73rd NSC Executive Committee, 24th March 2017, Southend on Sea

8.30-8.35 Formalities
   Welcome by Cllr Kerstin Brunnström, NSC President
   1. Approval of the agenda
   2. Approval of the minutes of 72nd ExCom in Brussels 21st October 2016

8.35-8.50 Managing Maritime space
   3. Report by Cllr Anders Fasth, Chair of Marine Resources Group
   4. NSC involvement in European Maritime Day, Poole (UK) 18-19 May

8.50-9.00 Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport
   5. Report by Cllr Preben Friis-Hauge, Chair of Transport Group

9.00-9.15 Tackling Climate Change
   6. Report by Cllr Jimmy Gray, Chair of Energy and Climate Change Group (tbc)
   7. Report by NSC President Kerstin Brunnström from North Seas Energy Forum

9.15-9.45 Attractive and Sustainable Communities
   8. Report/presentation by Cllr Barney Crockett, Chair of new thematic group (tbc)
   9. Name of the new thematic group

9.45-10.15 Other reports
   10. Presidency and secretariat activities by Cllr Kerstin Brunnström, NSC President
   11. Interreg North Sea Programme – state of play, Christian Byrith, Director

10.15-10.40 Coffee

10.40-11.40 Other reports (continued)
   12. CPMR report, including the Future of Europe process, Gregg Jones, Director, CPMR
   13. Reports (max 5 min each) from national representatives

11.40-12.00 Strategic issues
   14. Brexit (Secretariat)
   15. Action plan 2017-18 (Secretariat and advisors)
   16. Communication strategy 2017-19 and communication activities plan 2017-18 (Secretariat)

12.00-12.45 Lunch

12.45-14.00 Organisational issues and finances
   17. New model for the NSC Secretariat
   18. Accounts 2016
   19. Statement of accounts
   20. Budget 2018
   21. The 26th Annual Business Meeting and North Sea Conference, Göttingen
   22. Next ExCom meetings
   23. AOB
1. Approval of the agenda

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Approves the agenda for the meeting
2. Approval of the minutes

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Approves the minutes of the 72nd ExCom meeting, 21st October 2016, Brussels
Attending
President Kerstin Brunnström
Vice President Andreas Lervik
Danish representative Preben Friis-Hauge
Dutch representative Nienke Homan
English representative not present
French representative not present
German representative Anke Spoorendonk
Norwegian representative Marianne Chesak
Scottish representative not present (proxy for Martin Brebner, see below)
Swedish representative Dag Hultefors

NSC thematic groups Chairs/Vice Chairs
Culture and Tourism Otto Kjær-Larsen
Economic Development not present
Energy/Climate change Jimmy Gray
Marine resources Anders Fasth
Transport see Danish representative

Other political representatives
Gunn Iversen Stokke Deputy County Mayor, Sør-Trøndelag

NSC Secretariat
Executive Secretary Magnus Engelbrektsson
Assistant Ex Secr Melissa Frödin
Assistant Ex Secr Irma Ganibegovic

NSC thematic group advisors
Culture and Tourism Geir Sør-Reime
Economic Development not present
Energy/Climate change Paulien Kooistra
Marine resources Camilla Løvaas Stavnes
Transport Jon Halvard Eide

Supporting officers and speakers
Kia Sofie Abildtrup, Syddanmark Nicolas Brookes, CPMR
Martin Brebner, Aberdeenshire Lucille Ehrhart, CPMR
Eileen von Elsner, Schleswig-Holstein Carsten Westerholt, Interreg North Sea
Kjersti Helene Garberg, Østfold
Torsten Raff, Bremen
Karen Greve Somerset, Nordjylland
Wim Stooker, Noord-Holland
Giles Merritt, Friends of Europe
Eleni Marianou, CPMR

North Sea Commission, c/o Region Västra Götaland, Box 1091, 405 23 Göteborg, Sweden
nsc@northsea.org / cpmr-northsea.org
72nd NSC Executive Committee meeting agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMALITIES  09.00-09.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome by President Kerstin Brunnström</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Approval of the agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Approval of the minutes of 71st ExCom in Vejle 17th June 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORTS/FOLLOW-UP ON ACTION PLAN  09.05-10.30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Introductory remarks (President)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Managing maritime space (MRG Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Increasing accessibility and clean transport (TG Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tackling climate change (ECCG Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attractive and sustainable communities (CTG and EDG Chairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Follow-up on other parts of action plan and communication plan (Ex Secr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reports from national representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC ISSUES  11.00-13.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Update on Brexit (external guest, tbc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. CPMR and the upcoming General Assembly (Eleni Marianou, CPMR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cooperation with the Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme (Christian Byrith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Future of Cohesion policy and EU budget post 2020 (Nicolas Brookes, CPMR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Status on a Preparatory Action for the North Sea Region (DG MARE, tbc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES  14.00-14.30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Election of Chair and Vice Chairs for the new thematic working group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Appointment of advisor for the new thematic working group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Election of Vice Chair for Marine Resources group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINANCES  14.30-14.45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Statement of accounts as per 31 August 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Revised budget 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AOB  14.45-15.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. Next ExCom meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The 26th Annual Business Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Meeting plan 2016-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Conclusion of the meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kerstin Brunnström, President of the North Sea Commission, welcomes everyone to the meeting, and to Region Västra Götaland’s Brussels Office where the meeting is held. She
introduces the secretariat, with staff members based in Gothenburg and Brussels. She mentions that with a revised strategy and well-functioning structures thanks to the work of former presidencies and secretariats, our meetings can now focus more on the contents of the strategy and less on internal matters.

1. Approval of the agenda

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee approves the revised agenda for the meeting, including the minor change of the order of the speakers.

2. Approval of the minutes from the 71st Executive Committee meeting

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee approves the minutes of the 71st Executive Committee meeting, 17th June 2016, Vejle (Denmark).

3. Introductory remarks by the President

Kerstin Brunström thanks all thematic groups for their active work and she sends a special thanks to the Culture Tourism Group and Economic Development Group who have both recently had their last meetings. She expresses hope that the members of those two groups continue to be active in the new thematic group.

She reports about the process led by DG Energy and DG Mare to follow up on the declaration on energy cooperation adopted in June by the energy ministers of the North Sea countries. A work plan was launched in September and four working groups have been established, one on the North Sea grid. The North Sea Commission will actively follow the work in these working groups. The Presidency will give an update on this at the next Executive Committee meeting in March 2017.

She also informs about the recent declaration by European regions and regional organizations, including CPMR, on a continued Cohesion Policy post 2020 for all regions. This was presented to the leaders of the EU institutions.

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.
4. Managing Maritime Space

A presentation from the Marine Resources Group was given by Anders Fasth, Chair, and Camilla Løvaas Stavnes, Advisor.

A resolution on discard ban was adopted at the NSC ABM, and because of the interest from other member regions the group is extending an invitation for a meeting on Norwegian experiences in January, in Bergen. The group is facilitating cooperation between member regions on maritime skills by study visits and discussions, and now there are two project proposals. The group is maintaining a dialogue with national level regarding maritime spatial planning – especially through Noord-Holland in the NorthSEE project.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

5. Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport

A presentation from the Transport Group was given by Preben Friis-Hauge, Chair, and Jon Halvard Eide, Advisor.

Preben Friis-Hauge informs that the group has taken part of CPMR’s territorial assessment on Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which will feed in to a position paper that will be presented during the CPMR General Assembly 2016.

Jon Halvard Eide informs about the latest meeting with the CPMR Transport Group, well organized by Bremen, where Motorways of the Sea, TEN-T and CEF was on the agenda.

The North Sea Commission has been invited by the GREAT project to present its report on alternative fuels at a seminar in Brussels on the 9th of November.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

6. Tackling Climate Change

A presentation from the Energy and Climate Group was given by Jimmy Gray, Chair, and Pauline Kooistra, Advisor.

Jimmy Gray informs about the joint meeting between the Energy and Climate Group and the Economic Development Group in the beginning of October in the provinces of Drenthe and Groningen. Pauline Kooistra informs that the group is working with students of the Hanze University in Groningen to develop a brochure and a movie on climate change.

The presentation was followed by a discussion on how to proceed on the ministers’ energy cooperation agreement in the North Sea. Nienke Homan, Dutch representative, expressed the need for a North Sea Strategy on how to move forward with the energy storage issue, which should also address the issue of multi-level governance in this, i.e. the role of regions.
Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

7. Attractive and Sustainable Communities
A presentation from the Culture and Tourism Group was given by Otto Kjær Larsen, Chair, and Geir Sør-Reime, Advisor.

Otto Kjær Larsen informs that the Culture and Tourism Group had its 55th and last meeting in Tjörn, Västra Götaland. The group had presentations and discussions concerning the groups’ history and there was also a lot of discussions about the new thematic group. There is interest from the group members to bring several priorities into the new group, such as diversification, circular economy, sharing economy etc.

Kerstin Brunnström thanks the chair and the advisor for an excellent work in leading the Culture and Tourism Group.

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

8. Follow-up on other parts of action plan and communication plan
Magnus Engelbrektsson, Executive Secretary, informs that the secretary is now complete with two Assistant Executive Secretaries, Irma Ganibegovic stationed in Gothenburg together with Magnus, and Melissa Frödin stationed at Region Västra Götaland’s Brussels Office.

The new webpage is still not ready for launch, and as a compensation the secretariat has sent out two newsletters with information to the members. Hopefully the webpage will be launched in the middle of November.

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

9. Reports from national representatives
Germany
Anke Spooredonk, German representative, will not stand as a candidate in the next Landtag election in Schleswig-Holstein. She informs that she is very pleased with the North Sea Commission and about new members – which means that the commission is going in the right direction. Anke Spooredonk stresses however that we need to think about next steps, and the natural step is a macro regional strategy for the North Sea.
Furthermore, she informs that Schleswig-Holstein has been approved for the Northern Connection project, a partnership with 23 partners that aims to strengthen the cooperation between energy clusters.

**Denmark**
Preben Friis-Hauge, Danish representative, thanks the North Sea Commission members for attending the ABM in Billund, Denmark. Preben Friis-Hauge informs that his region, South Denmark, is also approved for the Northern Connection project.

**Sweden**
Dag Hultefors, Swedish representative, informs about the ongoing regional reform in Sweden where the aim is to merge the 21 councils into six regions.

**Scotland**
Martin Brebner informs that Cllr David Aitchison, Aberdeenshire, will be the new representative of Scotland, replacing Martin Kitts-Hayes who has left all political assignments. Martin also extends apologies from Aberdeenshire for the delegation’s early departure from the North Sea conference in Legoland. Kerstin Brunnström assures him that the North Sea Commission will miss Martin Kitts-Hayes’ commitment to the work of the North Sea Commissions.

**Norway**
Marianne Chesak, Norwegian representative, informs about the upcoming regional reform where the 19 counties will probably be merged to about ten. Marianne Chesak also informs that the Norwegian government has presented a draft state budget for 2017 with drastically reduced co-financing for Interreg programmes.

**Decisions and conclusions**
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

**10. Update on Brexit**
Giles Merritt, founder and Chairman of Friends of Europe, shares his views on Brexit and whether the effects will strengthen or weaken the EU. Merritt believes that the EU has been on the wrong track for a while and is today not delivering on the bigger issues the member states face. Due to discontent and a lack of understanding and confidence for the EU, there is a need for a reform. The effects of Brexit may be a catalyst for reform where changes are made and credibility rises – and this can potentially strengthen the union.

It is also important that the EU informs about the added value of a membership – what has the UK gained being members in the EU? Also, what has the EU gained by UK being members? The fact that the citizens of UK voted for leave is not a British problem only, but a European problem – this is something that the EU should have pointed out before the referendum, and not leaving it up to the UK government to handle alone.
Finally, Merritt presses on the importance of bridging the gap between the EU and its citizens, making it a union fit for the challenges we are all facing.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information and to follow up on the development of Brexit at the next Executive Committee meeting in March 2017.

11. CPMR and the upcoming General Assembly

Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of CPMR, informs about the current work of CPMR and on the coming General Assembly, 2-4 November, Azores, Portugal.

There will be elections of the CPMR Political Bureau and an adaption of different documents, among others the final declaration. The North Sea Commission members are encouraged to send in input to the final declaration.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

The Executive Committee asks the North Sea Commission Secretariat to coordinate input from the NSC members to the Final Declaration for the CPMR General Assembly.

12. Future Cohesion Policy

Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Director, presents the latest information on future Cohesion Policy. CPMR will develop a joint position paper stating that Cohesion Policy is important for regional cooperation and should therefore be available for all regions in Europe.

The General Assembly will discuss a position paper on future Cohesion Policy. After the General Assembly the CPMR will develop a more concrete paper before the CPMR Political Bureau in March 2017. We need concrete examples on why Cohesion Policy is essential for regions in Europe to maintain a sustainable development.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

The Executive Committee asks the North Sea Commission Secretariat to coordinate input from the NSC members to the Draft Policy Position – Principles for Cohesion policy for the post-2020 period for the CPMR General Assembly.

13. Cooperation with the Interreg VB North Sea Programme

Carsten Westerholt, Deputy Head of Joint Secretariat, Interreg VB North Sea Programme, presents the latest information from the programme and initiates a discussion on possible cooperation between the programme and the NSC.
After the presentation there is a further discussion on the Norwegian government’s proposal to reduce the budget for the Interreg programmes in 2017. The members agreed on the importance of a continued financial support from the Norwegian government.

**Decisions and conclusions**
The Executive Committee takes note of the information on the Interreg programme.

The Executive Committee asks the Presidency to send a letter to the Norwegian government that states the importance of a continued financial support to the Interreg programmes.

**14. Status on a Preparatory Action for the North Sea Region**
Magnus Engelbrektsson informs that DG Mare, European Commission, wants to report to the European Parliament before they inform the NSC on the results of the Preparatory Action. This is scheduled for late March 2017 and DG Mare wants us to come up with good examples on cooperation for blue growth to be included in the presentation. The NSC should continue the dialogue with DG Mare on possible future steps.

**Decisions and conclusions**
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

**15. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the new thematic working group**
There is one nomination for the post as Chair:

- Cllr Barney Crockett, Aberdeen City Council

There are three nominations for the posts as Vice-Chair:

- Cllr Otto Kjær-Larsen, North Denmark Region
- Cllr Birgitta Adolfsson, Region Västra Götaland
- Cllr Drew Ratter, Shetland Council

**Decisions and conclusions**
The Executive Committee elects Cllr Barney Crocket, Aberdeen City Council, as Chair.

The Executive Committee elects Cllr Otto Kjær Larsen, North Denmark Region, and Cllr Birgitta Adolfsson, Region Västra Götaland, as Vice-Chairs.

**16. Appointment of advisor to the new thematic working group**
There are two nominations for the post as Advisor:

- Geir Sør-Reime, Rogaland, today advisor to the Culture and Tourism Group
- Simon Tijsma, Noord-Nederland, today advisor to the Economic Development Group
Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee appoints Geir Sør-Reime, Rogaland, as Advisor.

17. Election of Vice-Chair to the Marine Resources Group
There are three nominations for the post as Vice-Chair:
– Erik Kursetgjerde, Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune
– Henk Staghouwer, Provincie Groningen
– Drew Ratter, Shetland Council

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee elects Henk Staghouwer, Provincie Groningen, as Vice-Chair.

18. Statement of accounts per 30th August 2016
Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee approves the statement of accounts.

19. Revised budget 2017
Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee adopts the revised budget for 2017.

20. Next Executive Committee meeting
Magnus Engelbrektsson, Executive Secretary, informs that the 73rd Executive Committee meeting will be held in Southend-on-Sea, UK, on the 24th of March 2017, by kind invitation of Vice-President John Lamb, preceded by a dinner on the 23rd on the invitation of Ostfold.

To attract new members, the North Sea Commission will arrange a seminar on the 23rd for English county councils on the work of the NSC. ExCom members are encouraged to participate. Participants in the seminar will also be invited to the joint dinner and to be observers at the ExCom meeting.

Preben Friis-Hauge requests for the Executive Committee meetings – when they are held on Fridays – to start and finish earlier to allow for an earlier departure. The secretariat will take that in to account when planning the meeting.

Decisions and conclusions
The Executive Committee takes note of the information.
21. The 26th Annual Business Meeting

Magnus Engelbrektsson informs that Lower Saxony, Germany, has kindly offered to host the Annual Business meeting and the North Sea Conference. The ABM will be in Göttingen on the 28th of June 2017, followed by study visits and conference on the 29-30.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee accepts the kind offer from Lower-Saxony to host next year’s ABM in Göttingen, Germany.

22. Meeting plan 2016-2017

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

Kerstin Brunnström closes the meeting and thanks everyone for attending the meeting, for engaging discussions and informative presentations.
3. Managing Maritime Space

The item will be introduced by the Chair of the Marine Resources Group

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
## Managing Maritime Space

### Activity report: September 2016 – February 2017

### Priority and Key action areas in NSR 2020 strategy

**Managing Maritime Space**

- Use maritime spatial planning as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders

**Status on key activities:**

*Coordinate/contribute to NSC activities within the NorthSEE project:* Region Noord Holland participates in the project on behalf of the NSC/Marine Resources Group. The Noord Holland representative attends the MRG meeting and the group will be involved when relevant.

*Compiling data on land/sea interaction in the North Sea Region:* The group initiated the discussion in the Fredrikstad meeting September 2016 and followed up in Bergen January 2017. The following headlines will make up the content of the resolution, which will be put forward to the Annual Business Meeting in June 2017.
  - Multi-level governance
  - Skills gap at local level
  - Political commitment
  - Horizontal and vertical integration
  - How can planning keep pace with a dynamic sector?
  - Is it possible to make business within marine protected areas?
  - Cross border cooperation

- Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources

*Initiate a conference in Bergen to facilitate for exchange of good practice from Norwegian experience in implementing the discard ban to fishery dependent regions in the EU:* see explanation under group meeting in Bergen January 2017.

*Compiling experience from member regions on implementation of the discard ban:* This has been a point on the agenda the last couple of years, and it is based on input from member regions. The mini workshop on Norwegian experience with a discard ban is one result of this.

**Under guiding principles: Skills and R&D**

- Ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future and livelihood in coastal communities

*Facilitate for mobility of teachers and students between maritime educational institutions in member regions:* Member regions have presented project ideas and made contacts during group meetings, follow up and further development between partners in between meetings.
**Follow the European Commission’s blue career initiative:** The work the MRG is doing on recruitment to the fisheries sector is closely linked to the EU blue careers initiative. The group has applied to hold a workshop on the topic during the European Maritime Days in Poole, UK May 2017.

**Update on development in the EU, the CPMR and the North Sea Region related to the priority area**

The group has been working closely with the CPMR giving input to the CPMR Maritime Agenda, adopted at the CPMR GA in November 2016.

DG Mare has been asking for input regarding regional blue growth cooperation in the North Sea Region. The group discussed the matter during the full group meeting in Bergen January 2017 and sent input on behalf of the group.

**Thematic group**

Name of group: Marine Resources Group  
Chair: Anders Fasth, Västra Götaland - Sweden  
Advisor: Camilla Løvaas Stavnes, Hordaland - Norway  
Vice Chair: Jonathan Wills, Shetland Islands - Scotland  
Vice-Chair: Henk Staghouwer, Northern Netherlands - Netherlands

**Group Meeting(s): when, where, regions attending, focus of the meeting**

A **strategic meeting** was held in December 2016 at Schiphol. Chair Anders Fasth, vice-chair Henk Staghouwer, advisor Camilla Løvaas Stavnes and the officer of Cllr Henk Staghouwer Marten ter Wolde attended the meeting. The meeting was an introduction to the group for Cllr Henk Staghouwer that was elected vice chair in October 2016. It was also a preparation for the full group meeting and an opportunity to discuss and move on with current affairs.

The **full group met in Bergen** mid-January 2017. The meeting attracted 21 participants from 4 countries and 11 regions. The minutes will be made available at the website. The main focus of the meeting was to learn from Norwegian experience when it comes to discard ban. The Norwegian Directorate of fisheries, Institute of Marine Research and a fishery organisation were invited to give presentations and engage in discussion with group members.

**Participation in other events and processes of relevance for the priority area, e.g. EU and CPMR events, project meetings, professional conferences and networks, etc**

Given input to DG Mare’s work on preparatory action; best practices on regional blue growth cooperation.

Been in touch with KIMO, Waddensee cooperation and North Sea Advisory Council about strengthening cooperation and exchanging knowledge.
The group has put forward a support letter to the Marine Planning Exchange; to underline the need for planning to be based on marine knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other group activities contributing to the NSR 2020 key action areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application to hold a workshop on recruitment to the fisheries sector during the European Maritime Day 2017 was successful, but the workshop needs to be merged with an application from CPMR. An update can be given during the ExCom meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upcoming activities (group meetings, participation in &amp; contribution to external events, processes and projects, etc) and planned activities in follow up of the key actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15th March – adviser to participate in planning of North Sea Conference 2017, Göttingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th-25th April – full group meeting in Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th-19th May – European Maritime Days 2017, Poole-UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th-30th June – North Sea Commission ABM and North Sea Conference, Göttingen, DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th-27th September – full group meeting in Flekkefjord, NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. European Maritime Day

The European Commission (DG MARE) issued a call with a deadline in December for potential workshops at the 2017 European Maritime Day, which will be held in Poole (UK) on 18-19 May. The Marine Resources Group and the Secretariat offered to arrange a workshop on recruitment to the fisheries sector.

Due to a large number of workshop proposals, the organisers have decided to merge the NSC proposal with a CPMR proposal for a workshop on “New skills for European maritime technologies” into one workshop.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
5. Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport

The item will be introduced by the Chair of the Transport Group.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
## Increasing accessibility and clean transport
### Activity report: September 2016 – February 2017

**Priority and Key action areas in NSR 2020 strategy**

**Priority:** Increasing accessibility and clean transport

**Key action areas:**

- Ensure good access to the TEN-T Core Network for peripheral and maritime regions through funding instruments (the CEF) and governance mechanisms (Core Network Corridor Forums)
- Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea
- Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping

### Update on development in the EU, the CPMR and the North Sea Region related to the priority area

#### Meetings in TEN-T Core Network Corridor Forums

The 9th round of meetings in the Core Network Corridor Forums took place in Brussels in the first week of December. The meetings presented the second generation of Work Plans (now officially approved by the member states), provided an update on the state of play of corridor implementation – incl. updated project lists and the way forward.

#### Public consultation on mid-term evaluation of Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

The European Commission has launched a mid-term evaluation of the infrastructure programme for transport, energy and ICT, CEF, ending on 27 February. The general purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to report on the progress in achieving the objectives of the programme, the efficiency of the use of resources, and its European added value.

#### CEF "blending" call

DG Move has launched a call for projects contributing to the trans-European network that utilise private finance, as support through debt financing and risk-sharing may not always be sufficient. Blending in the context of this Call, is the use of CEF grants in projects utilising private finance, or with finance from National Promotional Banks/European Investment Bank. An info day was organised in Brussels on 27 February.
Public consultation regarding the revision of the EU Clean Vehicles Directive

The Directive is a “public procurement-related instrument, which is more commonly known as "the Clean Vehicles Directive". It requires public bodies to consider certain energy and environmental impacts when purchasing road vehicles”. Response deadline: 24 March 2017.

European Shipping Week 2017

The second European Shipping Week is being organised from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March 2017 in the permanent representation of Malta in Brussels and will bring together all relevant stakeholders and policy-makers to provide the necessary input on the future of the maritime sector.

CPMR technical paper and response to CEF consultation

The CPMR Secretariat has prepared a technical paper which is a first step in the process of preparing a position paper on the review of the CEF regulation for post-2020: thematic content and design of the 9 core network corridors. The paper is up for discussion at the Political Bureau on 10 March. The CPMR Secretariat has also responded to the above-mentioned consultation on the CEF.

Meeting of CPMR Transport group 27 January 2017

The meeting addressed the CEF review and discussed the draft CPMR response (see above). The meeting also addressed the consultation process on the Detailed Implementation Plan (DiP) for Motorways of the Sea (MoS), and presented a CPMR working paper on this issue.

Call on MEPs to sign letter in support of accessibility

The CPMR Secretariat is requesting the members to encourage their MEPs (Members of European Parliament) to sign a declaration in support of regional accessibility in the TEN-T.

Thematic group

Name of group: Transport
Chair: Cllr. Preben Friis-Hauge, South Denmark Region, elected on 31 October 2011
Advisor: Jon Halvard Eide, Vest-Agder Norway (appointed October 2000)
Vice Chair: Cllr. Peter Argyle, Aberdeenshire Council Scotland, elected 8 March 2013
Vice-Chair: Cllr Kåre Pettersen, Vestfold County Council, elected 4 March 2015
**Group Meeting(s): when, where, regions attending, focus of the meeting**

1 - 2 March, Aberdeen. The first afternoon was devoted to a seminar on autonomous vehicles organised by the City of Bremen. The ordinary group meeting took place in the morning of 2 March, focusing on the key action areas of the accessibility and clean transport priority of the NSR 2020 strategy. The Chair will provide an oral update from the meeting in his progress report to the Ex Com in Southend on 24 March.

**Participation in other events and processes of relevance for the priority area, e.g. EU and CPMR events, project meetings, professional conferences and networks, etc**

- The Adviser presented the report on the mapping of alternative fuels in public transport among NSC member regions at a seminar organised by the CEF project GREAT in Brussels on 9 November. The report was afterwards sent to DG Move upon request.

- Representatives of NSC member regions from South Denmark, Västra Götaland and Lower Saxony attended the last forum meetings of the Core Network Corridors for Scandinavian - Mediterranean and North Sea Baltic in December.

- NSC members from Aberdeenshire and Örebro, as well as a representative of the NSC Secretariat in Brussels attended the meeting of the CPMR Transport Working group on 27 January. The meeting addressed the CEF review and discussed the draft CPMR response (see above). The meeting also discussed the consultation process on the Detailed Implementation Plan (DiP) for Motorways of the Sea (MoS), and presented a CPMR working paper on this issue.

- The Adviser and a representative of the NSC Secretariat in Brussels met with DG Move staff on 2 February to be updated on current issues within the CEF and EU initiatives on low emission vehicles & clean transport. DG Move is interested to know whether NSC members are involved in the use of financial instruments in the transport sector, and requested the NSC to raise awareness about funding opportunities and identify "front runners" within clean vehicles.

- A seminar on funding opportunities for green transport was organised by the Interreg North Sea Region Programme back to back with the Transport group meeting in Aberdeen 2 March. Several group members attended and contributed to this seminar.

**Other group activities contributing to the NSR 2020 key action areas**

- Comments to CPMR technical paper on the CEF revision
- Input to CPMRs response to the CEF consultation
• The Adviser has provided input for a speech to be delivered by the NSC President at the transport session of the CPMR Political Bureau at Malta on 10 March
• Aberdeenshire Council is lead partner and several group members are partners to an application to the North Sea Region Programme on the promotion of public transport in rural areas. The project application is utilising findings from previous reports by NSC group members, and has been discussed at group meetings. The Adviser has signed a letter in support of the project.

Upcoming activities (group meetings, participation in & contribution to external events, processes and projects, etc) and planned activities in follow up of the key actions

The next group meeting will take place in Göttingen, Lower Saxony, on 29 June, ahead of the North Sea Conference there.
6. Tackling Climate Change

The item will be introduced by the Chair of the Energy and Climate Change Group.

**Recommendation:**

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. *Takes note of the information*
Tackling climate change
Activity report: September 2016 – February 2017

Priority and Key action areas in NSR 2020 strategy
Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels
During the meeting in September the regions of Midtjylland, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen, Hordaland, Aust Agder, Groningen and Drenthe presented their views, policies and practices. The project Topsoil was presented, and the group visited a waste to energy plant at Wijster, Drenthe and the Energy transition center, EnTranCe in Groningen.

A group of 30 students from the Hanze University of applied sciences in Groningen developed a climate change campaign. This resulted in different instruments we could use, to discuss during the next meeting in Aust Agder. Also some useful material was developed for the brochure.

Promote energy efficiency and facilitate for greenhouse gas emissions:
Input from Groningen and Hordaland was given on this topic during the September meeting.

Foster strong regional, national and European support for the development of the North Sea Grid.
Organise input from member state level Netherlands at meeting with coastal provinces in December 2016. Having a meeting with DG Ener, Brendan Devlin about the political declaration and region input from NSC. In September a meeting took place with the Benelux, Jan Molema about the Political declaration. They form the secretariat of the Declaration, also a meeting with WindEurope took place to stress the role of the regions. Talks took place about the possibility of a joint meeting with the Atlantic Arc Commission on off shore wind in September 2017.

Update on development in the EU, the CPMR and the North Sea Region related to the priority area
Climate Taskforce of the CPMR: At the initiative of the Region of Brittany, the CPMR launched the Climate Task Force which will replace the previous Energy/Climate Working group of the CPMR. Among its main issues, the Task Force aims to:
- Regions in the implementation of the Paris Agreement
- Understand the economic, social and environmental impact of climate change in peripheral maritime regions;
- share the Regions’ experiences on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- ensure synergies with existing projects, as well as with the key objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.
The first meeting will take place on 30 March in Brussels.

Winter Package of the European Commission: In December the European Commission published its “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package, more commonly referred to as the Winter Package, consisting of numerous legislative Proposals together with accompanying documents, aimed at further completing the internal market for electricity and implementing the Energy Union. The Winter Package is part of an overall package of more than 40 planned measures, which was first announced in February 2015 and designed by the Commission to strengthen and standardise the European Union’s energy markets.
Political declaration off shore wind:
Support groups were formed to give output to the political declaration off shore wind by the EC, DG Ener in cooperation with member states, TSO’s and industry. The working groups are focussing on Maritime spatial planning, development and regulation of offshore grids and other offshore infrastructure, support framework and finance for offshore wind projects, standards, technical rules and regulations in the offshore wind sector. The Benelux Brussels forms the secretariat of the Declaration.

Thematic group

Name of group: Energy and Climate Change Working Group
Chair: cllr Jimmy Gray (Highlands)
Advisor: Paulien Kooistra (Drenthe)
Vice Chair: cllr Tjisse Stelpstra (Drenthe)
Vice-Chair: cllr Jon Olav Strand (Aust-Agder)

Group Meeting(s): when, where, regions attending, focus of the meeting
September 2016, Groningen-Drenthe
Focus of the meeting: climate change adaptation, mitigation, energy skills, circular economy, energy efficiency, green data centres.

Participation in other events and processes of relevance for the priority area, e.g. EU and CPMR events, project meetings, professional conferences and networks, etc

Meeting with WindEurope October 2016
Conference cooperation Energy cooperation Lower Saxony Northern Netherlands, January 2017
Meetings with students of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, assignment Climate Change Brochure/communication strategy and other instruments
Input for the meeting of Dutch coastal provinces in December 2016, participation of ministry of Economic affairs, DG Mare, topic off shore wind cooperation.

Other group activities contributing to the NSR 2020 key action areas

Upcoming activities (group meetings, participation in & contribution to external events, processes and projects, etc) and planned activities in follow up of the key actions

23 March North Seas Energy Forum
23 March Meeting off shore wind Lower Saxony, Brussels
28 March, Intergroup Seas, rivers, islands and coastal areas. North Sea Preparatory Action in practice
28 March Smart Islands initiative, Brussels
31 March Climate Task force (CPMR, Paris)
19-21 April, Working group meeting Agder Norway
29 May-2 June, EU Green week, Brussels
19-25 June, Sustainable Energy Week, Brussels
29 June, study visit Gottingen, North Sea Conference 2017
September, Meeting off shore wind with Atlantic Arc Commission CPMR
October, Working Group Meeting
7. North Seas Energy Forum

The European Commission is organising the North Seas Energy Forum in Brussels on the 23rd of March. It is a stakeholder forum within the process of North Sea energy cooperation which was agreed by the national governments in 2016.

President Kerstin Brunnström will participate in the Forum as a speaker and will give an oral report from the Forum.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
8. Attractive and sustainable communities

The item will be introduced by the Chair of the new thematic group.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
Attractive and sustainable communities
Activity report: September 2016 – February 2017

Priority and Key action areas in NSR 2020 strategy

Priority 4: Attractive and sustainable communities
More sustainable tourism sector, differentiation of tourism offers, heritage-based tourism, cultural networks, demographic and migration challenges, blue growth, knowledge transfer across sectors

Update on development in the EU, the CPMR and the North Sea Region related to the priority area
EU communication on Building a European data economy (10 January 2017)
Directive proposal on the respect for private life and the protection of personal data in electronic communication (10 January 2017)
EU initiatives on collaborative economy
EU initiatives on circular economy

Thematic group

Name of group: To be decided by ExCom
Chair: Barney Crockett
Advisor: Geir Sør-Reime
Vice Chair: Otto Kjær Larsen
Vice-Chair: Birgitta Adolfsson

Group Meeting(s): when, where, regions attending, focus of the meeting
The 55th and final meeting of the Culture & Tourism Group took place in Västra Götaland region 13-14 October 2016. Here, the transition to the new thematic group was a focal point, but the group also discussed the Seafood Route, cruise awareness, youth exchanges in culture, culture and inclusion of migrants, and there were several presentations from regional actors in Västra Götaland relating to these themes.
North Denmark, Västra Götaland, Central Denmark, Rogaland, Vest-Agder and Aberdeenshire participated.
The Economic Development group organised a seminar together with the Energy and Climate Change group 14-15 September 2016 on climate change and mitigation measures in the provinces of Drenthe and Groningen. The seminar exchanged information on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures as well as energy shift towards renewables, and had technical visits to selected sites. There was no specific meeting of this group since the 2016 AGM.
The first meeting of the new thematic group to be held 3 March in Aarhus, focus to define new group and technical visits focusing on several themes: culture (Aarhus European Capital of Culture 2017), culture tourism, climate adaption and tourism, circular economy and bio economy, regional food development, museums.
Delegates from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Rogaland, Vest-Agder, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre og Romsdal, Vestfold, Buskerud, North Denmark, Central Denmark and Västra Götaland have registered for the meeting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in other events and processes of relevance for the priority area, e.g. EU and CPMR events, project meetings, professional conferences and networks, etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The adviser has participated in a NECSTourR conference on collaborative economy and tourism in Barcelona 3 December, and in several events at the European Week of Regions and Cities on smart cities, and the future cohesion policy. The adviser also participated in a workshop on age-friendly tourism organised by DG Grow in Brussels 13 September 2016.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other group activities contributing to the NSR 2020 key action areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The joint seminar organised by the Economic Development group and the Energy and Climate Change group was a major activity towards Priority 3: Tackling climate change and the sustainable tourism element of Priority 4.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upcoming activities (group meetings, participation in &amp; contribution to external events, processes and projects, etc) and planned activities in follow up of the key actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The new group will meet 3 March for the first time, with almost 30 participants. The chair group has suggested several concrete actions relating to Priority 4 for the NSC Action Plan 2017-18 (see this).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Name of the new thematic group

The group dealing with priority area “Attractive and sustainable communities” has been asked to come up with a proposal for group name to be decided by the Executive Committee. The group will discuss the matter at its meeting on 1-3 March.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Decides to name the new group according to the group’s proposal
10. Presidency and Secretariat activities

The item will be introduced by the President of the North Sea Commission.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
Activities of Presidency and Secretariat Sept 2016-Feb 2017

This report summarizes activities within the action plan but outside the four priority areas, as well as activities related to the communication plan.

Membership
- Efforts are made to increase the member base. The ultimate goal is that the North Sea Commission should represent all regional governments around the North Sea, which would give us a strong legitimacy in relation to European institutions and national governments. So far, at least one region has indicated to CPMR that they may send in an application this year.

- All councils on the United Kingdom are invited to an information session in Southend in March.

European institutions
- The President is invited to speak at the North Seas Energy forum in March, and will attend the SEARICA group meeting in the European Parliament where the DG MARE is supposed to report progress on the Preparatory Action.

- The President has established contact with the Committee of Regions’ Intergroup North Sea-Channel and spoke to a meeting of the group in October.

- The Secretariat has frequent contact with officers in the European Commission to get information on various issues, and to make the North Sea Commission visible.

Interreg
- The President wrote a letter to the Norwegian government and parliament to express concern about the proposed budget cuts for co-financing of Interreg North Sea. The letter was an initiative from the October Executive Committee meeting.

- The Secretariat has regular phone meetings with the Secretariat of the Interreg North Sea Programme.

Brexit
- The North Sea Commission was asked by the UK House of Commons Committee for Exiting the EU in December to submit evidence on the Brexit issue. The evidence was given in writing.

The NSC’s role within the CPMR
- Several NSC member regions will be involved in the new CPMR climate task force and a couple of regions have leading roles in the expanded work of the Cohesion Policy task force.

- The President and other members from the North Sea Commission were involved in panels.
at the CPMR General Assembly.

- The secretariat coordinated the NSC members comments and amendments to the final declaration and policy positions papers during the General Assembly to assure a North Sea perspective.

- Discussions have started with the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission about possible joint initiatives for regions around the English Channel, first of all about exchange in the field of offshore energy.

- The Secretariat has attended all meetings of the CPMR management group and has frequent meetings with the CPMR secretariat on issues of common interest.

Brussels North Sea network
- A meeting was held in Brussels in December with representatives of the member regions’ Brussels offices. This first meeting aimed at informing about the North Sea Commission and establish a first contact. Some of the offices are actively involved in North Sea issues, some are not, and it could be useful to meet occasionally to discuss developments of common interest.

Internal NSC work
- The Secretariat has been present at all meetings of the thematic groups.

- The task force for a new secretariat model has met once and finalized a proposal.

- The Secretariat and advisors have met to discuss activities.

Communication

The Secretariat
- has informed members and relevant stakeholders about NSC, current and planned activities by sending out three newsletters and by being active on the social media (Twitter).

- has launched the new website in December, and informed the members about it.

- is continuously updating the website with information from the Presidency, on new NSC policy statements and positions, about the thematic groups, planned activities, the CPMR and other relevant news from the North Sea region.

- has updated and quality checked the internal contact list, both for members and for thematic groups.

- has created external contact lists with contact information on North Sea-Channel Intergroup (Committee of Regions) and Brussels Offices representing the regions around the North Sea. We are in the process of updating a contact list with stakeholders in the North Sea.

- has distributed the revised North Sea Region 2020 strategy online and during meetings.
11. Interreg North Sea Programme

Christian Byrith, Director of the Interreg North Sea Programme Secretariat, will give an update on recent developments in the programme.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
12. CPMR

Gregg Jones, CPMR Director of Finance and EU Programmes, will give a briefing of recent developments in CPMR.

Gregg will focus on the Future of Europe process that the CPMR is launching, and where the Geographical Commissions are requested to take an active part. The overall aim is to present a strong position from the CPMR on the reform agenda for the Future of Europe, setting out the central role of regions in this debate. It is proposed that the CPMR would adopt a Manifesto on the Future of Europe in 2018, before the next European Parliament elections, the new European Commission and the likely implementation of Brexit in 2019.

Each Geographical Commission is invited to contribute ideas, analysis and suggestions to the preparation of the Technical Report for the CPMR General Assembly in October 2017, and to suggest names of academics and other experts who could play an active role in the initiative.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
2. Asks the Secretariat to prepare, in cooperation with CPMR, a Future of Europe workshop in connection with the Annual Business Meeting and the North Sea Conference in Göttingen in June
1. Purpose of the paper

This paper sets out a proposed approach to the CPMR’s engagement in the Future of Europe debate during 2017 and 2018.

It is for circulation to members during January and for consideration and adoption of further steps at the Political Bureau to be held in Gozo, Malta on 9 March 2017.

2. Purpose of CPMR engagement

2017 marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome and 2018 the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, which provides a fitting context in which the CPMR launches its reflection on the future of Europe.

The overall aim of this work is to present a strong position from the CPMR on the reform agenda for the Future of Europe, setting out the central role of regions in this debate, and the CPMRs priorities and vision for reform.

It is proposed that the CPMR would:

- Adopt a **Manifesto on the Future of Europe** placing regions and the territorial dimension at the heart of this discussion, identifying key political messages;
- Undertake a **detailed technical analysis** that underpins the political messages, looking at different scenarios/visions of EU reform, the key challenges facing Europe, focused around key thematic issues for CPMR.

The target audience for this work will be:

- EU Institutions in particular the European Parliament and European Commission
- National Governments
- CPMRs member regions
- Other regions/territories that are not currently members of CPMR
- Other EU networks and organisations representing regional/local interests, including the Committee of the Regions
3. Timing

The Commission is due to publish a White Paper on the future of Europe in March, therefore, we propose to address a first press release to the EU Institutions on our prospective work on the future of Europe at the Political Bureau in March 2017, with the intention of sending a clear message of intent to the European Commission, the other EU Institutions and the Member States about the central and essential place of Europe’s regions in these discussions.

Given 2019 is a year of change at EU level with the European Parliament elections, a new European Commission and the likely implementation of Brexit, we propose adoption of the CPMR Manifesto at the AGM in the autumn of 2018. This gives us around 21 months in total to complete this work.

We are proposing a two-phased approach:

Phase 1 - February-July 2017: Formulation of key ideas, themes, thinking
High level discussions and ideas generation/formulation, at the Brussels level, through the Geographical Commissions, and engagement of academics/experts from Member Regions. This will include a mixture of brainstorms, events as well as a new Web Forum for contribution of analysis and perspectives on EU reform (more on this below). This will culminate in the presentation of a Technical Analysis Report to the CPMR Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October 2017, setting out the key themes/issues and including conclusions and recommendations for consideration by members. We envisage to discuss this report with Michel Barnier, the European Commission’s Chief Brexit Negotiator, during our Helsinki AGM on (include date). Michel Barnier is very familiar with the work of the CPMR and is former EU Commissioner for Regional Policy (1999-2003).

Phase 2 - November 2017 – June 2018: Wider consultation and articulation of key political messages
This phase would focus on a wider consultation of membership, including further activities by the Geographical Commissions, local and regional events organized by Member Regions, to translate the conclusions and recommendations from the first phase into key political messages (and further analysis) on the future of Europe. The outcome from this second phase of work would be:

(i) CPMR Manifesto on the Future of Europe: setting out key political messages. To be adopted at the AGM in the autumn of 2018 and presented to the EU Institutions during a high level event in Brussels.

(ii) Accompanying Technical Report: providing detailed analysis from the research undertaken, providing the rationale behind the political messages.

Following the adoption of the CPMR Manifesto there would be a communication/lobbying strategy to promote the key messages of the report, including a launch conference in Brussels, as well as events in the Geographical Commissions and in Member Regions.

4. Reflecting CPMRs core principles

The CPMR since its creation has stood for three core principles:

- Balanced Territorial Development and Territorial Cohesion
5. Responding to Europe’s challenges

Europe is facing a significant number of challenges as we highlighted in the discussion document at the AGM in the Azores in November (and Annex I provides a summary of these challenges). These are broad and wide-ranging, cutting across many different levels of European life. There is a strong territorial dimension to many of these issues, and clear variation in the impact, the intensity and importance of these issues to CPMRs member regions

We propose in this work to concentrate on three key pillars of activity, which draw together a number of these challenges, where we can make a forceful and persuasive contribution to the reform debate:

- **Investment, competitiveness and territorial cohesion**: centred around the social, economic and financial instability following the financial crisis of 2008-2009 remains, seen in the growing levels of social and economic disparities across the EU, and the failure to effectively address this through EU level action; as well as the need to support investments in key infrastructure across all parts of Europe including the maritime economy, with connectivity for peripheral and outlying areas a key priority, to underpin balanced territorial development; and measures to strengthen the competitiveness of regions across Europe, investing in skills, education, research, new and emerging technologies and sectors like ocean and marine energy etc.

- **Democratic participation**: in the aftermath of the financial crisis there has been a rise in populist and euro-sceptic forces across Europe, together with an increase in xenophobia and racism; this has included a growing frustration with and lack of trust in traditional politics, the role of governments, institutions and the mainstream political parties, at both the national and EU level; re-engaging with citizens, in particular young people, has therefore become a top priority in the debate on the future of Europe; there are also calls for greater solidarity in Europe to address the growing inequalities, and for political institutions to provide stronger leadership and direction in pursuing a Social Europe agenda;

- **Relations between the EU and its neighbours**: in particular, the geo-political instability on the EUs borders in Eastern Europe and the Middle East/North Africa, including the resurgence of Russia and the ISIS threat; the impact of Brexit in the north west of Europe (Channel, Atlantic and North Sea). These developments draw the ‘peripheral’ regions into the heart of many of the challenges along the EUs borders, including a strong maritime dimension to these, and one message that we would expect to come out of this will be ‘ignore the periphery at your peril’.

These are very much shared challenges that cut across national boundaries and which cannot be tackled by individual countries acting in isolation of one another. Close and effective cooperation at the European level is imperative, involving all levels of government – regional, national and supra-national – through a coordinated, multi-level governance approach.
We will underline and illustrate the role that regions play in promoting and engaging in partnership, through networks like the CPMR, and through projects and other initiatives that promote co-operation in its various forms: economic, cultural, political and in many other ways. How such activities provide the ‘glue’ that brings Europe closer together, and how such co-operation activities are even more essential given the social, economic and political instability across Europe, and should be supported and reinforced in the future.

6. Considering different ‘visions’ of Europe

We expect the EU level discussion to focus around different ‘scenarios’ or ‘visions’ of reform, and in the Technical Analysis we would set out what these different scenarios are, and analyse how these different visions of Europe could impact on regions and at the territorial level. This would include looking at the EU Institutions perspectives, individual Member States and groupings of Member States (where evidence exists of this, e.g. VISIGRAD).

In particular, we see this as centring around a number of themes:

- Level of integration within the EU: i.e. How much EU? This ranges on the one hand from the disintegration or break up of the EU, to at the other end the adoption of a federalist model. We would propose to look at how different levels of integration (including two-speed or multi-speed Europe; thematic and geographical intensities of co-operation) could impact on the three core thematic pillars of this work, including the relations between the EU and wider Europe.
- Role of the EU Institutions: including the use of the ‘community method’ of policy and law-making versus the rise of inter-governmentalism; the degree to which the interests of regions are understood and prioritized within these; the role of the Committee of the Regions as a voice for regional interests; ideas and proposals for reforms to the EU Institutions;
- Role of the EU Budget in addressing new and existing challenges: rationale for EU level intervention; challenges to traditional areas of expenditure; own resources proposals presented by Mario Monti; investment versus redistribution; importance of EU programmes and projects in making the EU relevant, and the role of regions in this.
- Role of national/regional parliaments: their formal status within the EU policy and law-making process, legislation and programming; whether there will be any reforms to strengthen this; and this would include regional parliaments.
- Political visions on the overarching policy direction of the EU: economic, security and foreign policies; level of intervention and control from Brussels (relates back to ‘integration’ model); role of the EU budget to support policy interventions; Social Europe versus austerity/conservative economic policies; use of central controls including ‘conditionalities’ in programming; commitment to ‘core’ EU values and how these position the EU in the global context

Whilst much of the above is centred on an internal debate in the EU about its future direction and structure, this remains very relevant to the relations between EU and wider Europe, thematic pillar 3 described above, and the analysis we undertake will take this into account.
7. Organisation of the work

Modes of engagement
We envisage a number of different methods of gathering evidence and facilitating debate:

- Brainstorms in Brussels with reps from EU Institutions, academics, regional/national reps
- Workshops/seminars in Brussels and in Member Regions
- Geographical Commission: discussions/workshops at Political Bureau meetings and potentially dedicated events
- Dedicated event(s) on potential impact of Brexit on CPMR regions

We also propose to establish a Web Forum – in part inspired by the UK in a Changing Europe initiative. The idea of this forum would be to provide a space where academics and other experts, the CPMR Directors, the Geographical Commissions, and the CPMR Member Regions, could post analysis and research of relevance to the future of Europe debate. It would serve as both a research tool and a communication platform for the CPMRs initiative.

This Web Forum would be managed by the CPMRs Press and Communications Officer.

CPMR General Secretariat
The work will be coordinated by the CPMR General Secretariat, under the lead of the new Director of Finance and Programmes, Gregg Jones, and with the close involvement of the CPMR Policy Directors, CPMR Press and Communications Officer, and the Secretariats of the Geographical Commissions.

There will be regular reporting to the CPMR Political Bureau and the Geographical Commissions, and engagement of Member Regions on a day to day basis through a ‘Technical Expert Group’ (more on this below).

Geographical Commissions
The Geographical Commissions will play a central role in contributing ideas and background information into the preparation of the CPMR Manifesto and the technical analysis underpinning these. It is important that this work reflects and encapsulates the perspectives at the Geographical Commission level, within an overall CPMR position.

We invite each Geographical Commission to determine whether to cover one or more of the three pillars outline above to focus on in their reflections.

For phase 1 each Geographical Commission is invited to contribute ideas, analysis and suggestions to the preparation of the Technical Report for the AGM October 2017. We would propose that this be gathered through:

---

1An initiative financed by the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK bringing together academics from across the four UK ‘home’ nations, to analyse and discuss the UK’s relationship with the EU in the context of Brexit.
High level discussion at the General Assembly meetings and/or at Executive Secretariat meetings of the Geographical Commissions between March and July.

Potentially through dedicated ‘brainstorming sessions’ organized by the Geographical Commissions involving academics, experts and key stakeholder interests.

Potentially (where feasible/relevant) adding a ‘future of Europe’ theme to other events planned by the Geographical Commission between March and July.

Each Executive Secretary would provide feedback to the CPMR General Secretariat, through a short report summarizing the key messages, conclusions and ideas coming out of these discussions. To ensure that this feedback is taken into account by the CPMR General Secretariat in preparing the Technical Report for AGM October 2017, this information should be provided by beginning of July at the latest (and for events taking place in July within a week of the session ending).

The Geographical Commissions are also invited (as per the next section – engagement of CPMR partners) to suggest names of academics and other experts, to the CPMR General Secretariat, and to forward any analysis or research that they are aware of within their membership that is of relevance to the debate on the future of Europe.

For Phase 2 of the work we envisage the Geographical Commissions playing a role in animating wider consultation and engagement with stakeholders, through organizing dedicated workshops as part of the future of Europe debate. We would also envisage clear opportunities for co-operation with other organisations or networks active within the Geographical Commission areas in this debate on the future of Europe, such as the European Movement, youth organizations, student unions, sectoral interests etc. The CPMR General Secretariat will provide further guidance on this aspect of the work following discussions with the Geographical Commissions during Phase 1.

Engagement of CPMR partners

We are inviting expressions of interest from CPMR Members Regions about their interest in actively participating in this initiative.

We see participation taking place at a number of levels:

- **Political engagement**: confirmation of interest of regional politicians taking an active role in the initiative, at the EU/Brussels level, through the Geographical Commissions and through activities in Member regions;

- **Technical Expert Group** (established in February/March 2017): around 15-20 officials from Member Regions. This body would act as a sounding board to play an active role in shaping the work, and in facilitating participation from regional experts/academics. It would meet in Brussels and would also function through an e-mail group;

- **Academics/experts from Member Regions**: recommend and bring on board academics and experts from our Member Regions and Geographical Commissions who could play an active role in the initiative – including contributions of ideas, research and analysis, participating in events (in Brussels) and at the local/regional level. We are particularly keen to involve academics from Member Regions with expertise on the territorial dimension in key challenges and policy contexts.

- **Regional/local events**: this could include dedicated events animated and organized by CPMR Member Regions in the context of this initiative. It could also mean making the link between the
CPMRs future of Europe initiative and other events planned for 2017 and 2018 that are of direct relevance, such as events being organized in the context of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, or in relation to rotating EU presidencies, or European Capital of Culture, and so on.

- **Partnership working:** as per the Geographical Commissions there is clear scope for co-operation at the Member Region level with other organisations, networks and sectoral interests, including European Movement and others.

To be actively involved in Phase 1 we ask CPMR Member Regions to inform us of their interest for engagement in the above areas as soon as possible (and ideally during February at the latest).

**Engagement of young people**

Connecting with young people, getting their views on the future of Europe is an important priority. CPMRs work on the future of Europe. The Brexit vote in the UK saw a clear difference between the age groups in support for the EU, with strong support amongst younger people compared to the older generations. This, despite the impact of the social and economic crisis on young people, which has seen them bear the brunt in many ways.

We are particularly keen to encourage Geographical Commissions and Member Regions to consider how to engage young people in this debate, including through partnership working and through involving organisations active in representing young people. The Atlantic Arc Commission is inviting a group of young people, trainees within the Maritime sector, to participate in its General Assembly in March 2017, as part of a session dedicated to blue growth, and investing in skills and training, and this potentially provides a first such opportunity.

**Wider partnership**

The CPMR General Secretariat will be looking at opportunities to work in partnership with others at the EU level and in Brussels in this work on the future of Europe, including think tanks, EU associations, networks and other bodies (including Committee of the Regions) to share ideas, potentially organize joint events and other activities to raise the profile of our work.

We also propose to establish a wider pool of academics and other experts at the Brussels/EU level, to provide ideas, critical thinking, analysis and advice, in particular through the proposed brainstorms/workshops and the Web Forum mentioned above.

This is in addition to the opportunities for cooperation that we have already mentioned in regard to the Geographical Commissions and activities of Member Regions.
Annex 1: Addressing the challenges facing the EU

Discussion document AGM November 2016

The discussion document presented to the AGM in November set out the broad range of challenges that face the European Union at present, which provide the context in which the debate on the future of Europe is taking place.

These cover a number of new and emerging challenges as well as issues that have been on the EU agenda for a number of years. One of the issues we will face in our work on the future of Europe is determining which of these challenges are most important to CPMR, where we should focus our energy in setting concrete and clear messages for action.

By way of reminder the broad issues (and one or two additional ones that will provide the context for this work) are as follows:

**New and emerging challenges:**

- Brexit: the withdrawal of the UK from the EU has implications at many levels (trade, cultural, movement of people including students, researchers, tourists, businesses etc., transport and accessibility, the maritime agenda and share marine environment etc.) and will have a disproportionate territorial impact on parts of Europe, including in particular the Channel, Atlantic and North Sea coastal areas. Brittany published a report to scope out and measure the potential impact of Brexit on its territory and other parts of Europe are undertaking similar exercises.
- Deepening crisis in the democratic process with the rise of nationalism and populist movements, distrust of and resentment towards political institutions, experts and elites, which has increasingly played out as an anti-EU sentiment. This has been building up over a number of years, both pre- and post-2009 financial crisis, however, it has reached something of a climax with the Brexit vote and the Trump election across the Atlantic.
- Centralisation tendencies within many member states, placing challenges to regional and local institutions
- Migration and refugee crisis and the pressures coming from the EU’s immediate external borders. Like Brexit this is having a disproportionate territorial impact on some parts of Europe, and illustrates the ‘shared’ nature of European policy challenges.
- Geopolitical threats and instability in the near border of the EU, notably Russia and the Middle East. Again, there is a strong territorial dimension to this issue, particularly in the Baltic and the Central Eastern European area.
- Security and terrorism, which has become top of the agenda in 2015-2016 following the spate of attacks across Europe. This is inextricably linked to both the migration and refugee crisis and the geopolitical threats and instability on the near border of the EU.

**Ongoing challenges include:**

- Economic and financial crisis: lack of investment; austerity and pressures on public budgets; fragility of Eurozone economy, and individual Eurozone states;
- Ongoing high levels of unemployment, including youth unemployment, growing social divisions and wealth disparities between Member States and within Member States, and insufficient focus on the needs of peripheral areas;
• Climate change and wider sustainability agenda, including the commitments to delivering the UNs Sustainable Development Goals [more on this below]
• Growing disillusionment with the EU project: viewed as a ‘distant and elitist project’ (part of wider democratic crisis noted)
• Energy security including the Energy Union, and overcoming barriers to developing ocean and marine energy
• Competitiveness of the European economy in a global economy: investing in research, skills, developing new economic sectors including the blue economy
• Reforming the Single Market including digital single market, which has been a dominant theme under both Barroso and Juncker’s Commissions. The angle the CPMR could pursue in this is ensuring that territorial cohesion underpins development of the Single Market reforms.

The status of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within EU policy-making, and within the future MFF is something that we will monitor. There is suggestion that these could be used as the basis for the successor to the Europe 2020 strategy. How this shapes a vision of the Future of Europe, and what impact this could have on CPMRs member regions is something we will consider in this work.
13. Reports from national representatives

The national representatives will update the Executive Committee on relevant issues from the respective country.

**Recommendation:**

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
14. Brexit

Negotiations on the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union are expected to start soon, and finish by March 2019. The outcome of these negotiations is likely to have implications for the North Sea region and North Sea cooperation, and should therefore be monitored closely by the North Sea Commission. Whenever appropriate, the North Sea Commission should make its views heard to the negotiation process and in public.

The Brexit issue is relevant also in the framework of the Future of Europe discussions launched by the CPMR.

The NSC was asked in December 2016 to submit evidence on short notice to the UK House of Commons Select Committee on Exiting the EU. The evidence was delivered in written form after consultations with the President and Vice Presidents, and is attached here for information.

In order to follow the negotiations, to draft opinions and to propose NSC action, it is suggested that a Brexit task force is established in the North Sea Commission, chaired by a political representative and supported by the Secretariat.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the evidence to the UK House of Commons

2. Establishes a task force with the responsibility to report to the Annual Business Meeting and the Executive Committee on developments in the Brexit negotiations, to draft opinions and propose NSC action when appropriate, and to involve actively in the CPMR Future of Europe process

3. Elects a political representative to chair the task force
To the House of Commons Committee on Exiting the European Union

Evidence submitted by the CPMR North Sea Commission

Dear Sirs,

The North Sea Commission was invited to give evidence to the Committee at its meeting in Aberdeen on 19th December. For logistic reasons it was not possible for us to attend on short notice, and we thank you for this opportunity to give our evidence in written form. We remain at the Committee’s disposal for questions and for possible future oral evidence.

Executive summary

- More cooperation, not less, is needed to balance the many and conflicting interests in the North Sea, one of the busiest sea basins in the world.
- The entire North Sea region is likely to suffer economically from new trade barriers. It is potentially extra harmful for coastal areas and port cities across the region. But Brexit effects go beyond economy. Other major concerns are how Brexit will affect the situation in the North Sea itself, and how it will affect conditions for exchange of people and cooperation between institutions in the North Sea area.
- The North Sea energy cooperation, initiated under the Dutch EU Presidency, must continue with all North Sea countries involved also after Brexit. This is crucial for European energy security as well as for climate change mitigation.
- British support and participation is needed in future EU efforts to strengthen the blue economy of the North Sea area.
- From a North Sea perspective, there is a need for continued British participation in the coordination and cooperation on maritime spatial planning and on fisheries, whatever the outcome of Brexit.
- It would be valuable to seek agreements that makes it possible for the UK to remain a partner of major European programmes for exchange, research and transnational cooperation.
- The UK constitutes an important part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in the North Sea Region. It would be of great importance that the UK remains a part of the TEN-T governance structure and continues to take part in transport projects under EU programmes.

Who we are

1. The North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation between 32 county councils and equivalent bodies in the North Sea countries. We have 7 UK members: the Councils of Shetland, Orkney, Highland, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Fife and Southend-on-Sea. Our member list also includes almost all regions/provinces/Länder/fylken with a North Sea coast in France, The
Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In 2017, in the light of a possible Brexit, we will increase our efforts to attract more UK members.

2. Our mission is to further partnerships between regional authorities which face the challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea. We promote and create awareness of the North Sea Region as a major economic entity within Europe. We are a platform for developing and obtaining funding for joint development initiatives. We lobby for a better North Sea Region.

3. Over the years, our efforts have contributed to the creation of the Interreg programme for the North Sea, the North Sea Advisory Council, the EU Preparatory Action for the North Sea, and this year’s national cooperation agreement on energy. We build our work on a strategy, North Sea Region 2020, which was revised this year. Our four main themes are managing maritime space, transport, energy/climate change, and attractive/sustainable communities (business competitiveness, tourism, skills and employability).

4. The current President is Cllr Kerstin Brunström, Västra Götaland, Sweden, and our secretariat is based partly in Gothenburg, partly in Brussels. The NSC is part of the CPMR, a pan-European organization of peripheral and maritime regions. More information can be found on cpmr-northsea.org.

General comments

5. A British decision to exit the European Union may cause many concerns on various levels. As a North Sea organization for sub-national political bodies, we concentrate our evidence to potential Brexit effects on the North Sea and its coastal regions, and leave to others to comment on wider issues as the future of the EU, EU’s global standing, and relations between countries on a national level.

6. The North Sea is one of the busiest sea basins in the world, used for fisheries, oil and gas production, windfarms, shipping, military purposes, and leisure. The major European ports are located here. More than 50 percent of the EU’s foreign trade passes through these ports. 80 percent of EU’s offshore renewable energy is produced in the North Sea. It is a sea where many millions of Europeans spend their holidays along the shores. It is a sea and a coastal area with vulnerable ecosystems.

7. To balance all these interests and increasing pressure, to develop blue growth while at the same time safeguarding ecological and recreational values, the North Sea needs more of cooperation, not less. It needs transnational, cross-sectoral, and multilevel cooperation and governance. The North Sea Commission has, on several occasions, and in the context of the EU Preparatory Action, called for a stronger platform for cooperation between national and subnational bodies and with stakeholders in the area.
8. Since major cooperation initiatives in the North Sea Region are part of the European Union or EEA framework, Brexit will call for new ways to handle transnational cooperation on North Sea issues. The North Sea Commission’s major concerns are how Brexit will affect the situation in the North Sea itself, how it will affect economic development in the entire region, and how it will affect the conditions for exchange of people and exchange between institutions. We see a risk that these perspectives will not be sufficiently addressed in future negotiations.

9. The final declaration from the CPMR General Assembly in November 2016 called upon the European institutions and the British government ‘to negotiate a Brexit deal that causes as little harm as possible to the peripheral and maritime regions and to European unity and cooperation. The CPMR further wishes to:
   - Express its hope that the difficulties caused by this decision may be amicably resolved
   - Invite UK member Regions to participate in the work of the CPMR, which will remain relevant and useful to them, whatever the outcome
   - Express support for UK member Regions who wish to find a way to maintain participation in the European project.’

Trade

10. Germany, France, The Netherlands and Belgium are among the top 10 export countries for the UK. About 30 per cent of UK export goes to North Sea countries. The UK is among the top 5 export markets for all other North Sea countries. Possible new trade barriers in the North Sea, if the UK was to leave the EEA, are likely to change this balance, and have a negative economic effect on the entire North Sea region. Coastal regions and port cities might suffer more than others.

Energy and climate change

11. The North Sea Region can expect a wide range of climate change impacts over the coming decades. The entire region is warming, sea level is rising, extreme weather occurs more often. Coastal areas across the North Sea are vulnerable to flood hazards and coastal storm surges. Marine and coastal ecosystems are expected to change. Although many of these changes have their causes on a global level, they need to be tackled regionally. And by working closely together North Sea countries can do a lot to adapt to climate changes, but also to mitigate such changes.

12. In June 2016, under Dutch EU Presidency, nine Ministers from the North Sea countries, including the UK, and two EU Commissioners signed a political declaration and action plan on energy cooperation. The aim of the agreement is to create good conditions for the further development of offshore wind energy. It is supposed to boost interconnection and capacity, and will lead to better energy security and less greenhouse gas emissions. The work areas
include a better coordination of spatial planning, of regulation for grids, of finance and support frameworks for offshore wind projects, and of standards and technical rules in the sector. The North Sea Commission welcomes this initiative, and calls for full British participation in the work also post-Brexit.

Blue growth

13. The North Sea’s maritime industry is said to represent at least € 150 billion and employ at least 850,000 people. In 2013, the European Parliament approved a preparatory action – a regional strategy for the North Sea Region to support cross-sectoral maritime cooperation in the region. A stakeholder workshop on blue growth was held in June 2016 within the frame of the preparatory action. One finding of the workshop was that while there are several strong blue growth clusters in the North Sea coastal areas, there seems to be considerable potential for more cooperation between the various clusters to really boost the maritime sector.

14. The workshop identified a number of needs: clear political will and direction, better compilation of data about the sea and the marine environment, mapping of support structures, better matchmaking in the maritime sector, success stories/flagships, less bureaucracy and easier ways to combine funding for cooperation. British support and participation is crucial in this work and in future EU efforts to strengthen the blue economy.

Maritime spatial planning

15. An EU directive on maritime spatial planning was adopted in 2014. The directive establishes a set of minimum common requirements for the member states to follow, in order to increase coordination and cooperation, reduce conflicts, encourage investment, and protect the environment. In the case of a hard Brexit, the EU directive would no longer apply to the UK. The need and reasons for joint spatial planning will however still remain, not least in the North Sea. We call for continued and intensified cooperation and coordination, whatever the outcome of Brexit negotiations.

Fisheries

16. Even after a Brexit, the UK will be subject to international conventions and other commitments. One of them is UNCLOS, which requires fish stocks in a sea basin to be managed jointly and at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSE) level. Another one is the OSPAR mechanism to protect the marine environment in the North-East Atlantic. If the UK leaves the Single Market, it will however leave the European Common Fisheries Policy.

17. A recent agreement between EU ministers on fishing opportunities in the North Sea establishes quotas based on the fact that many fish stocks have recovered in past years, thanks to years of restricted and disciplined fisheries. Brexit will in any case require some form
of agreement between EU and the UK on fisheries, and it is of great importance that this is negotiated in cooperation with stakeholders, and that the result safeguards continued good management of fish stocks in the entire North Sea.

European funding for transnational cooperation

18. Several EU programmes aim at increasing cooperation across borders, to strengthen understanding in general and to tackle common challenges. Erasmus+ supports education, training, youth and sports, and has given millions of young Europeans opportunities to study abroad. Horizon 2020 contributes to Europe’s global competitiveness by supporting research and innovation projects with partners from several countries. A UK withdrawal from these programmes would have a negative impact in UK as well as in other European countries.

19. Cohesion Policy is one of the areas where most of the EU budget is spent. Territorial cooperation is one objective of the Cohesion Policy, and the North Sea region has its own Interreg programme. Since the 1990’s this programme has supported projects for regional development with partners in several North Sea countries. The case of Norway shows that a country outside the EU can still be part of the transnational programme, with its own internal arrangement for co-financing. We would highly recommend the UK to look into this possibility for its own future participation in transnational North Sea cooperation.

Transport

20. The UK constitutes an important part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in the North Sea Region and of the Core Network Corridor North Sea - Mediterranean. The UK part of the TEN-T consists of road and rail corridors, as well as of urban nodes and major sea ports which are of high importance for European trade and movement of people. A Brexit could therefore negatively affect the conditions for successful implementation of the TEN-T up to 2030 (deadline for completing the core network) and beyond. It would be of utmost importance that the UK remains a part of the TEN-T governance structure in line with the Norwegian model, and continues to participate in transport projects under European research and cooperation programmes.

‘The necessary step-change in the management of the North Sea Basin’

21. We want to finish by quoting ‘The North Sea under pressure: is regional marine co-operation the answer?’, a report of the House of Lords EU Committee in March 2015: “We conclude that no existing body or mechanism has a broad enough remit to facilitate the political co-operation required to make the necessary step-change in the management of the North Sea basin. We recommend therefore, that the UK Government convene a North Sea ministerial conference in order to develop a holistic approach to all economic and environmental issues affecting the North Sea. Importantly, the conference should seek to deliver the urgently required political
and strategic vision which will sustain this precious resource and secure it for future generations.” These words still apply, and are even more important in view of the United Kingdom exiting the European Union.
15. Action plan 2017-18

The item will be introduced by the Secretariat and the advisors.

**Recommendation:**

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Approves the draft action plan 2017-18 for final decision at the Annual Business Meeting
### North Sea Commission Action Plan 2017-2018

#### NSR 2020 Priority: Managing Maritime Space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key action area</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Key activities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use maritime spatial planning (MSP) as a tool to promote dialogue between different governmental levels and stakeholders</td>
<td>Increase dialogue with relevant authorities on national level</td>
<td>Coordinate/contribute to NSC activities within the NorthSEE project</td>
<td>Continuous; NorthSEE is a 3 year Interreg-project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that relevant EU institutions and member states have a high level of knowledge about the NSR and the NSC’s priorities within the field.</td>
<td>Establish contact with the new desk officers at DG Mare</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular meetings and/or contact with relevant officials and stakeholders to keep them up to date with NSR developments.</td>
<td>2-3 times/year, when Advisors are in Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure sustainable and innovative exploitation of marine resources</td>
<td>Establish a NSC position on Brexit to make sure regional interests are heard</td>
<td>Actively follow Brexit’s potential implication on the marine sector</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a NSC position on environmental protection</td>
<td>Identify areas of cooperation with Waddensee cooperation and KIMO in field of environmental protection</td>
<td>Q 2, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future and livelihood in coastal communities</td>
<td>Boost exchange of experience between member regions regarding maritime skills</td>
<td>Continuous, during working group meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow the European Commission’s blue careers initiative</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about relevant EU calls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

North Sea Commission, c/o Region Västra Götaland, Box 1091, 405 23 Göteborg, Sweden
nsc@northsea.org / cpmr-northsea.org
### NSR 2020 Priority: Increasing accessibility and clean transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key action area</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Key activities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure good access to the TEN-T Core Network for peripheral and maritime regions through funding instruments (the CEF) and governance mechanisms (Core Network Corridor Forums)</td>
<td>The revised and post 2020 CEF regulation is more beneficial for the North Sea Region in terms of accessibility and framework conditions for maritime transport.</td>
<td>Draft input to revision of CEF-regulation through the CPMR and submit a response to the consultation on behalf of the NSC.</td>
<td>Q 3-4 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about upcoming CEF calls.</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More CEF transport projects with involvement of stakeholders in, and/or of benefits to NSC member regions are generated.</td>
<td>Discuss project ideas and exchange information about members’ involvement at group meetings.</td>
<td>2-3 times/year at working group meetings and other conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More projects from the NSC member regions are included in the Core Network Corridors’ project lists</td>
<td>Provide input and arguments at meetings of relevant Corridor Forums.</td>
<td>2-3 times/year, at Corridor Forum meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate modal shift from road to rail and sea</td>
<td>More funding and higher co-financing rates for MoS projects in the CEF</td>
<td>Provide views on EU implementation plan for MoS through the CPMR.</td>
<td>Q 3-4, as part of input to CEF post 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More favourable conditions for participation in the CEF of actors from peripheral regions and 3rd countries</td>
<td>Collect views and input from, and possibly meet with maritime and rail transport stakeholders in the NSR.</td>
<td>Continuous, at least 2-3 meetings/year in relation to working group meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping</td>
<td>Better policy frameworks, funding opportunities and technological development in support of clean efficient and</td>
<td>Further develop the survey on the use of alternative fuels in public transport and other transport services among NSC members, and keep DG move up to date – use survey as a</td>
<td>Finalise survey Q 1-2, 2018. Disseminate to dg move continuously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support measures and incentives to promote clean, efficient and inclusive transport, incl. Clean Shipping (cont.)</td>
<td>basis for policy positions and project development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusive transport solutions</td>
<td>Disseminate information on relevant calls under CEF, Horizon 2020 and interreg and initiate/support/shadow projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(cont.)</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better policy frameworks, funding opportunities and technological development in support of clean efficient and inclusive transport solutions</td>
<td>Organize and follow-up on project development seminar in cooperation with the NSR programme secretariat on 2 March 2017.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate the possibility of using Financial Instruments to promote/develop projects on the greening of transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to the EU consultation on the revision of the Clean Vehicles Directive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key action area</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Key activities</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation through local, regional and national levels</td>
<td>Boost exchange of best practices within climate change and climate change adaptation</td>
<td>Create and distribute/communicate a brochure for the North Sea based on its best practices.</td>
<td>Assignments Climate Change of 30 students Hanze university of applied Science finished in January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and communicate factsheets within this brochure for participating regions</td>
<td>Discussion of brochure at April meeting Agder, finished in June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions</td>
<td>Monitor developments in the regions, stimulate exchange of best practices.</td>
<td>Exchange of best practices between regions in the group. Focus on reduction of emissions from industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 times/year Exchange of activities during working group meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promote energy efficiency as well as innovation and green growth in low-carbon technologies</strong></td>
<td>Inform group members and other stakeholders in NSR about relevant EU calls.</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor developments in the regions, stimulate exchange of best practices</td>
<td>Exchange of best practices between regions.</td>
<td>2-3 times/year Activities during working group meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Foster strong regional, national and European support for the development of the North Sea Grid</strong></th>
<th>Visibility of NSC positions in relevant statements and documents.</th>
<th>Continuous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the role of regions in the work related to the MS political declaration off shore wind.</td>
<td>Follow up on participation in Stakeholder Conference Political Declaration in March 2017</td>
<td>MS WG meetings are expected approx. 2 times a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish the NSC and its member regions as an active partner in the energy cooperation around the North Sea</td>
<td>Exchange of practices of regional cross border grids interconnections</td>
<td>2-3 times/year at ECCWG meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with Atlantic Arc Commission of the CPMR on off shore wind.</td>
<td>Sept/oct 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key action area</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Key activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support the development of a more sustainable tourism sector</strong></td>
<td>Raise awareness of digital economy opportunities and challenges in the tourism sector</td>
<td>Exchange of practice between members, visits to relevant businesses during group meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support the diversification of tourism offers in coastal areas as well as in cruise tourism</strong></td>
<td>Create a North Sea Seafood Route</td>
<td>Combine existing offers into a coherent North Sea route as a starting point for adding other offers and launch the route in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop cultural heritage based tourism, nature, outdoor and health tourism in coastal areas</strong></td>
<td>Develop new products</td>
<td>Develop projects focusing on product development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support the development of permanent networks for cultural actors</strong></td>
<td>Support youth networks in culture</td>
<td>Ensure broad youth representation at Norwegian Youth Culture Festival 2017, and at the 2017 Cultural Summit on Mors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improve policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges</strong></td>
<td>Exchange knowledge and experiences on migration and work</td>
<td>Arrange a seminar in Aberdeen on migrants and work opportunities - combined with technical visits to selected businesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promote maritime clusters to continue to play an important role as provider of blue growth, jobs and innovation.

Joint NSC seminar/conference on Blue Growth

Prepare a 2018 conference on this theme, possibly in Brussels

Q 2, 2018

Promote knowledge transfer and cross-overs between different sectors in the North Sea Region

Promote exchange of best practice between the members of the group

Exchanges at meetings, presentation of project ideas

2-3 times/year at working group meetings

NSR 2020 Guiding principles

Innovation, excellence, sustainability, stakeholder involvement, skills and R&D and visibility are horizontal priorities and are therefore included in all the other priorities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Key activities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Strategic cooperation in the North Sea Region | Promote regional interests in EU actions for the North Sea  
Mobilising EU institutions/MS in North Sea cooperation | Follow-up on the EU North Sea Energy cooperation (see above)                      | Continuous                      |
<p>|                                         |                                                                             | Follow-up on preparatory action                                                 | Q 3-4, 2017                    |
|                                         |                                                                             | Organise a North Sea stakeholder Conference, potentially together with the Interreg North Sea Secretariat | Q 2, 2018                      |
|                                         |                                                                             | A combined NSC-BSC Brussels offices meeting, prior to the CPMR ABM 2017        | Q 3, 2017                      |
|                                         |                                                                             | Organise a conference on innovation and smart specialisation strategies in the NSR | Q 2, 2018                      |
| Use of ad hoc task forces                | Ensure that interests of the North Sea Region are heard in the Brexit process | Create and maintain a Brexit task force                                          | 2-3 meetings/ year              |
|                                         |                                                                             | Follow Brexit negotiations from a North Sea perspective                         | Continuous                     |
|                                         |                                                                             | Prepare NSC positions and activities when appropriate                           | Continuous                     |
| Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR | Promote the North Sea perspective in the work of the CPMR                   | Promote participation of NSC member regions in CPMR working groups and task forces | Continuous                     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengthen the NSC role within the CPMR</th>
<th>Speak for North Sea interests in the Future of Europe process and other CPMR position papers</th>
<th>Process with deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(cont.) Promote the North Sea perspective in the work of the CPMR</td>
<td>Promote NSC members as speakers in meetings of the CPMR governing bodies</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract new members and keep the existing</td>
<td>Strengthen NSC legitimacy as a representative for the entire North Sea region</td>
<td>Building relations with potential new members, focus UK and Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase income in order to cover more secretariat costs from the budget</td>
<td>Contact with member regions after elections and mergers</td>
<td>Meetings in Scotland and Schleswig-Holstein Q3-4, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings with Danish members and Trøndelag in Q1-2, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate the functions of Presidency and Secretariat (subject to ABM:s approval)</td>
<td>Issue call for a member region to host the NSC secretariat 2018-2021</td>
<td>Q3 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Communication strategy 2017-19 and communication plan 2017-18

The item will be introduced by the Secretariat.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Approves the draft communication strategy 2017-19 and draft communication plan 2017-18 for final decision at the Annual Business Meeting
North Sea Commission Communication Strategy 2017-2019

The North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation platform for regions around the North Sea, reflecting the needs, interests and expectations of its member regions. The NSC’s mission is to further partnerships between regional authorities that face challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea.

Objectives and aim

The main objectives of the North Sea Commission are:

- To promote and create awareness of the North Sea region as a major economic entity within Europe through political lobby work
- To be a platform for exchange of experience and for developing and obtaining funding for joint development initiatives

Communication is an essential part in fulfilling the main objectives. An evaluation of the North Sea Commission made in 2012, indicated that the NSC needs to strengthen its profile as a platform for policy development, lobbying and transnational project development and increase its visibility towards internal and external stakeholders.

This will be achieved through closer links and better communication between the North Sea Commission and internal and external stakeholders.
The purpose and aim of the Communication Strategy

The communication strategy serves as a roadmap, guiding the North Sea Commission to ensure a strategic communication that is effective and achieves desired results. The communication strategy is revised every other year, and attached to it is a communication activity plan that is revised every year.

The aim of the North Sea Commission’s communication strategy is to support implementation of the North Sea Region 2020 strategy and other policy documents. This will be achieved by:

- **Member involvement**: Ensure that member regions are informed of the work done by the organization and that they are involved in relevant events and consultations,

- **Keeping a close contact with European policy makers and relevant stakeholders**: Make sure that relevant decision and policy makers at all levels are informed about NSC official strategies and policy positions,

- **Promoting projects and project results**: Communicate involvement in the North Sea region projects and the results and output.

Stakeholders

The North Sea Commission communicates and cooperates with a number of stakeholders, both internal and external, where the communication varies depending on stakeholder and objective.

**Internal stakeholders**

- **Member regions**
  
  To ensure that the NSC represents the interests of member regions and keeps them well informed of its activities, the NSC needs to communicate with all members, irrespective of how involved they are in the NSC structures.

- **CPMR**
  
  The NSC is a part of the CPMR, and should promote NSC interests and visibility in the overall work of the CPMR. In 2017 and 2018 focus will be on the Future of Europe discussions, Brexit and the work on EU post-2020 policies and programmes.

**External stakeholders**

- **Non-member regions around the North Sea**
  
  The NSC has the ambition to increase the number of members, as this would strengthen the NSC’s voice for the North Sea regions. During 2017-2019 the NSC will focus its efforts at recruiting new members from the United Kingdom and Belgium.
- **North Sea regional stakeholders**
  In order to represent the entire North Sea Region, the NSC will maintain and develop close connections with regional stakeholders in academia, industry, governmental and non-governmental institutions.

- **North Sea Region Programme**
  A close cooperation and good communication with the North Sea Region Programme is vital for the NSC’s ambition to develop cooperation among members.

- **National state ministries and agencies**
  NSC needs to lobby towards member states in order to achieve consensus on challenges and solutions for the North Sea Region.

- **EU institutions**
  The NSC should communicate directly, and through the CPMR, with the institutions of the European Union. Important target groups are:
  
  - Officers in relevant DG’s of the European Commission
  - Committee of Regions (CoR) members from the North Sea Region, and the North Sea-Channel Intergroup
  - Members of the European Parliament from the North Sea region, relevant committees and the Intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas.

**Communication tools**

**Webpage**
Central to all communication is a well-functioning website that can act as a cooperation and knowledge sharing platform for members and a source of relevant and up-to-date information for both internal and external stakeholders.

A new webpage has been launched in 2016. It will be updated on a regular basis with news about NSC activities such as thematic group meetings and Executive Committee meeting. The focus will be to make the webpage work as an amplifier that will reinforce the most important policy topics of the NSC. This will be done through news at the front page and making relevant documents accessible.

**Social media**
Social media, in this case Twitter, is a good tool for short updates that in relevant cases lead the reader to the webpage for more information. This gives the NSC the opportunity to be more visible with short messages on positions and statements. It’s a way for the NSC to have a more informal
contact with member regions, MEP’s and other stakeholders, and at the same time Twitter is a way to get an overview of events, views and current topics in the North Sea region and in Europe.

**Newsletter**
A newsletter will be sent out every other month to member regions and external stakeholders to reach those who do not actively follow the website.

**Mailing lists**
An essential part of good communication is contact lists that are updated on a regular basis. The Secretariat will, in cooperation with the thematic group advisors keep member lists updated, and also create a list with contact information to external stakeholders, such as EU institutions.

**Events and meetings**
The most effective way to communicate positions and statements is by meeting the stakeholders. Arranging and attending events, either at existing conferences or through separate events, and arranging bilateral meetings is an essential part of the NSC work.

**Printed information**
NSC communication will, for several reasons, mainly be digital, but there are occasions where printed material can be used as a complement, e.g. in connection with events, meetings and workshops.
## NSC Communication Activity Plan 2017-2018

The Communication Activity Plan serves as a guide of activities necessary for the NSC to implement to achieve the overall purpose and aim of the Communication Strategy 2017-2019. The activity plan is revised yearly, and the strategy every other year.

More information about the aim of the NSC communication, target groups and communication tools can be find in the NSC Communication Strategy 2017-2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Target group(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Update list with the member regions’ contact information</td>
<td>- Member regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create list with external stakeholders’ contact information</td>
<td>- Regional stakeholders &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- National stakeholders &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- EU institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Continuously update the webpage <a href="www.cpmr-northsea.org">www.cpmr-northsea.org</a> and Twitter-account with news about the NSC, thematic groups, policy positions, NSC documents (as NSR 2020) and other relevant information</td>
<td>- Member regions &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regional stakeholders &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CPMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Non-member regions &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relevant decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- EU institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Send out a newsletter every two months</td>
<td>- Member regions &lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CPMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regional stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Specify and inform about the added value of being a NSC member</td>
<td>- Member regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Non-member regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Map and target British regions with information about the added value of being a NSC member and how to get involved in the NSC</td>
<td>- British non-member regions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Arrange and attend relevant meetings, events and workshops with stakeholders to inform about NSC activities, positions and good practice examples, e.g. European Maritime Day, and events within the EC processes on energy cooperation and on blue growth

- Member regions
- Regional stakeholders
- CPMR
- Non-member regions
- Relevant decision makers
- EU institutions

8. Inform about NSC activities and policy positions in EU decision processes

- Brussels Offices of members and non-members from the North Sea Region

9. Continuously inform CPMR about NSC activities, policy positions and other relevant information

- CPMR

10. Monitor and spread information about relevant calls for project cooperation

- Member regions
- Regional stakeholders

11. Keep members of the Committee of Regions from the North Sea Region informed about NSC activities and policy positions

- EU institutions (Committee of Regions)

12. Keep members of the European Parliament from the North Sea Region informed about the NSC activities and policy positions

- EU institutions (European Parliament)
17. New model for the North Sea Commission Secretariat

The Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in 2016 asked the NSC secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work was to be carried out by working with the existing task force. The Annual Business Meeting also asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

The Secretariat will present the proposal, which it has prepared together with the task force, including representatives from Aberdeenshire, Groningen, North Denmark, North Netherlands and Ostfold.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Supports the enclosed proposal to be decided at the Annual Business Meeting
A new model for the North Sea Commission secretariat

This paper summarizes discussions so far on a new secretariat model, and tries to outline a way forward. It is prepared by the Secretariat, together with a task force including representatives of Aberdeenshire, Hordaland, North Denmark, North Netherlands, and Östfold.

0. Executive summary

The Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in 2016 asked the NSC secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work was to be carried out by working with the existing task force. The Annual Business Meeting also asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

The main concern has been to move the costs for running a secretariat away from the President’s region for democracy reasons. Any member region, irrespective of financial situation, should have the possibility to nominate a President of the NSC.

There is room in the NSC budget to support the host region to some extent, but not to cover the entire cost of a secretariat. The NSC should not lower its ambitions, and should continue to be present in Brussels, while keeping a close cooperation with the President, the thematic groups and the member regions.

The task force recommends that

1. the political and administrative responsibilities of the NSC (i.e. the President and the Secretariat) are separated.

2. if this principle is accepted by the Annual Business Meeting, the ABM should ask the Executive Committee to issue a call for a member region willing to administer, host and finance the secretariat for a year period from the Annual Business Meeting in 2018, when the mandate of the current President expires, until the 31st of December 2021, with an option to extend.

3. a new budget line ‘Secretariat support’ is added to the NSC budget to contribute partly to the costs for running the secretariat.

4. the tasks of the secretariat is clearly defined in an agreement between the Executive Committee and the host region.

5. the secretariat should consist of at least two persons, and it is strongly recommended that one of them is based in Brussels.
1. Introduction and background
The need for a permanent secretariat for the North Sea Commission has been discussed at every meeting of ExCom and ABM since 2014. Several proposals have been presented by the secretariat and by national groups of members. So far it has not been possible to reach consensus.

To summarize discussions so far:

1. The NSC wants a new way to fund the secretariat for democracy reasons. The role of President must be open to any member region. Today this is not the case, since the President’s region carries the entire staff costs for the secretariat, something not all members can afford.

2. The current model is extra challenging when the NSC President resigns in the middle of a mandate period as a consequence of council elections in his/her region (which happened to the last two Presidents). The resigning President’s region will still carry with the costs for the secretariat until the next Annual Business Meeting.

3. The NSC budget cannot pay the entire cost of the secretariat, unless we increase the total budget substantially. Savings have been made, and the current budget has a surplus, but still far from the sum needed to fund a secretariat.

4. We should keep the financial support to those regions that coordinate the thematic groups.

5. Raising membership fees is not an option, according to the ABM decision in 2016. It would probably lead to a loss of current members and prevent us from recruiting new ones.

6. The NSC secretariat should not be part of the CPMR financial structures, according to ABM. Members are keen to keep a strong North Sea identity.

7. The NSC secretariat should, however, be frequently present or based in Brussels in order to follow the EU agenda, work with officers from European institutions, the CPMR secretariat and the offices of the NSC member regions.

8. Continuity is important. Two years, the mandate period for a President, is a short time for a secretariat to get organised, develop routines, get involved in all issues, build networks and get something done. In the NSC history, Presidents have been re-elected several times, and secretariats have worked for longer periods. But that is situation-dependent. Thematic group advisors and long-serving officers in member regions represent the institutional memory.

9. The secretariat must work close with the President.
These specifications are, for obvious reasons, not easy to merge into one model. Some kind of compromise has to be worked out.

The 2016 ABM adopted the following decision:

1. The Annual Business Meeting asked the NSC Secretariat to find a solution for a permanent and sustainable Secretariat in some form, which is not part of the CPMR financial structures and without increasing the membership fees. The work is to be carried out by working with the existing task force.
2. The Annual Business Meeting asked the NSC Secretariat to clearly define the role and tasks of the Secretariat in order to better understand the resources needed to run the organization.

2. Role and tasks of the secretariat

2.1. According to the Charter
The Charter for the North Sea Commission does not mention a “secretariat”, only an Executive Secretary. The Charter does not give any guidance about location or funding of the Executive Secretary. The responsibilities are described in three bullet points:

- The North Sea Commission shall have an Executive Secretary whose responsibility is to ensure the day-to-day organisation of its work and implementation of its decisions.
- The Executive Secretary assists the President in his/her tasks and under his/her authority.
- The duties of the Executive Secretary are carried out with the support of the CPMR General Secretariat.

2.2. In practice
The “day-to-day organisation” includes the following:

- Support the President and Vice Presidents in their tasks
- Prepare, arrange and follow-up meetings (ABM, ExCom, Presidency, advisor meetings, Brussels network)
- Attend and report at thematic group meetings
- Follow and lobby within strategic issues and policy development, incl meetings with EU institutions and stakeholders
- Manage communication and member relations (web, newsletter, twitter, contacts with members and potential members)
- Represent the North Sea Commission in CPMR’s work
- Actively encourage and facilitate member regions’ participation in the CPMR’s work groups and task forces
- Liaise with the Interreg North Sea programme, plan for the annual North Sea conference
- Manage the accounts

(for a more detailed description, see attached document)
3. Current organisation
The region of the NSC President hosts the secretariat and employs the staff. At present, during the Västra Götaland presidency, the secretariat consists of

- Executive secretary, 100 %, based in Gothenburg
- Assistant executive secretary, 70 %, based in Region Västra Götaland’s Brussels office
- Assistant executive secretary, 30 %, based in Gothenburg
- Support from a financial officer on ad hoc basis

It is still early to evaluate all aspects of the current arrangement with a secretariat shared between Brussels and the President’s region, since it started only in mid-September 2016, but initial experiences are positive. The secretariat maintains strong links to the President, while developing relations to CPMR staff and EU institutions. From an organisational point of view it works smoothly. A reason for that could be that the Brussels office is an integral part of the external relations team of Region Västra Götaland, which means that all three staff members belong to the same structure, although they are in two separate geographic locations.

4. Budget
It is worth mentioning that the President’s region today pays more for the North Sea Commission than all the other members do together over the NSC budget.

The current President’s region has an annual budget of approximately 175,000 euro for the Secretariat. This includes salaries and other payroll expenses. There is no budget figure for rent or other office costs. This is offered for free by the host region.

Together with the NSC budget expenses of 113,000 euro, this leaves a total annual budget today of 288,000 Euro for running the North Sea Commission, office cost and President’s travels not included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSC</th>
<th>Pres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries + other staff costs</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>Ex Secr full time, 2 Assist Ex Secr part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor’s support</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>€ 12,000 each for four groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat’s travel/accomodation</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>Probably less with staff in Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint annual conference</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Support to host region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic groups, meetings</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional expenditure</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2017 NSC budget has a total income of 133,850 euro (all from membership fees), which gives a surplus of 20,850. With Lower Saxony joining, the total income will be approximately 140,000 euro.
The NSC has reserves of more than 200,000 euro. According to an earlier ExCom decision, 100,000 euro should be tied up as an insurance for bad times, while the rest is a free reserve that the ABM can decide to use for special purposes.

5. Way forward
There is a number of alternative solutions for funding, location, ambitions, staff mandate periods, recruitment/employment, etc. All of them raise new questions, and the decision on one element has implications for the others.

5.1. Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC budget</th>
<th>Mix of both</th>
<th>Outside NSC budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased membership fees</td>
<td>Secretariat partly paid by NSC budget, partly by one region or group of regions or external funding</td>
<td>President’s region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More members</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared between a number of regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower costs/ lower ambitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>External funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Making room in the North Sea Commission’s budget for the secretariat’s salaries, or at least parts of them, will require higher incomes and/or lower costs/ambitions.

*Increased membership fees*
On the income side, *increasing membership fees* is not an option, according to the ABM decision.
More members

*Increasing the number of members* should always be an ambition, as long as there are non-member regions around the North Sea. This is not only, not even primarily, a budget issue, but a way to strengthen our work and our legitimacy. In the hypothetical situation that all coastal regions bordering the North Sea would join the NSC, we would have about 30 more members and another 125,000 euro in the budget. A more realistic ambition is to attract a few more members and 10,000-15,000 more in membership fees over the coming years. However, the NSC is also vulnerable to sudden political and economic changes in member regions.

Lower costs/lower ambitions

*Cost reductions* in the NSC budget have already been done, and the annual accounts show a surplus. Parts of the free reserve could be used during a transition period, but not as a long-term solution.

The number of *thematic groups* has gone from five to four, while the support for each advisor is still 12,000 euro. The groups are crucial for our work, and we want them to be coordinated by permanent group advisors. Without a financial support to their regions, it will be harder to recruit advisors.

The *travel budget* could probably be lower with permanent staff in Brussels – there is less need for travel to Brussels, and travel connections between Brussels and member regions are in general better and cheaper than intra-regional North Sea connections.

The NSC could give less support to the annual *North Sea conference*, which is organised jointly with the Interreg North Sea secretariat and a host region back to back with the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). For 2017, the conference probably would not have happened at all without the NSC support of 20,000. The question would be if we want to continue to have an annual conference where NSC meets the projects. If not – how much money should be spent on the ABM only? Should the ABM cost be entirely on the host region? And would it then be possible to find a host?

Is it possible to *reduce the secretariat staff* to less than two persons? Yes, certainly, but this would also require a reduction of ambitions and activities. The end result would be less action, less visibility, and less added value for the members.

Staff costs can be reduced by partly replacing full-paid staff members with *trainees* for some tasks. But that would also reduce continuity, efficiency and access.

A down-scaled secretariat would have to reduce its presence at thematic group meetings, and *thematic group advisors* could possibly take an increased responsibility for overall NSC work.

*Communication* could be less ambitious, and maybe partly outsourced to the CPMR secretariat.

*President’s region*

Status quo – a secretariat entirely funded by the President’s region – is not considered sustainable for the future.
**Shared between a number of regions**
Could then the costs, at least partly, be **shared between several regions**, depending on the current level of engagement in the organisation – President’s and Vice President’s region, or all ExCom member regions? There are examples in the past where the costs have been shared by regions in the President’s country, but this must be based on a voluntary agreement, and not as part of a general NSC solution.

**External funding**
Could the NSC be a coordinating part in a possible future EU agenda/strategy for the North Sea? Given the slow progress of the preparatory action, this seems unlikely to happen.

Could the secretariat involve in **project coordination**? NSC is not a legal entity, and cannot formally be a project partner – at least as long as it is not integrated in the CPMR financial structures. Funding the ordinary secretariat work with project money does not seem possible.

The solution will probably have to be a combination of several of these measures. Even with more members and some additional cost reductions, the NSC budget will probably only sustain a part of the secretariat. This will still reduce the current burden for the President’s region.

---

**5.2. Location**

- **In Brussels**
  - CPMR office
  - Office of President’s region
  - Office of any member region

- **Mix of both**
  - Staff in Brussels and in a member region

- **In a member region**
  - In current President’s region
  - Permanent location in one region

---

*North Sea Commission*, c/o Region Västra Götaland, Box 1091, 405 23 Göteborg, Sweden
nsc@northsea.org / cpmr-northsea.org
In Brussels
The obvious advantage of a Brussels-based secretariat is the proximity to the European institutions and the CPMR secretariat. It will also make it easier to involve member regions’ Brussels offices in policy discussions, and in general increase the visibility of the North Sea Commission.

It is probably easier to build and maintain a North Sea network from Brussels, where most regions are represented and where many North Sea stakeholders are frequent visitors, than from any city in any region around the North Sea.

A Brussels-based secretary could have his/her office in the CPMR secretariat, in the President’s regional office or in any member region’s office. What is most important is that office space and other office costs are offered for free by the host – otherwise costs will be higher than today.

In a member region
The main advantages of being in one of the North Sea regions is the proximity to the President (as long as the secretariat is based in the President’s region), and maybe a better knowledge and understanding of the regional perspective and the North Sea perspective.

The same condition – avoid office costs! – applies if the office were to be located somewhere in the North Sea region, in a permanent location, decoupled from the President’s region. It then has to be a location that is easy accessible from all member regions.

Mix of both
A Secretariat with one (permanent?) officer in Brussels and one (temporary?) officer in the President’s region will probably be the most workable solution. It could work well also with the funding outlined above. A remaining question is then which one of them should be the Executive secretary and which one should be the assistant.

5.3. Employment and financial management
If the secretariat is financially and administratively separated from the Presidency, who would then recruit, employ and administer the secretariat? Which legal entity would manage the finances?

The North Sea Commission itself is not a legal entity. The CPMR is – and they manage these functions for most of the geographical commissions. But, according to the ABM decision from 2016, the NSC secretariat should not be part of the financial structures of the CPMR.

The remaining option then seems to be that there is a member region willing to host the secretariat, manage the finances, provide the human resources needed, and cover the costs – or at least most of the costs – and to do this without having the Presidency. An agreement between this region and the Executive Committee will be needed to specify the tasks of the secretariat. The agreement should be for more than two years, maybe four, with an option to extend. At least one of the staff members should be based in Brussels.

To make it slightly more attractive to host the secretariat, a support could be given from the NSC budget to the host region, in line with the support paid to the advisors’ regions. The level of support...
for hosting the secretariat will be subject to budget decisions, but an indication is that the planned surplus in the 2017 budget is 20,850 euro. If the ABM so wishes another € 10,000 could be added annually for a number of years from the free reserve. If more members will join, and the total of membership contributions will increase, the additional income can also be used to support the secretariat.

Why would any region want to pay for a secretariat, without having the Presidency? One reason could be the value for the host region in terms of visibility, networks and influence that comes with a secretariat, both on North Sea level and within the wider CPMR.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

To find a more long-term solution for the secretariat, while at the same time supporting the democratic principle of a Presidency which is not required to have the financial muscles for running a secretariat, it is suggested that the functions of Presidency and Secretariat are separated.

If this model is accepted by the Annual Business Meeting, the Executive Committee should issue a call for a member region willing to administer, host and finance the secretariat for a four year period2 – or rather for three and a half years, from the Annual Business Meeting in 2018, when the mandate of the current President expires, until the 31st of December 2021 (in order to have the next change of secretariat in the end of a budget year and separate from the change of President).

To somewhat reduce the financial burden for the host region and make it more attractive to host a secretariat, it is recommended that ‘Secretariat support’ is introduced as a new budget line in the NSC budget.

The tasks of the secretariat should be clearly defined in an agreement between the Executive Committee and the host region. The ambitions of the North Sea Commission should not be reduced. Nor should the staff. The secretariat should consist of at least two persons. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that at least one of them should be based in Brussels.

---

2 It would be possible to share the responsibilities between two or more regions. Formally, one region would then be the contracting part in relation to NSC. Other regions could contribute with money and/or time as “sub-contractors”.

North Sea Commission, c/o Region Västra Götaland, Box 1091, 405 23 Göteborg, Sweden
nsclnorthsea.org / cpmr-northsea.org
Role and tasks of the secretariat (detailed)

Support the President and Vice Presidents
- Initiate and coordinate external meetings
- Briefings, speaking notes, draft speeches and presentations

Prepare and arrange NSC meetings
(agenda, documents, practical issues, contacts with host region, minutes, follow-up on decisions)
- Annual Business Meeting (1/year)
- Members meeting at CPMR GA (1/year)
- Executive Committee (3/year)
- Presidency skype meetings (every 4-6 weeks)
- Advisor meetings (skype every month, physical meetings 2/year)
- Participate and report at thematic group meetings

Strategic issues and external relations
- Follow up on North Sea Region 2020 strategy and action plan
- Draft annual action plan
- Prepare and follow up declarations, resolutions
- Develop cooperation with Interreg North Sea program
- Develop cooperation with European institutions (EC, EP, CoR)
- Develop cooperation with national authorities/government offices
- Follow specific issues (e.g. preparatory action, North Sea grid, Brexit)
- Act as an intermediary for project proposals

Member relations/communication
- Follow up and revise communication strategy/communication plan
- Keep mailing lists updated
- Newsletter (every two months)
- Web update, web development
- Twitter update
- Network of Brussels offices of member regions
- Recruit new members

CPMR relations
- Attend General Assembly and Political Bureau
- Coordinate NSC input to CPMR documents
- Attend meetings with CPMR management team (every two weeks)
- Day-to-day contact with CPMR secretariat on various matters
- Encourage member regions’ participation in CPMR work groups and task forces
- Develop relations with other geographical commissions

Finances
- Follow up on accounts
- Draft budget
18. Accounts 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Budget 2016</th>
<th>Accounts 2016</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership subscription</td>
<td>133 850</td>
<td>131 100</td>
<td>-2 750²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL INCOME</td>
<td>133 850</td>
<td>131 100</td>
<td>-2 750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENDITURE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint annual conference expenses</td>
<td>16 256</td>
<td>16 256</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional Expenditure</td>
<td>4 572</td>
<td>1 137</td>
<td>3 435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, Accommodation, etc.</td>
<td>37 592</td>
<td>23 955</td>
<td>13 637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Groups, meetings</td>
<td>10 160</td>
<td>6 046</td>
<td>4 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor’s Support</td>
<td>61 011</td>
<td>60 000</td>
<td>1 011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tif. adm, internet, etc</td>
<td>4 064</td>
<td>1 998</td>
<td>2 066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSR 2020 revision expenses</td>
<td>30 000</td>
<td>14 576</td>
<td>15 424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>163 655</td>
<td>123 967</td>
<td>39 688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</td>
<td>-29 805</td>
<td>7 133</td>
<td>36 938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISPOSAL**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transferred reserve from 2015</td>
<td>218 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This year’s surplus/deficit</td>
<td>7 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESERVE</strong></td>
<td>225 433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free reserve</td>
<td>125 433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied up reserve</td>
<td>100 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Includes the 2015 fee for Buskerud. No payment for 2016 has been made by Hauts-de-France.

⁴ In the budget, this cost was supposed to be covered from the free reserve. For the sake of clarity, it is reported here within the total expenditure.
Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Approves the accounts for 2016 for final approval by the Annual Business Meeting
19. Statement of accounts

The Secretariat will present an up-to-date statement of accounts.

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Takes note of the information
20. Proposal for budget 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Accounts 2016</th>
<th>Budget 2017</th>
<th>Budget 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCOME:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership subscription</td>
<td>131 100</td>
<td>133 850</td>
<td>142 215&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td>131 100</td>
<td>133 850</td>
<td>142 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENDITURE:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint annual conference expenses</td>
<td>16 256</td>
<td>20 000</td>
<td>20 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional expenditure</td>
<td>1 137</td>
<td>4 000</td>
<td>1 215&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, accommodation, etc.</td>
<td>23 955</td>
<td>36 000</td>
<td>30 000&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic groups, meetings</td>
<td>6 046</td>
<td>5 000</td>
<td>5 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor’s support</td>
<td>60 000</td>
<td>48 000</td>
<td>48 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlf. adm, internet, etc</td>
<td>1 998</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSR 2020 revision expenses</td>
<td>14 576</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat support</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48 000&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td>123 968</td>
<td>113 000</td>
<td>152 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</strong></td>
<td>7 132</td>
<td>20 850</td>
<td>-10 000&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation:**

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. **Approves the budget proposal for 2018 for final decision by the Annual Business Meeting**

---

<sup>5</sup> Compared to previous year’s budget, this includes membership fee for Lower Saxony and higher fee for Hordaland, where the population has increased above 500,000 inhabitants

<sup>6</sup> With the secretariat partly based in Brussels, travel costs are lower than previously

<sup>7</sup> Subject to ABM decision to support hosting region

<sup>8</sup> It is recommended that money from the free reserve is used to support the secretariat. The total free reserve is now more than 125 000 €
21. The 27th Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting will be hosted by the Region of Lower Saxony in Göttingen in the afternoon of Wednesday 28th of June 2017, followed by study visits and thematic group meetings in the morning of the 29th and a North Sea conference lunch to lunch 29-30 June. For financial reasons, the conference is slightly downscaled, and study visits will only be open for the ABM participants.

The North Sea Conference is arranged in cooperation between the host region, the Interreg programme and the North Sea Commission. The tentative plan is to have five streams – four of them following the four priority areas of the North Sea Region 2020 strategy, and the fifth on more general issues, where we can include topics like Brexit and the Future of Europe.

The venue for the ABM and conference is Freizeit In, a hotel a few kilometres from the city centre in Göttingen, where there is room for most participants to stay. There is no international airport in Göttingen, so participants flying to and from the meeting are advised to use the airports of Hannover or Frankfurt and go by train from there.

Practical information will be sent out soon, and participants are encouraged to register early.

**Recommendation:**

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. *Takes note of the information*
22. Next Executive Committee meetings

The 74th meeting of the NSC Executive Committee will be held in Göttingen on June 28, just after the Annual Business Meeting.

The 75th meeting will be held in Brussels. The meeting is suggested to take place on Thursday the 12 October, which is in the end of the European Week of Regions and Cities (formerly “Open Days”).

Recommendation:

The Secretariat recommends that the Executive Committee

1. Confirms the dates for the next ExCom meetings
### 22a. Meeting plan 2017-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy and Climate Change Group</td>
<td>19th-21st April 2017</td>
<td>Agder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Group</td>
<td>24th-25th April 2017</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMR Political Bureau</td>
<td>22nd June 2017</td>
<td>Stavanger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th Annual Business Meeting</td>
<td>28th June 2017</td>
<td>Göttingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74th ExCom</td>
<td>28th June 2017</td>
<td>Göttingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sea Conference</td>
<td>28th-30th June 2017</td>
<td>Göttingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Group</td>
<td>26th-27th September 2017</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th ExCom</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMR General Assembly</td>
<td>18th-20th October 2017</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76th ExCom</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>