

MEETING DOCUMENT

Wadden Sea Board (WSB 35)

10 March 2022
Online Meeting



Agenda Item:	5.2
Subject:	Progress report TG-M
Document No.:	WSB 35/5.2
Date:	17 February 2022
Submitted by:	TG-M

This document contains a progress report of the Task Group Management (TG-M).

TG-M would like to draw attention to the formation of an ad hoc Working Group Cables and Pipelines (ad hoc WG-PC) (page 4 item 9, Annex 1).

Proposal: The WSB is invited to note the information

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Task Group Management (TG-M) progress report to WSB 35

Since WSB 34, the TG-M has progressed on (3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), respectively accompanied/supported (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 14) the following specific items:

1. Flyway & Breeding Birds

Multiple rounds of revisions have delayed the decision and the start date of the International Climate Initiative (IKI) preparation phase. The preparation phase is planned to start in April 2022. However, the death of our partner Evgeny Syroechkovskiy is a tragic loss and decisions have to be made who can take over his role at Birds Russia. CWSS is in close contact with all partners involved in the Arctic component of the IKI project to find a solution. To recognize Evgeny Syroechkovskiy's exceptional contribution to the conservation of the world's migratory birds, CWSS has added a tribute the Arctic Report which has been finalized in January 2022 and will be distributed soon.

The Declaration of the East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum has been published in January 2022. The declaration calls upon young people to take actions for flyway conservation, but also to stakeholders and politicians to work with youth from local communities connected through the flyway. Their main message is "We, the young people, are the key to sustainable long-term developments. It is time to act together for the protection and conservation of wetlands and migratory birds".

The new Flyway Assessment Report is currently being finalized. The CWSS is discussing how the report can be marketed to reach a wider audience than in previous years. The Migratory bird trend report was published at the beginning of February 2022.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

2. Fish targets / Swimway

The first two meetings of the new trilateral Expert Group Swimway (EG-Swimway) have been conducted in November 2021 and February 2022. A drafting (sub) group of EG-Swimway is elaborating on a scientific publication and on a position paper on using windows of opportunity to redesign sluices and other flood protection structures fish-friendly.

A mid term review of the [Swimway Vision Action Programme](#) is planned for the first half of 2022.

EG-Swimway took up a discussion on a concrete way forward to a trilateral SWIMWAY project, based on a living document containing modules for (a) possible future project(s).

Funded by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), a small scale trilateral SWIMWAY historical reference project is being conducted from end of 2021 to July 2022. The consortium consists of CWSS (lead), DTU Aqua (DK), Uni Kiel (D) and two consultants. Further, University Groningen (NL) is involved. Goal is to gain an overview on fish present in historical data by means of a systematic review. In addition, three to four students from named organisations will support the project and will be connected. Results may form a good basis for a larger future project proposal.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information

3. Wardening & management

Planning of a wardening workshop in April 2022 under lead of Dutch TG-M members is on-going.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

4. Seal Management Plan

A research project analysing the impact of human disturbances on the reproductive success of seals in the Rømø vicinity is carried out at the moment by the University of Aarhus. Sustainable tourism in relation to marine mammals is also an activity for the Partnership Hub, see [WSB 34/6/1](#).

The harbour seal report was published in November 2021, documenting a continuous increase in the number of harbour seal pups, with stabilizing moult counts.

As the celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the implementation of the Wadden Sea Seal Agreement could not be celebrated last year, the CWSS is developing a programme for this year's Wadden Sea Day which will include the recognition of the importance of seals as top predators in the Wadden Sea ecosystem.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information

5. Harbour porpoises

The CWSS participated in the North Sea Group meeting of Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS), providing an overview about recent developments on the Wadden Sea and the recommendations of the 15th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium (ISWSS), specifically related to harbour porpoises.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information

6. Alien Species

The Expert Group Alien Species (EG-AS) continues working towards development of operational assessment criteria/targets for non-indigenous species, which could be integrated into the future parameter set and programme array of the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP). In addition, the development of a draft concept note on the potential use of environmental DNA (eDNA) methods for non-indigenous species for administrative purposes, to guide evidence-based decision-making is on-going.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information

7. Sustainable Fisheries

As one key topic towards sustainable management in the Wadden Sea, sustainable fisheries is being tackled within the frame of the single integrated management plan (SIMP) (see page 5 item 12, WSB 35/5.1/2 and WSB 35/5.3).

TG-M continues preparing a document with status and recommendations/management advice for principles of the [Framework for Sustainable Fisheries \(Annex 3 Tønder Declaration\)](#).

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

8. Marine litter

Collaboration of TG-M and Task Group Monitoring and Assessment (TG-MA) is on-going, with the aim of both TG's presenting consolidated recommendations to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) regarding this matter. This will be based on the trilateral overview on marine litter related policies and activities in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Region (see [WSB 32/5.2/5 TG-M Marine Litter inventory](#) and also the latest [TWSC QSR-Litter report](#)).

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information

9. Energy

As one key topic towards sustainable management in the Wadden Sea, energy is being tackled within the frame of the SIMP (see page 5 item 12, WSB 35/5.1/2 and WSB 35/5.3).

TG-M formed an ad hoc Working Group Cables and Pipelines (ad hoc WG-CP) at TG-M meeting 22-1 on 17 January 2022 (see Annex 1), with the objective to tackle implementation deficits of No.29, Leuwarden Declaration as far and pragmatic as possible, in due time for the Wadden Sea Trilateral Governmental Conference end of 2022. It will build on the work done for the draft Quality Status Report (QSR) thematic chapter energy and will serve as a good first topic to try to make parts of the draft SIMP chapter on energy operational. CWSS secretary of the ad hoc WG-CP is Anja Domnick.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

10. Ports and shipping

As one key topic towards sustainable management in the Wadden Sea, shipping and ports is being tackled within the frame of the SIMP (see page 5 item 12 and WSB 35/5.1/2 and WSB 35/5.3).

The proposal on engaging the level of competent national authorities regarding shipping safety under initiative of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management ([WSB 34/5.2 TG-M Progress Report](#)) is on-going.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

11. Natura 2000 roof report

TG-M has contributed towards finalizing a feasibility study regarding the implementation of the NATURA-2000 complex in the respective countries. The writing process will be finalised by the chair of TG-M. The submission of the final report and proposals by TG-M in order to decide on any further steps is postponed to WSB 36.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

12. Single integrated management plan (SIMP)

TG-M, through ad hoc SIMP drafting subgroups for the key topics, has supported refining activities for TG-M related key topics shipping and ports, fisheries and energy in the draft SIMP version 0.8. For SIMP see WSB 35/5.1/2.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

13. Quality Status Report (QSR)

Independent peer review and TG-M review of QSR thematic reports of TG-M relevant topics shipping and energy is completed, review of the thematic report fisheries is on-going. For QSR see WSB 35/5.3.

Proposal: WSB is invited to note the information.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR) ad hoc Working Group Cables and Pipelines (ad hoc WG CP) (Version date 17 January 2022)

Background

Due to its geographical location in the southern North Sea between the areas of offshore renewable energy production and the main consumption centres in the inland, the trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation Area is a crossing and landing area for high-voltage subsea cable systems and gas pipelines intended to transport energy with an accelerating growing trend towards 2030 and beyond. In the course of the further decarbonisation of the energy sector, also new technologies are being developed that would require pipeline infrastructure to transport hydrogen or carbon dioxide (Carbon Capture and Storage in the North Sea). In addition, Power to X plants may be established in connection with so-called “energy islands” in the North Sea. Products from these plants may be brought ashore in pipelines, too.

Aware of the environmental risk this development might pose to the Wadden Sea ecosystem, it was already addressed by the Ministers in the Tonder Declaration 2014 and agreed in the Leeuwarden Declaration 2018, para 29, to: *“Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to review and monitor the impacts of renewable energy production and energy transportation on the Wadden Sea ecosystem and to consider measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts by looking for best environmental practices also with the aim of developing, for example, related common principles to evaluate the impact of high-voltage power cables in the Wadden Sea Area in close consultation with the responsible bodies and stakeholders”*.

Some steps to fulfil this task have already been taken since the TGC 2018: Review and monitoring of impacts in the context of the drafting process for the single integrated management plan for the Wadden Sea World Heritage (SIMP) and the update of the thematic report on energy in the framework of the Quality Status Report, both currently nearing finalisation. For further information see draft SIMP plus background papers (risk assessment), draft QSR thematic report on energy and <https://northsearegion.eu/northsee/e-energy/>.

Considering measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts lies in mutual trilateral conservation and sustainability interests. What is still lacking, is a more in-depth trilateral nature conservation and sustainability focus and exchange on strategic grid planning, route selection and fine routing, laying and maintenance of future high voltage power grid and pipeline crossings of the Wadden Sea including cumulative effects.

On the implementation level, all countries will run to similar problems. There is a risk of different implementation of the mitigation and compensation measures from the bird and habitats directive¹. Also, they are not at similar starting points. Germany has various, spatially defined energy corridors and is experienced with landing high voltage power cables. In the Netherlands discussions are ongoing, whereas scientific advisers have different views on routing than partially applied in Lower Saxony or Schleswig-Holstein. Denmark expects no more landing of electricity in the near future, but is looking for Germany and Netherlands to further implement North Sea wind energy cooperation. Innovations (such as 2GW cables) might be tried within one country whereas lessons learned can be applied within a broader context. Finally, UNESCO has, as part of the passive monitoring of World Heritage, announced their concerns in this regard.

The ad-hoc working group reports to the TG-M.

Objective

The objective of the ad hoc working group is to tackle implementation deficits of No.29, LD as far and pragmatic as possible in due time for the Wadden Sea Conference Nov 2022. It will build on the work done

¹ Page 52 ; [EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

for the draft QSR thematic chapter energy and will serve as a good first topic to try to make parts of the draft SIMP chapter on energy operational.

Tasks

1. Exchange on existing information on potential impacts from impact assessments and effect monitoring on high-voltage subsea cables and gas pipelines
2. Exchange on existing information on alternative solution (technical/spatial) and mitigation concepts and best practise at different stages: strategic grid planning, spatial planning, project permission and implementation incl. maintenance.
3. Advise/support harmonisation and best practice implementing Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
4. Identify open questions for effect monitoring and applied research
5. Explore potential future roles of the TWSC in the context of North-Sea-wide grid planning and transnational routing.

Deliverables to TG-M

1. Overview report on impact assessments and effect monitoring
2. Best practice report on mitigation concepts and measures (tool box), incl. trilateral stakeholder workshop
3. Recommendations to further harmonisation and best practise implementing Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
4. List of open questions for effect monitoring and applied research
5. Recommendations on future role and approach of TWSC towards North-Sea-wide grid planning and transnational routing.

Composition/Membership

1 member per region (DK, DE, SH, LS, NL), external experts and stakeholder representatives from the energy sector might be invited as guests, when appropriate.

The ad hoc group is chaired by one group member, selected by the group.

Time schedule

Jan 2022 – Dec 2022