ADOPTED SUMMARY RECORD

44th Meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 44)

20 November 2024
Online meeting

1. Opening of the Meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Anne-Marie Rasmussen, at 10:35 hours on 20 November 2024. Rasmussen welcomed Paul Pieter Mertens stepping in for Nanou Beekman. Mertens gave a small introduction about himself. Rasmussen conveyed the apologies from Sascha Klöpper, substituted by Julia Busch and Annika Bostelmann, as well as Martin Petersen, substituted by Henrik Jørgensen. Alexandra Stück was substituted by Carolin Galler, Susan Top was excused.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Document: WSB 44/2 WSB 44 draft annotated agenda

An outline of the agenda is in Annex 2 and the list of documents not foreseen for discussion during the meeting are in Table 1.

Table 1: List of documents submitted to WSB 44 but not foreseen for discussion during the meeting. By 19 November 2024, comments were received by the German Delegation (see agenda item 8), no comments by the other delegations or advisors were received.

Agenda item	Submitted by	Description	Proposal
WSB44/4	CWSS	CWSS announcements	take note
WSB44/5.1/2	TG-WH/SEA subgroup and CWSS	Progress on Strategic Environmental Assessment	take note of the slight postponement and agree
WSB44/5.3/1	CWSS	Quality Status Report	take note

The WSB **adopted** the agenda as submitted.

3. Summary Record WSB 43

Documents: WSB 43/3 Final Draft Summary Record WSB 43

The WSB **adopted** the final draft summary record of WSB 43.

4. Announcements

Document: WSB 44/4 Announcements by CWSS

Denmark

- Jørgensen informed about the establishment of new ministries in Denmark and the reassignments of tasks between existing ministries. The task of coordinating the Wadden Sea cooperation has been moved to one of the new ministries, the Ministry of Green Transition, and now specifically placed in the Agency

for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment. The main task for the new Ministry for Green Transition will be the extensive conversion of agricultural land to nature and forest (based on reducing CO2 and nutrient discharges), the improvement of the Danish WFD-related water environment and to support sustainable agricultural and food production. The marine environment in general remains with the "old" Ministry of Environment. Agreements regarding cooperation concerning the Wadden Sea will be established between the two.

- Hansted reported on the new organisation: Due to changes in the Danish ministries, the Danish Coastal Authority has now become an integrated part of the Environmental Agency. A new Division for Climate Adaptation has been established. This change focuses on strengthening our ability to implement climate adaptation in Denmark which has a great political focus. The tasks regarding WSB remain the same.
- Research between Aage V., Universities, and Danish Coastal Authority: As mentioned at the latest meeting, a new research project involving a Danish private foundation named Aage V. Jensen, Danish Universities, and the Danish Coastal Authority has been announced. The project aims to examine the connection between the wading surfaces and the birds' food base. The project is in its early phase, but promising results seem to be on the horizon. The WSB will be updated as it evolves.
- Fries informed about the Natura 2000 Action Plan for the Wadden Sea (2022-2027): In July this year, the four Danish Wadden Sea municipalities approved at new Natura 2000 action plan for the Wadden Sea following a public consultation period of 8 weeks. The action plan outlines the efforts to be initiated in the Natura 2000 area in the planning period up to 2027. The key objectives of the plan are:
    - 1. Enhancing the natural processes and the robustness of the ecosystem to ensure ecosystem resilience in the Wadden Sea.
    - 2. Improving existing habitats to ensure and improve the condition of existing natural habitats and the living conditions of species.
    - 3. Focussing on addressing invasive species
- LIFE Nature Project River Kongeåen: From September 2023 to December 2030, Esbjerg Municipality, along with several project partners, will implement the LIFE Nature Project Kongeåen. The total Project cost is approximately €13 million. Kongeåen is one of the 4 main watercourses flowing into the Danish part of the Wadden Sea. The project aims to improve the conservation status of several fish species (such as the Houting) and bird species.

Germany

- Wagner informed on end of coalition in Germany. SPD and Green party continue as minority government, until new elections in February 2025.
- A budget of about 400 million EUR from bidding processes for offshore wind energy fields will be dedicated to marine nature conservation projects via a foundation by Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU).
- A number of projects are being supported by the BMUV Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity, e.g., seagrass and seaweed restoration projects in the coastal waters.
- A kick-off meeting for the five projects funded under joint German-Dutch research call would be held.
- Knoke informed on intensified dialogue in Schleswig-Holstein with shrimp fisheries
- The Schleswig-Holstein National Park authority is part of a project within the German marine research alliance focusing on different natural and human induced stressors on marine and coastal environments (see www.sustainmare.de).
- The Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2025 with a series of public events under the heading "young, wild and dynamic", reflecting the OUV and the World Heritage criteria (see www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/sh/40jahre/).
- Galler reported that in June 2024, the presence of a wolf had been documented on the Island of Norderney. It was assumed that the wolf came to the island in natural way from the mainland across the mudflats. It was not expected that this would cause an additional threat to breeding birds, since birds and bird eggs played only a minor role in the diet of wolves.
- An Interreg project called WattenVision (WaddenVisie) started in June (duration: 4 years). In this project, Dutch and German partners are working together aiming to make their respective Wadden Sea

regions one of the most sustainable destinations in Europe. The project includes four work packages: developing a sustainability dashboard, CO2 Compensation, Experiencing Wilderness and Preserving Nature, Improving biodiversity). More information: https://deutschland-nederland.eu/de/projects/wattenvision-waddenvisie/.

- The City of Wilhelmshaven, as the developer of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Partnership Centre in Wilhelmshaven participated in a call for an Exhibition of UNESCO. The Exhibition titled "Deep Surface: Polyfunctional architecture to enhance the experience of UNESCO Designated Sites" would take place in the context of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale die Venezia. The application was prepared with the support and feedback from the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park Authority, BMUV, and CWSS. The Trilateral Wadden Sea Partnership Centre (as a building) together with the concept of the Partnership Hub presents a unique selling point. The decision on the contributions to the exhibition is still pending.

Netherlands

- Mertens informed that since three months a new government is in place in the Netherlands and a government programme was launched. Ministry is now including fisheries named "Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature".
- Stoel reported that following the agreement, the representation of the municipalities alternates every two years between the island and the coastal Wadden Sea municipalities. Therefore, this would be his last Wadden Sea Board meeting. The next representative, starting early 2025, will be Stefan van Keijzerswaard, an alderman of the municipality Hogeland. Currently, he is touring the trilateral Wadden Sea area. He thanked the WSB for the good cooperation in the Wadden Sea Board over the last two years.
- De Ruig reported on the deepening of the Ems channel (related to paragraph 22 of the Wilhelmshaven Declaration about waterways and natural limits): Germany intends to deepen the Ems channel by one metre, to improve accessibility of the port of Emden. Dutch governments and NGOs have submitted their views, because there are concerns about the effects of the deepening on the water quality and ecology in the Ems-Dollard estuary. This was discussed in the Ems Commission on 7 November 2024. The following agreements were made: The Wasserstraßen und Schifffahrtsverwaltung (WSV) will again include the views of Dutch governments in the considerations forming the basis for the deepening, addressing concerns such as what alternatives exist and what compelling reasons of major public interest are there? In a German-Dutch working group, possibilities for mitigation and compensation will be discussed and investigated, with the aim of reaching a result before the summer.
- Landing of cables and pipelines from offshore wind farms (related to paragraph 26 of the Wilhelmshaven Declaration on multifunctional use): The Netherlands is building wind farms in the Dutch part of the North Sea, and the potential routes for laying the necessary cables and pipelines are being explored. One route under consideration runs through the Ems-Dollard treaty area. However, the German competent authorities (GDWS/WSA) and the German Bundesministerium für Digitales und Verkehr have indicated that there are shipping safety risks associated with the proposed route which are not compatible with the requirements to ensure safe and free passage. From a German perspective, a permit cannot be issued for this route. The Dutch Ministry of Climate and Green Growth and the German BMDV are in consultation regarding the interpretation of responsibilities and powers under the treaty.

CWSS

- For CWSS announcements see document **WSB44/4** in Table 1.

The WSB **noted** the information.

5. Implementation Wilhelmshaven Declaration

5.1 Protect and strengthen the Outstanding Universal Value (paras 1-16)

5.1.1 State of Conservation -see document **WSB 44/5.1/1** in Table 1-

The meeting was invited to consider the process and timeline regarding the update of the State of Conservation Report requested by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (WSB44/5.1/1).

Board members recognised the capacity issues at the CWSS, but also highlighted the importance of this process at the political level and the need to advance with the content of the SOC report to ensure deadlines for internal consultations and the final submission deadline can be met.

Ilka Wagner requested that the desired outcome should be considered during the SOC/SEA processes to ensure that the concerns of UNESCO regarding the impacts of human usage on the OUV of the Wadden Sea are adequately addressed. She advocated for a middle ground regarding the level of detail required in the SOC report.

Hans-Ulrich Rösner stated that while the NGOs appreciate the UNESCO decision in New Delhi and the hope that the subsequent SOC/SEA will help to improve the protection of the Wadden Sea, all efforts should be made to prevent the delisting of the Wadden Sea as a World Heritage Site.

Julia Busch confirmed that the SOC/SEA processes will be prioritised at the CWSS and thanked the partners for their ongoing support in the process.

The WSB **approved** the process and preliminary timeline regarding the update of the State of Conservation Report. Given the strict timeline and the internal procedures in some member states, it is **acknowledged** that it may become necessary to ask for an extension of the deadline.

5.1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Board members discussed the challenge of finding the right scope and procedure for a collaborative SEA, given differences in the scale of specific human activities in the different countries, and the resulting financial implications for the delegations. Jørgensen highlighted that the concerns expressed by UNESCO largely relate to activities in the Netherlands and Germany which should be reflected in the scoping report.

Board members expressed their willingness to reach an agreement at the level of detail needed for the SEA. Mertens suggested a meeting in January to find a middle ground regarding the level of detail to be provided in the SEA while also addressing financial concerns. He emphasised that each country should do their part. Wagner reiterated to keep in mind that the aim of SEA should be the common and enhanced protection of the OUV of the Wadden Sea, backed by Knoke, who stressed that the emphasis should be on activities with the potential of impacts on the OUV and on cumulative effects. Wagner also recommended that CWSS should restart the process of seeking external support for the trilateral aspects of the SEA by a call for tender as decided at WSB 43. Jørgensen noted that the scoping document should contain ToR which could be used for a tender.

Henk de Vries stated the need to include information on the expected cumulative effects in the SEA.

Rassmussen reiterated the need to discuss finances for consultants to support CWSS in the SEA process and noted that the SEA scoping report will be sent to the delegations for approval prior to the submission to UNESCO.

The WSB **took note** of the postponement and **agreed** on the further procedure for the coordination of the draft scoping report of the SEA by TG-WH and SEA subgroup and communication with the WHC/IUCN. A meeting is requested for January 2025 to reach an agreement on the level of detail needed in the SEA.

The WSB **agreed** for the focal points to discuss the content of the tender to support the SEA process, in particular regarding budget considerations.

5.2 Enhance Sustainability of Human Uses and foster Transformative Change (paras 17-37)

Task Group Coordination and Management

Document: WSB 44/5.2 TG-CM progress report

The WSB **adopted** the proposals to 1) support the process of developing National Restoration Plans according to the EU Nature Restoration Law and 2) pause the review of the WSP 2010 due to capacity problems, while noting the necessity to review the WSP 2010.

5.3 Manage and communicate effectively (paras 44-56)

5.3.1 Wadden Sea Quality Status Report

Document: WSB 44/5.3/1 Quality Status Report

5.3.2 Strategic communication and brand management

Document: WSB 44/5.3/2 Progress on brand positioning and strategic communication

Annika Bostelmann introduced Mike Horne from ASHA & Co. and briefly outlined the process of developing the brand platform. Horne presented the results of the collaborative co-creation process, conducted with representatives from each of the three nations. The presentation introduced a clear, comprehensive brand platform for the TWSC, that outlined the strategic foundation for the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand, including its core elements and communication framework. The meeting expressed overall satisfaction with the progress, particularly highlighting the successful compromises and the clarity achieved. It was noted that existing documents of the TWSC (e.g., Joint Declaration) remain foundational, and the guiding principle will direct future communications. The balance between conservation and ownership was recognised, with both aspects deemed equally important. A more detailed report of the consultation process was requested, which will be added as an annex to the minutes. Furthermore, the brand platform needs to be translated into Danish, German and Dutch.

The WSB **adopted** the brand platform as the guiding basis for future brand management and communication efforts and **requested** CWSS to provide a report on the creation process.

5.4 Intensify collaboration and strengthen engagement by working with partners (paras 57-66)

Stakeholder involvement

During WSB 42, and as a consequence of the cancellation of the Wadden Sea Forum, CWSS was requested, along with interested persons, to develop a proposal on how to involve stakeholders in the future including taking into account the potential role and capacity of the Partnership Hub (PH). Due to capacity issues in 2024, CWSS was not able to elaborate on a substantial proposal in time.

The Chairperson introduced the topic by stating that it should be clearly distinguished between two tasks: (1) stakeholder engagement in general, and (2) stakeholder advisors to the Board. CWSS would address (1) in a proposal. Regarding (2), CWSS was not positioned to decide on advisors on behalf of the delegations.

On (1): Busch reassured that this proposal is on CWSS's task list, but postponed due to lack of capacity, an issue likely to increase with a disbandment of the PH project officer position. Rösner pointed out that the reasons for why the Wadden Sea Forum did not succeed should be considered and avoided in the process of developing a new stakeholder engagement approach. Galler emphasised that the existing Partnership Hub should be considered in the proposal, while Jørgensen referred to a growing reluctance to the current setup of the PH.

On (2): The meeting agreed that CWSS should nevertheless take a lead in organising the decision process on finding advisors for the Board. Jørgensen offered support on this from the Danish Delegation, who is in close contact with the Danish equivalent to the former Wadden Sea Forum.

Knoke emphasised the importance of stakeholder involvement on a trilateral level and informed that Schleswig-Holstein has reserved the former WSF-budget share for a new trilateral approach on stakeholder engagement efforts.

The WSB **noted** the information, renewed the request for a proposal on general stakeholder involvement on a trilateral level by CWSS, and **requested** CWSS to come up with a proposal on how to organise the quest for advisors to the Board, supported by the Danish Delegation, with a document for consideration at the next WSB meeting.

6. Trilateral Governance

Trilateral Governmental Conference

Document: ***WSB 44/6*** *Trilateral Governmental Conference roadmap (distributed via e-mail on 19 November)*

Jørgensen presented the document as tentative. It included 27-29 May 2026 as proposed dates for the next Trilateral Governmental Conference. The WSB discussed that the save-the-date should be well-timed and that this year might be too early for a final decision on the dates. Also, the proposed deadline of February 2025 for CWSS's policy assessment report will not be feasible. Further, the International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium (planned by Waddenacademie for autumn 2025 in the Netherlands) and a trilateral youth conference should be included in the roadmap, pending the availability of additional funds and/or support for the organisation of the latter. The WSB estimated that more WSB meetings would be needed starting mid-2025 and the future drafting group should finalise those dates at the beginning of 2025.

The WSB **approved** the roadmap and **mandated** the delegations to appoint representatives to a ministerial declaration drafting group.

7. Wadden Sea Board Advisors

Henk de Vries reported that the authorising minister must decide on the permit to extract gas in Ternaard by end of 2024. Further, Waddenvereniging and Natuurmonumenten ensured that a military permit on Vlieland would not be extended. Whilst this has no immediate consequences, it may have future implications and therefore should be mentioned in the State of Conservation Report. Lastly, the Management Authority for the Wadden Sea is working on an ambitious integrated management plan with a multitude of actors.

Marco Brodde reported that the Danish National Parks are facing consequences due to the parliament's plan to cut administrative costs. Even though the parks had stressed that they were not administrative bodies, they have had to implement these severe cuts. In the Wadden Sea National Park, the Board had to find additional budget. During the annual meeting of the Danish Birdlife partner with the Ministry of Environment the success of expanding state-owned marsh land areas through land trades with smaller landowners for the protection of breeding birds was highlighted and the ministry asked to continue the process.

Rösner reported on a meeting with the new company and the responsible ministry regarding the Mittelplate oil production, where the company informed about an agreements made in 2024 with the ministry about the future of oil production. The company estimated that decommissioning the platform starting in 2041 would take eight years to complete. As the agreement is supposed to prohibit an expansion of the area where oil production would be allowed, the request of UNESCO regarding Mittelplate seemed to be fulfilled. However, the green NGOs still consider the exit date 2041 as much too late.

The WSB **noted** the information.

8. Any Other Business

Margrita Sobottka stated that the German Delegation sent CWSS comments on the documents WSB 44/5.1/2 and WSB 44/5.3/1 on 19 November 2024.

Flemming Just reported on the Danish government's decision on serious cuts of the funding of the national parks. The Danish Wadden Sea National Park Board is in close dialogue with other political players to meet this challenge[1]. Just further reported that the trilateral summer school on Borkum in August was very successful with a very good evaluation. The second summer school in 2025 is scheduled to take place in Ribe and on Sylt, with participation in the Wadden Sea Day in Wilhelmshaven on the final day.

The WSB **noted** the information.

9. Closing

The Chair thanked the participants for joining and for their contributions and closed the meeting at 13:45 hours on 20 November 2024.

The next WSB 45 meeting is to be scheduled via the National Focal Points. The Danish delegation will as soon as possible propose dates for additional WSBs needed in preparation of the next ministerial conference.

[1] After WSB 44, the Danish Government has reversed the cuts to the national parks

ANNEX 1: List of participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

44th meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 44)

20 November 2024
Online meeting

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Invited Guest	
Mr Mike Horne ASHA & Co.	

ANNEX 2: Agenda

ADOPTED AGENDA

44th meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 44)

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1. **Opening of the Meeting**
2. **Adoption of the Agenda**
3. **Summary Record WSB 43**
4. **Announcements**
5. **Implementation Wilhelmshaven Declaration**
6. **Trilateral Governance**
7. **Wadden Sea Board Advisors**
8. **Any Other Business**
9. **Closing**

ANNEX 3: Action items arising from the 44th WSB

ACTION ITEMS

44th meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 44)

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Action #	Agenda item	Actions agreed upon	Person responsible	Deadline
1	5.1.1	Extension of SOC report deadline	CWSS	tbd
2	5.1.2	Arrange January 2025 meeting to discuss details of SEA	CWSS	Mid-December
3	5.1.2	Discuss tender for SEA support	Focal Points	Mid-December
4	5.3.2	Report of the consultation process	CWSS	Mid-December
5	5.4	Renewed proposal stakeholder engagement	CWSS	WSB 45
6	6	Appoint representatives for ministerial declaration drafting group	Delegations	January 2025
7	9	Propose dates for additional WSBs needed	Danish delegation	Mid-December

ANNEX 4: In-meeting presentation “Brand platform” by Mike Horne, ASHA & Co., & requested report on creation process under Agenda Item 5.3.2.
(*distributed to WSB Members, Advisors, and Staff via e-mail*)