

North Sea Commission Sustainable Development Group

Minutes of Project Working Group meeting Fredrikstad, Østfold fylkeskommune, Norway. September 15th, 2006

PRESENT:

Chair Alison McInnes, Aberdeenshire Council, Scotland
Vice chair Andreas Lervik, Østfold fylkeskommune, Norway
Vice chair Henrik Ringbaek Madsen, Nordjyllands Amt, Denmark (items 1 - 5)
(former) NSC SDG co-ordinator Per Hörberg, Region of Västra Götaland, Sweden

Denmark:

Nordjyllands Amt Kenn Bloch Mortensen (items 1 - 5)
Susy Lauesen (items 1 - 5)

England:

Suffolk County Council Jerry Hindle

Germany:

Land Schleswig-Holstein Norbert Hölcker

The Netherlands:

Provincie Fryslân/
Samenwerkingsverband
Noord-Nederland Gerda Baarsma

Norway:

Østfold fylkeskommune Torhild Kongsness

Scotland:

Aberdeenshire Council Jeffery Kenyon

NOTE:

The first day, Thursday September 14th, the participants enjoyed three presentations:

- a) The Forum Skagerrak II Interreg project, with a focus on seabed mapping and Integrated Coastal Zone Planning and Management, presented by Mr. Terje Pettersen and Mr. Magnar Tveit respectively, both from Østfold fylkeskommune.
Weblink: www.forumskagerrak.com
- b) The EU Maritime Policy, as expressed in the Green Paper, published by the European Commission on June 7th. The view of the Norwegian government, presented by Ms. Kristin Frogg from the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment.

1. Opening of meeting, Apologies, Adoption of Agenda,

The chair Alison McInnes welcomed the participants and thanked Östfold fylkeskommune for so generously hosting the meeting. All participants briefly introduced themselves.

Apologies: Sverre Fosse, Aust-Agder fylkeskommune, Hans van Meerendonk, Provincie Fryslân/Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland, Katrine Erikstad, Nordland fylkeskommune, Pål Julius Skogholt, Troms fylkeskommune, Gordon Summers, Highland Council, Lars Haukvik, NSC secretariat.

The Agenda was adopted as proposed. The co-ordinator pointed out that several issues under item 4, Work Programme 2006 - 2007, could best be discussed under item 5, revised Terms of Reference.

2. Minutes of last meeting.

Minutes of NSCEG Annual Meeting (Leeuwarden, April 4th, distributed via e-mail May 12th 2006, and available on the website). The Minutes were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising.

No further comments were made as a result of the Minutes of Annual Meeting.

4. NSCEG Work Programme 2006 – 2007, reports, follow-up, current work, planning, etc

4.1 EU Maritime Policy, NSCSDG contribution to a NSC consultation response.

The chair introduced the topic and a.o. underlined that the EU Task Force for the Green Paper is asking for concrete proposals, which are easy to legislate for, to include in a future Maritime Policy. As examples she mentioned "fishing for litter", "shore-side electricity for ships at berth", "sea-bed mapping" and "training for key staff".

Norbert Hölcker pointed out the opportunity for individual Regions to respond to the EU's consultation, while at the same time let their views be channeled through the NSC response, as well.

Further issues were identified, which should be raised by the NSC and considered by the EU in the further work on a Maritime Policy:

- Certainly there is need for collection of more maritime data – but the Maritime Policy should also suggest how to act, when alarming data are known!
- The NSC should concentrate on comments on sections 3, 4 and 6 of the Green Paper, particularly "quality of life" in unsuccessful coastal areas.
- The NSC should provide examples of best practice, concerning re-generation, flooding, erosion, climate change, sustainable coastal tourism etcetera, where Regions have a role.
- The NSC should stress the need for integrated spatial planning of maritime areas, both in national and international waters.
- When it comes to the Green Paper's section on "maritime governance", i.e. the regulations which are needed to have sustainable development of the maritime areas, the NSC must repeat its demand for a new EU Directive on the Quality of Marine Fuels.
- The NSC should underline that it is not enough just to say that "the EU Marine Strategy should be the environmental pillar of the Maritime Policy". One must also make sure that it is a strong pillar – and prescribe how it will influence the Maritime

Policy! And finally one must take steps to ensure that this will actually work, and monitor it.

- There is need for an EU-wide uniform system for regulating coastal and marine areas. I.e. the EU does not have to "rule" about everything – but a uniform framework for the jurisdiction of zones, etcetera, for all countries would facilitate Regional action. This should be connected to what the Green Paper says in its item 5.4 about "geographical realities".
- The EU needs to have an overview of the competition between European ports.
- Ship-to-ship transfer of oil etcetera must be dealt with in the Maritime Policy.
- Dismantling of ships must be dealt with in the Maritime Policy.
- The issue of Maritime Safety should be part of a more "holistic" "Sustainable shipping" approach.

As for the responsibility for the Sustainable Development Group to arrange a workshop at the upcoming NSC/BSC Conference in Stavanger on the Green Paper, there were the following proposals and instructions:

- As input to workshop discussions, there should be brief presentations on the upcoming HELCOM Action Plan for the Baltic Sea, the recent eutrophication crisis in the Danish Mariager fjord and – as an example of best practice – the new Norwegian management plan for the Barents Sea.
- A small working group was set up for this event, consisting of Andreas Lervik, Alison McInnes and Susy Lauesen.
- The co-ordinator should contact the Baltic Sea Commission to specifically ask for joint preparations of this workshop.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 25th

4.2 Influence a future EU Objective 3/"Interreg 4" Programme for the North Sea.

The co-ordinator reported on consultation activities, which he had performed on behalf of Swedish Regions, in order to maintain various topics of NSC interest in the programme draft.

Gerda Baarsma reported that the European Commission seems to want changes in the draft programme regarding a.o. promotion of SMEs, which may lead to a delay of the adoption and implementation of the entire Objective 3 Programme. Most likely it will be difficult to have a call for North Sea projects before the summer of 2007.

Andreas Lervik reported that there still is discussion in Norway about the geographical extent of the North Sea Programme.

4.3 Green Purchasing

The co-ordinator gave an update of preparation efforts for a North Sea network of purchasing experts. An interest was expressed to arrange a networking meeting in connection with another NSC event. The group advised to try to co-organise with a meeting of the Executive Committee to get political benefits for this important issue. The co-ordinator was instructed to convey this advice to the relevant contacts.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed October 4th.

4.4 OSPAR observership

The co-ordinator reported that the only recent activity was concerning the "sequestering of CO₂", where he had tried to alert NSC observer from the University of Aberdeen, Professor David McDonald, to the fact that there now seem to be efforts to weaken OSPAR regulation on this subject. So far no response from Professor McDonald. The chair would try to contact him again.

Action: Alison McInnes

Susy Lauesen informed that observer Maria Pécseli of the County of North Jutland will no longer be able to perform her observership on behalf of the NSC/CPMR, since she is changing her employment.

NOTE! There is always need for more qualified NSC observers, preferably experts provided by NSC member Regions or authorities, with which they have contacts. The benefits for the Regions are obvious – international experience for their staff and well-developed and important contacts within OSPAR.

All Sustainable Development Group members or contact persons are asked to forward this appeal within their organisations! Information about the OSPAR observership is available from the NSC secretariat, the NSCSDG co-ordinator and the OSPAR website at www.ospar.org

4.5 Follow-up on Energy Conference 2006.

The Energize Regional Economies project, which co-organised the Conference 2006 with the NSCSDG and CPMR, is now running. A project meeting will be held on the Danish island of Samsø, which is striving for "energy independence".

Alison McInnes announced that she will attend the CPMR Conference "Energy for the Periphery" on October 5 - 6th. The co-ordinator offered to provide her with some information prior to this.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 25th

4.6 Promote Sustainable Shipping, incl. activities on "Clean Ship approach"

The co-ordinator reported about work which the SDG had done on behalf of the NSC during the summer. It was a response to a request from the Scottish Parliament for comments on a petition by a Scottish citizen on the topic of ship-to-ship transfer of oil in the Firth of Forth. In its response the NSC a.o. strongly supported its member Region Fife Council in this matter.

Further more, the co-ordinator explained upcoming work on the "Clean Ship approach" as an outcome of the North Sea Ministerial Meeting on Environmental Impacts of Shipping and Fisheries, MM06. The Netherlands and Norway have offered to take lead of a working group "to start work in the immediate future, with the aim to develop and submit a proposal to the IMO on the environmental indexing of shipping and incentives schemes by 2007." The NSC can join this group as observer.

This task will be performed – as agreed by the NSC Executive Committee and the NSC member Region of Västra Götaland, Sweden – by experts from Västra Götaland. The co-ordinator was asked to stay involved in this work also after resigning as NSCSDG co-ordinator on October 1st. He was also asked to contact The Netherlands to get clarification as to when this working group will be formed.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 19th

4.7 Conference 2007, theme(s), time, host, arrangements?

It was considered essential to hold Conference 2007 together with as many of the NSC Thematic Groups as possible. The theme suggested is therefore “Quality of Life in Coastal Regions”, to fit with one of the sections in the Maritime Policy Green Paper – and with the work of all Thematic Groups.

The timing is chosen to fit with the work schedule of the NSC Executive Committee, which is planning to have its spring meeting late March/early April. Thus the dates for the NSCSDG Conference 2007 will be March 15 - 16th.

The offer by Aberdeenshire Council to be host was welcomed by the PWG.

A Conference working group was appointed, consisting of Andreas Lervik, Henrik R Madsen, Gerda Baarsma and Per Hörberg. They will have telephone meetings.

The co-ordinator was requested to contact his co-ordinator colleagues about this proposed Conference as soon as possible.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 18th

4.8 Member Profiles

The co-ordinator referred to the latest update of the NSCSDG Member Profiles and pointed out that there had been difficulties getting responses from member Regions. The PWG Country Representatives were asked to promote this opportunity for members to get good contacts for their politicians and staff and inform about their own sustainability work.

Action: All!

4.9 Sustainable Innovation

Gerda Baarsma informed that the Interreg IIIB project Facilitating Sustainable Innovation, FSI, is running with 11 partners from 6 countries and a start meeting in Cambridge, East of England. Next meeting will be in Emden, Land Niedersachsen, Germany, on the theme of mobility.

4.10 Water Framework Directive, WFD

Torhild Kongsness informed that in Norway the County Governor has been appointed as responsible authority for the implementation of the WFD.

The NOLIMP-WFD Interreg IIIB project has its last meeting in Aberdeenshire in September.

4.11 North Sea Food Event

Henrik R Madsen reported that the NSC Food Event 2006 was held on August 31st - September 1st in Dundee, Scotland, with excellent speakers and hospitality.

Unfortunately the attendancy was relatively weak – particularly on the very interesting study tours. The themes were *Food & Health, Food & Innovation, Food & Sustainability and Food & Tourism*.

One conclusion from the event was that it is very important to “educate people to buy healthy local products”. A group was formed at the Conference to develop concrete projects.

The co-ordinator had received a written Conference Report and was asked to forward it to the entire Sustainable Development Group.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed October 5th

5 Revision of NSCEG Terms of Reference

The topic was introduced by the chair and the co-ordinator. The context to the "new structure" of the NSC was given, i.e. the merging of some Thematic Groups and their new task to follow-up on specific EU strategies and policies. A discussion paper prepared by Transport Group co-ordinator Jon Halvard Eide was discussed and lauded.

The co-ordinator was requested to draft new Terms of Reference for the SDG, taking into account comments made and including a.o. wordings from the Group's latest Work Programme.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 21st - October 5th

Expanded remits for some Groups make additional resources necessary, something which needs to be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee by the chair.

Action: Alison McInnes

It was pointed out that there is reason to discuss the ToR of all the Thematic Groups – and that it might be useful to hold one joint meeting each year to do this, while preparing the Groups' Work Plans.

6. Reports from Country Representatives

The Netherlands; Gerda B had reported under item 4 on the ERE and FSI projects. She now added that the Interreg IIIB projects Water City International and Mopark both have finished. Provincie Fryslân is now in a process with stakeholders – including their own provincial departments – to develop new projects for the coming Objective 3 period. At an upcoming visit to Northern Netherlands by the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Ms. Danuta Hübner, Hans van Meerendonk and colleagues will get the opportunity to demonstrate the value and importance of international co-operation projects.

England; Jerry Hindle reported that Suffolk is much involved in Interreg projects. However, from now on Suffolk County Council will be represented in the NSC by the East of England Regional Assembly. Norfolk County Council might be interested in a direct membership of the NSCSDG – Jerry H will investigate.

Action: Jerry Hindle

Germany; Norbert Hölcker reported that Land Schleswig-Holstein has its main interest towards the Baltic Sea. Now they are considering getting more involved in North Sea matters, for instance through the Wadden Sea trilateral co-operation. They now investigate what role the NSC could play for them.

He listed a number of projects in various fields, where his Region is active – a.o. on renewable energy (hydrogen, biomass) and sustainable shipping and ports ("New Hansa"). Most remarkable are the so called Lighthouse projects, which are intended to raise the profile of interregional co-operation.

Finally he distributed information about a Conference in Hamburg, November 23 - 25th, "Shaping Globalisation with Local Authorities: Challenges to Partnership and Integration", and asked the co-ordinator to spread this information. (Conference held mainly in German.) More info through The Service Agency Communities in One World / InWent at: www.service-eine-welt.de/en/home/default-aboutus.html (The Service Agency provides services for communities and further local actors getting involved in development cooperation, e.g. information on financing local projects of development cooperation.)

Action: Per Hörberg

Norway; Torhild Kongsness reported that Östfold fylkeskommune now takes part in an Interreg IIIA project about how to include energy efficiency and renewable energy in local and regional planning. Further more, landscape planning in Norway should now include the aspect of Sustainable Development.

Scotland; Jeffery Kenyon, European Programmes Co-ordinator at Aberdeenshire Council, is new Scottish substitute to the PWG and had not had time to prepare any report.

Denmark and Sweden; no reports.

7. Other Reports.

The chair reported on her participation in a meeting of the NSC Strategic Committee and representatives from the NSC Transport and Environment Groups and their counterparts in the Baltic Sea Commission. The purpose was to start co-operation on topics of priority to these Groups. (Minutes from this meeting available on:

www.northsea.org/nsc/documents/strategic_committee/minutes_nsc_bsc0406.pdf)

The co-ordinator reported that she had sent a first contact e-mail to the BSC President, who is also Environment contact person, on August 9th. He was asked to send a new invitation for co-operation – this time including the very concrete task of organising a workshop at the joint NSC/BSC Conference in Stavanger on November 20 - 21st.

Action: Per Hörberg (same as item 4.1)

Note: Task performed September 25th

12. Any Other Competent Business

a) The resigning co-ordinator was thanked for his work during the past 10 years and wished good luck in his future job. (He will remain representative for the Region of Västra Götaland in the NSCSDG – and very likely as Swedish representative in the PWG.) The co-ordinator, in turn, repeated how dependent any Thematic Group is on its members and their activity and thanked the PWG for always being positive, active – and friendly.

b) The co-ordinator introduced the idea of "greening" all events arranged by the NSC. He handed out information from a relevant site on the Internet: www.myclimate.org/?lang=en

Many major events are today trying to become "climate neutral" or otherwise reduce their environmental impacts. Examples include the recent FIFA World Cup in Germany, the upcoming ICLEI EcoProcura 2006 in Barcelona and the Nordic Council's "Fremtid-kom.no", a Nordic Conference on Sustainable Social Development. Alternative ways are offered to offset some or all of the emissions of Climate Gases, which occur when delegates travel to and from events and during the actual event itself.

The meeting supported the idea of the NSC and the CPMR becoming fore-runners in this respect and asked the co-ordinator to provide next Executive Committee meeting (October 20th) with an explanatory paper about this proposal.

Action: Per Hörberg

Note: Task performed September 28th

13. Next Meeting

A preliminary date was set for December 15th, with time for potential additional programme on December 14th. One plausible venue could be somewhere in an English member Region. Jerry Hindle would investigate further. Another alternative would be a video or telephone meeting to avoid travelling.

Action: Jerry Hindle

Notes: 2006-10-05

Per Hörberg, (former) co-ordinator of NSC SDG

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