49th meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 49)

Adopted Summary Record

16 April 2026
Online

1. Opening of Meeting

The meeting was **opened** by the Chairperson, Anne-Marie Rasmussen, at 09.05 CET on 16 April 2026.

The Chairperson welcomed Luzette Kroon as future Chairperson of the Wadden Sea Board during the upcoming Dutch presidency. Peter Paul Mertens informed that the Dutch government appointed Luzette Kroon as the WSB Chairperson for 2026 to 2030. Luzette was the chair (Dijkgraaf) of Wetterskip Fryslân, the water authority of the province of Fryslân, and chair of the Netherlands World Heritage Foundation. As independent chair, she would dedicate herself to further shaping and strengthening our trilateral cooperation over the next four years, under the Dutch presidency. Mertens was confident that her efforts would make a significant contribution to the future success of the trilateral cooperation.

Additionally, Tjeerd de Groot was welcomed as new green NGO Advisor from the Netherlands, following Luuk Boon and Karsten Shipperheijn. The Chairperson further welcomed Mikkel Ammitzbøl Jensen from the Esbjerg Kommune, who will be the Danish stakeholder representative, with Preben Friis-Hauge as his substitute.

Ilka Wagner informed that she would not be present for the second half of the meeting, in which time Thomas Borchers would stand in.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Document: WSB 48/2 WSB 48 draft annotated agenda

The Chairperson proposed to move agenda item 6 in front of 5 and informed the WSB that due to a missing Danish mandate the Ministerial Declaration would not be discussed.

Table 1: List of documents submitted to WSB 48 not foreseen for discussion during the meeting.

Agenda Item	Document No.	Submitted by	Description	Proposal
4	WSB 49/4	CWSS	Announcements by CWSS	to note
5	WSB 49/5.1	TG-WH	TG-WH Progress Report	to note

*The WSB **adopted** the agenda with the proposed change of agenda item order.*

3. Summary Records WSB 46 and 47

Documents: WSB 49/3/1 Final Draft Summary Record WSB 47, WSB 49/3/2 Final Draft Summary Record WSB 48 (sent via e-mail on 15 April 2026)

The WSB was invited to **adopt** the draft Summary Records WSB 47 and 48 (**WSB 49/3/1-2)**.

*The WSB **adopted** the Summary Records WSB 47 and WSB 48 as submitted.*[1]

4. Announcements

Document: WSB 49/4 Announcements by CWSS

CWSS

For CWSS announcements see document WSB49/4.

NETHERLANDS

Dutch municipalities

Municipal elections took place in the Netherlands in March, and it remains to be seen what the implications will be for the Dutch municipal representation in the WSB.

Governmental

The Dutch Ecological Authority (Ecologische Autoriteit) has published a new report last week, which states that there is convincing evidence that nature in the Wadden Sea has deteriorated due to human influences. In addition to many reasons to take swift action, the State is also obliged to act. The Wadden Sea nature has been deteriorating for years, and it has not been possible to turn the tide. Therefore, the Ministry is establishing a new policy framework for the Wadden Sea. This policy framework will provide insight into how nature can recover and the extent to which human

[1] after the meeting, the Dutch delegation reminded to include their announcements into the final summary record of WSB 48 which were missing in the final draft.

activities—such as fishing, shipping, dredging, recreation, gas, salt, and sand extraction, and military exercises - can be accommodated in the Wadden Sea without causing damage to nature. To this end, the ministry has drawn up a memorandum outlining the principles for the so-called Wadden Sea Nature Policy Framework. The Ecological Authority concludes that the memorandum demonstrates the great urgency of restoring nature in the Wadden Sea and observes that the Wadden Sea is disturbed. The Ecological Authority shares the conclusion of the note: the ecological carrying capacity of the Wadden Sea is being exceeded by human activities, statutory targets are not being met and are not within reach under current policy. The Ecological Authority concludes that swift action is necessary and mandatory to resolve the problems in the Wadden Sea. In addition to the problems mentioned in the memorandum, climate change, sea level rise, and changing morphology are leading to fundamental changes that further increase cumulative pressure.

Succession of Peter Paul Mertens

After the Esbjerg conference, the responsibilities for Wadden Sea management will be shifted within the ministry. As a consequence, after the Esbjerg conference, Mertens will no longer be responsible for the trilateral cooperation. His successor in the Wadden Sea Board will be Fred van de Wart who will also attend the Esbjerg conference.

GERMANY

None.

DENMARK

None.

ADVISORS

Tourism manifesto

The tourism sector has published a manifesto, outlining how tourism can contribute to broad prosperity, in balance with nature and with respect for landscape, culture, and sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. In the Netherlands, this perspective is used in policy discussions. It may offer a useful basis for dialogue and exchange with partners in Germany and Denmark.

*The WSB **noted** the information.*

6. Trilateral Governance

-moved forward from its original place as per meeting agreement-

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Document: WSB 49/6/1 Draft Esbjerg Declaration (send via e-mail)

Not discussed due to the ongoing government formation process in Denmark.

TRILATERAL GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

The Chairperson noted that the Conference would be held regardless of the status of the Danish government formation process. Heidi Nielsen informed that on 10 April the Agency had received approval to proceed with preparations for the programme and side events. An update of the preliminary programme was scheduled for 21 April. In March, the WSB Chairperson had circulated a save-the-date. In addition, on 13 April, the Ministry's Permanent Secretary had confirmed with Dutch and German counterparts that the Conference would take place.

In response to a question from Ammitzbøl Jensen on how local stakeholders could support the Conference, Nielsen encouraged the WSB and Advisors to support the dissemination of the Conference website. Brodde advised that the website landing page should include clear instructions on the registration process.

Stefan van Keizerwaard noted that some specific contributions from the Netherlands were requested to be part of the conference programme and Nielsen replied that any suggestions to the programme be sent to her per email (before 20 April).

Nielsen explained that the Ports of Esbjerg conference was independent and would run in parallel with the first half of the first day (27 May) of the Trilateral Governmental Conference. Participants planning to attend both conferences were required to register separately for each event.

On request by de Groot, Soledad Luna informed that the Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) was planned to be a programme item during the conference.

POLICY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Document: WSB 49/6/2 Policy Assessment Report (send via e-mail)

Sascha Klöpper presented the PAR to the WSB.

Wagner thanked CWSS for the document, noting that it provided a clear overview of key achievements and unresolved challenges. While acknowledging the many positive outcomes, the German Delegation indicated that it would have welcomed a stronger Danish footprint, given Denmark's presidency. Wagner further suggested framing the joint SEA as a major ongoing challenge rather

than as a key achievement, as it had been initiated in response to an external request due to pressures on the ecosystem. Klöpper agreed that the wording could be adjusted but emphasised that reaching the necessary trilateral agreements to formally initiate the process should be regarded as a milestone achievement.

Vera Knoke suggested adding an overview of the thematic Quality Status Reports published during the Danish presidency. She also inquired about the status of the Synthesis Report, noting that it was intended to be reviewed first by the relevant trilateral groups and approved by the WSB prior to completion ahead of the TGC. Klöpper explained that due to recent developments the Synthesis Report would need to be moved from achieved to in progress, as further work was required to improve the quality of the existing draft, including the review by the groups and approval by the WSB. He noted that the current version would be treated as an internal document serving as a basis for further development.

Marco Brodde expressed his appreciation for the PAR, noting that it would be a valuable tool for discussions with local stakeholders to express the relevance of the trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC). Klöpper reminded that the current version of the PAR should be treated as an internal document. Mieke Langedijk also expressed her appreciation for the PAR and asked whether it would be possible to include a more reflective overview of the current situation and the products delivered, as well as priorities and plans for the upcoming period.

The Chairperson responded that the strategic direction onwards would be addressed by the new Declaration. Klöpper explained that an outlook had been included in the first draft of the PAR, however, together with TG-CM, CWSS had decided to remove the forward-looking elements as the PAR's conceptual focus was on past activities. He added that the outlook was still being drafted and that its placement and format would be discussed with the incoming presidency.

De Groot missed an analysis of the actions needed to restore the status of the Wadden Sea ecosystem. Klöpper responded that it was a shared responsibility of all parties to set the direction for the next period and to identify measures to restore the ecosystem. He noted that the Business Plan would provide much greater detail on the objectives for the upcoming period and emphasised that all TWSC members would need to play an active role in this regard.

*The WSB **noted** the information.*

5. Implementation Wilhelmshaven Declaration

5.1 PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE (PARAS 1-16)

Document: WSB 49/5.1 TG-WH Progress Report

Klöpper introduced the status of the SEA process, including information on the recently received letter from the WHC, which expressed appreciation and provided advice on the gaps identified in the draft Scoping Report. He also referred to the expert advice from the NCEA and the accompanying press release, which was scheduled for publication on 16 April.

Mertens thanked the TG-WH for their work on the SEA. He expressed support for the advice received, which called for closer coordination between the three national components and simultaneous implementation. He requested that the responsibilities of the trilateral consortium be added to the document and that a presentation on the status of the SEA be given at one of the coming WSB meetings. Regarding the Danish situation, Nielsen informed the meeting that procurement-related meetings were ongoing and would be finalised soon. She further expressed her confidence that Denmark would accelerate its efforts and catch up in the process.

Sobottka suggested that the WSB tasks TG-WH with thoroughly assessing the final expert report from the NCEA, the letter from the WHC, and the suggestions submitted by stakeholders, and with drafting a proposal on how to finalise the draft Scoping Report.

*The WSB **noted** the information and **tasked** the TG-WH with assessing the advice received on the draft Scoping Report and drafting a proposal for its completion.*

5.2 MANAGE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY (PARAS 44-56)

Trilateral Programming Committee on Wadden Sea Research

Document: WSB 49/5.2 TPC-WSR Strategic Note

The Chairperson introduced the TPC-WSR's strategic note on recent achievements and proposals for the forthcoming period. She noted that the draft Esbjerg Declaration included a strategic target on research and its specific implementation measures would be discussed at WSB level when developing the TWSC Business Plan.

Mertens thanked the TPC-WSR for their work and indicated that the proposed activities for the coming years could be accepted. He expressed particular support for establishing a genuinely trilateral research programme from 2028 onwards and acknowledged the importance of the summer school, noting the need for a truly trilateral budget. On his request, Nielsen explained that budgetary issues were not discussed at WSB meetings but expressed hope for future financial contributions from Denmark. Regarding the positioning of the TPC-WSR in the trilateral framework, Mertens reminded participants of the necessity to plan for generally lean structures.

Borchers also thanked TPC-WRC and emphasised the importance of engagement and advice, signalling support for the proposals, though with a reservation on finances. He expressed Germany's continued commitment to supporting the summer schools, acknowledging the success in integrating young scientists into the Cooperation.

Regarding the Science Platform, he noted that further clarification was needed on its meaning and organisation and suggested a discussion with the TPC-WSR on how to structure their advisory role in recognition of their engagement. He emphasised that, while the TWSC supported this work, there was no intention to create additional resource-intensive structures, and that keeping the advisory arrangements independent was favourable. He echoed Mertens' support for a trilateral research programme but noted that Germany could not commit to a new programme before first results from the current one.

Knoke suggested strengthening links between the TPC-WSR and existing groups, for example fostering exchange with the TG-CM to better connect management and research aspects.

Klöpper explained that the purpose of the TPC-WSR note was to increase visibility at ministerial level and to seek the WSB's advice on the appropriateness of this approach. He considered the WSB the appropriate level to discuss the issues raised. This was echoed by the board members. The proposal of Knoke to have a closer connection to existing trilateral groups discussing content and implications of research results for the management of the Wadden Sea was appreciated and would be taken up in the next period.

Regarding the proposal for a trilateral science platform, he suggested building on the momentum of the successful International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium, which had demonstrated a strong and engaged scientific community that could benefit from more structured exchange. He clarified that the TPC-WSR was not seeking to become an advisory body or member of the WSB, but to be mandated to provide scientific and research input on specific issues when needed, without creating new structures. He also noted the summer school's need for continuity. Finally, he stated that the note requested a mandate from the WSB for the TPC-WSR to continue its work.

In response to Borchers' request for clarification, Klöpper explained that the scientific platform was not intended to become a new trilateral group. While independence was considered important, the aim was to establish occasional thematic links to trilateral processes to enhance mutual exchange. Borchers added that the CWSS already played a key role in this connection and noted the need to consider the associated resources and the CWSS's role in maintaining it.

The Chairperson concluded that the WSB was the appropriate level to consider TPC-WSR's strategic note. She noted broad support for continuing the summer school, alongside some reservations regarding the science platform, particularly concerning its implications and resource requirements. She observed that it would be for the Cooperation to decide how to proceed, while noting that the

recommendations for ministerial endorsement were too specific and closely linked to the content of the Ministerial Declaration.

*The WSB **noted** the document in general support of the proposals with further discussion required on how to improve connections. The WSB **advised** the TPC-WSR that the WSB is the right level to consider their proposals.*

7. Wadden Sea Board Advisors

Knoke reported that the nomination of a stakeholder advisor from Germany was not yet possible, due to differing meeting schedules of the federal states' advisory councils. She expected that an advisor could be appointed by the first WSB meeting following the TPC.

*The WSB **noted** the information.*

8. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

9. Next meetings

The next meeting (WSB 50) will be held on **11 May 2026 from 13.30 to 16.30 CET**. A tentative additional meeting is planned for **18 May 2026 from 9.00 to 12.00 CET**.

Mertens reported that the Dutch delegation envisioned the WSB meeting after the TGC to be held in-person in the Netherlands to mark the start of the Dutch Presidency.

10. Closing

The meeting was closed at 11:15 CET on 16 April 2026.

Annex 1: List of participants of the 49th WSB

CHAIRPERSON

Anne-Marie Vægter Rasmussen, Chief Advisor, Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment, Ministry of Green Transition

DANISH DELEGATION

Christina Korsgaard Andersen Dissing, Head of Danish Delegation, Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment, Ministry of Green Transition

Anne Krag Svendsen (*On behalf of Klaus Bertram Fries*), Esbjerg Municipality

Carlo Sass Sørensen, Danish Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality, Danish Environmental Protection Agency and Coastal Authority

GERMAN DELEGATION

Ilka Wagner, Head of Delegation, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Vera Knoke, Head of Division Marine Protection and National Park, Schleswig-Holstein Ministry of Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature

Janne Lieven, Director, Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park Authority, Hamburg Agency for Environment, Climate, Energy and Agriculture (BUKEA)

Alexandra Stück, Ministry for Environment, Energy and Climate Protection of Lower Saxony

DUTCH DELEGATION

Peter Paul Mertens, Head of Delegation, Acting Director of Fisheries and Large Waters, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature

Stefan van Keijzerswaard, Chair Vereniging van Waddenzeegemeenten (Gemeente Het Hogeland)

Mieke Langedijk, Rijkswaterstaat Noord Nederland

ADVISORS

Mikkel Ammitzbøll Jensen, Medlem af Kommunalbestyrelsen - Esbjerg

Marco Brodde, Wadden Sea Team, Danish Ornithological Society

Tjeerd de Groot, Wadden Sea Team, Waddenvereiniging

Hans-Ulrich Rösner, Wadden Sea Team, Wadden Sea Office, WWF Germany

Heleen van Wijk, Head of Sustainability and Corporate Circularity, Groningen Seaports

Karsten Schipperheijn, Wadden Sea Team, Vogelbescherming Nederland

COMMON WADDEN SEA SECRETARIAT

Sascha Klöpper, Executive Secretary

Annika Bostelmann | Soledad Luna

SUPPORTING STAFF

Thomas Borchers, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Carolin Galler, Lower Saxon Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Protection

Kasper Knak Sørensen, Danish Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality, Danish Environmental Protection Agency and Coastal Authority

Heidi Nielsen, Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment, Ministry of Green Transition

Margrita Sobottka, Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park Authority

Marina Sanns, Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park Authority

Stefanie Sudhaus, Marine Protection and National Park, Schleswig-Holstein Ministry of Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature

Alex van Westerlaak, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature

Roeland Bakker, Rijkswaterstaat Noord-Nederland

GUESTS

Luzette Kroon, Dijkgraaf van Wetterskip Fryslân

Annex 2: Adopted agenda of the 49th WSB

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Summary Record WSB 47 and 48
4. Announcements
6. Trilateral Governance (adjustment of agenda proposed by Chairperson)
5. Implementation Wilhelmshaven Declaration
7. Wadden Sea Board Advisors
8. Any Other Business
9. Closing

Annex 3: Action items arising from the 49th WSB

Action #	Agenda item	Actions agreed upon	Person responsible	Deadline
I	6	Disseminate the Conference website	All	asap
II	6	Update PAR with recommendations from WSB 49	CWSS	asap
IIII	5.1	Assess the advice received on the draft Scoping Report and draft a proposal for its completion	TG-WH / CWSS	asap
IV	5.1	Present the SEA and the responsibilities of the trilateral consortium to WSB	TG-WH / CWSS	During one of the next WSB meetings