

MEETING DOCUMENT

Wadden Sea Board (WSB 45)

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Hamburg, Germany



Agenda Item:	5.2 Enhance Sustainability of Human Uses and foster Transformative Change (paras 17-37)
Subject:	TG-CM progress report
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Submitted by:	TG-CM and CWSS

Since the WSB 44 meeting, the Task Group Coordination and Management (TG-CM) held one meeting (TG-CM 25-1 on 3 March 2025).

This progress report of the TG-CM contains recommendations and proposals of the group regarding 1) the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and 2) Implementation WD: Fisheries, and Progress on SIMplementation: 3) LANICE (Energy) project and 4) Understanding tourism impacts project.

Proposal: The meeting is invited to:

- 1) discuss** the contribution of the TWSC to the national implementation of the NRR and how to proceed with the recommendations.
- 2) agree** with the proposal to postpone TG-CM activities on fisheries as outlined.
- 3) discuss and decide** on the way forward regarding the strategic approach on renewable energy offshore infrastructures.
- 4) note** progress on the project “Development of Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines to Detect and Mitigate Tourism Impacts on the OUV”.

TG-CM progress report

1. Recommendation for the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation

The Wadden Sea Board 44, held on 20 November 2024, has requested the trilateral Task Group Coordination and Management (TG-CM) to support the formal process of national implementation of the NRR by building on the trilateral knowledge base and to foster professional exchange, e.g., on restoration needs and measures for habitats and species, and with a view on the coherent ecosystem of the Wadden Sea.

In the following, the outcomes of a consultation with trilateral Expert Groups on this matter are outlined. These form the basis for TG-CM recommendations on supporting the process. The national implementation activities are planned to be presented at WSB 45.

Trilateral overview and recommendations

Trilateral Expert Groups were asked to provide an overview of:

1. Deteriorating habitats and species of the Wadden Sea with highest relevance and/or potential for restoration - The NRR includes all species according to Natura 2000. Additional species are given in Annex III. Habitats and biotopes are given in Annex I (coastal and semiterrestrial) and II (marine) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1991&qid=1722240349976>).
2. Examples and/or recommendations of/for potential and proven restoration and management measures reversing the deteriorating trends.

Below are the compiled recommendations provided by the Expert Groups: Salt marshes and Dunes, Marine Mammals, Breeding Birds and Migratory Birds.

Recommendations by Expert Group Salt marshes and Dunes

Salt marshes and dunes provide key habitats for numerous species, including plants, invertebrates, fishes, and birds. When planning restoration and management actions it is therefore essential to always consider the consequences that restoration and management actions have on other elements of the Wadden Sea ecosystem. Similarly, salt marshes and dunes are closely connected to neighbouring habitats, e.g. mudflats and beaches, and spillover or edge effects need to be considered. Monitoring efforts must extend beyond the immediate areas and factors to encompass broader ecological indicators, e.g. to monitor the benthic composition close to restored marshes and the return of foraging bird populations.

Human activities and climate change have considerable impacts on salt marshes and dunes in the Wadden Sea (see QSR chapters) and several management and restoration measures are available. However, it is important to consider the site-specific context, as not all measures are equally relevant for all sites. At the scale of the Wadden Sea, maximum biodiversity can be achieved by the application or continuation of a large-scale mosaic of different management regimes including a regime of minimum intervention (i.e., no livestock grazing).

The following recommendations were taken from [the QSRs on salt marshes](#), with additional suggestions provided by national salt marsh and dune experts:

1. **Natural processes:** The development of naturally protruding salt marshes is best guaranteed by leaving the geomorphology of both the growing marsh and the adjacent intertidal mudflats undisturbed. Cliff erosion should be considered as a natural process in both natural and artificial salt

marshes and should not automatically be interrupted by countermeasures. Natural dune development can result in the development of many diverse habitats, planting marram grass, covering e.g., with hay is not necessary for dune development.

2. **Hydrodynamics and aeolian dynamics are part of the natural processes:** On some islands, salt marsh development is initiated by constructing sand dikes or artificial dune ridges. While these structures accelerate the establishment of salt marsh vegetation, they reduce sand input from the North Sea, affecting the area near and particularly behind the artificial dune and are therefore not recommended. Wash-overs can enhance aeolian dynamics, introducing sand into salt marshes—an important process for breeding birds, sensitive to flooding. Additionally, removing stone or wooden dams can increase hydrodynamic activity within salt marshes.
 - a. Many dune areas have become static in recent decades. Introducing notches, wash-overs or small-scale blow-outs in the entire dune series can enhance aeolian dynamics, benefiting dune system biodiversity. For example, the input of fine calcareous sand can help to reduce acidification in dune habitats caused by nitrogen deposition. On a larger scale, aeolian processes can drive secondary succession of dune slacks and grey dunes.
3. **De-embankment of summer polders** may specifically contribute to the restoration and formation of wide salt marshes which have a higher conservation value.
4. **Natural creek systems in artificial salt marshes:** Refrain from the establishment of new artificial gullies and any maintenance of the established artificial drainage systems but let the natural hydrodynamics of salt marshes prevail.
5. **Undisturbed vs managed:** When the undisturbed course of natural processes is the main objective, a management of minimum intervention should be applied. For an enhancement of biodiversity (e.g. breeding birds), livestock grazing could be applied to control vegetation succession. Type of grazing management should be considered carefully to ensure the specific goals for salt marsh and dune management (e.g. herding, year-round grazing, low densities of grazers, no supplementary feeding, no medical treatments; please also see the bird recommendations on this topic) and natural grazing by hares and rabbits should be preferred.
6. **Nitrogen deposition:** Dunes are home to specialized plant species adapted to nutrient-poor conditions. Nitrogen deposition can lead to soil enrichment, which can favour fast-growing (often non-native) species, such as the grasses *Rosa rugosa* and *Carex arenaria*, over slower-growing, native species (e.g. *Herminium monorchis*). Reduction of nitrogen deposition through agricultural reforms and the removal of nitrogen from dune areas through removal of topsoil and higher vegetation (also of native plant species), followed by grazing may be recommended in some places.
7. **Water management:** Due to climate change and increased consumption, e.g. by tourists, there are strong fluctuations of the water table, and a flexible ground water catchment concerning nature requirements is necessary. On Wadden Sea islands, dune slacks are often affected by a decline of natural dynamics, and by a lack of water, which led to a decline of species of pioneer dune slacks (e.g. *Liparis loeselii*). More recently, these species have benefitted from artificial digging of dune slack areas, but water management plans need to be adapted to tourism numbers and possible climate change effects. An enhancement of cooperation between water catchment and nature conservation agencies is required.
8. **Invasive species management:** Develop and implement invasive alien species management plans that include regular monitoring for invasive species and early eradication where invasive species have been detected. Especially within dune areas several invasive species have been identified as problematic and need to be removed, such as *Rosa rugosa*, *Prunus serotina*, and *Rubus armeniacus*. Because many alien species are only invasive in habitats like dunes or saltmarshes, it is

important to go beyond EU regulations, and to create an Atlantic IAS warning network, so that invasive alien species could be identified at the earliest stage as possible.

9. **Visitor management** through effective recreation plans is needed to prevent disturbance and destruction of habitats, essential for other Wadden Sea species.
10. Salt marsh sites with an unfavourable conservation status and/or low potential for increased naturalness can be considered for restoration measures, such as top-soil removal, re-arrangement of the artificial drainage system, or even a re-design of the entire habitat.
11. Artificial salt marshes created, for example, as breeding habitats for birds should not be considered as natural salt marshes.

Recommendations by Expert Group Marine Mammals

Understanding how populations changes are linked to human activities, and the degradation of habitats is key to identify effective management and restoration measures. Hence, a general recommendation from the Expert Group is to strengthen research and monitoring, not only into the drivers of population changes, but also into the impacts of restoration and management measures taken as part of the new Nature Restoration Regulations.

Specific recommendations for management of marine mammals include the following:

1. **Seasonal closure of key pupping sites (SMP Objective):** Harbour seal numbers have been declining in recent years after a period of stagnating growth. Lower survival of harbour seal pups has been discussed as a parameter contributing to the decline in the population. To ensure harbour seal pups leave the Wadden Sea in optimal condition, disturbance at pupping sites needs to be avoided. While seasonal and permanent closures of several pupping sites do exist in the three countries, distances that should be kept to these sites during pupping season have often been debated with people arguing that their activities are not causing seals to move, hence not causing any disturbance. While this may be true for single events, the cumulation of activities taking place during a haul-out period is of concern. In addition, even smaller disturbance behaviour like lifting their heads may be linked to lack of sleep, increased heart rates, etc. which may ultimately affect the condition of the seals. Thus, clear protected zones are needed and a proper enforcement during the harbour seal (and grey seal) pupping seasons.
2. **Registration and reduction of set nets in the Wadden Sea, also by private fishermen (SMP objective):** Marine mammals in the Wadden Sea, both dead and alive, are frequently found entangled in nets, raising concern about the impact of bycatch on seal and harbour porpoise mortality. While many focus on industrial fisheries, there is limited attention on set nets which are still being used by commercial and private fishermen in the Wadden Sea and adjacent waters. Seals and harbour porpoises are known to become entangled in these nets, but there is no information on the location where these nets are set and how they are set. For example, nets are often set very close to the shore which is of great concern to animals hauling out on beaches. It is recommended that registration of all locations where nets are set is required (as in Sweden) and limitations on the temporal and spatial coverage of areas are defined.
3. **Implementation of bycatch mitigation measures (SMP Objective):** Bycatch is of great concern for the conservation of marine mammals and other marine species, although the extent of bycatch of Wadden Sea species is largely unknown. The development and implementation of bycatch mitigation measures also for vessels <12m needs to be fostered and enforced to minimize indirect effects of private and commercial fishing activities on the Wadden Sea ecosystem. Consideration regarding the type of mitigation measures being used is needed, especially in the Wadden Sea, to avoid any negative impacts.

4. **Visitor management and enforcement:** The Wadden Sea is a key tourism destination with great economic potential, but the activities also have negative impacts on the ecosystem. Managing and enforcing visitor access through spatial and seasonal closures of key breeding and resting areas during sensitive times of the year is essential to minimize disturbance and negative impacts of tourism. As ignorance of existing regulations is often argued when confronted with fees and fines, education campaigns on key biodiversity issues need to be deployed.
5. **Nature protection zones in the North Sea:** As marine mammals are dependent on both the North Sea and Wadden Sea, human activities in the North Sea have direct consequences for the marine mammal species using the Wadden Sea. The identification of areas with high relevance to marine mammal species in the North Sea is essential and so is the protection of the key areas through exclusion of disturbing human activities. Mitigation measures are needed in some cases, e.g. construction sites due to the expansion of renewable energies, to minimize disturbance of marine mammals.
6. **Securing prey availability:** In order to restore the Wadden Sea as a suitable habitat for marine mammals, prey availability should be enhanced. Many fish stocks in the Wadden Sea have declined over the past decades (locally or Wadden Sea wide), such as plaice, sole, dab, cod, whiting and sprat. Strengthening the stocks of important prey species for harbour porpoise (such as sand eel, herring, sprat, whiting) and seals (such as whiting, sand eels, flatfish) could be done by means of fisheries measures (such as temporary and/or area-specific bans on fishing of important prey species) or improving the habitat quality for these fish species.

Recommendations by Expert groups Breeding Birds and Migratory Birds

Recommendations for management of birds are very closely linked to restoration and management of habitats and of human activities. Here, the members of the Expert Groups Breeding Birds and Migratory Birds tried to specifically focus on activities that would benefit birds. However, the wider ecosystem needs to be considered as well to ensure actions benefitting one species group (i.e. birds) generate no disadvantage for other species groups (e.g. insects, fish, plants). A general goal should be to improve and secure overall breeding, resting and foraging conditions for birds in the Wadden Sea, to ensure populations are able to adapt to climatic changes expected in the future.

A lack of information on the drivers of population changes means that it is often difficult to give clear recommendations for management and restoration efforts. Programmes and projects monitoring vital rates (mark-recapture, colour ringing, etc.) and spatial use (tagging studies) are keys to determine where management measures are most beneficial and should be financially supported for species declining in the Wadden Sea/the Flyway. The requested update of the Breeding Bird Action Plans (to start in 2025) is expected to provide recommendations for concrete management actions to improve the conservation of Wadden Sea breeding birds.

The following recommendations were taken from the [Breeding Bird Action Plan](#) and the QSRs on [breeding birds](#) and [migratory birds](#), with additional suggestions provided by national experts.

Habitat restoration for birds (local)

- To improve habitats for birds, it is suggested to allow a more natural water regime and high vegetation diversity in salt marshes, e.g. by closing artificial drainage works.
- Removal of barriers to former marine landscapes and habitats is known to improve high tide roosts and feeding grounds for many bird species:

- a) Opening of summer dikes or relocation of dikes contributes to recolonisation of habitats by breeding birds and/or an increase in migratory bird numbers. If the de-embanked areas already support high densities of breeding birds caution is required as risk of flooding might increase with the removal of summer dikes.
 - b) Restoration of dune areas by removal of protecting sand dikes, allows regular wash-overs. This provides more diverse habitat structures for migratory and breeding birds, which is beneficial for breeding species like Great Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover and Little Tern.
- Re-wetting coastal grasslands and salt marshes is regarded an important measure to improve habitat dynamics and thereby breeding conditions for waders in areas where the opening of dikes is not possible. It is also assumed to slow down settlement of mammalian predators.
 - The more frequent occurrence of onshore winds, in combination with spring tide (and general sea level rise) has increased flooding risk during the breeding season, causing frequent losses of nests and drowning of chicks. Also, soil subsidence by gas exploitation led to loss of feeding and breeding areas. Measures to minimise impact of flooding are e.g. creation of safe breeding sites behind the dike (see below). Establishing dams or improving coastal protection to prevent flooding is not beneficial as it reduces habitat quality.
 - Creation of inland breeding sites which are protected against flooding and situated in areas with sufficient food for the chick-rearing period (e.g. for Avocet). These sites should not replace other suitable and more natural bird habitats. Measures of predation managed will need to be considered for areas behind the dikes (see below)
 - Implementation of meadow bird friendly farming practices in coastal grasslands, avoiding losses by mowing and providing feeding opportunities for chicks.
 - Improving habitat quality by allowing more natural dynamics is welcomed in the Wadden Sea. For example, re-establishment of natural dynamics fosters sedimentation which is seen as beneficial for flood protection. However, locally natural dynamics may lead to losses of important breeding sites.

Habitat management for birds (local)

- Some species may benefit from low intensity grazing (e.g. Lapwing, Avocet) whereas other species prefer ungrazed vegetation (e.g. Common Redshank and Black-tailed Godwit). Management of salt marshes with livestock-grazing could improve the macro morphology of salt marshes and meadows (to be reviewed against targets for vegetation and morphodynamics) and strengthen the food availability conditions for food for both migratory and breeding birds. The risk of nest trampling, especially with horse-grazing, could be reduced by introducing grazers after the main breeding season.
- Creation of new inland breeding sites (see habitat restoration) should be accompanied by vegetation management, as coastal breeding birds prefer sparsely vegetated sites and without vegetation management most sites will become less attractive over time due to succession (also in combination with the existing nutrients still present in the soil).
- It has been shown that barriers like stone walls or groynes in salt marshes are a problem for chicks moving between breeding and feeding sites. The same also applies to deep and steep ditches along the inner side of the main dike. Locally, also barbed wire fences and dense vegetation (e.g. reed beds) are a problem.

- Limited food availability is assumed to play a key role in the poor breeding performance of a number of breeding bird species. The current impact of fishery activities on breeding and migratory birds is not well known, but it is assumed that it still puts constraints on food resources for birds like Common Eiders and Oystercatchers. In addition, there are concerns regarding increased water turbidity as a result of dredging and its impact on benthos organisms and hence the availability of food for benthos-feeding species.
- Important high-tide roosts and feeding areas are affected by increased military and air traffic. The 600-meter “allowed low-flight altitude” level should be implemented again in the entire Wadden Sea, at least above protected areas such as National Parks and Nature protection areas.

Generally, management measures taken to improve breeding conditions should be associated with breeding success monitoring to determine their success as bird numbers may change positively at first sight, but when not accompanied by increased reproductive output will not sustain the population.

Predation management for breeding birds (regional)

Current predator densities are extremely high due to anthropogenic impacts (e.g. change in land use resulting in dryer, more eutrophic coastal marshes; eradication of rabies, etc.) and are causing substantial losses among breeding birds. Predator densities need to be lowered to natural levels or predators removed from sites, which are naturally predator free (e.g. many Wadden sea islands).

- Predation management should therefore aim to lower overall predation risk by removing predators (i.e. predator control) and by making settlement and living conditions for predators more difficult (see also habitat restoration).
- Keeping islands free of predators is an important prerequisite to maintain populations of coastal breeding birds. On islands, predator control will be most effective as vacant territories of predators will not immediately be filled-in by continuous dispersion as on the mainland. In addition, opportunities for predators to access islands should be minimised.
- For inland breeding sites behind the dike, it will be necessary to implement measures for predation management (e.g. fences), as otherwise predation risk will be too high and breeding success low.
- Locally, fences (colonies) or cages (Ringed Plover) might protect nests from predation. This is especially relevant for inland breeding sites behind the dike where predation risk is high and as a result the breeding results very low. However, intensive monitoring is required when applying this measure to ensure functionality of fences and there are potential detrimental effects for adult survival with regard to nest cages.
- Additional research is needed to inform predation management: How do predators use habitats inhabited by coastal breeding birds and interact with breeding birds? How can this knowledge be transferred to dedicated measures to reduce losses caused by mammalian predation?

Visitor management (regional)

Disturbance at feeding and roosting areas causes additional flight activities in birds. Feeding and resting time is lost, and additional energy is spent for the flights. With the increasing numbers of tourist visiting the Wadden Sea, regulations should be in place reducing disturbance by human activities (e.g. boats and mudflat hikers).

- Important foraging, resting and breeding sites in the Wadden Sea need to be identified and proper and professionally justified reserve planning is required to ensure the ecological functionality of these sites for birds
- Implement zoning and surveillance to separate sites used by tourists and sites kept visitor-free for undisturbed breeding and roosting during high tides.
- Prohibit or regulate access to the most likely breeding sites to reduce visitor pressure and attract breeding birds, e.g. beach-breeding bird species like Great Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover and Little Tern. To ensure effectivity, surveillance of sites is needed, as well as maintenance of signal posts and fences. This issue has become more important as traditional breeding sites are affected by flooding and increased predation and as new recreational activities, such as kite-surfers and beach-buggies, have put new constraints on use of beaches, posing a considerable source of disturbance at high tide roosts.

Table 1. Long-term and short-term trends of migratory and breeding bird species in the Wadden Sea. Symbols in the table represent: ++ strong increase, + increase, 0 stable, - decline, ? insufficient data, -- strong decrease. Species of concern judged by EG-Migratory and Breeding Birds. Adapted from the EAF assessment report 2023 (to be published in May 2025) and the Breeding Bird trend report.

Species	Migratory birds		Breeding birds		Species of concern
	Longterm trend (1978/1988-2022/2023)	Short term trend (2013/2014-2022/2023)	Longterm trend (1991-2017)	Short term trend (2006-2017)	
Barnacle Goose	+	0	++		
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	0			
Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>lapponica</i>)	0	0			
Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>taymyrensis</i>)	-	-			yes
Black-headed Gull	0	0	--	0	yes
Brent Goose	-	0			
Common Eider trend starts 1992/93	-	-	--	0	yes
Common Greenshank	-	0			yes
Common Gull	0	0	+	-	
Common Redshank	0	+	-		
Common Redshank (<i>robusta</i>)	0	+			
Common Redshank (<i>totanus</i>)	-	-	--	0	yes
Common Shelduck (ground counts)	-	0	+	0	yes
Common Teal	0	+			
Curlew Sandpiper	0	-			
Dunlin	0	0	-		yes
Eurasian Curlew	0	-	--	-	yes
Eurasian Oystercatcher	-	-	--	-	yes
Eurasian Spoonbill	++	+	++	+	

Eurasian Wigeon	+	+			
European Golden Plover	0	+			
European Herring Gull	-	-	--	0	yes
Great Black-backed Gull	-	-	++	++	
Great Cormorant	+	0	++	?	
Great Ringed Plover	+	+			
Great Ringed Plover (<i>hiaticula</i>)	0	+	--	?	yes
Great Ringed Plover (<i>psammodytes/tundrae</i>)	+	+			
Grey Plover	0	0			
Kentish Plover	-	?	--	+	yes
Mallard	-	-			yes
Northern Lapwing	+	+	--	-	yes
Northern Pintail	+	+			
Northern Shoveler	+	+			
Pied Avocet	-	-	--	-	yes
Red Knot	-	0			yes
Red Knot (<i>canutus</i>)	0	0			
Red Knot (<i>islandica</i>)	-	0			
Ruddy Turnstone	+	+			
Ruddy Turnstone (Greenland & NE Canada)	+	+			
Ruddy Turnstone (Scandinavia - Western Russia)	-	-	0		
Ruff	-	+	-		yes
Sanderling	+	+			
Spotted Redshank	-	-			yes
Whimbrel	0	0			
Red breasted Merganser	NA	NA	+	?	
Hen Harrier	NA	NA	--	--	yes
Mediterranean Gull	NA	NA	++	?	
Lesser black-backed gull	NA	NA	+	0	
Great black-backed gull	NA	NA	++	++	
Gull-billed tern	NA	NA	0	?	yes
Sandwich tern	NA	NA	0	?	yes
Common tern	NA	NA	--	-	yes
Arctic tern	NA	NA	--	-	yes
Little tern	NA	NA	0	?	yes
Short-eared owl	NA	NA	--	-	yes
Black-tailed godwit	NA	NA	--	0	yes

Based on these, TG-CM recommends the WSB to consider:

- the Wadden Sea is one transboundary ecosystem and that this should be reflected to the best extent possible.
- the recommendations provided by the trilateral expert groups in the national restoration plans.
- the national approaches, their similarities and differences and how these might have an effect on cross-border restoration efforts in the Wadden Sea.
- how TWSC can contribute to relevant processes beyond its borders that are crucial for the Wadden Sea and its components (e.g. measures under the Common Fisheries Policy to enhance fish stocks).

Proposal: The WSB is invited to **discuss** the contribution of the TWSC to the national implementation of the NRR and how to proceed with the recommendations.

2. Proposal to postpone Wilhelmshaven Declaration activities related to paras 17, 18 (fisheries)

For the Danish presidency, TG-CM had envisaged a review of the [Framework Sustainable Fisheries \(2014\)](#) 10 years after its adoption (WD 54), as well as activity 6 of the key topic Fisheries in “The SIMP Integrated Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage”:

SIMP Fisheries Activity 6. ‘The TWSC to produce a coordinated approach to contribute to reaching the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 according to nationally based interpretation of key elements thereof and in line with the Wilhelmshaven Declaration 2022’.

These relate to the Wilhelmshaven Declaration’s paragraphs:

17. ‘Encourage and call on the fisheries sector to continue on their path to make the fishery more sustainable while respecting the nature conservation objectives in the Wadden Sea;’

18. ‘Urge the Wadden Sea Board to enter a dialogue process with competent authorities for fisheries, sector representatives and environmental NGO’s at trilateral level to advance the implementation of the trilaterally agreed Framework for Sustainable Fisheries (2014) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage in a collaborative approach by stimulating and facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge, best practices and management experiences about impacts of fisheries and by developing, where adequate, pilot studies and concrete measures;’

54. ‘Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to review the existing trilateral sectoral visions, strategies and action plans in general 10 years after their adoption, decide on the updates and amend where necessary, sharpening the objectives and application orientation of the measures contained therein, e. g. according to the SMART principle (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound); ’

At their TG-CM 25-1 meeting, the group agreed to postpone the review for the time being, due to the high work load for fulfilling TG-CM tasks, and commitment in a World Heritage context, with the UNESCO-Request for a joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (joint SEA), as well as with high national resource demands for the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation. The TG-CM regrets their current lack of capacity for the complex task of reviewing the Framework and activity 6 of the SIMP Key Topic Fisheries.

Proposal: The WSB is invited to **agree** with the proposal to postpone TG-CM activities as outlined above.

3. Progress on the SIMPlementation: reporting on the progress of the two strategic projects under key topics Energy and Tourism: 1) LANICE (Energy) project and 2) Understanding tourism impacts project.

1) SIMP key topic Energy in conjunction with the UNESCO request from July 2024

In their Decision 46 COM 7B.51, the World Heritage Committee:

12. Acknowledges the importance and necessity to accelerate renewable energy production, nevertheless, notes with serious concern the increasing number of onshore and offshore energy facilities (e.g., wind) within the wider setting of the property, and requests moreover the States Parties to:

a) Adopt a joint strategic and systematic approach to the planning and implementation of projects to connect offshore infrastructures with the mainland, with the aim of avoiding negative impacts on the OUV of the property,

b) Ensure that the planning and implementation of onshore energy facilities (e.g., wind) avoid negative impacts on migratory bird pathways and habitats;

Activity 2A of the key topic energy in the SIMP says:

TWSC facilitates trilateral exchange and collaboration with agencies, energy companies and authorities to put together technical guidance for nature-friendly transmission grid projects.

Project LANICE

LANICE (North Sea wide acceleration of **LAND**ing offshore energy while mitigating **Impact** on the **Coastal Environment**) is a current trilateral project aimed at supporting an environmentally sound energy transition. The project aims to support the achievement of EU renewable energy targets and climate change mitigation objectives while preserving the Wadden Sea World Heritage.

Objectives:

- Provide mitigation strategies to reduce environmental impacts of energy transmission.
- Investigate environmental conflicts and acceleration opportunities for transmission grid projects.
- Provide practical environmental solutions for planning, permitting, implementation and maintenance of projects.

Project Timeline: January 2024 – May 2026

Who's Involved?

Lead: TG-CM *ad hoc* WG-RE and CWSS (Chair: Maren Bauer)

Members of the ad hoc WG-RE: Margrita Sobottka, Karst Jaarsma, Henrik Pind Jorgensen

CWSS Secretary: Cristina Nazzari

Funded by: European Union's NextGenerationEU and TWSC

Execution:

- Activities on environmental impacts and mitigation: March–early 2025, by Witteveen+Bos (NL) with Deltares (NL), DHI (DE, DK), Intertek (UK) and NIRAS (DK).
- Activities on mitigation toolbox, environmental conflicts and needs: March 2025 – end of 2025 by experts to be decided with support by the ad-hoc WG-RE.

- Materials and activities on communication: 2024-2025, CWSS and DPI (NL).

Throughout the project's execution, external support is required. Time for drafting TORs and commissioning/procurement procedures as well as factual checks of products shall be considered. Furthermore, the involvement of stakeholders is key. Stakeholder mapping, developed by a consultant in 2023 in advance of the LANICE project, shall be used to identify any missing groups or sectors. Topic-specific interviews, online workshops and in-person exchange is required to identify obstacles, prerequisites, demands, feasibilities. The specific topics could be developed within the ad-hoc WG.

Progress so far:

- Stakeholder mapping was carried out in 2023 as a preparatory activity to the project.
- Wadden Sea Day: "Safeguarding the Wadden Sea: Navigating Green Energy Development in the North Sea" (WHV, Aug. 2024).
- Trilateral Workshop on environmental impacts and mitigation (Hamburg, Sept. 2024).
- Final Report by external consultants: Results of the activity on offshore grid connections impacts in the Wadden Sea (The final version of the report is expected in May 2025).
- Communication about the project (CWSS Newsletter, Annual Report).
- Development of communication materials.

Outlook until the 15th TGC

Continuation of the LANICE project, including:

- Development of an Environmental Mitigation Toolbox.
- Identifying conflicts and acceleration potentials for offshore energy grids.
- Assessing stakeholder needs for planning and implementation.

These activities are part of a joint strategic, systematic approach to offshore-to-mainland infrastructure planning and implementation to avoid negative impacts on the property's OUV.

To best streamline these next steps with other relevant TWSC activities including the process towards the 15th TGC, it is essential to:

- Agree on a common understanding of a joint strategy as requested by the WHC to “...a) *Adopt a joint strategic and systematic approach to the planning and implementation of projects to connect offshore infrastructures with the mainland, with the aim of avoiding negative impacts on the OUV of the property, ..*”
- Clarify /discuss the input/deliverables for the Esbjerg Conference/Ministerial declaration (TG-CM/MD drafting group).
Clarify to what extent and in which steps of the process the policy level should be involved. Policy level representatives could be involved in dedicated sessions, instrumental for the development of the LANICE's project's products. Furthermore, they could be involved via the members of the *ad hoc* WG-RE. Although the policy level is subject to rapid changes, influenced by the geo-political situation, it is important to seize the opportunity and aim for active participation at the policy level. A participatory approach throughout the project would lead to a closer cross-sectoral collaboration and ensure a broader support of the created products and strategies. It could also contribute to developing products that prove to be useful for e.g. the permitting authorities and the applicants.
- Re-confirm TWSC role as a knowledge hub: existing work structure, CWSS as facilitator of platform for exchange on the topic in connection with the OUV and communication, making use of the Partnership Hub to connect different sectors affected by renewable energy developments.

- Considering that energy is one of the key topics of the SIMP, it is crucial to seek synergies with the SEA process. Relevant elements of the project components should enrich/be fed into the SEA findings.

More information: <https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/energy-transition>

Proposal: The WSB is invited to **discuss** and **decide** on the way forward regarding the strategic approach on renewable energy offshore infrastructures as requested by the WHC in July 2024, including the role of the LANICE project as core element within. This should include the involvement of the policy level and feeding into the SEA process and results.

2) SIMP key topic Tourism

Activity 3A of the key topic tourism in the SIMP says:

TWSC to strengthen initiatives for cross-border cooperation for fostering the nature conservation aspect of sustainability in tourism by, among other, addressing gaps in knowledge regarding the impacts of tourism on the OUV.

Development of monitoring and assessment guidelines to detect and mitigate impacts of tourism on the OUV

General aim:

The project aims to develop guidelines for monitoring and assessing tourism impacts on the OUV, outlining methods to identify, analyse, and quantify effects using existing data to support effective mitigation. The results will contribute to relevant trilateral processes, including the joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP) parameter review, and future Quality Status Reports (QSRs) on tourism.

Objectives:

- Screen and validate existing data to assess tourism's impact on the OUV.
- Evaluate existing data and best practices for mitigating tourism impacts on the OUV.
- Identify key information gaps and develop practical recommendations for improving monitoring and assessment methods incorporating stakeholder engagement and a trilateral case study.
- Develop comprehensive guidelines for monitoring and assessing tourism impacts on the OUV, providing stakeholders with data-driven strategies to identify, mitigate, and manage negative effects while strengthening existing best practices.

Project Timeline: December 2024 – September 2025

Who's Involved?

Lead: CWSS and TG-CM (overseeing the implementation of the SIMP) with the involvement of NG-Sustainable Tourism (NG-ST), EG-Data, and EG-MA, as stakeholder participation being an essential part of the process. Active engagement of stakeholders across all relevant sectors is strongly encouraged, and these groups are especially invited to contribute their expertise and perspectives throughout the process.

Funded by: TWSC

Execution: trilateral consortium led by Zentrum für nachhaltigen Tourismus (ZENAT; DE), in cooperation with SusMetro (NL) and University of Copenhagen (DK).

Progress so far:

- Kick-off and screening of TMAP parameter data.
- Planning and organisation of national workshops to validate data quality and coverage and to gain additional data and information.
- Planning of trilateral workshop to discuss preliminary results, exchange experiences among stakeholders and site managers, refine approaches for monitoring and assessing tourism impacts on the OUV and to develop recommendations for the guidelines.
- National workshops on 2, 28 and 29 April 2025 in Leeuwarden, Rømø and Hamburg respectively to identify useful data and vulnerable species and habitats. The workshop outcomes will directly inform the selection of the case study area and ensure that stakeholder perspectives, existing knowledge, and regional needs are fully reflected.

What's Next?

- Trilateral workshop on 19 June 2025 in Hamburg.
- Case study development: an area will be selected to showcase the analysis of data to assess tourism impacts on the OUV key values and cumulative effects. The selection of the case study will be based on data availability, and representativeness. This process will combine international data analysis with a national validation process and draw directly on input from national workshops.
- Compile best practices for tourism impact management, including data and analysis used to assess their effectiveness.
- Identification of key information gaps and practical recommendations for monitoring and research needs.
- Design monitoring and assessment guidelines to help identify and effectively mitigate negative tourism impacts on the Wadden Sea's OUV using suitable data.

More information: <https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/understanding-tourism-impacts>

Proposal: The WSB is invited to **note** the information.