

# MEETING DOCUMENT

## Wadden Sea Board (WSB 43)

16 April 2024  
Ameland, Netherlands



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>5.3 Manage and communicate effectively (paras 44-56)</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposal on development process of strategic communication and brand management</b>
<b>Document No.:</b>	WSB 43/5.3
<b>Date:</b>	23 April 2024
<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>CWSS</b>

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As requested during WSB 42, CWSS has worked out a proposal on combining brand positioning and strategic communication. Included are an outline of the further process and integration of stakeholder feedback. The document also states and considers a set of recommendations formulated by the trilateral social media group as requested during WSB41. Overall, a clear brand positioning and communication serves as a guiding framework for the Trilateral Cooperation, ensuring that it remains focused, effective, and credible, which is essential for maintaining the Cooperation and achieving sustained impact.

**Proposal:** The meeting is invited to endorse the proposal.

## Proposal on development process of strategic communication and brand management

At WSB 42 on 23 November 2023, following the presentation on the WSWH Place Brand Architecture, the Members mandated CWSS to prepare a proposal on next steps of the branding process addressing how to work/proceed with the further development of the current brand strategy with regard to the following:

- The relation of the branding and the communication strategies;
- Trilateral and national consequences of any next steps in the review of the brand strategy (who should do it, resources, prioritisation with other tasks);
- Recommendations on how to manage and use the brand as basis for decision and adoption on WSB level.

ASHA&Co outlined and proposed to meet those requests through a deeper exploration of the Cooperation's purpose, work, narrative, and expression. It is important to note that the next phase envisioned is not a 'logo' discussion but rather the aim is to strategically develop both branding and communication, assess their connectivity, and find synergies and co-dependencies between the two.

In the following, CWSS presents relevant background information, including the status quo of both the development of a brand strategy and the revision of the communication strategy. The document further states the objectives and aim of the proposed next steps including the specific actions or initiatives as well as costs and funding sources.

### Background Information

#### **Status quo of development of branding strategy**

The WSWH Place Brand Architecture & Management Strategy project was initiated in 2023 (intermediate results presented at WSB42; see annex in WSB42 draft summary record) to create a bold, future-focused, and compelling Wadden Sea World Heritage place brand architecture & management system.

The purpose of this is to serve as a link for the initiatives within the existing cooperation as well as within the partnerships envisioned for the future. The brand requires a brand architecture that helps the TWSC and its stakeholders understand how different aspects of Wadden Sea World Heritage fit together and creates connections between the different entities that positively impact each other.

Creating an architecture that effectively delivers this will lead to a wider and more impactful presence of the brand, greater public understanding of the importance of the Wadden Sea and more participation in its protection and conservation.

#### **Status quo of revision of the communications strategy**

The TWSC follows a joint [Communication Strategy](#). Since its adoption in 2012, new media and activities have been introduced within the framework given by the strategy. However, as the strategy itself has not been updated since then, this is now planned to be done as part of a revision process, accompanied at the operational level by the trilateral group of communications officers. CWSS provided an [assessment](#) to the WSB in 2021 identifying the main issues with the strategy.

On 20 November 2023 the trilateral social media group met for a workshop on the revision of the 2012 TWSC Communication Strategy. The meeting objective, as requested by WSB41, was to formulate recommendations on the revision process. The following recommendations were shared with ASHA&Co and considered for this proposal:

1. An updated strategy is welcomed and needed. The group recommends that the strategy should be shorter and have a ready-to-use partner version. It should be applicable and actionable.
2. The strategy should also be owned by the persons and organisations asked to implement it. To generate

that ownership, the group recommends that direct partners such as the TWSC member organisations and indirect/associated partners such as local DMOs should be included in the review process.

3. The group recommends that the target audiences should be reviewed and personas updated to current trends.
4. The group recommends building the strategy in a framework structure that allows embedding of project into the overall communication to avoid several parallel strategies being developed for the different projects (e.g. Swimway, WSFI, SIMP).
5. The group recommends involving external expertise to help objectively develop an owned, actionable, and applicable strategy.
6. The group recommends a rapid revision process for implementation to start within this presidency.

Participants of the social media group meeting were Jens Laurits Hansen, Nationalpark Vadehavet, Sjon de Haan, Coördinator Wadden Sea World Heritage Netherlands, Imke Zwoch, Nationalparkverwaltung Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer (NLPV), Jan Pelle Länger, Nationalparkverwaltung Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer (NLPV), and Annika Bostelmann, CWSS.

## **Objectives**

Public support for the protection of the Wadden Sea is one of the defined objectives of the Cooperation. A shared narrative (communication) based on a common understanding of the WSWH & TWSC core values (brand positioning) across the countries, member organisations, partners, and stakeholders are key to achieving this. In the proposed next steps, we will therefore integrate the development of a strategic communication framework in the brand process, in which a vision and direction for the WSWH & TWSC are determined and structured. A clear positioning will be the foundation for the strategies of both branding and communication, as it defines the target audiences, determines communication channels, decides on objectives, and creates core messaging to increase engagement. To ensure a sense of ownership and hence a successful implementation, it is essential to include an active exchange with the stakeholder (partners) in the process.

## **Proposed Process**

### **Pre-requisite**

As requested during WSB 42, the first step of the process is to capture the diverse perspectives and viewpoints of our key stakeholders. We thereby aim to further enhance the level of engagement of additional groups and organizations committed to protecting and conserving the World Heritage as well as generate added value and a feeling of ownership for all parties involved. In-depth interviews with representatives from various countries, organizations, and positions will be conducted (8 virtual interviews lasting 1 hour each over 2 days).

Additionally, a "task force" comprised of nominees from the competent authorities resp. their organizations was established for further progress. This task force supports and consults CWSS and ASHA&Co in the subsequent stages of the branding process (as suggested by the German delegation) and will have continuous insight and involvement in the project.

### **Phase 1 Narrative**

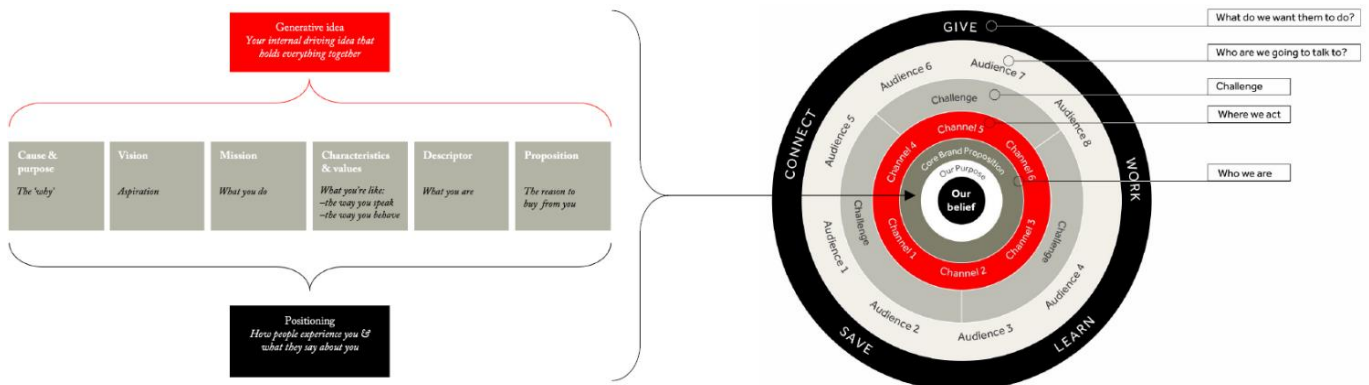
The work entailed in this phase encompasses genuine insight, visionary perspective, and strategic guidance aimed at crafting a cohesive, compelling, and pragmatic narrative. This serves as the cornerstone for both internal and external portrayals of identity and the manner in which individuals perceive it.

Cause & purpose <i>The 'why'</i>	Vision <i>Aspiration</i>	Mission <i>What you do</i>	Characteristics & values <i>What you're like: -the way you speak -the way you behave</i>	Descriptor <i>What you are</i>	Proposition <i>The reason to engage with you</i>
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Estimated time for phase 1: 2 month

## Phase 2 – Generative idea & positioning

During this phase of work a clear positioning will be established. This involves crafting a 'generative idea' that describes on the one hand the current identity and on the other hand the desired identity and makes clear its implications for the behaviour, aesthetics, tone, and voice of the WSWH brand. This will provide a unique positioning for the WSWH & TWSC and the strategic framework of a future SMART communication strategy and action plan.



Estimated time for phase 2: 3 months

## Project delivery – who & how

Proposed is a multi-faceted approach centred around two key principles: exchange and involvement.

### 1. CWSS Project Team (Annika Bostelmann & Anja Domnick)

- Day to day communication and management;
- Weekly and/or bi-weekly status meetings, with ASHA & Co;
- In all meetings for continuity and input;
- Supporting the ASHA & Co team to help guide any content, queries for workshops and presentations.

### 2. Task Force

Members as nominated by the countries: Sjon de Haan for the Netherlands, Anne Husum Marboe & Jens Laurits Hansen for Denmark, and Maren Bauer & Astrid Martin for Germany.

- Workshopping strategies and assets;
- Involved in workshops and key meetings:
  - Playback of consultation;
  - Brand platform & strategic framework –workshop of territories (e.g. target audience(s), brand

- attributes or values, communication channels);
- Brand platform & strategic framework –workshop of the creation;
- presentation on completion of phase 1 (prior to the Board meeting WSB 44/45);
- Generative idea & positioning workshop –phase 2 (prior to the Board meeting WSB 44/45).

### **3. Involvement/ reporting to TG-CM/ Wadden Sea Board**

- presentation on completion of phase 1 – Brand platform & strategic framework;
- presentation on completion of phase 2 – Generative idea & positioning.

### **Expected deliverables**

- A clear and differentiated narrative for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Brand;
- Definition of the generative idea;
- Solution with strong rationale that is right for the WSWH/TWSC in regard to brand, positioning, and narrative;
- A strategic communication framework that guides all internal and external messaging that mirrors the brand positioning and narrative. The framework will not be a fully developed strategy down to means and measures, but rather set the strategic focus and answer the questions of what, to whom, and why we communicate;
- Suggestion of necessary next steps for respective fields for 2025 onwards.

### **Budget**

The projected expenses for the tasks, derived from rates and quotes obtained for similar projects, amount to €122,000, surpassing the TWSC supplementary budget (budget line #8 under “Outreach and Communication”). ASHA&Co offered completing the work at a reduced rate of €82,500 (excl. VAT), which will be allocated within CWSS as follows:

Source	Approx. amount (proposal in GBP)
Supplementary Budget 2024:	€ 25,000,-
Surplus PROWAD LINK for Branding:	€ 57,500,-
<b>Total sum</b>	<b>€ 82,500,-</b>

### **Conclusion**

Within the proposed project we will be able to develop a clear positioning of the WSWH and TWSC that will be highly beneficial for the TWSC for several reasons:

1. **Alignment of goals:** Clear brand positioning ensures that all parties involved understand the objectives, values, and mission of the WSWH & TWSC. This alignment fosters better communication and collaboration toward common goals.
2. **Consistency in communication:** The messages communicated by each party involved in the trilateral cooperation will be consistent. Consistency builds trust among stakeholders and avoids confusion or misinterpretation of intentions.
3. **Distinct identity:** Each party in the TWSC brings its unique strengths, capabilities, and perspectives. A clear brand positioning helps to highlight these differences while also emphasizing how they complement

each other, thus creating a distinct identity for the WSWH. Competency of the bodies will be defined and communicated.

4. **Enhanced stakeholder perception:** Clarity in the positioning of the WSWH & TWSC enhances the perception of the Trilateral Cooperation among stakeholders, including governments, businesses, NGOs, and the public. This positive perception can attract more support, investment, and participation in the Cooperation.

Overall, a clear brand positioning and communication serves as a guiding framework for the Trilateral Cooperation, ensuring that it remains focused, effective, and credible, which is essential for maintaining the Cooperation and achieving sustained impact.