

Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation

Strategy [2010-2015]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation

In recognition of the ecological importance of the Wadden Sea the three countries whose jurisdictions cover the maritime and coastal environment of this shared wetland – Germany, The Netherlands and Denmark – entered into a trilateral agreement to manage the area as a single entity. This agreement was first set out in the ‘Joint Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea 9 December 1982’, signed by the three Governments, in which they declared their intention to coordinate their activities to achieve the comprehensive protection of the Wadden Sea, with particular emphasis on seals and migratory birds.

This Declaration and all of the subsequent Ministerial Declarations and decisions have contributed substantially to the extensive protection and management arrangements between the three countries in the framework known as the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. Today the Wadden Sea enjoys a level of environmental protection and wise management that is unprecedented throughout Europe.

Purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy sets out what the Cooperation would like to achieve over the next six years, [2010-2015]. It is designed to give direction and establish the strategic priorities. How quickly progress is made will depend mainly on changes made in the way the Cooperation operates and the resources available from Governments and from other sources. .

The priorities established by the strategy will be put into practice through a more detailed three year business plan for the Cooperation. The business plan will set out the actions over three years; the first year of which will be against a known budget . The duration of the strategy (6 years) has been designed to cover two business planning cycles, and it will be reviewed at the end of the first three years.

Achievements of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation

The achievements of the Cooperation are many and varied, but of particular note was the agreement on the Guiding Principle in 1991 and the publication of the Wadden Sea Plan in 1997. This plan, and its future updates, provides a framework for the integrated management of the Wadden Sea and sets out a series of Targets, as well as the policies, measures, projects and actions to be taken by the countries to achieve these Targets. Delivering this Plan requires the involvement of many parts of the three Governments as well as the support and assistance of private and voluntary sectors, and civil society.

Comparison of strategy and Wadden Sea Plan	
<i>Strategy - Gives direction and establishes priorities for the work of the Cooperation</i>	<i>Wadden Sea Plan - A management plan for the Wadden Sea</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy describes how the Cooperation will achieve the objectives set out in the Joint Declaration over the next 6 years • Strategy is owned by the Board and used to ensure activities are focussed and consistent with mission and vision • Strategy covers the work of the Cooperation and the 'organisational' development and governance arrangements • The Cooperation is accountable, through the Board, to Ministers for delivery against the strategy and business plan • Helps stakeholders understand work of the Cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes what the three Governments wish to achieve in the Wadden Sea and has a different timeframe to strategy • Prepared by Cooperation but ownership should be shared by Governments and other bodies • Partly delivered by work of Cooperation, but requires many other parties to contribute in order to achieve the targets • Does not cover any aspects of development of the Cooperation or governance • Used by Cooperation to influence activities of others • Cooperation prepares reports on progress against the plan and each participating government is accountable for progress to implementing the plan

The Cooperation has also made a substantial contribution to increasing the understanding of the Wadden Sea ecosystem and a comprehensive Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP) has been established. The Cooperation has utilised data from this programme to produce Quality Status Reports (QSR). This periodic assessment of the status of the Wadden Sea ecosystem, and the evaluation of progress towards the Targets set out in the Wadden Sea Plan, are an essential prerequisite for informed debate and decision-making. The QSR provides an invaluable source of information for policy makers and the many interest groups in the Wadden Sea.

Development of the work of the Trilateral Cooperation

Since the original Declaration was signed in 1982 many environmental, political, economic and social changes have taken place and the scope of the work of the Cooperation has evolved in response to these changes. A number of these changes are of particular significance for the future work of the Cooperation. For example:

- There are new commitments made by the countries as parties to EC Directives including the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Commitments to international Conventions, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Designation of major parts of the Wadden Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area by the International Maritime Organisation.
- There has been a significant strengthening of the scientific evidence about the scale and pace of climate change and the associated rise in sea level.
- There is increased attention given to landscape and cultural heritage.
- The importance of the wise use of natural resources and sustainable development is now more widely recognised.
- The promotion of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- There is growing interest of civil society in the environment and a strong expectation that people will be able to enjoy the unspoilt beauty and learn about the Wadden Sea].
- There is an increased recognition of the need to involve stakeholders in decision making processes that affect them.

In recognition of these and other developments the Ministerial Declaration of the 10th Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea held in Schiermonnikoog in 2005 agreed that over the next period the Cooperation should be evaluated, including the organisational structure. This Strategy is a product arising from a recommendation of the evaluation and subsequent implementation process.

Current Challenges

Many of the threats that emerged in the past decades, for example the reclamation of coastal habitats for agricultural purposes, and chemical pollution of the rivers and the sea, have been dealt with or have reduced considerably. However, some such as pollution from endocrine disruptors and xenobiotics remain a major concern. But today, we are also facing challenges of a new kind which require broader approaches and responses. The character and scale of problems has become more complex, for example, in relation to climate change. In addition the many interactions from the local to the international level in connection with concepts such as sustainability have brought about the need for significant discussion and clarification.

A related major issue is the ongoing loss of biodiversity and the effects of alien invasive species. One powerful instrument in dealing with those challenges is the

implementation of EU legislation mainly concerning the two Natura 2000 Directives, but also the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. It is one of the core responsibilities of the Cooperation to increase the consistency of cross-boundary implementation of Directives, in exchanging data and in management. There is a need for effective information exchange between partners, but also with the EU Commission and international Conventions. The World Heritage Designation highlights the need to ensure successful cooperation across political boundaries and different sectors of the economy and areas of public interest.

The pressures from many uses such as the extractive industries, the energy sector, shipping, fishing, and tourism are likely to continue to increase. It is essential to find solutions to minimise conflicts and safeguard nature by common approaches. Jointly agreed indicators for sustainable development in the area would be very helpful. The Cooperation needs to keep an eye on developments outside of its core responsibility and find perspectives and ways to influence these developments. In this context it is very important that the Cooperation keeps up and intensifies its engagement with different stakeholders as well as with the people living in the Wadden Sea, encompassing the coastal zone from Den Helder in the Netherlands to Blåvands Huk in Denmark, including contacts with the Wadden Sea Forum, the regional advisory boards and other stakeholder fora.

The process of evaluation and implementation of changes that have been undertaken over the past two years has revealed questions about the fundamental purpose and role of the Cooperation. The discussions in the framework of elaborating the new Joint Declaration made it clear that the Cooperation should maintain its focus on nature protection in the Wadden Sea. Moreover, it is essential to broaden its perspective in order to promote its efforts for landscape and cultural heritage, improve the application of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), sustainable development and developing environmental education.

CHAPTER 2

VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Vision for the Wadden Sea as entailed in § 2.2 of the Joint Declaration.

Our Vision for the Wadden Sea

The Wadden Sea is a unique, natural and dynamic ecosystem with characteristic biodiversity, vast open landscapes and rich cultural heritage, enjoyed by all, and delivering benefits in a sustainable way to present and future generations.

This vision builds upon previous work and has been the subject of extensive discussion. To assist in achieving this vision for the Wadden Sea, the Cooperation has clarified its core purpose in a short mission statement.

Mission of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation

To be a world class example of transboundary cooperation for the long-term safeguard of the unique Wadden Sea ecosystem, its natural values, landscape and cultural heritage - by working in partnership with civil society for the benefit of the present and future generations

To achieve the vision, the 2010 Joint Declaration between the three countries identified 5 key objectives.

Key Objectives

To achieve

1. A natural ecosystem, its functions and characteristic biodiversity.
2. Adaptation to climate change and other impacts.
3. Maintenance of the landscape and cultural heritage.
4. Sustainable use, as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Habitats Directive.
5. Public support for the protection of the Wadden Sea.

CHAPTER 3

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Objective 1

A natural ecosystem, its functions and characteristic biodiversity

The Wadden Sea forms the largest unbroken system of tidal sand and mud flats worldwide, in a largely unimpaired natural state where natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way. Such vast ecosystems in an almost pristine state of wilderness are extremely rare in the densely populated centre of Europe.

Consequently the Governments of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have defined as an overall goal for their cooperation: ***“The guiding principle of the trilateral Wadden Sea policy is to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way.”*** (MD of 6th Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference, Esbjerg, 1991, p. 13)

In virtually all scientific investigations it has been reconfirmed, that providing ample space for a free development of nature is a precondition for the ability of ecosystems to cope with changes. The characteristic habitat and biodiversity of the Wadden Sea can only survive if the naturalness, on which it relies, is conserved. The same holds true for the functions of a natural ecosystem, which are likewise aimed for by the three states.

All recent management approaches, i.e. those of the European Union with their various directives, are pointing in the same direction: all use in the Wadden Sea (area) should be in accordance with the main goal for the Wadden Sea and it is of paramount importance to strengthen and secure the untouched naturalness of the Wadden Sea ecosystem (including the unique open landscapes, tranquillity, vastness and darkness) in order to safeguard its functions and characteristic biodiversity not only for the present but also for future generations.

During the period of this strategy, the Cooperation will pursue the following strategic priorities:

- 1.1 Facilitate the harmonisation of implementation of the EU Directives of relevance to the Wadden Sea in order to achieve Favourable Conservation Status (Birds and Habitats Directive) and Good Ecological Status (Water Framework Directive).
- 1.2 Secure greater involvement of the Cooperation at the European level.
- 1.3 Maintain and further develop the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP) particularly in relation to access to information and to provide the data and information to assist adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

- 1.4 Develop understanding of long term population trends particularly in relation to birds and neobiotics.
- 1.5 Facilitate greater coordination of research programmes, particularly in relation to natural resilience, ecosystem dynamics and non-native species.

Objective 2

Adaptability to climate change and other impacts

The impacts of climate change on the Wadden Sea may become manifest in two ways: firstly through changes in physical, chemical and biological parameters such as sea level rise, erosion, temperature, acidity and species composition , and secondly, through human responses such as coastal protection measures.

Changes will affect valuable natural and cultural heritage assets throughout the Wadden Sea. The combined impacts of these changes on the ecosystem are so diverse and numerous that predictions of the expected direction of change are very difficult and in some aspects may not be possible. Nature protection, cultural heritage and conservation policies and management must therefore become more flexible, so that adaptation to rapid change is possible. This is particularly relevant in the implementation of conservation objectives under the Habitats and Birds Directives and the ecological quality requirements of the Water Framework Directive. To help achieve this it will be necessary to intensify contact with relevant scientists so that the latest research and advice is used to adapt monitoring and management programmes.

It will also be necessary to increase the ability of the ecosystem, including landscapes and cultural heritage features to cope with changes. To this end, the natural diversity, especially along the mainland coast, must be increased. This, in turn, requires close cooperation with responsible coastal protection authorities particularly as recently the EU agreed a Flooding Directive which aims to reduce and manage the risk that floods pose to human health, the environment, infrastructure and property. During the period of this strategy Member States are required to undertake preliminary risk assessments and produce flood risk maps of areas at risk of flooding by the end of 2013. Flood risk management plans are due for the end of 2015.

The above elements must be part of a long-term trilateral strategy on increasing resilience and adapting to the effects of climate change with a view to achieving both the protection of the people living in the region and the natural, landscape and cultural heritage qualities of the Wadden Sea. Such a strategy must include guidance on which policy steps to take for different climate impact scenarios. The development of the trilateral climate change strategy requires close consultation with all stakeholders.

During the period of this strategy, the Cooperation will pursue the following strategic priorities:

- 2.1 Develop a strategy for climate change adaptation taking account of nature protection, coastal protection and cultural heritage.
- 2.2 Ensure TWSC perspectives influence national and regional climate change adaptation strategies, including contributing to the risk assessments and risk management plans that will be prepared under the Flooding Directive.

2.3 Develop and implement pilot projects and research programmes on climate change adaptation, resilience and coastal protection, and share best practice and lessons learnt throughout the Wadden Sea.

Objective 3

Maintenance of the landscape and cultural heritage

At the end of 2007 the Lancewad Plan project on the Wadden Sea landscape and cultural heritage was finalized and its findings were reported to EU. The results were welcomed and in the following discussion, two main elements for the follow-up process were identified: 'raising the awareness of the results of the projects', and 'to involve a broader constituency (responsible authorities)'.

The main argument for the involvement of the Cooperation in the management of landscape and cultural heritage is that the cultural landscape heritage compliments the natural and environmental heritage. Despite local and regional diversity, the Wadden Sea Region has a common history in developing and shaping the landscape, in human survival adaptation strategies and techniques and a cultural heritage which is apparently unique worldwide.

The apparent uniqueness of the heritage needs to be more widely recognized, and the responsibility for the management of landscape and cultural heritage needs to be acknowledged. The management of landscape and the cultural heritage is an issue of integrated spatial planning and is therefore also a responsibility of the regional and local partners in all three countries. The implementation of a trilateral strategy should therefore be carried out by, or in close cooperation with all administrative levels and with support of the people living and working in the region. The involvement of stakeholders is essential for the wise management of the heritage and in particular, further integration of natural and landscape management should be an aim.

During the period of this strategy, the Cooperation will pursue the following strategic priorities:

- 3.1 Recognize the international importance of the landscape and cultural heritage of the Wadden Sea Region.
- 3.2 Promote the further development of appropriate planning instruments.
- 3.3 Enhance the involvement and responsibility of relevant authorities and stakeholders for the management of the landscape and cultural heritage.
- 3.4 Intensify the integration and collaboration between the natural environment and landscape management.

Objective 4

Sustainable use as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Habitats Directive

The Convention on Biological Diversity 'recognizes that ecosystems, species and genes must be used for the benefit of humans. However, this should be done in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity.' The Habitats Directive states that 'the maintenance of such biodiversity may in certain cases require the maintenance, or indeed the encouragement, of human activities.'

The Wadden Sea is an area that is both an important nature conservation area and an area that is used by for example, fisheries, recreation, tourism, shipping, and the oil and gas industry. Managing these activities in order to ensure they do not conflict with the objectives and targets of the protected areas is part of what is required to make them sustainable and achieving a balance between nature and human activities in this unique area. Sustainable use of the Wadden Sea, and also the sustainability of the larger Wadden Sea region is therefore one of the objectives of the Cooperation.

At its decision to inscribe the Dutch-German Wadden Sea on the World Heritage List, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Parties "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". Also in the context of the establishment and further development of the Danish Wadden Sea National Park sustainable tourism development is a central objective.

Given the overarching importance of the natural values of the Wadden Sea area, the aim of this Strategy is that all use is sustainable. Because the Wadden Sea is a nature protection area, the ecological dimension of sustainable use must predominate compared to the economic and social aspects of human activities.

For the application of sustainable use within the Wadden Sea it is necessary to specify the relevant conservation principles and targets. This is done at the trilateral level in the Wadden Sea Plan. Therefore this objective is closely linked to Objective 1. In order to promote sustainable use and to make it more transparent for all parties involved, the uses must respect the principles and targets set out in the Plan and a set of specific sustainability indicators should be applied. To develop these indicators, use should be made of those developed by the Wadden Sea Forum and also those developed by Governments. A method for jointly assessing the three dimensions of sustainability in accordance with the above mentioned predominance of the ecological dimension of sustainability within the Wadden Sea is required. This will be done both by compiling input from users and discussions in (trilateral) working groups.

Eventually, specific proposals for the regulation of economic activities should become part of the Wadden Sea Plan.

During the period of this Strategy, the Cooperation will pursue the following strategic priorities:

- 4.1 Develop a specific understanding of what is meant by “Sustainable Use” within the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation.
- 4.2 Develop tools for facilitating assessment and practice of sustainable use.
- 4.3 Facilitate a common assessment of sustainable use across the Wadden Sea.
- 4.4 Conduct a pilot project for testing the above approach.
- 4.5 Develop and promote sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region.

Objective 5

Public support for the protection of the Wadden Sea

A successful long-term protection of the Wadden Sea as an entity depends not only on the cooperation of politicians, conservationists and scientists, but also on the insight and awareness of the people living in this region.

The perception of and identification with the Wadden Sea as a shared natural and cultural heritage constitute an essential basis for a successful Wadden Sea protection in the long-term, with a broad recognition of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation's approach to a joint management being a very important tool for this.

However, the external evaluation of the TWSC found that external communication and public promotion of the Cooperation should be further strengthened. Following the recommendation of the evaluation, existing means of communication such as the CWSS website and the TWSC newsletter will be given a wider audience through improved linking and distribution while also making full use of the attention generated by the positive results of the Lancewad project and the nomination of the Dutch-German parts of the Wadden Sea Area as a World Heritage Site.

In the coming strategy period the possibility of strengthening the CWSS with fundraising expertise and capacity will be investigated. Moving the educational efforts of the Cooperation – the IWSS activities - from a project status to becoming an integrated part of the trilateral cooperation can be another means of strengthening the public outreach, thus also effectively linking the educational network in the three countries to the Trilateral Cooperation. The CWSS will also continue its work to compile and disseminate all relevant scientific information on the Wadden Sea through web-based media, symposiums, workshops and reports as well as through meetings with other relevant organisations and institutions.

Furthermore, the TWSC will continue its cooperation with relevant stakeholder fora and organisations.

During the period of this Strategy, the Cooperation will pursue the following strategic priorities:

- 5.1 Enhance the awareness of the Wadden Sea as a shared cultural and natural heritage.
- 5.2 Secure public and political support for the protection and integrated management of the Wadden Sea as a shared entity.
- 5.3 Support, facilitate and coordinate stakeholder involvement and initiation.
- 5.4 Promote, coordinate and facilitate trilateral Wadden Sea education.
- 5.5 Enhance and advertise the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation as an

international role model.

CHAPTER 4

GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES

Following the 2007 Evaluation, the participating countries agreed to streamline the governance of the Cooperation to provide fit-for purpose arrangements to serve the Cooperation into the future. The revised governance framework / organisational structures are shown schematically in the organisational chart, below.

Governance structures and mechanisms

Decision-making is limited to two levels:

a. Trilateral Wadden Sea Governmental Council

The politically responsible body (Ministers) for the Cooperation, which establishes and oversees the Cooperation; gives political leadership, and assures international policy development, harmonisation and decision-making between the three governments.

b. Wadden Sea Board

The governing body of the Cooperation, which prepares, adopts and implements the Strategy, oversees the operational and advisory bodies, and secures relations with key stakeholders. The Board, which operates according to agreed Rules of Procedure, is chaired by a senior government official appointed by the Council, rotating between the countries

Operational structures and mechanisms

The Decision-making bodies are supported and advised by three types of operational and advisory bodies:

a. Advisors

The Board will receive the support of Advisors with expertise and experience relevant to the Cooperation, appointed according to agreed criteria. The Advisors will participate in the meetings of the Board in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

b. Task Groups

Groups appointed by, and reporting to, the Board to prepare and undertake specific tasks, plans or projects. Usually, these Task Groups will be time-limited.

c. Wadden Sea Conferences

Triennial conferences, aimed to inform policy-making and the Cooperation in its work, including review of the Wadden Sea Plan. These conferences will usually be held every three years in conjunction with the meetings of the

Trilateral Governmental Council. For specific items the Board can decide to organise thematic workshops.

d. International Wadden Sea Scientific Symposia

The International Wadden Sea Scientific Symposia are essential fora for presentation of the latest scientific research and discussion of implications for trilateral policy and management. The symposia will normally be held a year before the Wadden Sea Conferences to inform these conferences and delivering recommendations for trilateral policy and management.

The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) is responsible for support to the Board and the Council, implementation of the CWSS Work Plan, support to scientific networks and projects, communications and financial management (within delegated limits).

Planning, reporting and meeting cycles

Following a recommendation of the Evaluation, the Cooperation has adopted a triennial cycle for planning and reporting.

Key planning documents are:

- A six year “rolling” Strategy, covering two triennial cycles (but with more detail for the first)
- A triennial Business Plan for implementation of the Strategy
- Annual work plans for the CWSS (as part of the business plans)
- Indicative triennial budgets with detailed annual budgets

Key reporting documents are:

- A triennial report from the Board to the Council
- Annual reports from the CWSS to the Board (including financial reports)
- Annual audited accounts

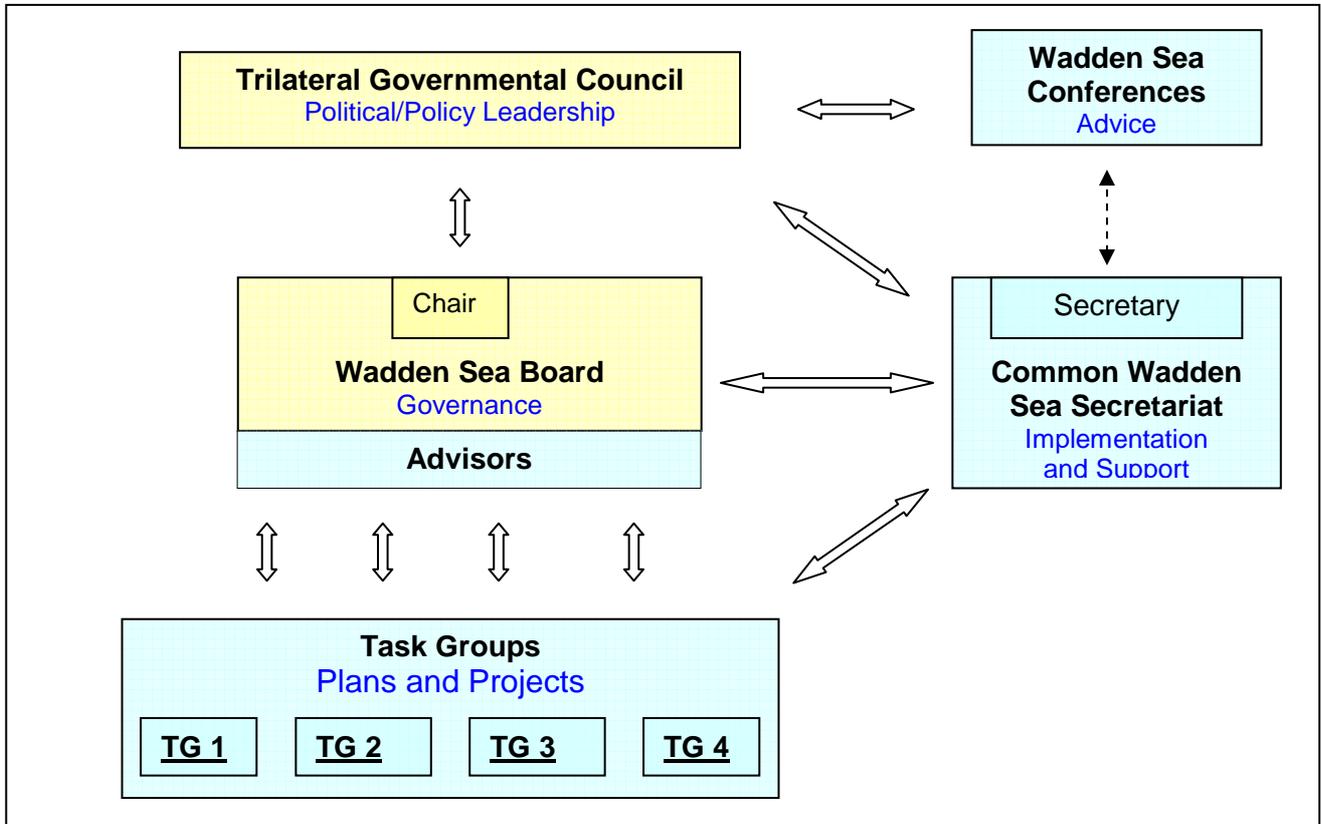
Financial Arrangements

The Cooperation will agree an indicative 3 year core budget to assist long-term planning. This budget will be financed in equal share by the participating governments.

An allocation to a project fund, the reserve fund referred to in the financial regulations, will be included within the core budget, to facilitate the financing of small projects. Additional project funds, particularly for larger initiatives, will be sought from the participating governments and third parties.

The Cooperation will explore with partners the merits of establishing a Wadden Sea Foundation as an external funding vehicle for supporting implementation of the Wadden Sea Plan.

TRILATERAL WADDEN SEA COOPERATION ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



KEY

- Decision-making bodies
- Operational / advisory bodies

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Trilateral Governmental Council: Minimum every three years / Ad-hoc meetings

Board: Minimum two meetings per annum

Wadden Sea Conferences: Every three years (plus additional thematic workshops)

Task Groups: As defined by their TOR.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of implementation of this strategy will initially take place through the annual business plan reporting process and the production of an annual report.

A mid-term evaluation of the strategy will be undertaken as an internal process. However, the Cooperation will collect views from key stakeholders and these will be considered alongside performance against targets by the Board. This mid-term evaluation of the strategy will allow overall progress to be assessed and adjustment of the priorities in the light of performance and any new challenges that may have been identified.

In the last six month period of the strategy an evaluation will be carried out. This evaluation will provide an independent perspective on the work of the Cooperation. The Board will appoint an appropriately experienced and qualified evaluator and will determine the precise scope and nature of the evaluation. The evaluation will be undertaken in an open and transparent manner and will provide information for the development of the next strategy for the Cooperation.

Throughout the period of the strategy, the Cooperation will actively assess risks to the delivery of the strategy and business plan targets. Actions will be identified to mitigate these risks. This risk assessment process will be incorporated within the annual business planning process of the Cooperation.