

NORTH SEA COMMISSION ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Work Programme 2005 - 2006

INTRODUCTION

The overall vision of the NSCEG is to encourage the development of sustainable communities, the sustainable use of resources and the development of policies and actions, which take full account of environmental requirements.

The aim of the NSCEG is to progress key environmental issues, as they affect local authorities bordering the North Sea, by co-ordinating and initiating projects involving all members, or on a partnership basis.

The NSCEG, through the NSC Executive Committee, will attempt to influence future research and future EU and national policies.

The NSCEG will also take steps to encourage a heightened awareness of the North Sea as an important ecological area.

In order to achieve its aims the NSCEG engages in

- Project development
- Exchange of experience and dissemination of information
- Participation in relevant international commissions, meetings or organisations

Activities

- To work for funding of joint projects and to help member regions to find partners in projects.
- To work for the improvement of the horizontal (between regions, local authorities and nations) and vertical (between EU/national/regional local) flow of information.
- To develop involvement with relevant international commissions or organisations.
- To be active in the planning and implementation of European programmes.

The NSCEG is Chaired by Councillor Alison McInnes, Aberdeenshire Council, Scotland. The group has two Vice-Chair positions - one is held by Councillor Andreas Lervik, Østfold Fylkeskommune, Norway, and the other position is currently vacant.

Work Programme - BACKGROUND

The NSCEG Project Working Group, PWG, decided at its meeting in Göteborg, Västra Götaland, on February 15 to revise the NSCEG Work Programme for 2005 and 2006, which was adopted by the NSCEG Annual Meeting and developed by the PWG in October 2004.

This would have to be done in response to the Executive Committee's request to have co-ordinated work programmes from all Thematic Groups to discuss at its meeting on March 1st. If approved there, these would then be passed on to the General Assembly in June.

A wide discussion in the PWG covered issues like "environment or sustainable development?", "what should the NSCEG do for the NSC?", "how can the NSCEG and the NSC attract more active members?" Emphasis was on finding opportunities for working together with other Thematic Groups. Further more, the importance of communicating what work the NSCEG – and the NSC – actually is doing was underlined.

A new "Aim" of the NSCEG was discussed: "To support members of the NSC to speed up rate of adjustment/change towards Environmental sustainability in our communities around the North Sea".

Four "Primary Concerns" were identified:

- Climate Change – working to mitigate and adapt
- Water
- Biodiversity and Landscape
- Use of Resources

The attainment of this aim and the addressing of these concerns would then be supported by "NSCEG action", "NSCEG organisational and administrative activities" as well as "NSCEG requests to the Executive Committee". These various activities are specified in the below matrix.

Joint NSC activities

Possible joint activities with the other NSC Thematic Groups during 2005-2006 include:

- Culinary Heritage and Regional foods – building on the joint regional food event held in May 2004 and preparing for a similar event in Scotland in Spring 2006
- Energy Efficient Housing – working jointly on the environmental and education requirements linked to energy efficient and renewable energy applications

Note: NSC General Assembly Environment Study Tour – Zeeland, NL, Thursday 16th June 2005

It is proposed that the North Sea Commission 2005 General Assembly Environment Study Tour will study the efforts to reduce the negative environmental impacts from the very large farm Koninklijke Maatschap de Wilhelminapolder.

At Wilhelminapolder they have taken a lot of sustainable measures the last few years and have got a lot of success. They also promote sustainable development to their 'environment', colleague-farmers and authorities, and are very willing to tell their story to all the people who are interested. Also every year they organise so-called 'open days'. Saturday June 18th is an 'Open Day' with a lot of excursions and attractions. A lot of them will be also available on Thursday the 16th.

The visit to Wilhelminapolder may include a lunch in their barn with regional products, a short introduction followed by a sight-seeing of the advanced technology and a bus-tour over the acres to see the benefits of the sustainable management.

See the website of the Wilhelminapolder farm: www.kmwp.nl (English info)

More details of the Study Tour will be included in the official NSC General Assembly promotional material at www.northsea.org.

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