



Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



The Wadden Sea
World Heritage Site
since 2009



WADDEN SEA
WORLD HERITAGE



Common
Wadden Sea
Secretariat

Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination

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The work on the strategy has been carried out by the 16 members of the trilateral Task Group 'Sustainable Tourism Strategy' within the project 'PROWAD – Protect and Prosper: Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea', co-financed by the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme (www.prowad.org).



Foreword

SHARED APPROACH, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

This is a momentous occasion for Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. It's the first time we have come together to really bring about positive changes to the tourism sector and at the same time maintain the integrity of the World Heritage property.

The strategy was developed through partnership between nature conservation organisations, governments, the tourism sector and NGOs in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. It's a strategy that outlines the true potential that exists for tourism in the Wadden Sea and how, by supporting and protecting the 'Outstanding Universal Value' (OUV) of this World Heritage site, we can all reap the benefits socially, economically and environmentally.

The strategy invites all stakeholders to work together to make it more than just words. Local stakeholders, regional advisory boards, committees, and many other organisations took part in two extensive consultation rounds in spring 2012 and summer 2013. This provided valuable input in jointly developing the strategy and how it can be implemented on the ground. We received much positive feedback and support for the strategy, which is regarded as a common framework and creating new synergies. Specifically, the cooperation of different sectors in a transboundary approach was very much appreciated by the stakeholders. But we have also experienced that, due to regional differences, the relevance of some parts of the strategy varies for stakeholders in the different regions.

The consultations also revealed a number of challenges we have to face in the future, in particular finding sufficient resources to coordinate and implement the strategy on local, region, national and trilateral level. This can only be achieved when we get sufficient support from all levels.

Therefore, we invite you to sign up to the actions we have proposed and to fully commit to playing your part in making the potential benefits a reality.

As chair of the Task Group, I would like to thank everybody who has been involved in the process for their cooperative spirit, commitment and valuable contributions to date, through participation in the regional workshops and input into the questionnaire, and in drafting the strategy.

The opportunities are there for the taking, and I am convinced that, by working together, we can achieve sustainable tourism in this truly incredible place.

Ms Elze Klinkhammer

Chairperson of Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The Wadden Sea is prescribed onto the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List in recognition of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the area (see page 8) and the progress made in protecting and managing it for more than a generation.

The World Heritage status underlines the fact that we need to protect and manage the Wadden Sea as one ecological entity. And through this we can develop a new quality of cooperation and joint responsibility towards the global community.

At the 11th Governmental Wadden Sea Conference on Sylt (2010), the ministers agreed to develop a 'Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy' for the entire Wadden Sea. This meets the World Heritage Committee's request for a strategy "that fully considers the integrity and ecological requirements of the property and that provides a consistent approach to tourism operations in the property".

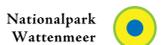
The World Heritage inscription is an opportunity we must take. It promises incentives for stakeholders, in particular for conservation, tourism, and for local and regional communities.

This joint strategy of sustainable tourism in the Dutch-German-Danish Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination invites all stakeholders to participate in its delivery. It describes and guides how stakeholders can actively contribute to and benefit from the aims of the World Heritage Convention in protecting the natural values of the Wadden Sea.

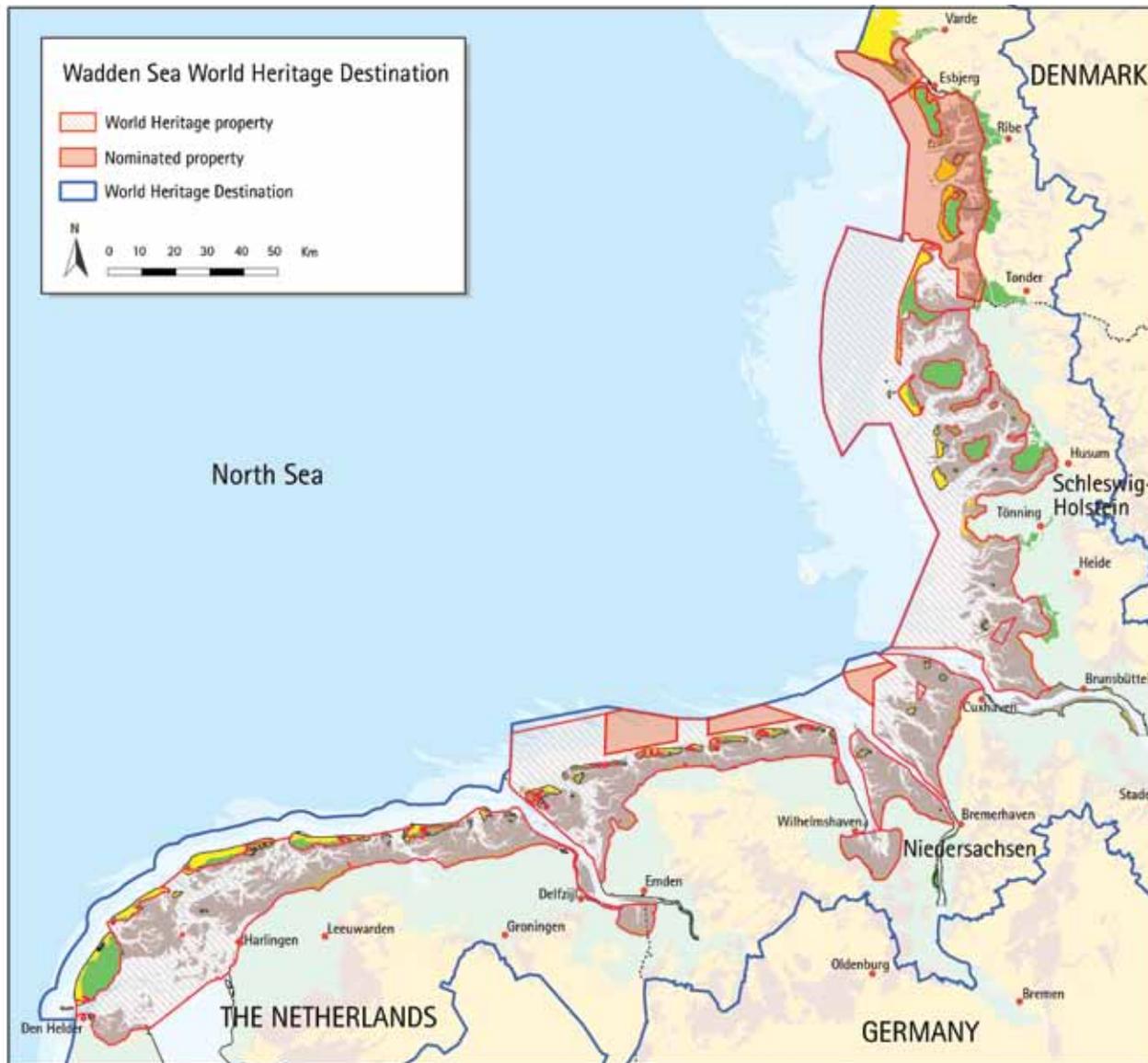
There are successful existing local, regional, national and trilateral initiatives throughout the whole area. This strategy adds value by creating synergies and new partnerships to strengthen the cooperation and commitment of stakeholders.

A Trilateral Task Group will coordinate the implementation of the strategy, complemented by an Action Plan for 2014-17 and onwards. The Task Group will also evaluate the plan annually.

The strategy and action plan are not just words; there are roles and responsibilities to fulfil. All stakeholders are invited to sign up to the actions and work together to make the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination a reality.



Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination



NATURE CONSERVATION AND TOURISM IN THE WADDEN SEA

The Trilateral Cooperation on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, with its Wadden Sea Plan and monitoring programme of the nature assets, together form a strong framework from which to build this overall policy of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

The aim of nature conservation in the Wadden Sea is: "to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way".

Some 11,000 km² of the Wadden Sea is already subject to nature protection under Natura 2000 and conservation legislation of the respective countries: the Wadden Sea Nature Reserve in the Netherlands; the Wadden Sea National Parks of Niedersachsen, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein in Germany; and the Nature and Wildlife Reserve in Denmark.

The Wadden Sea is also a major tourism destination. On many of the islands and some mainland locations tourism is the main source of income and contributes significantly to sustaining local employment.

In order to avoid negative impacts of tourism on the Wadden Sea ecosystems, specific management frameworks are in place in all three states to regulate recreational activities: e.g. visitor information and guidance, zoning, closure of sensitive areas, and guided walks to experience the area.

The Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world, with geological and ecological processes undisturbed throughout most of the area.

OUR VISION FOR THE WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE DESTINATION

The strategy aims to provide a long-term transboundary framework for the development of sustainable tourism across the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

VISION STATEMENT

Nature conservation and sustainable tourism development go hand in hand across the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. This relationship is characterised by appreciation, understanding, experience and active participation of all committed partners.

People who visit, live or work in any part of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination are aware of and appreciate the 'Outstanding Universal Value' and the unique landscape. They are committed to preserving these assets for the benefit of present and future generations.

Local businesses and communities benefit both economically and socially from the high quality offers that support the integrity of the Wadden Sea and the ecological requirements of its World Heritage status.

THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure all stakeholders have a transnational understanding and appreciation of the values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.
2. To ensure stakeholders have responsibility for and contribute to the protection of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' through involvement in tourism management and product development.
3. To ensure the tourism sector provides consistent communication and marketing, and promotes the high quality tourism offers of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.
4. To ensure nature conservation, tourism and local communities benefit from the World Heritage Status.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A DEFINITION

UNESCO defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment".

World Heritage properties are often important travel destinations that, if managed properly, have great potential impact for local economic development and long-term sustainability. The new UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme vision is as follows:

"World Heritage and tourism stakeholders share responsibility for conservation of our common cultural and natural heritage of 'Outstanding Universal Value' and for sustainable development through appropriate tourism management."

The concept of sustainable development, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 'Our Common Future' (1987), also guides the overall positioning of this strategy. In these terms, sustainable development is that which "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

IN THE WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE DESTINATION, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:

1. Is aware of the natural values of the Wadden Sea and accepts the global responsibility for its protection as a result of the World Heritage status.
2. Contributes to the protection, conservation and presentation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.
3. Promotes the cooperation with tourism stakeholders in a participatory approach to maximise conservation, and presents outcomes whilst minimising the threats and adverse impacts from tourism.
4. Presents the Wadden Sea World Heritage property in an adequate, consistent and comprehensive way, which mobilises awareness, understanding and support for its protection.
5. Meets community and economic benefits for present and future generations while at the same time sustaining the conservation objectives.
6. Offers high quality, low impact tourism (products, services, facilities), which considers the ecological requirement of the property.
7. Contributes to regional development.

Key Statistics

The Wadden Sea can boast some impressive statistics in terms of wildlife, environment and sheer scale...

**10
million**

tourists visit the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination per year with about 50 million overnight stays and 30 –40 million day-trippers every year.

**3.7
million**

people live on the mainland of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination and 75,000 people live on the islands.

**€3-5
billion**

estimated yearly turnover of tourism in the Wadden Sea region.

**14,700
km²**

the Wadden Sea stretches for 14,700 km² and 11,000 km² of this is National Parks and conservation areas that make up the World Heritage Property.

500 km

uninterrupted coastal stretch at the North Sea shores of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark.

6 million

migratory birds can be present at the same time in the Wadden Sea, and an average of 10-12 million pass through it in autumn and spring every year.

DENMARK

GERMANY

THE NETHERLANDS

Outstanding Universal Value

WHAT IS 'OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE'?

The overarching goal of the World Heritage Convention is the protection of cultural and natural properties of 'Outstanding Universal Value' for mankind and to preserve it for future generations.

Properties wishing to become World Heritage sites have to prove to UNESCO that they have something critical called, 'Outstanding Universal Value' (OUV). OUV means cultural and/or natural significance that is exceptional enough to transcend national boundaries and to be relevant and of importance to the global community now and in the future.



WHY THE WADDEN SEA IS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

CRITERIA

The Dutch-German Wadden Sea was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2009 followed by the Danish part in 2014. It was inscribed for its globally important geology, ecology, and biodiversity.

The Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world, with geological and ecological processes undisturbed throughout most of the area. It encompasses a multitude of transitional zones between land, the sea and freshwater environment, and is rich in species specially adapted to the demanding environmental conditions. It is considered one of the most important areas for migratory birds in the world, and is connected to a network of other key migratory sites. Up to six million birds can be present at the same time in the Wadden Sea, and an average of 10-12 million pass through it twice a year. In short, biodiversity on a worldwide scale is reliant on the Wadden Sea.

INTEGRITY

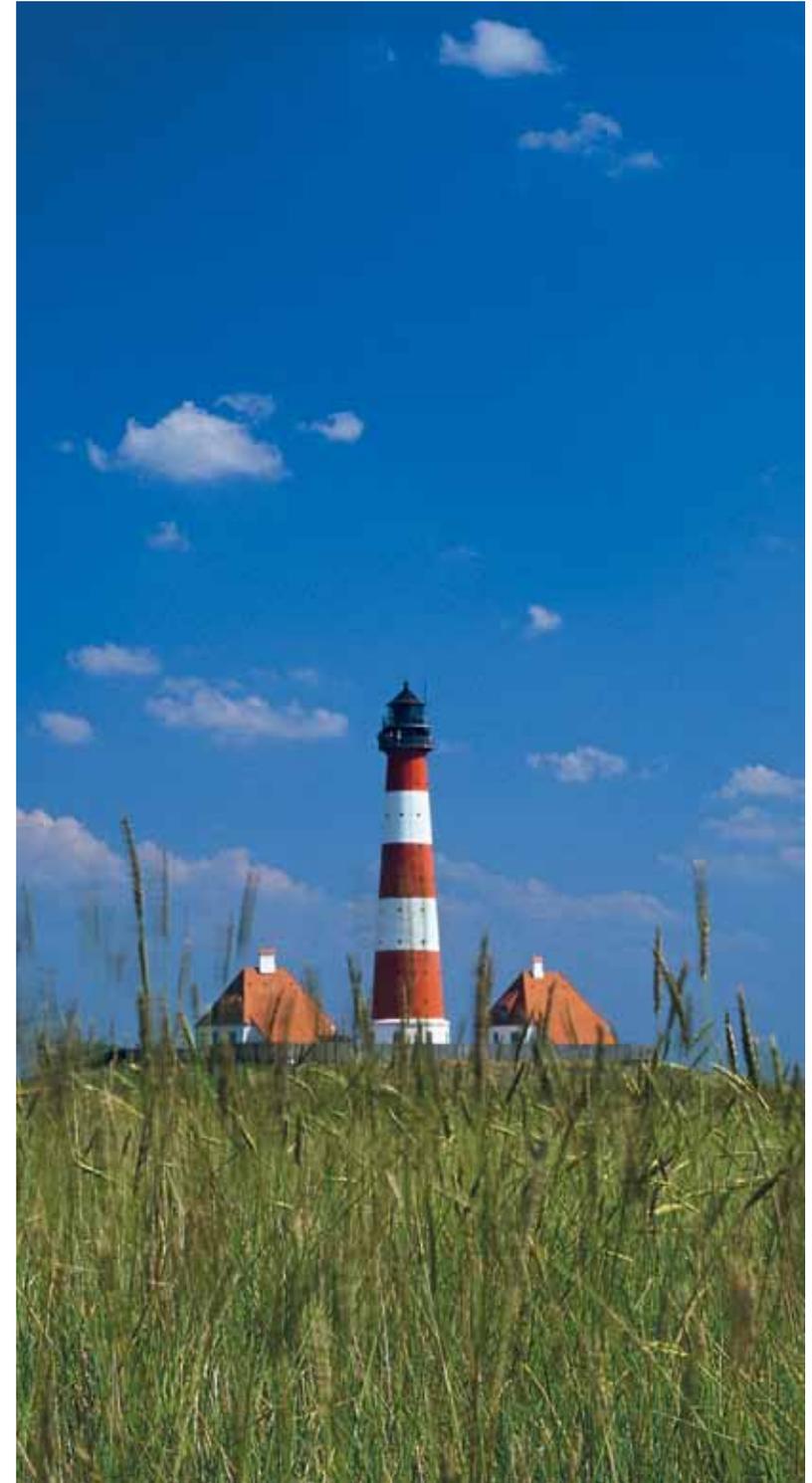
The integrity is ensured as the area includes all of the habitats, features and processes that exemplify a natural and dynamic Wadden Sea. The area is sufficient to maintain these ecological processes, key features and values.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

Maintaining the hydrological and ecological processes of the contiguous tidal flat system is an overarching requirement of the protection and integrity of the Wadden Sea for the benefits of present and future generations. Effective management needs to ensure an ecosystem approach that integrates the management of the existing protected areas with other key activities occurring in the property including fisheries, shipping and tourism.



Illustration of the three pillars of **Outstanding Universal Value** within the World Heritage Convention. All three must be in place for a property to be judged to have Outstanding Universal Value.



World Heritage Opportunities and Responsibilities

The World Heritage status is the most prestigious award for natural and cultural heritage recognised worldwide. Most people living in proximity to or associated with the World Heritage site are proud of it. The inscription can also be a catalyst for partnership, civic pride, social capital and investment.

Being a World Heritage Site also offers the communities a significant potential tourism advantage. The key words are 'potential advantage', because World Heritage potential has to be realised by coordinated actions.

There is a growing body of evidence around the world that the UNESCO World Heritage status gives places a greater global profile than they otherwise would have. This is because 'World Heritage' is increasingly understood globally by tourists as a statement of quality and exceptional experiences.

The UNESCO designation attracts priceless global media attention and is a huge opportunity for destination marketing and development. Many destinations have found that being a World Heritage site presents them with a powerful brand that adds value to their existing brands, and often transcends them in the global sphere.

The evidence suggests that World Heritage visitors are more likely to be international, to be affluent, to spend more in the destination, to stay longer, and more interested in the values and the OUV of the destination (including how they can contribute to conservation or sustainability).

The challenge is that World Heritage visitors expect to be able to access and understand the OUV narrative – they expect a unified identity, a coherent narrative of the place and accessible interpretation. World Heritage tourists are also more discerning, and more demanding of higher quality standards. Quite simply, they expect a world-class destination to match its World Heritage credentials.

The Wadden Sea as one coherent World Heritage property offers a host of new opportunities. The globally acknowledged value and unique selling point linked to the World Heritage status present a new opportunity for the tourism sector and local economies, which can only be exploited through a consistent, transboundary approach – underpinned by independent monitoring, strategic evaluation and cutting edge research.

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*Many destinations have found that being a World Heritage site presents them with a powerful brand that adds value to their existing brands, and often transcends them in the global sphere.*  
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The Road to Sustainable Tourism

KEY WORK FIELDS

To create an effective and successful strategy we need to understand the current status of tourism in the area and the potential that the World Heritage status offers for the development of a sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

In relation to the strategic objectives, we address the following key work fields:

Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation
[A Wadden Sea Cooperative](#)

The Unique Selling Point
[One World Heritage Destination](#)

Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy
[Key Ingredients for Tourism](#)

Environmental Education and Interpretation
[Bringing the Destination to Life](#)

Capacity Building and Raising Standards
[Creating a High Quality Destination](#)





Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation

A Wadden Sea Cooperative



WHERE WE ARE NOW

Nature conservation and recreation coexist well in the Wadden Sea, mainly due to long-term policies, comprehensive protection and management schemes, e.g. through nature reserves and national parks. Alongside these, information and education by various organisations and sectors throughout the Wadden Sea have ensured that they can successfully coexist. The commitment and contribution from the tourism sector to nature conservation and partnerships at national and regional level has also played a key role.

However, there are potential conflicts and issues of concern in relation to tourism. The most obvious perhaps is that World Heritage status may result in increased numbers of visitors, and those visitors may negatively affect the natural values of the Wadden Sea. For example, shoreline activities and recreation could affect rare species of beach breeding birds, or inadequate planning of tourism facilities and buildings in the coastal zone close to sensitive nature areas are issues of concern.

Data about changes and repercussions on the site integrity in relation to tourism/recreational impacts, the regional tourism economy, visitors preference and residents' opinions can provide important information for the management of the World Heritage Site. To date, there is no joint monitoring programme or methodology to evaluate these changes and the effects on regional development.

The World Heritage status is seen as an opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism across the Wadden Sea. It is not about causing conflicts between tourism and nature conservation.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Most stakeholders see the World Heritage status as an opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism across the Wadden Sea. It is not about causing conflicts between tourism and nature conservation.

The World Heritage status also recognises the achievements in internationally coordinated protection and guides us to safeguard these highest of standards to conserve the Wadden Sea.

A comprehensive visitor guide and information system is critically important. We have the opportunity to tell the stories of the Wadden Sea, to reveal its unique selling point – or 'Outstanding Universal Value'. This will ensure that, during sensitive periods or in vulnerable areas, we can limit negative impacts and generate understanding and consideration from tourists.

There is also an increased understanding of the need for a joint approach to assess potential tourism impact on the integrity of Wadden Sea values. This will involve compiling existing information on the impacts of various types of tourism activities and the effect of counter measures. Moreover, the development and the implementation of a harmonised or consistent socio-economic data gathering could serve as a constitutional element of a monitoring programme for the destination.

CASE STUDY

TOURISM PLANNING IN THE COASTAL ZONE

The Danish Government's claim regarding tourism planning in the coastal zone has been reflected in Esbjerg Municipality's 'Planning for Tourism 2014-18'. This includes:

- > Coherent tourist political considerations are a prerequisite for localisation of new holiday and leisure facilities in the coastal zone;
- > New holiday and leisure facilities and major expansions of existing facilities to be located in existing urban or major holiday and leisure areas;
- > New marinas must not be placed in the open coastal landscape;
- > No planning of new holiday home areas in the coastal zone, and existing holiday home areas must be maintained for holiday purposes.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC MONITORING

Since 2000, socio-economic monitoring has been carried out in the Schleswig-Holstein National Park Region. This has involved:

- > Collecting and analysing data on tourism and revealing the effects of the National Park on regional economy;
- > Recognising (negative) repercussions and trends in order to react in a proper and timely manner;
- > Continuous recording of the popularity and adequacy of National Park information and nature experience offers, as well as of instruments of nature conservation and visitor management;
- > Measuring the acceptance of local residents and German citizens with respect to the National Park, by surveying their attitudes, opinions, expectations, motives and their satisfaction with communication and (tourism) offers.

OUTCOMES REQUIRED →

- > Increased participation of stakeholders in planning, development and management of sustainable tourism, taking responsibility for the protection of the OUV.
- > Effective tourism planning that is in line with the OUV, minimising the potential conflicts between recreational activities and Wadden Sea values.
- > A joint methodology to monitor and assess tourism impacts on nature and socio-economic values, made available to support planning and sustainable development.
- > A comprehensive visitor guide and information service to enhance understanding and awareness of the OUV.

The Unique Selling Point

One World Heritage Destination



WHERE WE ARE NOW

In the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, professional and comprehensive marketing strategies have been established to promote the islands and mainland coast. Regional marketing organisations cooperate with service providers and have developed strong brands for their own coastal region, but there are no marketing activities that cover the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. In fact, similar brands sometimes compete in the same region or country, such as 'Nordsee' in Germany. A lack of integration between the mainland and island destination marketing is also an issue in some parts.

The World Heritage status is used by many stakeholders in the Netherlands and Germany as an additional marketing tool. It is a really important dimension but few tourism offers refer to the World Heritage standards in a consistent and appropriate way. To address this, following the World Heritage inscription of 2009, several communication and marketing activities have been jointly carried out with partners from Germany and the Netherlands. This has created synergies, enhanced the profile and visibility of World Heritage and raised the awareness of visitors and inhabitants in the two countries. It has also demonstrated the potential of a transnational World Heritage brand for communication, as well as showing the complexity of working across borders and sectors.

At present, we know many basic facts about the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination but there's more to know. We need to coordinate this market research as a priority. Ongoing research is fragmented, sporadic, lacks a consistent approach and existing surveys are not specific for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, neither in terms of the content nor to the regional coverage.

Taken together and marketed intelligently, the whole Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination could reap much greater benefits than piecemeal, narrow focussed strategies.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A common understanding and awareness by stakeholders of the global importance of the Wadden Sea and the transnational World Heritage property, its beauty and unique natural processes, together with market research, are preconditions for strategic marketing.

Many stakeholders consider the World Heritage status as something that can be used as a joint marketing platform to enhance sustainability, create synergies and raise the profile of their region, nationally and internationally. There is a belief that the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. So, taken together and marketed intelligently, the whole Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination could reap much greater benefits than piecemeal, narrow focussed strategies. Enhanced cooperation, market research and communication between stakeholders across the regions will fully exploit the benefits and get more attention for the destination as a whole (from which all stakeholders and regions would profit). It will also avoid unnecessary competition between the regional destinations.

Wadden Sea wide visitor surveys should deliver valuable information about visitor demands and satisfaction, about expectations, attitudes, preferred activities, relevance of sustainability and World Heritage status for travel decision.

CASE STUDY

WORLD HERITAGE VISIBILITY

With the World Heritage inscription of 2009, a joint communications and marketing campaign was launched with stakeholders in the Netherlands and Germany. A common logo, a common road sign, an official World Heritage website, a video and an information flyer raised the profile of the World Heritage site. Alongside this, more than 65 information modules have been prepared and inhabitants and visitors have been telling their stories about the Wadden Sea under the motto: 'being part of the World Heritage'.

www.waddensea-worldheritage.org



OUTCOMES REQUIRED →

- > A strong World Heritage brand building on the OUV as starting point for the development of quality products, services and facilities.
- > A sustainable 'Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination' marketing concept – showing the value of existing regional brands and adding value and synergies to create further benefits.
- > A transnational market research concept and visitor survey for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.
- > Consistent World Heritage communications and promotion of high quality products for the entire destination.

Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy

Key Ingredients for Tourism



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The tourism sector, in particular accommodation and gastronomy, already benefits financially from unspoilt nature and magnificent landscapes. They have the opportunity to benefit even more from the promotion of the World Heritage status as visitors choose to stay longer and spend more.

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WHERE WE ARE NOW

TRANSPORT

Most tourists travel to the Wadden Sea by car. Road travel is generally more accessible than public transport, with the exception of a few examples such as the direct train connections to Sylt and to ferry crossings at the mainland (Dagebüll Hafen, Norddeich Mole and Harlingen). Within the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, public transport infrastructure and leisure facilities are well developed. However, there is still focus on improving the infrastructure for cars and a lack of investment in sustainable transport. The most obvious exceptions to this are areas where private cars are prohibited (on certain Wadden Sea islands) and where good public transport is available and cost effective.

Public transport as an environmentally-friendly alternative for tourists is not yet a viable option in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, but there have been scattered attempts to integrate the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the mobility sector, for example the 'Urlauberbus für'n Euro' in Lower Saxony and the ferry boat, Den Helder –Texel.

ACCOMMODATION AND GASTRONOMY

Accommodation and gastronomy are two of the most important factors when people are deciding where to go to and where to stay in the area. It is worth noting that they are also important factors in terms of job creation.

The dominant accommodation in Denmark is summer cottages and, to some extent, campsites. In the Netherlands and Germany, holiday apartments, hotels and camper-parks play a considerable role, as do overnight stays on boats in the Netherlands.

Small and medium sized enterprises dominate in all three countries. These offer a broad range of authentic visitor experiences and regional products. On the other hand, they have limited resources for investment in sustainability, quality development and marketing.

Due to different planning legislation in the three countries there are various approaches to the development of new tourism infrastructures – but all demand space. On some islands, increased fresh water extraction, especially in peak seasons, is a potential risk for vulnerable habitats.

Across the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination there is growing demand for authenticity and quality. There is a growing number of initiatives promoting regional products and cuisines as well as national park certification of accommodation and gastronomy enterprises.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Sustainable, inner-regional transport connections need to be enhanced and linked, including shared public transport and e-mobility. There is also a need for improved communications to tourism stakeholders and their guests about public transport and how it helps to reduce CO₂ emissions.

A sustainable infrastructure and network should be created to enable people to travel along the Wadden Sea coast, including cross-border biking, hiking, and kayak routes, etc. which can be integrated into World Heritage tourism packages.

The tourism sector, in particular accommodation and gastronomy, already benefits financially from unspoilt nature and magnificent landscapes. The sector has the opportunity to benefit even more from the promotion of the World Heritage status as visitors choose to stay longer and spend more. The accommodation and gastronomy offer can also make an important contribution to this protection and sustainable development by offering environmentally friendly quality (gastronomy) products.

Environmentally-friendly transport and accommodation are an important way to manage visitor flows. They will also contribute to the maintenance of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property and raise its profile as a CO₂ neutral tourist destination. Developing this aspect can be an important marketing angle for the destination.

CASE STUDY

URLAUBERBUS FÜR'N EURO

The 'Urlauberbus' in Lower Saxony offers environmentally friendly mobility opportunities to explore the National Park and the hinterland. For 1 Euro per ride, people can use every bus in the Ems-Jade area. Launched in the high season, the offer is now valid all year round. It's been a successful initiative – in 2012, one in ten visitors to the area used the 'Urlauberbus' and the scheme won the national 'Fahrtziel Natur' award.

www.urlauberbus.info

WADDEN GOLD

The Dutch Wadden Gold is a label for local products and services from the Dutch Wadden Sea Region. The brand is managed by the Foundation Wadden Group, a non-profit foundation and includes 300 individual products (mainly agricultural and mostly organic produced) and about 75 services (tourist, gastronomic, art and culture).

www.waddengoud.nl

OUTCOMES REQUIRED →

- > Improved partnerships and cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs and the nature conservation sector.
- > Efficient, sustainable public transport for all visitors to and within the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination with clear and accessible information.
- > Linking existing transport systems and infrastructure including e-mobility and hiking and biking facilities.
- > Regional and sustainable quality products, services and facilities in transport, accommodation and gastronomy, which can also contribute to the reduction of energy, water consumption and carbon emissions.

Environmental Education and Interpretation

Bringing the Destination to Life



WHERE WE ARE NOW

There are over 50 information and visitor centres that play an important role in presenting the values, attractions and global importance of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property to local inhabitants, stakeholders and tourists alike. Having the World Heritage status has meant that the Netherlands and Germany have been able to integrate World Heritage information into their exhibitions and guides.

The main challenge is to integrate the concept of 'Outstanding Universal Value' in a consistent and engaging way in existing and future information and educational activities.

The International Wadden Sea School (IWSS), together with the information centres, has developed a wide range of information and educational products, which present the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage property as one ecological and preserved entity with a wide range of authentic experiences. Regional networks of information centres, national parks and schools have been established for many years, including the 'Wadden Sea School' in the Netherlands, the 'Junior Ranger Programme' in Germany and 'My Wadden Sea' in Denmark. As well as the organised information and visitor tours, there is growing interest from local entrepreneurs to provide visitors with something distinctive, tours that showcase the peculiarity and uniqueness of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.

Developing and promoting authentic nature experiences can both maintain current visitors and attract new segments.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

World Heritage provides the chance to extend and develop the cooperation, active participation and networking among stakeholders, contributing to the understanding of the worldwide importance of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property and improving local awareness. The main challenge is to integrate the concept of OUV in a consistent, engaging way in existing and future information and educational activities.

Visitor information and environmental education should contain consistent messages, whether these are destination-wide or site specific. This consistency of messaging will increase understanding and appreciation of conservation aims and help to engage visitors and residents to maintain and protect this important environment.

People working in the visitor centres need to be fully trained to understand the OUV of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property. It is through them, and the coherent story they tell, that we can effectively promote our World Heritage status.

Developing and promoting authentic nature experiences can both maintain our current visitors and attract new segments. Creating 'experience packages' increases the opportunities for families with children, as well as providing greater diversity of activities and experiences for the many 'best agers'. There is also an opportunity to develop 'off-peak' packages to allow adventure seekers to experience natural forces and dynamics of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property and, for example, the spectacular features of bird migration.

CASE STUDY

The Five

The Schleswig-Holstein tourism organisation and the National Park Administration jointly developed nature experience trips. These include the 'Small Five' (the five most common benthic animals); the 'Flying Five' (typical birds); and the 'Big Five' (marine mammals, sturgeon, eagle). These experiences bring visitors close to the World Heritage without disturbing the wildlife. A booklet for children, developed in cooperation with the IWSS, has added the 'Moving Five' (dynamic structures, like dunes and tidal flats) and the 'Flowering Five' (dune and salt marsh plants) covering the most characteristic species and habitats of the Wadden Sea.



OUTCOMES REQUIRED →

- > Educational resources and activities to maintain the OUV and enhance appreciation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.
- > Authentic nature experience offers, an integral part of a sustainable 'Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination'.
- > Improved knowledge and appreciation of the Dutch-German-Danish Wadden Sea as an entity by all stakeholders.
- > Improved communication of the value of the OUV and its visibility amongst stakeholders, locals and guests.

Capacity Building and Raising Standards

Creating a High Quality Destination



WHERE WE ARE NOW

Transnational knowledge and awareness of the natural values of the Wadden Sea and its World Heritage status is key to the development of a sustainable Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. It is important that stakeholders are open to increasing their knowledge and awareness and improving their professional approach at a transnational level. By doing this, and understanding the brand, they can contribute to tourists' extraordinary experiences, which motivate them to both return and recommend the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination to others.

Successful examples of capacity building and stakeholder educational programmes in the regions can be found in the 'German National Park Partnership Programmes'. This primarily carries a regional focus but also includes the World Heritage dimension.

In order to position the Wadden Sea as a high quality tourism destination, a joint approach, improved stakeholder awareness and learning, and a research-based framework will be needed.

There is an ever-increasing trend within tourism to focus on holiday destinations that have sustainable, environmentally friendly/ecological and certified local products. Alongside this, there have been an increasing number of regional or national certification schemes and labels, which include sustainability criteria, for a broad variety of tourism services. However, only a few have a direct link to Wadden Sea values; none are coordinated throughout the entire area or can be perceived as a quality label for the entire Wadden Sea destination.

OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In order to position the Wadden Sea as a high quality tourism destination, a joint approach, improved stakeholder awareness and learning, and a research-based framework will be needed. We are just starting to use World Heritage status to add value, but an effective, coherent brand can help to add even more value.

Capacity building of (local) stakeholders, in terms of skills, awareness and training, will increase the knowledge of offers within other tourism sectors. These people, and businesses in the tourism sector, are ambassadors and champions for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. This will help to raise the overall profile of the destination, identify key stakeholders and local people, and contribute to maintaining a (local) qualified labour force.

The World Heritage status has great potential to promote quality offers and enhance guest satisfaction. Common overall standards should be developed, which can easily be communicated and integrated into existing structures.

CASE STUDY

NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP

The German National Parks have established a public-private partnership scheme. Members of the scheme come from accommodation, restaurants, nature and tourism organisations, information centres, tour operators and the transport sector. The scheme sets out specific environmental criteria and commitment to the National Park, with an aim for high quality service and nature-friendly economies.

www.nationalpark-partner-sh.de
www.nationalpark-partner-nds.de

BOATING COVENANT FOR THE WADDEN SEA

The Dutch Boating Covenant lays down the agreements among the boating and state parties regarding recreational boating. At its core is the fact that a quality-based approach is better for the conservation of the Wadden Sea and that any boating must have a minimal negative impact on its ecological features.

This quality-based approach is communicated through the campaign 'I take care of the Wadden Sea' and consists of education, advice and information aimed at raising awareness of what makes the Wadden Sea so special. The more that recreational sailors are able to enjoy these features, the greater the chance that their conduct will respect them.

www.ikpasophetwad.nl

OUTCOMES REQUIRED →

- > Improved awareness amongst stakeholders of the social, economic and conservation benefits of Wadden Sea World Heritage brand.
- > Common high standards and quality of sustainable products and offers from the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.
- > Increased stakeholder capacity and tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably.

Sustainable Tourism

Making it Work

This strategy will only be a success if we all work together to create consistent communications and mutually reinforce tourism and maintain a high level of nature conservation. It's all about learning from best practice and improving transnational understanding of what sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination could be.

Our vision for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination is underpinned by the four strategic objectives. Achieving these is reliant on the concerted and effective implementation of our five key work fields. Through this, our vision can be realised and reinforced in the long term.



Our approach to delivering sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination

Vision

Nature conservation and sustainable tourism development go hand in hand across the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. This relationship is characterised by appreciation, understanding, experience and active participation of all committed partners.

People who visit, live or work in any part of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination are aware of and appreciate the 'Outstanding

Universal Value' and the unique landscape. They are committed to preserving these assets for the benefit of present and future generations.

Local businesses and communities benefit both economically and socially from the high quality offers that support the integrity of the Wadden Sea and the ecological requirements of its World Heritage status.

Status and Analysis of Work Fields

Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation – *A Wadden Sea Cooperative*

The Unique Selling Point – *One World Heritage Destination*

Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy – *Key Ingredients for Tourism*

Environmental Education and Interpretation – *Bringing the Destination to Life*

Capacity Building and Raising Standards – *Creating a High Quality Destination*

Strategic Objectives

1. To ensure all stakeholders have a transnational understanding and appreciation of the values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.

2. To ensure stakeholders have responsibility for and contribute to the protection of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' through involvement in tourism management and product development.

3. To ensure the tourism sector provides consistent communication and marketing, and promotes the high quality tourism offers of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

4. To ensure nature conservation, tourism and local communities benefit from the World Heritage Status.

Action Plan

Protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property



Social, economic and environmental benefits

Strategic Objective One

To ensure all stakeholders have a transnational understanding and appreciation of the values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

Enhanced transnational knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the World Heritage concept and its added value will enable stakeholders to integrate it into their activities. Moreover, it will support the identification with the entire area and local pride.

1





COMMITMENTS TO REALISE THE OBJECTIVE

1. Awareness raising and visibility amongst stakeholders of the World Heritage and its benefits for conservation, economy and society.

The stakeholders will use information about World Heritage and its incentives in tailor made information packages, communication tools and marketing material through various channels (e.g. print, website, and stakeholder fora) and involvement of stakeholders in joint activities such as World Heritage Days and campaigns.

2. Providing stakeholders with the capacity and tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs (for example, qualification and training, best practice examples, education, information sharing, networking).

Qualification and training of stakeholders on World Heritage will enhance the credibility and high quality throughout the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. Specific training courses for service providers regarding language and rhetoric training, education, nature conservation and sustainability should be developed. Best practice examples and existing programmes should be communicated and shared through networking for the entire Wadden Sea destination.

3. Developing educational resources and to enhance (local) pride of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

More than 50 information centres play an important role in education and information and should enhance their cooperation and develop material for multipliers and the educational sector. Existing educational programmes should be further integrated and cooperation with kindergarten, schools and universities should be enhanced. An emotional affinity to World Heritage will support World Heritage pride and identity.

Strategic Objective Two

To ensure stakeholders take responsibility for and contribute to the protection of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' through involvement in tourism management and product development.

2

A broad stakeholder engagement in planning, development and management of sustainable tourism will enhance the commitment and involvement of stakeholders in protecting the Wadden Sea World Heritage property. Incentive mechanisms will encourage stakeholders (especially from the tourism sector) to act responsibly in terms of conservation and to provide social and economic benefits for local communities. Because of high regional differences in destination management, marketing and tourism infrastructures, a consistent approach for the entire area will be the main objective to ensure quality and credibility of throughout the entire World Heritage property.

The development of tourism products and services supporting the OUV will provide high quality and low impact visitor experience of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property and the destination as a whole.





COMMITMENTS TO REALISE THE OBJECTIVE

4. Common tourism management and planning schemes for the entire World Heritage in line with the OUV of the property and using a destination approach.

Enhanced involvement of the tourism sector in management and planning schemes will underline the joint commitment for World Heritage protection and conservation. This should also address further harmonisation of visitor management and guidance, as well as monitoring and impact assessment. Infrastructure development and sustainable transport should be an integrated part of the planning scheme and activities will be built on existing schemes.

5. A strong Wadden Sea World Heritage brand as starting point for development of quality products, services and facilities (common standards and quality schemes).

A common Wadden Sea World Heritage brand adds value to existing brands (through co-branding). A brand strategy is a prerequisite for a consistent understanding, presentation and marketing. Existing partnership programmes should form the basis for the development of common World Heritage standards and quality schemes. Sustainable, high quality, low impact and climate-friendly tourism offers and products should be developed to enable the 'magical experience' of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

6. A sustainable Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, building upon transboundary cooperation and partnerships.

World Heritage offers the opportunity to raise the profile of the Wadden Sea as a sustainable tourism destination. It also contributes to its protection and provides incentives for the tourism sector. The new transboundary destination approach should be established in partnerships building upon and further developing the existing regional and local destinations.

Strategic Objective Three

To ensure the tourism sector provides consistent communication and marketing and promotes the high quality tourism offers of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

3

Stakeholders and (potential) visitors expect high quality tourism at a World Heritage property, safeguarding and contributing to its OUV. This level of ambition must also be reflected in the marketing and promotion of sustainable tourism, which contributes to enhance the profile of the Wadden Sea locally, nationally and internationally. A joint approach in marketing and consistent communication is necessary to ensure credibility and authenticity throughout the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.





COMMITMENTS TO REALISE THE OBJECTIVE

7. Development of a joint marketing approach (products, services, facilities) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, which contributes to the aims of World Heritage.

A consistent transboundary marketing strategy should be developed for new as well as for existing offers. Internal marketing (business to business, tour operators, travel agencies) and cooperation with national tourist organisations should be extended.

8. Integration of World Heritage marketing in existing regional and national marketing activities.

Stakeholders need to integrate the World Heritage theme into their existing marketing and communication channels to ensure that quality and content is aligned with the joint Wadden Sea World Heritage brand.

9. Continuation of joint communication and information activities to raise profile and visibility of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination locally, nationally and internationally.

World Heritage offers the opportunity to create synergies through cooperation in joint communication activities that cover the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. This could include joint annual campaigns, publications (e.g. a joint World Heritage guide), internet (website and new media) and media cooperation, as well as joint merchandising concepts.

Strategic Objective Four

To ensure nature conservation, tourism and local communities benefit from the World Heritage Status.

4

Sustainable tourism will provide benefits for the conservation of Wadden Sea World Heritage property and for stakeholders in the region. This is reflected in enhanced engagement of stakeholders in transnational cooperation on World Heritage, and the appreciation of nature protection as the basis for economic and social welfare. In turn, World Heritage enhances the visibility of the Wadden Sea as a quality destination to both maximise and retain income for the region. It can also contribute to regional development through all sectors, resulting in better quality of life within local communities.





COMMITMENTS TO REALISE THE OBJECTIVE

10. Increased engagement of stakeholders in transnational activities on World Heritage (transboundary partnership and networking, cooperation with other World Heritage sites and UNESCO programmes).

Stakeholders will extend their engagement in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation by participating in trilateral and international projects. Cooperation and networking with other World Heritage sites will contribute to the UNESCO World Heritage Marine Programme and Tourism Programme and promote the Wadden Sea World Heritage site as an international model.

11. Promoting World Heritage and sustainable tourism as an instrument to maintain and enhance quality of life in local communities and sustainable regional development.

World Heritage can be a catalyst for sustainable development. It should be investigated how this potential can be made available for selected impact areas in a transboundary context and how this can be communicated among relevant stakeholders.

12. Generating financial revenue from high quality tourism to stakeholders and to the protection of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

High quality tourism, building on the OUV, provides possibilities of donations or funding of nature and educational projects. There are opportunities for companies in the region to contribute to its protection and management. The possibilities of financial support should also be investigated.

The Stakeholders

THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

For this strategy on sustainable tourism to be successful, all stakeholders need to be aware of the possibilities and be committed to development within the World Heritage concept.

Stakeholders also need to contribute and take ownership of the joint activities outlined in this strategy and action plan, and to bring it to life.

THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS ARE:

- **States parties, regional and local authorities:** in charge of implementing the World Heritage Convention, establishing and implementing policies and strategies to protect and conserve the area, and supporting sustainable development and management.
- **Local communities:** seeking improved quality of life while maintaining the integrity and access to the natural heritage that represents their history and identity. They play an important role as ambassadors of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.
- **Tourism sector:** wanting to realise long-term commercial and social benefits and recognising intact nature as a basis for their economic welfare.
- **NGOs:** enhancing awareness of the nature area and contributing to the protection and management of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.

GOVERNANCE

The strategy and action plan has been prepared by the Trilateral Task Group on Sustainable Tourism (TG-STs).

The members of the TG-STs represent nature administration at a state and regional level, tourism and marketing organisations and green NGOs involved in management and tourism planning in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

The TG-STs has been established in the framework of the Trilateral Cooperation on the Protection of the Wadden Sea (www.waddensea-secretariat.org).

The implementation of the strategy and the action plan will be coordinated by a trilateral working group building on the existing structures in the three countries, which includes a.o. governmental bodies, advisory boards, tourism and marketing organisations and existing World Heritage coordination structures, and the Wadden Sea Forum as independent trilateral stakeholder forum.

PLANNING, REPORTING AND MEETING CYCLES

The trilateral working group meets twice a year and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy and action plan, monitoring the progress and generating the necessary commitment for the implementation amongst stakeholders.

The work on the strategy and action plan is coordinated by the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) which coordinates and facilitates all activities of the Trilateral Cooperation.



Next Step: The Action Plan

An action plan for the period 2014–17 has been developed in order to implement the strategy. The action plan indicates themes, priorities, time planning and budgets.

In many cases, the action plan builds upon existing or planned activities on regional or national level thus creating synergies and a consistent approach for the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

Before implementing an activity, a detailed project plan will be prepared in cooperation with the involved stakeholders taking into account what has already been achieved, defining the specific objectives, work planning, budget and responsibilities.

Where needed, additional project funds, particularly for larger initiatives, will be sought from the participating stakeholders and third parties.

The action plan will be evaluated annually and amended if necessary to ensure it continues to fulfil the aims of the strategy and the aspirations of the stakeholders.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

All stakeholders are invited to take a look at the action plan and see how they can get involved.

There is a whole range of different activities to achieve successful sustainable tourism. All of these reinforce, enhance and protect the OUV.

By declaring your commitment to the action plan and by working together, we can realise the benefits of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

www.waddensea-worldheritage.org
www.prowad.org





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* For reference to the mandate given by the Dutch Wadden Sea Provinces/Municipalities see www.waddensea-secretariat.org/trilateral-governmental-conference-2014/



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