Minutes from meeting of NSC Transport group in Aberdeen 19 February 2020

Attendance:

24 persons from 12 member regions in Scotland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, including the NSC Secretariat and the Presidency attended the meeting. 10 of the participants were politicians and seven were new comers. The list of participants is attached to the minutes.

1. Welcome and presentation of participants

The Chair thanked the hosts in Aberdeen City for having organised an interesting programme the day before with excursion to the Aberdeen Harbour extension project and a Hydrogen refueling station. He also thanked the hosts for the wonderful dinner in the town hall. The chair welcomed the participants to the meeting and was pleased to observe a good attendance. He noted that there were seven newcomers at this meeting, and encouraged the experienced members to take that into consideration by speaking slowly, and not use acronyms or abbreviations which might not be understood by all. The Chair extended a special welcome to NSC President Kerstin Brunström, and noted that she had now attended two Transport group meetings in a row. The participants then briefly introduced themselves and the organisations they represented.

2. Minutes from meeting in Aalborg 1 November 2019

The minutes from the previous meeting in Aalborg on 1 November were originally distributed on 18 November, and also sent out on 5 February together with the other background information.

There were no remarks to the minutes.

Conclusions & follow-up:

Adopted.

3. General information on NSC and CPMR activities by representatives of NSC Presidency, Secretariat, Chair and Adviser

Assistant Executive Secretary Clara Zakariasson informed that the youth conference, NSC Annual Business Meeting and joint conference with the Interreg North Sea Region Programme will take place in Rotterdam on 23 – 25 June.

She introduced the new NSC youth adviser Esme Leitch who presented her tasks. The group was encouraged to keep Esme up to date on the activities. She informed that the member
regions had been invited to identify 1 – 2 persons aged 16 – 21 years from their organisations to participate in the youth conference on 23 June.

Clara reminded that 6 March was the deadline for responding to the consultation on the proposal for a new NSC strategy NSR 2030. The strategy would also be discussed at the adviser meeting in Aberdeen on 20 February.

She also encouraged the group to use the new CPMR intranet which provides good opportunities for sharing documents [contact persons for all NSC member regions should have received log-on information per mail].

**NSC President Kerstin Brusström** informed briefly about past and upcoming meetings in the CPMR and the NSC.

She also noted that transport is probably one of the most important issues for young people (public transport, sustainable climate-friendly fuels).

**Developing the work of the North Sea Commission – following up of initiative from the Executive Committee**

The President made an introduction to the background and purpose of this issue in accordance with a paper which had been distributed to the group ahead of the meeting. This paper is also taking into account the recommendations from the 2013 external evaluation of the NSC.

The Executive Committee meeting in November last year had mandated the Secretariat and the Advisers to consider how the functioning of the NSC as an organisation could improve in order to make it better fit to implement the NSR 2030 strategy. The performance of the thematic groups is an important aspect of this exercise, in terms of achieving a good balance between politicians and officers/experts. The President believed that politicians and officers are interdependent, and that both categories must be sufficiently involved and interact well in order for the group to function in a good manner. The same goes for the relation between the groups and the ExCom, as well as the functioning of the ExCom itself. The nature of the contacts with external stakeholders like national governments and the EU are also considered in this context.

The President invited the participants to provide views on the paper.

**Input from the meeting**

**The Chair** stated that the Transport group has practiced the same meeting format during his ten year in the chairmanship of the group. He believed that this format has functioned well, and he had difficulties with seeing the big need for changes. Should not change the way of working just for the sake of doing it as long as the group is performing and functioning well.

**Group members** highlighted the following:

- Should consider the need for change when it’s needed.
- Important to reach out wider with our outputs.
- The relations between politicians and officers function well.
- Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City are committed to continued involvement in the NSC post Brexit.
• Should exploit potential to recruit more members from the UK in the aftermath of Brexit.
• The paper confirms that the way the Transport group is working functions well
• Really happy that the NSC has hired a youth adviser.
• Should explore how the Transport group could work smarter, and some members announced written input to that
• Important to identify some strategic issues with high political significance, and work systematically to influence policy and politics, be it at a regional, national or EU-level, in line with -common goals in the NSC strategy and action plan. The issue of prolongation of the TEN T is one such example. Other policy areas -are clean fuels, and innovative solutions in the transport sector.
• Should highlight the success stories from the group, which shows the importance of transnational political cooperation, e.g. like the prolongation of ScanMed in Jutland.
• **The work of the NSC transport group can play a role in encouraging national governments to put greater emphasis on cross-border transport corridors in their national infrastructure planning and priorities.**
• Support the recommendation to encourage the management in member regions to allocate officers to the thematic groups on a more long-term and consistent basis in light of the fact that the consistency of meeting attendance could be better
• Also important to reach higher in the hierarchy of the member regions to legitimize the work.
• Skype meetings could be useful for attracting and involving more members and should be applied more often – in particular in between ordinary meetings.
• The NSC should promote its interests and positions in the CPMR. The President and other members believed that the NSC succeeded with that at the previous CPMR General Assembly in Palermo.

**Initiative to mobilise inactive regions for participation in the NSC Transport group**

**The Adviser** made an introduction to this item on the basis of the paper which had been distributed to the group ahead of the meeting.

He pointed to the fact that some member regions from the UK, Netherlands, Germany and Belgium are not at all involved in the work of the group. These regions also rarely respond to invitations to group meetings or calls for input to our work, e.g. like the mappings on alternative fuels and clean shipping. Due to this situation, the group is missing potentially important knowledge and resources which could have improved the performance in several ways – in particular when it comes to the potential for mutual learning and capacity for project development. Against this background, the Adviser proposed to organise “road shows” in the mentioned countries to promote the benefits of participating in the work of the group.

**Daniel** offered to help with involving Bremen which is Groningens’s neighbouring region in Germany.

**The meeting** supported this initiative.

**Conclusions & follow-up:**

• The Adviser comes up with a plan (dates & venues) for road shows in the countries in question and submits the proposal to the members of the political chairmanship and the NSC Secretariat.
The national Executive Committee members of the relevant countries should be approached with a request to invite the regions concerned to information meetings about the work of the Transport group.

4. Round table on recent transport developments (plans, strategies, infrastructure projects and investments, regulatory schemes etc.), in member regions

The Chair mentioned that this has become a regular item at group meetings. The members had been encouraged to submit written reports ahead of the meeting and he thanked those who had done that. These reports will be attached to the minutes from the meeting.

The Chair then invited the participants to briefly inform about the highlights in recent transport developments in their regions.

Vestfold-Telemark

The government has started to build double track rail through Vestfold (Drammen-Købervikdalen and Nykirke-Barkåker) which will result in shorter travel time, and higher frequency between Oslo-Tønsberg (4x hour).

Groningen

There is a debate about whether to launch a lobby initiative to promote an international train connection between Amsterdam, Hamburg, Stockholm and Helsinki as a response to the Green Deal from the European Commission in light of lacking train connections in the north. It is a problem that most rail connections are going through the capitals of the countries in question. The issue is both about obtaining funding and influencing regulations.

North Jutland

The Hydrogen (H2) refueling station in Aalborg has been running since January. The region has received the first H2 bus which will be running in Aalborg for three years to test whether fuel cells would be the best option for public transport.

Arne Nielsen referred to his question from the previous meeting in Aalborg on whether other member regions had solutions for managing the charging of a high number of electrical vehicles at parking lots, and invited the other members to inform about eventual solutions to this challenge.

South Denmark

A mobility strategy is under development and soon ready for approval. The problem in the region is a general lack of adequate “tools” to support the implementation of the strategy, which is mainly based on partnerships. The main priorities in the strategy is to secure a green transition of private and public transport, prevent further congestion at highways and explore new mobility solutions in rural areas lacking critical mass.

Møre og Romsdal

Mentioned that the NSC is a very important organisation for the county as the business community in the region is very international.

The county is currently working on input to the National Transport Plan (NTP) in Norway. The planning procedure has been changed in order to involve the regions at an earlier stage in
the process. The NTP is putting much emphasis on how new technological solutions could bring about the desired changes in the transport system.

The county is furthermore involved in a big road infrastructure project to islands.

Mentioned that also Møre og Romsdal is experiencing a popular “rebellion” against sharply increasing fares in the public transport ferries.

**Aberdeen City**

Referred to the information that was provided at the excursion to the H2 refueling station the day before. The City has plans for introducing a H2 double decker in public transport operations. It is regrettable that local authorities in the region did not support the plans for applying H2 trains on non-electrified tracks.

**Aberdeenshire:**

Agreed with North Jutland on the need to explore and exchange solutions on how to manage charging of electric cars at big parking lots.

Mentioned that the Scottish government has decided to phase out conventional cars by 2025. The Council is currently considering how to meet that objective for its vehicle fleet.

**Örebro**

Referred to the ongoing discussion in Sweden about whether and where to introduce high speed trains. Mentioned the presentation of the initiative for rail developments Oslo-Stockholm at the TEN-T seminar on 22 November.

120 biogas buses have been introduced in the region. The region will also start to investigate the performance of electric buses in a crisis situation when electricity might not be available.

Örebro has submitted a response to the ongoing review of the European rail freight corridors. The response calls for harmonization between the ScanMed and rail freight corridors as they are not applying the same system. The region would need support from the national government in this issue.

**Agder**

The new political representative from Agder informed that she previously had been a member of the transport committee in the Norwegian Parliament, and thus had good knowledge about the issues at the agenda of the Transport group.

She mentioned the success story in Agder of shifting transport of bottled water (Voss) from road to rail. The region is also involved in an initiative to link two rail lines in South-East Norway, which would significantly reduce travelling time between Oslo and Kristiansand.

It was furthermore mentioned that there is an ongoing discussion in the Agder region (and elsewhere in Norway) whether electric cars should keep comparative advantages, such as exemption from fees in road tolls, free/lower parking fees and access to public transport lanes. This discussion has originated from the fact that the growing number of electric cars contribute to congestion and strain on the road infrastructure in line with conventional cars.

**Västra Götaland Region (VGR)**
The VGR is home to a significant transport industry, e.g. like Volvo. The region is involved in an initiative to electrify heavy transport. Will start with 50 trucks. The industry has selected to focus on battery-powered trucks over electrical roads.

30% of the newly-registered cars in the region last month was electric, which is somewhat lower than normal.

95% of the public transport production in VGR is renewable. 230 electric buses will be put in operation by the end of the year.

VGR is also involved in the STRING network, developing rail in the corridor Oslo-Hamburg.

As a comment to this, the Adviser encouraged VGR to consider also joining the Nordic Transport-political Network (NTN), as involvement in this network doesn’t have to be in contradiction with the STRING corridor.

The Chair mentioned that South Denmark Region has been asked to consider membership in STRING, but he is not convinced that this would be beneficial for the region.

Vestland

Informed that 60% of all newly-registered cars in the region were electric. All taxis must be electric by 2024.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- The member regions are encouraged to exchange information on how they manage charging of electric cars at big parking lots, e.g. like outside hospitals.

5. **Clean and innovative transport**

Work on sustainable transport in Aberdeen City

An officer from Aberdeen City presented current projects and initiatives.

Aberdeen City Master Plan with a renewed vision for the center. The plan encourages more people to live in center and will facilitate shift from private cars to walking and cycling.

The opening of the Western Peripheral Route in 2019 provides opportunities for urban development and also serves to divert traffic away from city center.

A roads hierarchy review is performed to assess whether the network is fit for purpose. Foresees a re-classifying (up- or downgrade) of certain routes from the hierarchy.

City Centre Low Emission Zone (2020): The Council is currently considering the location and extension of such zones.

Aberdeen City is also working on a number of other initiatives and projects, such as

- H2 strategy.
- Bike rental scheme.
- Cargo bike project.
- Review of the availability and pricing of car parking.
- Freight routing
- Investments in the rail network.
Plans for finalisation and dissemination of the report on Alternative Fuels in Public Transport

A revised version of the «final edition» of this report was sent out from Linda on 14 February, and she outlined the plans for further follow-up and dissemination of the report.

Linda informed that some minor updates still remains to be done before the report is ready for publication. Any other input are welcome. It is a challenge that the work with the report has been going on for a so long time (started in 2015), and information entered at an early stage might risk to become out of date.

The President liked the report and suggested to consider how it could be used in support of the new NSR 2030 strategy.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- 29 February is the final deadline for providing additional input & corrections to the report
- The clean transport team will consider in which format the report should be published with a view of making it more reader-friendly.
- The final version of the report should be disseminated to external stakeholders like the CPMR, the Interreg North Sea Region Programme Secretariat, representatives of related projects, DG Move and to European transport networks (CIVITAS, Polis).
- It should be considered how the report could be used in support of the action plan for the new NSR 2030 strategy.

Outline for mapping of the uptake of automated/autonomous, intelligent and new mobility solutions, by task holders

At the previous group meeting in Aalborg on 1 November, it was decided to map the uptake of automated/autonomous, intelligent and new mobility solutions in the member regions. An outline for such a mapping was sent out by Linda on 24 January, and group members were requested to consider and comment upon this outline.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Benchmark practices and learn from each other
- Explore the possibilities for cooperation and identification of partners for EU-projects in the field of innovative mobility solutions
- Influence policy and regulation at the EU, national and regional levels
- Showcase the North Sea region as a frontrunner in terms of developing or applying innovative mobility solutions in order to attract investments and stimulate activities.

Linda and Daniel made an introduction to this item. They emphasised that the context for this initiative is related to the new opportunities offered by increasing digitalisation and automation, rapid roll-out of clean fuels, increased awareness of climate change, and emergence of shared mobility solutions. There is furthermore a need for common regulations and standards at European level, in order to contribute to the development of sustainable and innovative mobility solutions in Europe, and the uptake of such solutions in the transport sector. Cooperative and autonomous transport systems will require common standards in order to work across borders.

They then provided some illustrations of which kind of mobility solutions that this mapping could concern.
• Autonomous transport, ref to Groningen Innovative Transport programme. Festival in September. Only region in Europe that is involved in autonomous transports in all modes.
• Testing autonomous train operations (ATO) with passengers. Also need for common European regulation on rail safety.
• European Hyperloop Test Center to be opened in Groningen in 2022. Will be open for all countries in Europe. Could consider transport group meeting there.
• Electric buses with zero emissions. Ambition that all buses should be zero emission by 2030.
• H2 economy: Using wind energy from the North Sea to produce H2. 30 buses are running on H2. Started test in March with H2 train.
• “Hive-mobility” = innovation center. Collect all knowledge and ongoing projects in cooperation between authorities, knowledge institutions and businesses.

Linda mentioned some examples of what this mapping could cover:

• The first transit in the world with passengers was carried through in Vestfold in February, on the ferry connection Horten- Moss.
• The cargo ship Yara Birkeland will be the world's first completely autonomous, and fully-electric container vessel when launched in 2020, sailing between Yara's Norwegian production facilities at Herøya and the port of Brevik, replacing 40 000 lorries on the roads.
• ASKO, Norway’s largest grocery wholesaler, are developing two seadrones that is expected to replace 150 daily trips by lorry between Østfold and Vestfold. The autonomous vessels are electric and are set to cross the Oslo fjord as of 2020.

• The regional government is involved in several initiatives to support innovative mobility solutions. For example
  • Autonomous shuttle bus pilot in rural area
  • Pilot on Mobility as a Service (MaaS)
  • Water buss project (small passenger ferry to operate in Tønsberg)

Participants underlined that it is important to highlight where the regions are in the process of developing relevant solutions.

Conclusions & follow-up:

The meeting adopted the questionnaire. It will be sent out to the members with a deadline for responding on 1 June. A draft report should be presented at the next meeting of the transport group in the autumn.

Presentation of PORTIS project: port cities innovation for sustainability

A professor (?) from Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen presented this project which is about facilitating a move towards more sustainable transport and efficient use of data. The project is funded by the Horizon 2020 Programme and has partners from Scotland, Italy and Lithuania. Final conference in Aberdeen 24 – 26 June.

https://civitas.eu/portis

6. Clean shipping
The Chair welcomed Hilde Johanne Svensen from Møre og Romsdal and Øystein Hunvik from Vestland as new task holders for clean shipping. On behalf of the group, he expressed his gratitude that their regions are willing to continue this assignment. The Chair repeated his call for other member regions – preferably outside Norway - to join the clean shipping team.

Hilde started out by making the group aware of the fact that the available resources for this function are affected by ongoing internal restructuring as a result of the regional reform in Norway. She went one by sharing her thoughts about the functions of the task holder for clean shipping. The Western Norway Brussels Office can help with monitoring the international and EU agenda on policy, regulation and technological developments. She mentioned the IMO limits on Sulphur and the goal of reducing emissions from shipping by 50% by 2050. Hilde also referred to EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) priorities for 2019.

Link to relevant resources:


Due to time constraints, Hilde suggested to postpone the presentation of the Norwegian clean shipping programme to the next meeting.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- The task holders and other group members are encouraged to share relevant information on clean shipping developments in between group meetings.
- Members from non-Norwegian regions are urgently requested to volunteer for the clean shipping team.

7. TEN-T & CEF

The Chair made a brief introduction to the history of the group’s involvement in TEN-T and CEF-related issues. Last summer the group responded to the EU consultation on the TEN-T revision. On 22 November, the group organised a seminar in Brussels as part of the extended consultation, with participation from European Commission DG Move and the European Coordinator for Motorways of the Sea. Vice Chair Kåre Pettersen presented the links and nodes which are being promoted by the NSC in the context of the revision. A link to an article about this seminar is included here: [https://cpmr-northsea.org/uncategorized/nsc-transport-group-ten-t-seminar-22-november-in-brussels/](https://cpmr-northsea.org/uncategorized/nsc-transport-group-ten-t-seminar-22-november-in-brussels/)

The Adviser presented some ideas on how to follow-up on the 22 November seminar:

- Demonstrate the societal impacts of including and upgrading the different sections and nodes which were promoted by the NSC in the response to the TEN-T consultation and presented at the seminar on 22 November.
- Follow-up of the "offer" made by Philip Smart at the seminar on 22 November that the NSC can help refining the criteria for the network (88 nodes) – also encompassing nodes further away + drafting new eligibility criteria for ports.
- Promote the priority links and nodes of the NSC at the EU TEN-T Days in Croatia on 13 – 15 May. Relevant activities could include the production and display of roll-ups and electronic maps and organisation of seminars and receptions. He suggested that it
would be natural to coordinate with the activities that the CPMR is planning to organize at this event.

Clara informed that the available exhibition slots at the TEN-T Days are fully booked.

Daniel indicated that the NSC could probably use the Groningen stand there.

Linda pointed to the importance of presenting evidence of the societal benefits when arguing for a prolongation of the different corridors in the TEN-T. The business case developed by Oslo-Stockholm 2:55 can be used as an inspiration. Mentioned that the Vestfold-Telemark region is considering to demonstrate the significance of the Jutland Corridor, and explore the possibility of developing an project together with the involved regions in support of this (Interreg). The region will promote the international transport corridors in conjunction with the revision of the National transportplan (2022-2033) in Norway. Also important in this respect to develop a lobby & communication plan for the links and nodes we are promoting, and cooperate in between ordinary meetings (i.e. skype calls).

There is a case for mobilizing a wider range of actors required to contribute to the realization of sustainable transport corridors – government at all levels, ferry operators, logistics companies, harbor companies, etc. The target group for the TEN-T communication could potentially be broad, and will typically be specific for each corridor/ node.

Tommy confirmed that North Jutland is willing to contribute to the promotion of the Jutland Corridor.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- Develop a pro format for demonstrating the societal impacts of the TEN-T links and corridors which are being promoted by the NSC.
- Apply for funding from the NSC Executive Committee for production of promotional material, i.e. a map showing the corridors and nodes to be upgraded/included/prolonged in line with the NSC priorities, and for organising events at the TEN-T Days.
- Link up to CPMR’s planned activities during the TEN-T Days.

8. Members involvement in transport projects under EU programmes (Interreg, Horizon 2020, CEF etc)

Status for the transport priority under the Interreg NSR Programme

The Chair mentioned that an update on the transport priority under the Interreg North Sea Region Programme 2014 – 2020 had been sent out as part of the background information for the meeting. Unfortunately, no representative of the Interreg North Sea Region Programme Secretariat was able to attend this meeting

Role of transport in the new Interreg programme for the NSR – position paper from the EC

The Adviser recalled that the European Commission has issued an Orientation Paper which is meant to serve as a basis for discussion for the development of a new Interreg programme for the North Sea Region. This paper is however not recommending to include the transport-related policy objective (PO)3 – A more connected Europe. Without PO3, he believed that projects related to the TEN-T and the development of long-distance transport corridors would not be eligible in the programme – something which would negatively affect the opportunities
for promoting the “NSC links and nodes” under the network. In a background paper that the Adviser distributed to the group on 5 February, he suggested that the Transport group should develop arguments in support of also including this policy objective in a new Interreg Programme for the NSR, and submit them to the Programme Preparation Group (PPG) for the new programme. The Adviser pointed to a list of “generic arguments” that he had sent to the group just before the meeting.

Dino mentioned that Örebro region had submitted arguments in support of including the transport objective in the next Interreg programme for the Baltic Sea Region which might provide some inspiration to the arguments for including it in the North Sea Programme.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- The meeting agreed to the proposal of developing arguments in support of including the policy objective on transport in the new Interreg Programme for the North Sea Region.
- The Adviser is mandated to draft a set of arguments and to consult the group – after which the arguments are presented to the Executive Committee for inclusion in a general NSC statement on the profile of the new programme which is expected to be discussed at the upcoming meeting in Sandnes on 16 – 17 April.

9. Dates and venue for next meeting(s)

No thematic group meetings are foreseen in conjunction with the NSC Annual Business Meeting and North Sea conference in Rotterdam on 23 – 25 June.

The Chair suggested that members of the group’s chairmanship, the Adviser and task holders who are present in Rotterdam meet there to discuss the follow-up of current issues in the group, and to plan the next meeting in the autumn.

Cllr. Bill Howatson informed that Aberdeenshire is organising a big event in cooperation with KIMO in October, and that the Transport group meeting should avoid the dates for this event.

Conclusions & follow-up:

- Members of the Chairmanship and the task holders inform the Adviser about whether they are going to attend the events in Rotterdam on 23 – 25 June.
- The Adviser sends a Doodle to those who will be present in order to identify a time for a discussion of the follow-up of current issues.
- Member regions that are interested in hosting the autumn meeting (normally in October) are encouraged to come forward.
- Aberdeenshire informs about the dates in October to avoid.

9. AOB

No issues.

The Chair concluded the meeting and thanked the participants for their contributions.