

Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 18
3 November 2016
Wilhelmshaven**



Agenda Item: 5.1 Wadden Sea World Heritage
Subject: State of Conservation Report (final draft)
Document No. WSB 18/5.1/3
Date: 21 October 2016
Submitted by: TG-WH

Task Group World Heritage (TG-WH) met on 5 October 2016 in Bremen to discuss the outcome of the national consultation and to prepare a final draft of the SoC report (attached in Annex 1)

Proposal: The meeting is referred to the document.

State of Conservation Report to the World Heritage Committee

The draft SoC report (version 7 July 2016) was consulted in the countries during the period July – September 2016:

1. Lower Saxony: consultations with state ministries for agriculture and economy,
2. Schleswig-Holstein: consultations with the fishery department of MELUR, and the state ministry for Economy,
3. Federal Ministry: consultations with federal ministries for agriculture and economy, and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation.
4. The Netherlands: consultation with the ministries for education/science and infrastructure/environment, within the inter-ministerial World Heritage group, the regional Wadden Sea council (local and regional authorities), and nature NGOs,
5. Denmark: consultation with the ministry for culture and within SVANA.

Only few comments, mainly editorial or updates, have been received and were integrated in the final draft version at the TG-WH meeting on 5 October 2016 as attached.

Recent data from the QSR 2016 are still lacking with regard to blue mussel beds, seagrass, dunes and beaches, and harbour porpoise. TG-WH **proposes** to WSB to include information from the most recent nomination dossiers (2013) and, in case new data will be available before 15.11.2016, to update the text accordingly.

With regard to Section 5 Public Access, TG-WH **proposes** to WSB that the entire report should be made available for public access on the WHC SoC information system.

With regard to Section 6 Signature of Authority: TG-WH **proposes** to WSB that the final SoC report should be submitted to UNESCO on behalf of the States Parties by the Dutch UNESCO ambassador. The Danish and German ambassadors should be informed accordingly.

With regard to Annex 4 Danish National Park: TG-WH **proposes** to WSB that Denmark should send a letter to the UNESCO before 15.11.2016, which will then be annexed to the SoC report (see timelines). Consistency between section 2.1 and the letter in Annex 4 must be ensured.

Proposal: To approve the SoC Report accordingly and instruct TG-WH with the preparation of the final version to be submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December.

**Report on the State of Conservation of the World Heritage
property**

“The Wadden Sea (N1314)”

**Task Group World Heritage
Common Wadden Sea Secretariat**

Final Draft Version, 21 October 2016

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Response to the Decisions of the World Heritage Committee	4
2.1	Request on Danish National Park (2014).....	4
2.2	Management.....	5
2.2.1	Single integrated management plan.....	5
2.2.2	Sustainable tourism strategy and action plan.....	9
2.2.3	Alien species strategy	10
2.2.4	Cooperation with sites along African-Eurasian Flyways.....	11
2.2.5	Monitoring impact of fisheries.....	12
3	Other current conservation issues which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value	13
3.1	State of Conservation	13
3.1.1	Habitats and habitat developments	13
3.1.2	Species and population trends and developments	14
3.2	Factors affecting the property	17
3.2.1	Development pressures	17
3.2.2	Environmental pressures.....	18
3.2.3	Natural disasters and risk preparedness	19
3.2.4	Visitor/tourism pressures.....	20
4	New plans/projects	21
5	Public access to the state of conservation report.....	22
6	Signature of the Authority	22
	ANNEXES.....	22

PREFACE

With the extension of the Dutch German Wadden Sea World Heritage Site (inscribed in 2009) with further areas in Germany and the Danish part of the Wadden Sea in 2014, the entire Wadden Sea is now on the World Heritage List.

With the decision to extend the site, the World Heritage Committee requested the three states parties to submit a joint report on the conservation of the property and on the progress in implementing the requests from 2009 and 2014.

This report responds to these decisions of the World Heritage Committee and summarizes the most recent trends and developments concerning the state of conservation and factors affecting the property building upon the information given in the nomination dossiers of 2008 (Dutch German nomination), 2010 (minor boundary modification) and 2013 (Extension Denmark and Germany) respectively.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 page summary on the state of conservation and the progress in implementing the requests of the World Heritage Committee

(text to be drafted later)

2 RESPONSE TO THE DECISIONS OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

2.1 REQUEST ON DANISH NATIONAL PARK (2014)

“Requests the State Party of Denmark, in cooperation with the State Parties of the Netherlands and Germany, to prepare an implementation plan to enhance the conservation and management of the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value within the Danish National Park. This could be supported by the development and adoption of a binding agreement between the Danish Nature Agency and the National Park Board;” (38 COM 8B.13, Request No. 5).

Status

The request follows up on the supplementary information in the nomination dossier. The Danish National Park Wadden Sea (NPV) is a unit under the Ministry of Environment and Food (formerly the Ministry of Environment), the same ministry as the Danish Nature Agency (NST) and Danish Agency for Water and Nature Management (SVANA) Cooperation and agreements between NPV and SVANA/NST are regulated by law for national parks in Denmark and the statutory order for Danish National Park Wadden Sea in which roles and responsibilities for the Danish national parks respectively the National Park Wadden Sea is stipulated. This agreement divides the overall tasks and obligations of the three organizations:

- SVANA is the national authority, which enforces the legislation and regulations on nature conservation for the World Heritage area.
- NST is the site manager for the World Heritage property and manage state owned nature areas.. Rangers from NST enforce regulation in the protected area “Nature and Wildlife Reserve Wadden Sea” (World Heritage property)NPV takes care of communication, raising awareness, education, research and development and has an obligation to conserve, strengthen and develop nature and its values.

NPV is obliged by law to contribute to enhancing the management and conservation of the attributes described in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Wadden Sea World Heritage. This is enforced by the National Park Board through the NPV Plan which is a binding agreement, or performance contract, between the National Park Board and the Ministry. To add to the obligations in the NPV Plan, the NPV Board adopted a new strategy on 01/12/2015. The NPV Board deemed it necessary in order to clarify how the NPV contribute to safeguarding the World Heritage and the integrity of the site. Furthermore NPV will introduce a new National Park plan by end of 2018, where the strategy will be integrated and the World Heritage is primary objective. This will benefit and enhance the management and protection of the attributes of the OUV. The formal link between SVANA/NST and NPV is therefore already founded in the Danish legislation hence Denmark considers a new binding agreement not to be necessary.

An extensive list of cooperative actions and efforts further enhance the shared responsibility for and guarding of the OUV attributes.

The formal response to the World Heritage Committee submitted by the State Party of Denmark can be found in Annex 4 of this report.

2.2 MANAGEMENT

2.2.1 Single integrated management plan

The World Heritage Committee

“Also requests the State Parties of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to develop a single integrated management plan for the entire transboundary property in conformity with the requirements of Paragraph 111 of the Operational Guidelines, and to consider the options to strengthen the effectiveness of implementation of coordinated management within the property;” (38 COM 8B.13, Request No. 6)

“Further requests the State Parties of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands “to submit, by 1 December 2016, a joint report including a 1-page executive summary, on the state of conservation of the property, including confirmation of progress on the development and adoption of the integrated management plan and the institutional and financial provisions that will be in place to ensure its effective implementation.” (38 COM 8B.13, Request No. 8)

Status

As reflected in the decisions of the WH Committee in 2009, 2011, and 2014, the Wadden Sea Plan is the overall framework and structure for integrated conservation and management of the property as a whole and coordination between all three States Parties. The Committee also concluded that comprehensive protection measures are in place within each State.

As a result of the World Heritage Site designation, the agenda of the TWSC has been broadened and there are now many new opportunities to strengthen nature conservation - the fundamental purpose of the Cooperation – and to increase civic pride, raise awareness, increase support and practical involvement, and achieve socio-economic benefits.

The current work programme of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) is complex and is described in a wide variety of strategies and plans including, amongst others, the Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy and roadmap to involve strategic partners, the Wadden Sea World Heritage Brand Paper, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, the Flyway Vision, the Framework for Sustainable Fisheries, the Framework for Alien Species (in development), the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area Wadden Sea Operational Plan, the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme, the Seal Management Plan, and the Trilateral Communication Strategy,

A first analysis of these strategies and plans showed that much has been achieved since the World Heritage inscription 2009 and the extension in 2014, in close cooperation with and support of many stakeholders, such as a consistent tourism strategy and World Heritage communication. However, the development of a Single Integrated Management Plan (SIMP) could help to strengthen the further harmonization of managing the Wadden Sea as one property. A SIMP would also provide a clear overarching framework which can be easily read and understood by stakeholders and the general public. This concerns especially the definition of roles and responsibilities of the TWSC, site managers and key stakeholders in implementation of plans and strategies.

Therefore, a SIMP for the Wadden Sea World Heritage property will focus on main overarching issues to be managed with priority and in a consistent way across the property to maintain the OUV and protect the natural values and integrity. These issues will cover, amongst others, climate change, economic development and resource use, as well as other important issues such as World Heritage communication, working with partners, and buy-in of local stakeholders. Further management issues will be addressed, as a SIMP will be developed with the support and participation of all key parties involved in implementing the plan.

Taking into account the complexity of the transnational Wadden Sea World Heritage property, the process towards a SIMP will require a broad support from all stakeholders. Therefore, the preparation of a SIMP has been embedded in the preparation of the next Trilateral

Governmental Conference in Leeuwarden in April 2018. The approved timeline for preparation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage SIMP is as follows:

1. Assessment of existing trilateral plans and strategies in relation to the elements of a SIMP according to the Operational Guidelines by end of 2016, taking into account the results of the Quality Status Report 2016. This work has already started.
2. Preparation of communication material for stakeholders on overall rationale and added value of a SIMP for the WH property by mid-2017.
3. Preparation of a roadmap developing a SIMP including extent and process of stakeholder involvement by mid-2017.
4. Consultation of the proposed roadmap towards a SIMP in the framework of the preparation of the Trilateral Governmental Conference in spring 2018.
5. Formal decision on development of a SIMP at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in spring 2018 and adoption of a roadmap.
6. Starting the development of a SIMP in mid-2018 and implementation of the roadmap.

After approval of the roadmap towards a Wadden Sea World Heritage SIMP in 2018, the State Parties will provide the necessary institutional and financial provisions to develop a SIMP..

Harmonization of management – an ongoing task

Since the inscription in 2009, the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) has been working on the further harmonization of the management practices on the ground across the entire transnational World Heritage property to maintain and protect the OUV. This is an ongoing trilateral issue and has already been addressed by the Trilateral Cooperation as reflected in the decision of the Ministerial Councils in 2010 (Sylt Declaration 2010, §§ 7 -15) and 2014 (Tønder Declaration 2014, §§ 17-30) (Annex 1), at which it was agreed to strive for intensifying the cooperation at the operational management level (TD §18).

This covers the further harmonization of a. o. the implementation of relevant EU Directives, the update of existing trilateral management plans (such as Seal Management Plan), and development and implementation of new trilateral strategies and plans, such as on climate adaptations, alien species, sustainable fisheries and sustainable tourism (see Annex 2, List of Ministerial Council Decisions).

In order to strengthen the cooperation and further harmonize the management, the State Parties adopted *the “Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy 2014 – 2020: Challenging the global dimension – Working with partners” in January 2015 (Annex 3).*

It sets out what the TWSC would like to achieve by 2020 in cooperation with its strategic partners. It is an invitation for these partners to cooperate for the benefit of and support the Wadden Sea World Heritage and pools ideas, competencies and resources of many organizations and people to form a strong and united community profiting from working together.

The strategy is implemented through a road map which invites partners from all sectors across the Wadden Sea to cooperate. For each of the following work themes, concrete activities and projects are outlined in the road map:

- (1) Continue to work for conservation and international cooperation.
- (2) Establish, extend and manage the World Heritage brand.
- (3) Educate and inform.
- (4) Develop and advance sustainable tourism.
- (5) Contribute to regional sustainable development.
- (6) Promote science and monitoring.

The roadmap is a working document taking stock of ongoing or planned projects and for communication to potential partners who are interested to join. The road map is supervised and coordinated trilaterally including a regular reporting to and approval by the Wadden Sea Board:

Re. (1) Continue to work for conservation and international cooperation.

Wadden Sea as International Ramsar Site

As of December 2015, the Danish-Dutch-German Wadden Sea is included in the List of Transboundary Ramsar Sites, under the name "Wadden Sea". The 13 national Ramsar Sites that already existed across the Wadden Sea are all considered to be part of this overarching site. The recognition of one single, Transboundary Ramsar Site underlines the integrated nature of the Wadden Sea, as one single natural area. The intention to establish a Transboundary Ramsar Site in the Wadden Sea had already been expressed by the Ministers of the three countries in 2014, in the Tønder Declaration (§ 73 TD).

Climate Change Adaptation

Future impacts of global climate change and enhanced sea level rise may induce significant changes and challenge the adaptability of structure, functions and characteristic biodiversity of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. Addressing these impacts as a cross cutting theme is a major challenge. Trilateral Cooperation relating to this started in 1998 and culminated preliminarily in the adoption of the Trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy at the 12th Wadden Sea Conference in 2014. It sets out aims, strategic objectives and principles like natural dynamics, interconnectivity of habitats, integration, flexibility, long-term approach, site specific approach and participation (see Annex 1d). Implementation of the strategy is ongoing in the fields of best practice exchange, policy and management, monitoring and assessment as well as communication and education.

Breeding Bird Action Plan

Long-term monitoring programmes on bird counts and results of breeding success monitoring revealed a persistent decrease in trends of several breeding bird populations in the Wadden Sea mainly caused by poor breeding success. In order to reverse this trend, a trilateral Breeding Bird Action Plan was adopted in 2016. Based on known causes for breeding failure, the most appropriate measures from local to national level for each concerned species has been proposed. In a joined effort with bird experts, nature-managers, landowners, and governmental authorities, the Breeding Bird Action Plan has been adopted and is currently being implemented.

Seal Management

The trilateral Seal Agreement under the umbrella of the Bonn Convention was concluded in 1990 to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for the harbour seal population in the Wadden Sea. The accompanying Seal Management Plan (SMP) was adopted and has been revised periodically, thus adhering to a planning cycle that includes monitoring, implementation, evaluation and feedback – the latest revision was done in 2016. The SMP outlines management actions on the ground, and defines joint projects and actions. The SMP was extended to include the growing number of grey seals in the area. During autumn and winter 2014, an influenza A epidemic caused increased mortality among the harbour seals. Nevertheless, the trilaterally coordinated seal counts in 2015 showed that the overall population size had remained more or less unaffected, although significant regional differences were found. Thus, in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein, decreases of 15% and 10% respectively were identified, while increases of 9% and 8% were observed in Lower Saxony/ Hamburg and The Netherlands. This case shows the good transnational data exchange, communication and management within the framework the SMP.

In general, the three states are working closely together in monitoring and management of alien species (see section 2.2.3) and in strengthening the cooperation on the conservation of migratory birds along the East Atlantic flyway (see section 2.2.4), following the requests by the World Heritage Committee in 2009.

In addition, there are also several regional nature conservation projects. For example, in the Netherlands, a specific recovery project on fish migration is planned at the IJsselmeer. With so-called Fish-Friendly Management regarding the operation of sluices and spills, the effects on migratory fish of the Afsluitdijk is mitigated for specific species. It is also envisaged, to construct a Fish Migration River (FMR); a tidal river of several kilometres connecting the IJssel lake with the Wadden Sea.

Re. (2) Establish, extend and manage the World Heritage brand

The development of a “Wadden Sea World Heritage” brand has contributed to better understanding of the concept and significance of the OUV amongst stakeholders in the regions. The brand (see Annex #) explains the heritage values in a way that it is readily understood and explains its significance in a local, national and international context adding value to existing regional brands.

A strong Wadden Sea World Heritage brand which builds on the Statement of OUV is a starting point for all communication and stakeholder cooperation in particular in a socio-economic context. A number of new, high-quality World Heritage products have been developed since 2009 which are used transnationally and are highly appreciated by local and regional stakeholders to consistently communicate and market World Heritage. A World Heritage campaign in 2010-11 covering the entire Dutch-German Wadden Sea invited hundreds of locals and visitors to tell their own story of the Wadden Sea under the motto “There is a place where heaven and earth share the same stage”. Over 200 videos were collected and published on YouTube. A new World Heritage campaign is currently in preparation.

In addition, several regional and local initiatives have demonstrated the raising of awareness of visitors, locals and businesses for the global importance of the Wadden Sea and the protection of World Heritage for future generations.

Re (3) Educate and inform

World Heritage Education

The development of a trilaterally coordinated World Heritage education network, building upon the already existing International Wadden Sea School (IWSS) network including regional and local initiatives has started in 2014. The network contributes to an effective and comprehensive information and presentation of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation and the Wadden Sea World Heritage to secure public support for the protection and management of the Wadden Sea as a shared entity. The network is working towards enhancing awareness of the young generation of the Wadden Sea as a shared heritage through development of appropriate educational outreach and products as an integral part of the World Heritage communication and education (see Annex 55 with list of WH education products).

Re. (4) Develop and advance sustainable tourism

Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The joint strategy for “Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination” was signed by the State Parties and by all relevant stakeholders such as tourism organizations, local governments, nature conservation organizations and green NGOs in February 2014 (see section 2.2.2).

Re. (5) Contribute to regional sustainable development.

Stakeholder engagement

As result of the communication of World Heritage, stakeholders have now enhanced awareness of the high potential to engage with the World Heritage Brand and contribute to the protection of the World Heritage. In order to create a commercial response, a formal strategic business partnership arrangement at transnational level with high quality standards is currently being developed, building on new or improved regional partnership programmes,

to ensure that all partners can benefit from it equally and at the same time contribute to maintain the OUV and the integrity of the property.

Fisheries

To further the development of sustainable fisheries in the Wadden Sea, specific trilateral policy principles were adopted by the three Wadden Sea states in 2014. For the implementation of sustainable fisheries a catalogue of principles (Annex TD) has been issued, identifying several approaches to improve the sustainability of fisheries. These include measures like regular assessment of fisheries impacts, combining areas with sustainable fisheries and areas where all fisheries are excluded, bycatch reduction programmes and innovative environmentally sound fisheries techniques. In several regions of the Wadden Sea progress in this process towards more sustainability has been realised in negotiations and agreements between governments, fishery sector and NGOs and stakeholder participation. In 2015, it was decided to elaborate the “swimway”-approach, in order to gain more insight into the role of the Wadden Sea in the life-cycle of fish, another prerequisite for the sustainable fisheries implementation.

Re (6) Promote science and monitoring

Research Agenda

The 13th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium in 2012 focused on the themes climate and water, biodiversity, science for management and policy and sustainability and ecosystem services.

A trilateral research coordination group was established in 2015 and trilateral research issues had been agreed upon. The coordination group has contacted selected researchers for preparing proposals for single themes for the trilateral research agenda. The research issues will be classified according to the clusters geomorphology, ecology, socio-economy/cultural history and climate/safety and their relation to the OUV and the integrity of the OUV, and will be discussed with the broader scientific community.

The final draft version for a trilateral research agenda will be discussed at the 14th Trilateral Scientific Symposium in Denmark in February 2017 and decided at the Ministerial Conference in 2018.

Governance

In existence since 1978, the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) covers broad aspects of the protection of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. It is based on proven and functional structures like the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and is an essential element of the conservation of the property. With the inscription of the Danish Wadden Sea as part of the Site in 2014, a new stage of collaboration has been reached. In 2015, the TWSC commissioned an external feasibility study which notes, that the cooperation should now “move beyond coordination of activities and policies (...) to a more integrated approach to one World Heritage Site. This involves (...) binding together the parts of the Cooperation and the management of the Site into one cohesive whole.” The TWSC now aims to enhance and supplement the current structures, so that the full range of present and future challenges of furthering sustainability and regional development, while enhancing the protection of the Site will be successfully and jointly met. The establishment of a Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Centre, with the CWSS as a main partner and a Wadden Sea World Heritage Foundation to facilitate and fund the activities are currently under way.

2.2.2 Sustainable tourism strategy and action plan

“Requests the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to prepare and implement an overall Tourism Development Strategy for the property that fully considers the integrity and ecological requirements of the property and that provides a consistent approach to tourism operations in the property;” (33 COM 8B.4, Request No. 5)

Status

In order to implement the request of the World Heritage Committee, the State Parties Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands established a trilateral Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy (TG-STs) in 2010 with participation of tourism stakeholders and NGOs to develop a joint strategy and action plan. The development of the strategy and action plan was financed through the project "PROWAD: Protect and Prosper – Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea" co-financed by the INTERREG IV B North Sea Region Programme, running from 2012 – 2015 with a total budget of 1.6 Mio € (www.prowad.org).

The transnational strategy on "Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination" was adopted at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in February 2014 and signed by the tourism sector, nature conservation and economy (tourism) administrations, regional and local stakeholders and nature NGOs. The strategy is now an approved framework for cooperation in order to contribute to the protection of the nature values of the Wadden Sea and at the same time provide benefits for local communities and businesses. It defines the World Heritage Destination, the vision, and explains the main elements of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea. The four strategic objectives provide directions for all work fields and are implemented by an action plan which is a rolling work plan for the period 2014 – 2017 (Annex 1a).

As result of the PROWAD project, a working structure has now been established in all three countries to officially implement the tourism strategy and action plan. The new transnational network of regional working groups is in charge of coordinating the regional implementation and the transnational activities.

A number of new, high-quality World Heritage products (e.g. a set of local WH flyers and itineraries, an animated video, educational posters), all in four languages, have been developed and are used transnationally. A transnational concept of a visitor survey, implemented in Germany as a pilot, will support establishing a transnational destination from which all partners can benefit. Furthermore, a variety of material has been developed for different target audiences and multipliers to promote sustainable tourism and nature experiences of the Wadden Sea.

At the same time, the interest in the Wadden Sea World Heritage and how to experience the OUV has increased amongst visitors since the inscription in 2009 (PROWAD visitor survey at the German Wadden Sea 2013). Almost every visitor to the German Wadden Sea knows of its status as World Heritage site. For about 33% of the visitors, World Heritage is a (very) important factor in deciding to visit the region, and for almost half of the visitors, protection of the Wadden Sea as national park is a (very) important for the travel decision.

In recognizing this, the tourism sector has also increasingly engaged with World Heritage through signing of the WH tourism strategy and contributing to its implementation. This has resulted amongst others in an increased integration of World Heritage in training and qualification of tourism stakeholders, cooperation with other sectors on World Heritage promotion and communication, participation in partnership programmes, in World Heritage workshops and awareness campaigns, and in nature conservation projects.

2.2.3 Alien species strategy

"Acknowledges the research and control system provided by the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to mitigate the introduced species and encourage them to implement a strict monitoring programme to control invasive species associated with ballast waters and aquaculture in the property;" (33 COM 8B.4, Request No. 6)

Status

Following the request of the World Heritage Committee 2009, a trilateral Working Group Alien Species (WG-AS) has been installed and a draft Strategic Framework for dealing with Alien Species in the Wadden Sea has been developed.

The proposal for a Strategic Framework for dealing with Alien Species in the trilateral Wadden Sea has the overall objective to prevent threats to the Wadden Sea ecosystem and biodiversity through alien species by:

- Preventing alien species from entering the Wadden Sea Area,
- Minimising further spread of alien species once they have been detected in the Wadden Sea,
- Eradicating, if feasible, alien species that have become established in the Wadden Sea Area and are assessed as (potentially) invasive,
- Raising awareness of potential problems with alien species in the Wadden Sea amongst managing authorities, companies (e.g. shipping, marina operators and aquaculture facilities), scientists and the public.

The strategic framework will be further developed towards an alien species management and action plan by elaborating a joint annotated species list and a proposal for a joint monitoring and assessment program based amongst others on the needs of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. It is aimed to approve and implement the strategic framework and the action plan at the coming ministerial conference in 2018.

The countries are also working on the implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species (IAS No. 1143/2014).

2.2.4 Cooperation with sites along African-Eurasian Flyways

“Also requests the States Parties of Germany and the Netherlands to strengthen cooperation on management and research activities with States Parties on the African Eurasian Flyways, which play a significant role in conserving migratory species along these flyways.” (33 COM 8B.4, Request No. 7)

Status

The cooperation with States Parties on the African Eurasian flyways is organised under the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI). The WSFI is an initiative of the three Wadden Sea States Parties in working with partners to implement the request of the WH Committee.

A Flyway Vision for the Wadden Sea’s most relevant East Atlantic Flyway (EAF) has been developed by the WSFI and finally been adopted at the 12th Trilateral Wadden Sea Conference In the beginning of 2014, as part of the Ministerial Declaration. Almost 30 trilateral and international partners signed the Flyway Vision (Annex 1b):

Migratory birds find lasting refuge along the East Atlantic Flyway from northern breeding areas to their key Wadden Sea stopover and to the African coastline, and inspire and connect people for future generations.

This Vision guides the implementation of the 2009 recommendation and provides a framework for cooperation, communication, coordination, management and implementation strategies. It also aims at harmonising the different activities of all WSFI partners.

In 2012, Germany and the Netherlands launched two flyway projects in West Africa focusing on capacity building and monitoring. These projects were carried out under the umbrella of the WSFI and in close cooperation with the Conservation of Migratory Birds (CMB) project of Birdlife International and Wetlands International on the basis of a joint action plan.

In 2013, a basic network of collaboration with partners from Governments, NGOs, universities and other institutions was formed during several capacity building and monitoring workshops from local to regional level along the African Atlantic seaboard.

In spring 2014, the first census of migratory water birds along the whole EAF with some 1,500 birders in 30 countries and almost 15 million counted individual birds has been carried out since 2003. In January 2016, counts at selected sites along the EAF were conducted to verify the 2014 results. The next total count of EAF birds is scheduled in 2017.

In September 2015, a WSFI monitoring project prepared and published a status report on coastal waterbirds along the EAF on basis of the 2014 total count. In addition, a strategy on waterbirds and site monitoring and a framework and a programme outline for integrated monitoring of Wadden Sea and other migratory birds along the EAF were published.

In January 2016, an African East Atlantic Flyway Waterbird Guide (in English, French and Portuguese) was printed. The photographic guide covers over 270 waterbird species and will be freely distributed in African countries along the EAF in 2016 and 2017.

The WSFI in cooperation with Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) programme of the Arctic Council supports Guinea Bissau to nominate the Archipelago Bijagós, the second most important migratory bird site in West Africa, to the World Heritage list. The World Heritage site Banc d'Arguin will also participate in this process

The CWSS and the Mauritanian World Heritage site Banc d'Arguin signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to recognize the shared responsibility of migratory birds along the EAF. The MoU aims at promoting competence in migratory bird conservation, knowledge sharing in management and sustainable use and to support the UNESCO marine WH programme. Since 2014, the Wadden Sea and Banc d'Arguin have exchanged experts and experience on various occasions.

2.2.5 Monitoring impact of fisheries

“Recommends the States Parties to extend further the monitoring of impacts of fisheries activities within the existing and extended property, and consider the opportunities to ensure protection of the property from any detrimental impacts;” (38 COM 8B.13, Request No. 7)

Status

Several parameters relevant for assessing fisheries impact are being monitored in the Wadden Sea. It concerns data on fishing intensity and locations, mainly collected via the Vessel Monitoring System VMS, logbook and black boxes on board of fishing vessels, data on benthos, as well as data on subtidal habitats.

In the framework of issuing of fishing licenses, appropriate assessments are carried out if required by the EU Habitats Directive (Article 6).

The available material, in particular from impact assessments, will be evaluated and integrated in order to present a generalised overview of fisheries impact in the Wadden Sea.

3 OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES WHICH MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROPERTY'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

3.1 STATE OF CONSERVATION

Information on status and development in the Wadden Sea is compiled and assessed in regular Quality Status Reports, the recent has been prepared in 2016. The information in this chapter is based on this QSR 2016.

3.1.1 Habitats and habitat developments

Since the last status reports (as reported in the nomination dossiers 2008 and 2013), no major changes in habitats and habitat development have been observed. A 5% increase of salt marsh habitats was observed since 2009, the slow recovery of seagrass beds has continued, whereas intertidal mussel beds still show low coverage due to lack of significant recruitment since 1999.

Offshore Area

The offshore area is located off the Wadden Sea islands and extends up to 12 nautical miles into the North Sea to a water depth of 10 to 20 m. The area is interlinked with the Wadden Sea ecosystem and forms a coherent sand sharing system, thus allowing natural sediment transport along the coast and into the Wadden Sea. There is no evidence of severe effects on the natural dynamics on the geomorphology in the offshore area.

In the offshore area, nine coastal bird species occur in numbers which are of international importance.

The area is also important for marine mammals. Harbour seals use the area to a large extent, and harbour porpoises, distributed over the entire North Sea, also occur in the offshore area, with high densities off the coast of Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark.

Tidal Area

The tidal area between the mainland, the offshore area and the islands cover the intertidal flats and the subtidal area, and is characterized by high degree of natural dynamics. The total area of the intertidal flats (mud and sandflats) is about 4,700 km², almost the same as in the 1980.

Seagrass beds (*Zostera marina* and *Z. noltii*) are the only submersed flowering plants in the Wadden Sea and provide habitats for various animals and food for brent geese and widgeon. Subtidal seagrass beds (*Zostera marina*) disappeared in the 1930s because of a disease. A decline of intertidal seagrass (*Z. marina* and *Z. noltii*) was observed in the 1950 to 1990s in the southwestern and central Wadden Sea. This decline seems to come to a halt, and a slow recovery is evident. An increase of seagrass areas has been observed since the middle of the 1990s.

Intertidal blue mussel beds are subject to particular protection because of their key-roles in the ecosystem, such as enhancing biodiversity and providing food for birds. However, lack of significant recruitment since 1999 in the northern Wadden Sea has caused a loss of the area of beds and biomass in that area.

Around 2000, the Pacific oyster started to increase and occupy mussel beds with sometimes significant impact on the structure. Pure intertidal mussel beds are now less abundant and most beds consist of a today's coexisting mix of Pacific Oysters and mussels.

Total biomass of macrozoobenthos is relatively stable with some exceptions at monitoring areas with increasing or decreasing populations of non-indigenous species (in particular the

ancient invader *Mya arenaria* and more recent invaders *Ensis directus* and *Marenzelleria viridis*) that can contribute up to more than 75% of the total biomass.

Locally there are trends in taxonomic and functional community composition of Wadden Sea macrozoobenthos but there are no Wadden Sea wide directional trends. At a lower taxonomic level native *Macoma balthica* and Capitellidae abundance show long term declines in relative many monitoring areas, although in the southern Wadden Sea declines in *Macoma balthica* have recently come to an end and populations are increasing again. In many of the monitoring areas in the southern Wadden Sea *Nephtys hombergii* abundance is declining. Dollard is the monitoring area with most species that are declining in abundance.

Salt Marshes

In the Wadden Sea, coastal salt marshes cover approximately 42,000 ha (QSR 2016). Compared to the last report in 2009, salt marshes in the Wadden Sea increased in size by about 5%. The largest increase was the net result of natural processes (growth minus erosion). Also restoration efforts contributed to the increase.

Salt marshes face two major potential threats, viz. (a) the expected accelerated sea-level rise and (b) spatial fixation which frequently involves salt-marsh ageing and loss of biodiversity.

When a salt marsh is flooded by sea water, sediment particles from the water column may settle on the marsh bed. This sedimentation process is the key process which gives salt marshes their characteristic feature to grow vertically. If the resulting elevation change exceeds the long-term increase of mean high tide (MHT), the marsh elevation develops asymptotically to a constant level relative to the level of local MHT. In the opposite case, however, if the marsh surface grows slower than the rise of MHT level, flooding frequency and inundation periods of the marsh will increase over time, and ultimately the salt marsh will drown. At present, Wadden Sea salt marshes show a mixed picture of clayey mainland salt marshes with accretion rates that generally exceed the rise of mean high tide levels (about 50% of the salt marshes), and Hallig island salt marshes (about 5% of the total salt marsh area), where accretion rates seem so low that surface elevation of these marshes is already lacking behind the current sea-level rise.

Parts of the Wadden Sea salt marshes have become stabilized by human intervention in the past (coastal defence or former land reclamation), whereas a natural salt marsh is spatial dynamic: they either expand or erode. On the mainland, the seawall forms a fixed boundary between the salt marsh and the hinterland, whereas at many sites the seaward boundary of these marshes has been stabilized by the construction of groynes.

As a result of succession on the one side, and limited space for new marsh to develop by a lack of erosion on the other side, old succession stages of salt-marsh vegetation increase at the expense of young succession stages. In order to halt or retard succession, and to maintain a high diversity, several management measures are applied, such as livestock grazing, and rewetting by restoring a more natural drainage of these marshes. Both measures do not affect, however, the transition zone between the salt marsh and intertidal flat.

Beaches and Dunes

About 7,600 ha of dunes are located in the Wadden Sea WH property, with the majority located on the barrier islands of Niedersachsen, 670 ha in Denmark and 100 ha in Schleswig-Holstein. Natural dynamics of beaches and dunes occur mainly on the uninhabited parts of the barrier islands without coastal protection, as well as on small uninhabited islands. Excellent examples for natural geomorphological dynamics are found on the outer sandbars including the developments towards new sand islands.

3.1.2 Species and population trends and developments

The latest trends assessments show a decline in numbers of breeding and migratory birds, sometime with various trends in the different Wadden Sea regions. For the Flyway, the trends are more positive than the trends for the same populations in the Wadden Sea.

The numbers of harbour seals and grey seals have significantly increased during the last decades. Trends for population size of harbour porpoises are not yet known specifically for the Wadden Sea, but sightings have increased in recent years.

Birds

Breeding birds

The diversity of different habitats and rich food situation attract a large number of breeding birds to the Wadden Sea. Especially ducks, waders and colonial coastal breeding birds like gulls and terns are abundant. According to the latest trend assessment 18 out of 29 breeding bird species show significant downward trends. Moreover, in several species, the rate of decline has accelerated recently.

Poor breeding success has been identified as an important driver for the declining populations. Especially in species like Oystercatcher, Avocet and Arctic Tern, there is a clear association between low breeding success, the general decline in numbers and the recent acceleration in the rate of decline. The problems breeding birds in the Wadden Sea are facing are manifold. High predation risk and frequent flooding due to summer storms (in combination with general sea level rise) were among the most frequent causes of failure observed during trilateral monitoring of breeding success since 2009. Other causes include starvation and unfavourable weather, locally also trampling by livestock-grazing. Predation especially occurs along the mainland coast, where mammalian predators like Red Fox and Beech marten are more abundant than on the Wadden Sea islands. In order to reverse this trend, a trilateral Breeding Bird Action Plan was adopted in 2016.

Migratory birds

For migratory birds belonging to the East Atlantic Flyway, the Wadden Sea is of great importance as a staging, wintering and moulting area. Monitoring and population development in the entire Wadden Sea takes place for now 27 years for at least 39 populations of 34 migratory waterbirds; those species breed in a large part of the Northern hemisphere and use the Wadden Sea on their movements to the wintering areas in Western Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa.

Results of population developments according to counted and estimated numbers in the Wadden Sea show, that considering the last 10 years overall 4 species are increasing, 13 species are stable and 14 species are decreasing; for 3 species trend estimates were not significant.

Composite trend estimates of species grouped according to food, feeding habitat, breeding or wintering range revealed, that species feeding on worms or shellfish are on the decline, so are species of the coastal grasslands; in turn, fish-feeding species increase in numbers. Populations of some herbivorous species and / or species utilizing salt marshes have only recently started to decline. Trends of non-arctic breeders as well as trends of species wintering in Europe are on the decline, while trends of arctic breeders are stable and of species wintering in Africa even increase. This suggests that the reasons for negative trends are to be sought in the Wadden Sea itself rather than outside.

For monitoring, extra effort was put on western Africa as from most western European countries sufficient monitoring data was available. Through counts of a selection of sites in 2013 and a total count in January 2014, substantial new information was collected which could be compared with results from the past. The analyses of this new data together with migratory and breeding bird counts in Western Europe allowed calculating trends for whole flyway populations. These trend results could be compared with the results within the Wadden Sea.

Also on flyway level, fish eating populations seem to do better than populations feeding on worms or shellfish. However, in general, flyway trends are more positive than the trends for the same populations in the Wadden Sea and this seems especially true for populations

breeding in the Wadden Sea. This result confirms that especially the breeding birds are doing worse in the Wadden Sea compared with other sites: It seems that drivers of declines in both breeding populations and staging or wintering populations in the Wadden Sea are more related to local causes than to drivers outside the Wadden Sea. The flyway results revealed also major range shifts along the flyway compared with 10-15 year ago and affected trends for other species using the same sites in winter together with Wadden Sea populations. This development will be analysed in more detail in conjunction with additional counts along the flyway.

Marine mammals

The numbers of harbour seals and grey seals have significantly increased during the last decades. Trends for population size of harbour porpoises are not yet known specifically for the Wadden Sea, but sightings have increased in recent years.

Grey seals

The grey seal re-appeared in the Wadden Sea in the 1960s after being extirpated from mainland Europe mainly due to hunting. Since the re-appearance the population has grown at a high rate and the number of haul outs and breeding colonies has increased. In 2015, a total of almost 5000 grey seals was counted in the Wadden Sea, most of which are found in the Netherlands (3,544 animals). Records of newly born grey seal pups in Denmark indicate that the species is expanding northwards.

Harbour seals

The harbour seal is the most common seal species in the Wadden Sea and in 2015, the population numbered around 38,900 individuals. The harbour seal population is affected by recurrent virus epidemics of which the phocine distemper virus epidemics in 1988 and 2002 have had the highest impacts with mortalities around 50 %. During autumn and winter 2014, an influenza A epidemic caused increased mortality among the harbour seals in the Wadden Sea. Regional differences in mortality from the influenza virus was observed with the highest mortality seen in Denmark (population decrease of 15 %) and Schleswig-Holstein (population decrease 10 %) and lowest impact in the Lower Saxony/Hamburg and the Netherlands, where the population grew. In total the population decreased by less than 1 % after the epidemic.

Harbour porpoise

The total population of harbour porpoise in the North comprise about 230,000 individuals. Particularly females with small offspring are observed off the northern Wadden Sea. There, aerial surveys in May-August have spotted a mean density of 1-2 harbour porpoises per km². A whale sanctuary was established off the islands of Sylt and Amrum as part of the World Heritage property.

Fish

Overall, the number of fish species and the species composition in terms of ecological guilds has not shown any significant changes over the last 30 years.

Trends in abundance varied between ecological guilds. Fish using the Wadden Sea as a nursery area have generally decreased since the 1980s, with exception of a few species and regions. For other migratory species and resident species, trends varied considerably between species, regions and time periods. Most noteworthy trends are the increase of salmon and decrease of North Sea houting in Danish Wadden Sea rivers, and the overall decrease of eel.

3.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

The property is subject to a comprehensive protection, management and monitoring regime. Human use and influences are well regulated with clear and agreed targets. Activities that are incompatible with its conservation have either been banned, or are heavily regulated and monitored to ensure they do not impact adversely on the property. As a result, the property is not subject to significant development pressures.

However, there are a number of current and potential factors (inside and outside the property) which may have a negative impact on the property (see also Periodic Report 2014). These activities are shipping, the related (maintenance) dredging resp. deepening of the shipping routes, harbour developments, coastal protection measures, fishing, alien species, as well as laying of cables (from wind farms outside the property), resource exploration and extractions (oil, gas; outside the property), impacts from tourism and recreation, and climate change. All these current and potential factors have been addressed in the nomination dossiers (2008, 2013); there are no major developments to be reported in addition.

3.2.1 Development pressures

Harbours, industrial facilities and dredging

There are many harbours located adjacent to the property on the mainland and on the islands. They are vital infrastructure installations for the local and regional economy in terms of, in particular, the supply of the islands, the mainland and the maritime installations and the traffic to and from the islands.

In the Danish part of the Wadden Sea but outside the property, an application for a project for development of the Rømø Harbour is under consideration. The project includes an extension of the harbour, a new pier, increased dredging of the channel to the harbour and a possible heliport. The authorization of the project is subject to an EIA and will be within the existing regulation of the property.

Fishing and aquaculture

The most important fisheries in the property are for blue mussels and shrimps. Shrimp fishery is to a great extent done in the area off the islands but also takes place in the bigger tidal channels of the Wadden Sea. These fisheries are subject to coordinated management schemes which aim to ensure that the property will not be negatively affected (see also chapter 2.2.1.).

Wind farms and cables

Though the construction of new wind turbines is not allowed within the property, it can be expected that cables from planned and anticipated wind farms in the North Sea will have to cross the property in some cases.

COBRACable – a direct current cable connection between Denmark and Netherlands. Energinet.dk together with the Dutch electricity transmission company TenneT plans to build a direct current cable connection. The work is expected to start by the end of 2016 and be in operation early 2019. During construction phase, burying of the cable in the sea floor, will temporarily affect a small area of the property. An EIA report has been done, which concluded that only minor disturbance would occur in the construction phase and mitigation measure will be applied

In the Wadden Sea area of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, several high voltage cables connecting offshore wind farms in the German EEZ with the mainland have been laid. In accordance with the Wadden Sea Plan 2010, these cables are confined to a restricted number of corridors that were identified as being the ones with the least impact on the environment. Appropriate assessments according to the EU habitats directive were carried

out in the permission process. Due to mitigation measures, certain time frames and the best available cable laying techniques that were applied, only minor disturbances occurred in the construction phase.

In the Dutch Wadden Sea comparable strict procedures were applied regarding the cable connection of an offshore wind farm to the mainland at the Ems Harbour.

Nord.Link, a high voltage direct current cable connecting Norway and Schleswig-Holstein is expected to be laid in 2017/18, using the same corridor as the cables from the offshore Wind farms.

Resource extraction (oil and gas)

There have been no new developments with regard to oil and gas extraction after the inscription of the extended Wadden Sea World Heritage property, where the state parties confirmed the commitment not to explore and extract oil and gas at locations within the boundaries of the property in line with law in force, and that exploration and exploitation of gas and oil including seismic investigations is prohibited in the Danish part of the property according to the Statutory Order on the Nature and Wildlife Reserve Wadden Sea.

In this context, it is noticed that, in general, there are growing concerns in the public with regard to gas exploration plans in the Netherlands outside the World Heritage property.

Alien species

By 2016 90 alien species were detected in the Wadden Sea. Most of these originate from the Pacific or from the Atlantic. For almost a quarter of these taxa their origin is unknown. Vectors are e.g. transoceanic shipping and shellfish farming; direct introduction plays a minor role. Several alien species have established persistent populations already more than 60 - 100 years ago, like e.g. the Australian barnacle *Austrominius modestus*, or the American slipper limpet *Crepidula fornicata*. Their introduction is irreversible and more alien species are likely to come.

Although so far there is no evidence that alien species have caused the extinction of native species in the Wadden Sea, and most alien species become inconspicuous residents, some alien species have the potential to alter dominance structures, habitats and trophic regimes, like e.g. the spreading Pacific oyster *Crassostrea gigas* since the late 1990s and the Japanese seaweed *Sargassum muticum*.

A trilateral alien species management and action plan is under development (see section 2.2.3).

3.2.2 Environmental pressures

Pollution

Substantial reductions in riverine inputs and concentrations in sediment and biota of heavy metals took place in the late 1980s until the 1990s and have remained at a relatively low level since, although at some sites background concentrations were exceeded.

Most of the well-known persistent and non-polar xenobiotics have reached a basic levelled-off concentration in the sediments and biota of the Wadden Sea.

The less persistent, non-polar organic tin (TBT) compounds show a drastic reduction in recent period, attributed to the ban on TBT containing anti-fouling paints used on ship hulls.

PCBs are still wide-spread, but concentrations have decreased considerably over the past 25 years. They still, however, exceed agreed background levels many-fold.

Lindane and DDTs further decreased, though being sensitive to erosion of old deposits, e.g. by extreme floods, the concentrations tend to fluctuate.

HCB is at a basic level in all subareas of the Wadden Sea.

These trends are confirmed by data from the "pollutants in bird eggs" monitoring programme, showing that the concentrations of contaminants measured in bird eggs indicate that the burden of pollutants in the Wadden Sea is slowly decreasing towards the proposed Wadden Sea Plan Targets, which are background concentrations of micropollutants such as mercury

which also occur naturally, and zero in case of man-made substances such as organochlorines.

Climate change

The most important aspects of climate change in the Wadden Sea region are:

1. Sea level rise and storm surges: projections on global mean sea level rise vary among 0.2 and 1.4 m for the period 1990 – 2100. So far, no indication of accelerated sea level rise could be observed in the Wadden Sea. Studies on the future development of storm surges estimate a small to insignificant increase towards the end of this century. Ground water level will rise as a result of sea level rise
2. Precipitation patterns: Due to projected lower summer and higher winter precipitation, fresh water discharge into the Wadden Sea may become more fluctuating with larger extremes. Fresh water availability in the region, especially on the islands (in case they are self-sustainable) may become a critical issue.
3. Temperature: Projections indicate that mean annual temperatures in the Wadden Sea region may increase among 2.0 and 4.7 degrees Celsius until the end of this century. Water temperatures in the Wadden Sea are already increasing and are expected to increase further.

Due to the high uncertainty regarding the magnitude and direction of the above climate change aspects, as well as the complexity of geophysical and biological interactions, projections on the direction and magnitude of these aspects still constitute a major scientific challenge. Still, they are highly likely to negatively interfere with the aims for the protection of the Wadden Sea.

Some impacts can, at least qualitatively, already be addressed. As long-term impact, it might become realistic that not enough sediment will be available in the Wadden Sea to balance enhanced sea level rise. As a result, the Wadden Sea may start to “drown”, resulting in changing structures and functions, flora and fauna as well as the landscape (i.e., from an intertidal to a lagoon ecosystem). Such and other impacts may occur after a certain threshold value, the so-called tipping point, has been exceeded, after which the system is no longer resilient. Management options to prevent drowning of the Wadden Sea are scarce. One possible option to prevent drowning of tidal flats is large-scale nourishment of sand on strategic locations. Various methodologies and best practices are currently under investigation and are being discussed in a broad setting by governments (local, regional, central) and NGOs.

Furthermore, enhanced sea level rise will induce/accelerate coastal retreat of the barrier islands, thereby reducing the extension of the back-barrier bays. Without proper management, higher storm surge water levels will impair flood safety of the inhabitants. Finally, increasing water and air temperatures will cause geographical shifts of species and habitats.

3.2.3 Natural disasters and risk preparedness

The property is subject to certain risks from shipping offshore its boundaries.

The Wadden Sea as part of the North Sea is adjacent to some of the most frequented shipping routes in the world.

Because of the ecological importance and vulnerability on one hand and the proximity to the shipping routes, in 1994 the Wadden Sea was assigned a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), which allowed adopting practices intended to provide enhanced protection against marine pollution.

Despite the fact of large and almost constantly rising traffic figures, especially off the Southern part of the Wadden Sea, and the sometimes difficult navigational conditions due to strong and changing tides, major accidents have been very seldom.

The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have cooperated in the field of maritime pollution control for decades in the framework of the Bonn Agreement. A stronger cooperation and integrated approach in maritime safety by the competent authorities and administrations has

now been agreed upon by the installation of the so-called DENGERNETH Maritime Administration Group

The group will take into account issues concerning maritime safety in a wide scope in their common North Sea area and further elaborate on issues from the Tønder Declaration (Annex) including five operational plans addressing “prevention of accidents”, “operational pollution”, “awareness and education”, “preparedness and response” and “cooperation”.

3.2.4 Visitor/tourism pressures

The major part of the tourism activities, including development of e.g. infrastructure, takes place outside the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, but are so closely linked to the property that it is essential to take a broader scope when describing and assessing tourism and visitor activities.

As requested by the World Heritage Committee in 2009, a transnational strategy on “Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination” was adopted at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in February 2014 (see section 2.2.2).

For the first time since the inscription of the Wadden Sea on the WH List, the Wadden Sea Quality Status Report (QSR) 2016 has compiled and assessed tourism data for the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, which covers the property itself and adjacent areas outside the property on the islands and on the mainland.

Approximately 10 million visitor arrivals have been recorded in the destination resulting in about 50 million overnight stays; the number of day trippers is estimated to about 40-60 million (QSR 2016). Because of the different data sources in the three countries and changed statistical methods, an overall trend cannot be developed. However, compared to the results of the QSR 2009, a slight increase can be seen in some regions whereas other regions showed stagnation of even a decrease in numbers.

The number of guided tours (tidal flat walking) is an indicator on how many visitors experience the property. In Schleswig-Holstein, the number of guided tours as well as the number of participants (1999 – 2014) show no clear trends and vary round 5,000 tours and 115,000 participants annually (around 20 – 25 persons per tour). In the Netherlands, a limit has been set to the number of annual participants at 50,500. Since 2006, the number of participants which were recorded is around 25,000 per year, which is less than the years before (up to 32,000). Recreational boating in the Netherlands (recorded as number of sluice passages 1996-2015) has also decreased since 2009 from around 120,000 to around 90,000 in the last years.

These findings confirm that the inscription of the Wadden Sea on the World Heritage List has not automatically resulted in an overall increase of visitor numbers, also because the North Sea coast is already a strong tourism destination. Therefore, management of tourism, including monitoring and assessment of tourism impacts, will be an important issue also in the future to minimize potential conflicts between recreational activities and Wadden Sea natural values.

4 NEW PLANS/PROJECTS

In conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, please describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the protected area (core zone and buffer zone and/or corridors) that might be envisaged, as well as outside of the property.

Para 172

“The World Heritage Committee invites the States Parties to the *Convention* to inform the Committee, through the Secretariat, of their intention to undertake or to authorize in an area protected under the *Convention* major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Notice should be given as soon as possible (for instance, before drafting basic documents for specific projects) and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, so that the Committee may assist in seeking appropriate solutions to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is fully preserved.”

[With regard to § 172, only those developments / projects should be reported if a major impact on the OUV can be expected. Other activities should be reported in chapter 2.]

Currently, there are no new developments of projects to be reported in conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

5 PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

Decision to be taken by WSB after consultation phase:

Proposal to WSB to publish entire report.

6 SIGNATURE OF THE AUTHORITY

Proposal to WSB: (The report will be signed and submitted by the Netherlands on behalf of the three States Parties)

ANNEXES

1. Tønder Declaration. Ministerial Council Meeting 2014 (to be added)
 - a. Strategy Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination (TD Annex 1) and Action Plan Sustainable Tourism,
 - b. Flyway Vision (TD Annex 2)
 - c. Framework for sustainable fisheries (TD, Annex 3)
 - d. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (TD, Annex 4),
 - e. PSSA Wadden Sea Operational Plans (TD, Annex 5),
 - f. TMAP Strategy (TD Annex 6).
2. Overview of Ministerial Council Decision towards the harmonization of management in the Wadden Sea World Heritage
3. World Heritage Strategy, 2015 (to be added)
4. Letter by Denmark on Request No. 5 / Danish National Park Strategy 2015
5. Environmental education – IWSS (see WSB 17 doc on status IWSS),
6. Wadden Sea World Heritage Brandm
7. List of Acronyms,

ANNEX 2

Overview of Ministerial Council Decision towards the harmonization of management in the Wadden Sea World Heritage

Sylt Declaration 2010

- § 7: Adoption of the Wadden Sea Plan 2010 (amendment of the Wadden Sea Plan 1997)
- § 8 Harmonisation achieved by the TWSC in particular with regard to monitoring and assessment at an integrated ecosystem level.
- § 9 Focus future harmonisation efforts on high priority challenges, e.g. climate change, invasive non-native species, decline of birds, and on fisheries, in the national implementation of Birds, Habitats, Water Framework and Marine Strategy Framework Directives.
- § 10 Preparation of a common integrated Natura 2000 Wadden Sea report.
- § 11 Increase collaboration in relation to appropriate assessments under the Habitats Directive, and especially top exchange experience on the interpretation and application of site integrity, in combination effects and compensation measures.
- § 12 Further development of the Wadden Sea Plan, e.g. regarding the harmonized application of European legislation.
- § 13 Development of a programme of projects and measures to support the implementation of the Wadden Sea Plan.
- § 14 Guidance for the a Goose Management Plan in the Wadden Sea Region as prepared by the Wadden Sea Forum,
- § 15 Preparing an update of the Seal Management Plan.

Tønder Declaration 2014:

- §17 Reconfirm that the Wadden Sea Plan is the coordinated management plan for the Wadden Sea World Heritage property, which also applies to the nominated property.
- §18 Therefore also strive for intensifying the cooperation at the operational management level.
- §19 Ensure that there is adequate wardening over the whole Wadden Sea .
- §20 Explore the potential of applying a tidal basin approach in Wadden Sea policy and management, and support its further elaboration.
- § 21 Continue the trans-boundary harmonisation efforts of the implementation of existing EU Directives, and harmonise where relevant the trans-boundary implementation of forthcoming Directives at the earliest possible stage.
- §22 Acknowledge the activities of the member states in designating and enhancing coherence, as well as the efficiency of the Natura 2000 Network within the Wadden Sea Area.
- § 23 Agree therefore to cooperate in evaluating the assessments under the Habitats Directive, also with the aim to prepare a common Natura 2000 roof report for the Wadden Sea.
- § 24 Concerned about the persistent decrease of breeding bird populations in the Wadden Sea, driven by *inter alia* low breeding success.
- § 25 Instruct the WSB to develop and implement a trilateral Action Plan on improving conditions for breeding birds.
- § 26 Appreciate the positive effects of long-term trilateral seal policy and management, as reflected by the highest population level ever counted.
- § 27 Therefore continue the cooperation in the context of the Seal Agreement, including the Seal Management Plan, which will be updated in 2016, reconfirming the guidelines on taking and releasing of seals.
- § 28 Acknowledge the importance of fish for the Wadden Sea ecosystem and therefore instruct the WSB to work on the further implementation of the trilateral fish targets of the Wadden Sea Plan.

- § 29 Acknowledge the essential functions of estuaries in the total Wadden Sea ecosystem and note the current N2000 assessments on the unfavourable – bad conservation status of the habitat type “estuaries”.
- § 30 Contribute to the recovery of this habitat type by taking measures on appropriate temporal and spatial scales, e.g. through integrated management plans for N2000, while safeguarding accessibility and raising safety standards against flooding.

ANNEX 4

DK to send letter to WHC before 1.12.2016, this letter will be annexed to the SoC report.

Subject:WHC Request No. 5

Dear Madam/ Sir

Referring to Decision: 38 COM 8B.13 with the approval of the extension of the Wadden Sea, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, on the World Heritage List under criteria (viii), (ix), and (x) Denmark, in cooperation with Germany and the Netherlands, hereby respond to the request no. 5 from UNESCO World Heritage Committee:

- *Requests the State Party of Denmark, in cooperation with the State Parties of the Netherlands and Germany, to prepare an implementation plan to enhance the conservation and management of the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value within the Danish National Park. This could be supported by the development and adoption of a binding agreement between the Danish Nature Agency and the National Park Board;*

The Danish National Park Wadden Sea (NPV) was established in 2010 as state fund. As mentioned in the nomination dossier and in the supplementary information NPV is an independent unit under the Ministry of Environment and Food (formerly the Ministry of Environment), the same ministry as the Danish Nature Agency (NST) and the Danish Agency for Water and Nature Management (SVANA). NST and SVANA was formerly NST, but was in 2016 split into two agencies. Cooperation and agreements between NPV and NST/SVANA is regulated by law for national parks in Denmark and statutory order for Danish National Park Wadden Sea¹ in which roles and responsibilities for the Danish national parks respectively the National Park Wadden Sea is stipulated. This agreement divides the overall tasks and obligations of the two organizations:

- NST is site manager for the World Heritage and manage state owned nature areas
- SVANASVANA is the authority, which enforces the legislation and regulations on nature conservation for the World Heritage area.
- NPV manage communication, raising awareness, local community support, education, research and development, and NPV has an obligation to conserve, strengthen and develop nature and its values.

Statutory order on the Wadden Sea National Park

Section 1 of the statutory order determines the purpose of NPV is to strengthen and develop nature.

Section 2 describes the following seven obligations for NPV:

¹ National Parks Act, no. 533 of 6 June 2007

Statutory Order on the Wadden Sea National Park, no. 1159 of 30 September 2010

Both were submitted with the nomination dossier 1. February 2013

1. to conserve, strengthen and develop nature, its diversity, cohesion and dynamics, particularly for shallow waters of international significance, tidal waters, salt meadows and other coastal nature areas,
2. to conserve and strengthen landscape and geological values in the unique Wadden Sea landscape,
3. to conserve and strengthen heritage values of the national park,
4. to improve the opportunities for exceptional nature and heritage experiences and outdoor activities in the Wadden Sea landscape,
5. to strengthen research, learning, nature awareness guidance as well as dissemination of the values of the Wadden Sea landscape,
6. to support developments benefiting local communities, including the business community, with respect for protective interests, and leaving room for continued operation and development of agriculture and fisheries and
7. to contribute to a coordinated development of the Danish/German/Dutch Wadden Sea area.

NPV is as shown obliged by law to contribute to enhancing the management and conservation of the attributes described in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Property. This is enforced by the National Park Board through the National Park Plan, which serves as a binding agreement, or performance contract, between the National Park Board and the Ministry, see below.

Cooperation between NST, SVANA and NPV

SVANA has the authority and responsibility to enforce the Protection of Nature Act² thus is the responsible authority for the protection of the Danish Nature and Wildlife Reserve including the World Heritage area under the Statutory Order of the Wadden Sea³. NST is the site manager, while NPV fulfil the obligation to protect, preserve, conserve and also contribute to sustainable use of the national park, hereunder the WH in joint efforts with the local society, SME-businesses, tourism, culture and local authorities through communication, awareness raising and education. In order to do this in practice, SVANA/NST and NPV have very close dialogue and collaboration. As already mentioned SVANA/NST and NPV according to the law for national parks in Denmark have a binding agreement on management and communication for the national park area, hereunder the World Heritage in the National Park Plan. NST also supervise Danish National Parks observing the regulation for use of state funding for National Parks.

SVANA and NPV have according to the statutory order for NPV also obligations to stimulate and work with the Trilateral Cooperation and implement agreements between Denmark, Germany and Netherlands, according to the division of roles and responsibilities as mentioned above.

² The Protection of Nature Act, no. 933 of 24 September 2009

³ The Statutory Order of the Wadden Sea, no. 867 of 21 June 2007

Both were submitted with the nomination dossier 1. February 2013

In practice, SVANA/NST and NPV together or individually, depending on the specific type of activity, work with local authorities and communities in the regional collaboration for the Danish Wadden Sea World Heritage area. The regional collaboration coordinates and secures the Danish contingent in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation and thus contributes to the continued support for OUV.

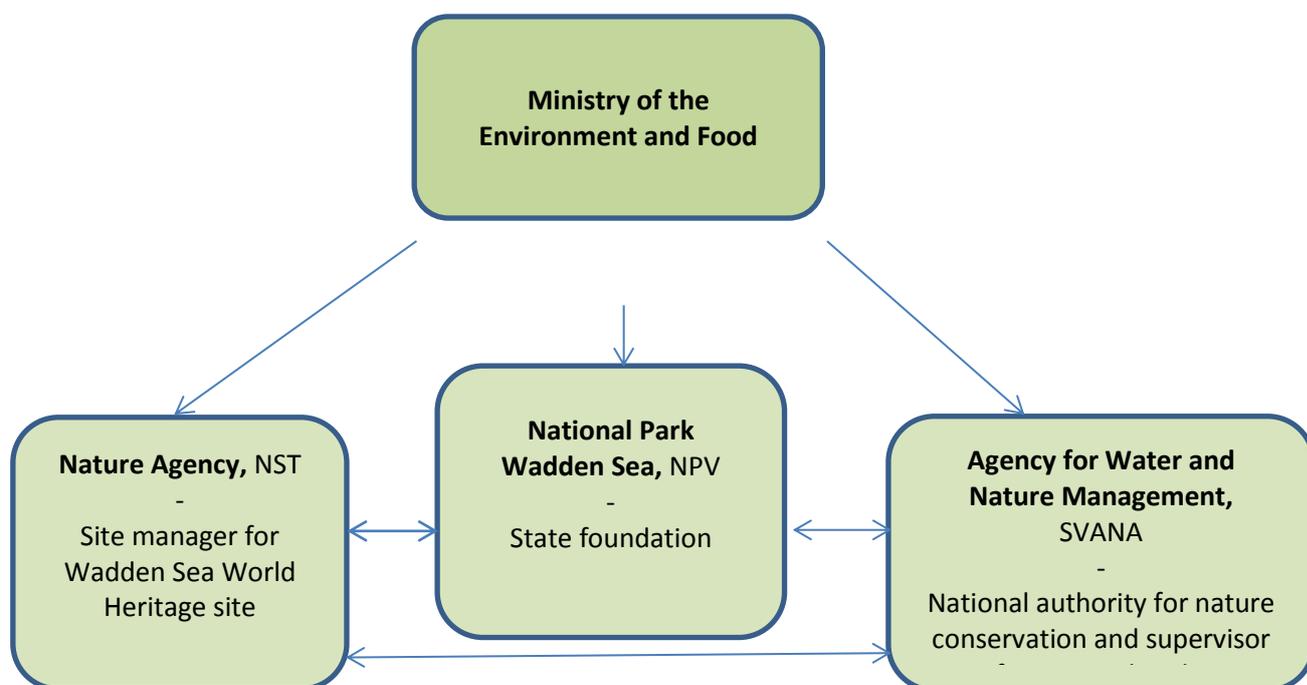


Figure: Organogram for the relation between the state fund National Park Wadden Sea and the Danish Nature Agency and the (new) Danish Agency for Water and Nature Management.

National park plan

NPV's primary functions and objectives are described and made operational in the National Park Plan (currently Wadden Sea National Park Plan 2013-2018), which cover the World Heritage status and safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a future goal that the NPV Board committed itself to work actively to reach, since the Danish part was not designated as WH when the plan was adopted.

The national park plan serves different aims, where political and strategic direction for the work of the National Park Secretary is one aim, and fulfilling of vision, objectives and activities are the fundament for the annual grant from the State is a second aim. The plan is a binding agreement for the National Park Board. The plan is also a tool in dialogues with local partners and relevant funding institutions to engage in joint activities.

The plan for the National Park is to be evaluated in 2016-2017 and a new plan shall be adopted by the National Park board and sanctioned by the Minister for the Environment and Food by end of 2018, where the conservation and protection of World Heritage and the OUV

attributes will be implemented as a primary objective for NPV. This is stated in the new strategic principles for NPV. In 2019 the new plan will be released.

New NPV strategy 2016-2022

NPV prepared a new strategy adopted by the National Park Board on 01/12-2015.⁴ The NPV Board found it necessary in order to clarify how the NPV contribute to the World Heritage /OUV and safeguarding of the integrity of the site, as this was not mentioned directly in the plan for the National Park 2013-2018. The board found this very unfortunate, since the NPV in practice already allocates resources into several World Heritage activities. Secondly the strategy was prepared because NPV has a need to focus more resources towards nature preserving activities than was seen during the period from 2013-2015, where communication and networking were the primary activities. This will directly benefit and enhance the management and protection of the OUV attributes.

The new strategy in brief outlines the strategic principles, objectives and activities for NPV. One of the main strategic principles is focus on the World Heritage. Since the NPV also include areas located outside the designated World Heritage area the strategy also covers activities dealing with natural and cultural values in the entire national park area.

As mentioned the strategy is the first step towards the new plan for NPV 2019-2023 and the strategy will be implemented in the new National Park plan, which is prepared in 2017-2018 and approved by the minister end of 2018. The board of the National Park will integrate the strategic principles from the strategy directly into the National Park plan and make the World Heritage a primary objective together with the obligatory objectives dictated by the Law for National Parks in Denmark. The integration of the World Heritage in the strategy and the new National Park plan also means that the National Park Board clearly and 100% commits itself to actively work for communication, awareness creation and education in proactive protection and conservation of the OUV of the World Heritage area in the Danish national park, in the Trilateral Cooperation and across border with the German and Dutch colleagues.

Concrete action

Besides the targeted strategic and political step taken by the NPV by creating a new strategy and the new evaluation of the national park plan in 2016, also concrete actions are taken by SVANA/NST and NPV together with local municipality authorities. A steering group for the World Heritage is formed, where SVANA/NST, local municipality directors and NPV is represented. The steering group is responsible for securing back up in their respective political hinder land and for initiating concrete activities. This regional arrangement adds value to the conservation, protection and management of the OUV attributes by enhancing cooperation between national nature protection authorities, local spatial planning

⁴ Appendix 1

authorities (municipalities), the tourism sector and the NPV, thereby securing involvement and commitment by all stakeholders to protection of the OUV.

NPV has already formed a National Park Council with 30 members and a National Park Partner program with more than 150 partners - more are joining the program each year. The council and the partner program serve as platforms for dialogue and activities with local community, SMV's, tourism business, NGO's, museums, nature centres, university and educational institutions and others.

NPV are currently engaged in activities, with a range of partners including SVANA/NST, contributing to enhancing conservation of the attributes of the OUV. One example is a 'code of conduct' for visitors and others in the National Park and World Heritage area prepared by NPV. Also an overview prepared by NST, the municipalities and NPV, which will identify the most valuable species and nature areas / sites in the national park and the World Heritage, is in the preparing stages. The intention is to prepare a common language between the mentioned stakeholders and a joint tool which can be used to prioritize future nature conservation and preservation initiatives in the national park. A workshop was organized for all partners about the values of the World Heritage / OUVs and how these values could be communicated on different platforms to different audiences. These targeted project on meadow birds and breeding birds, reduced predation on ground nesting birds, restoration of rivers etc. are all joint efforts on a trilateral level contributing to the cooperative work between The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Also World Heritage Wadden Sea training modules are prepared during 2016 and 2017 and afterwards nature guides, nature centres, municipality departments and other primary stakeholders are trained. This is just to mention some examples of concrete action targeted the protection of the OUV.

After words

Denmark has now provided what is necessary to fulfil the request from the World Heritage Committee, and that is has been proved that the NPV, under the auspices of the NPV Board, is committed to implementing and enhancing protection and management of the Wadden Sea World Heritage. We further hope to have accounted for a clear division of the roles and responsibilities between the SVANA and NST as the formal authorities for enforcing nature protection legislation and the NPV assigned to activities, with a range of partners including the SVANA/NST, supporting enhanced conservation of the attributes of the OUV by taking care of communication, dissemination and education. The formal link between SVANA/NST and NPV is already founded in the Danish law for national parks, the statutory order for NPV, the NPV plan and the new NPV Strategy; hence we consider a binding agreement not to be necessary. The envisioned trilateral partnership centre is an example of the enhanced cooperation in the three countries.