead); Telemark; Viborg; and Wilhelmshaven; concluded in March 2001.

The project was based on five inter-related, but separate, seminar/study visits held between June 1999 and April 2001:

‘The importance of internationalisation in economic development’. Fife, Scotland: 10 – 13 June 1999

‘Promotion of employment opportunities in rural areas’. Viborg, Denmark: 7 – 10 October 1999

‘A comparison of economic activities between urban and rural areas’ Telemark, Norway: 23 – 26 March 2000

‘Different models of economic and social development’. Wilhelmshaven, Germany: 7 – 10 September 2000

‘Urban and rural regeneration - final seminar’. Suffolk, England: 29 – 31 March 2001.

The final evaluation report of the seminar series confirms that delegates found the events of significant value in identifying new approaches to

economic planning and project development in their respective areas.

Further information:

Nick Burfield, e-mail  
nick.burfield@suffolkcc.gov.uk

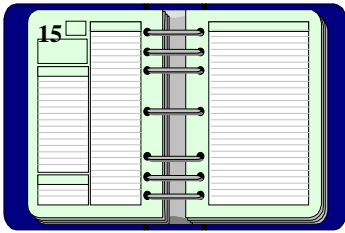
## **2001 Porsgrunn Challenge reviews**

### **Has your authority responded to the 2001 Porsgrunn Challenge reviews**

In March a “Sustainability Questionnaire” was sent to all NSC members. The purpose is to get an updated view of how the NSC regions work to promote a sustainable development in the North Sea area. To make this review comparable with the one undertaken in 1999 the NSC secretariat needs considerably more replies than it has received so far.

### **Please make sure that your own authority sends in its reply!**

This will be an excellent way of finding out how your own region performs in comparison with others in this important field.



## NSC Meeting Calendar

Seminar on Predators: 13-14 September 2001, Ringkjøbing, Denmark

CPMR General Assembly: 20-21 September 2001, Porto, Portugal

NSC Environment Group: Annual Meeting & Conference 4-6 October 2001, Varberg, Sweden

NSC Culture & Tourism Group: 4-7 October 2001, Västra Götaland, Sweden

NSC Transport & Communication Group, 8-9 October 2001, Narvik, Norway

NSC Education & Research Group, 11-12 September 2001, Suffolk, England.

NSC Business Development Group, 16 November 2001, venue to be arranged

NSC Executive Committee, 7 December 2001, Fife, Scotland

NSC General Assembly, 19-21 June 2002, Norfolk, England

### Short News

The NSC Secretariat has a new Executive Secretary, Henrik M. Jensen. Henrik started working at the Secretariat on 1 May. Henrik M. Jensen was formerly employed at the Euro Info Centre in Århus. He was accepted as Executive Secretary at the General Assembly on 21 June.

Since April this year the NSC Secretariat has been fortunate to have Daniel J. Winter with us for an 18-week period of work placement. Daniel is a fourth year undergraduate at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. At the moment he is preparing a short report focussing upon the lobbying activities of the NSC in order to identify opportunities for strategy development in the future.

On the 31 July, Ellen Ric-Hansen stopped working at the NSC Secretariat.

It has been enjoyable and very interesting working at the NSC Secretariat and a pleasure to have contact with so many of the NSC members, either by phone, e-mail or meet person to person.

### New vice chair for the NSC Business Development Group

Councillor Jane Hore has retired from her post as vice chair for the Business Development Group. We strongly encourage our NSC members to come up with suggestions for a new candidate for this post. He or she will have to be a regional elected politician from a member region but does not have to be a member of the NSC Executive Committee. Please send your suggestions to the NSC Secretariat by the end of October, so that the NSC Executive Committee can approve the candidate at its meeting on 7 December 2001

### Our Japanese friend

Hideo Kojimoto from Japan has now become an associate professor due to the work he has carried out on the NSC, and in particular the NSC Fisheries Group. He has finished his book and he hopes to continue to follow the work of the NSC.

### Christmas card for NSC 2001

The NSC Culture & Tourism Group has suggested that the NSC should promote young artists around the North Sea region through its Christmas cards.

This year it has been agreed to ask Grey's School of Art, Scotland, if one or some of its students could design this year's Christmas card, - displaying a North Sea theme.