

WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE STRATEGY 2014 – 20

CHALLENGING THE GLOBAL DIMENSION WORKING WITH PARTNERS

“Experience and Help Preserve a Natural Wonder”

draft 31 May 2013

WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE STRATEGY 2014 – 20: CHALLENGING THE GLOBAL DIMENSION WORKING WITH PARTNERS

1. INTRODUCTION

The inscription of the Dutch-German Wadden Sea on the World Heritage List in 2009 and 2011 has strengthened, reinforced and enhanced our generation long efforts to protect, conserve and manage the Wadden Sea as the World's largest tidal barrier island system, a unique natural intertidal ecosystem, and a property shared between three nations for the benefit of present and future generations. The inscription has engendered enormous pride and received amazing support. It has been embraced by virtually all stakeholders in the Wadden Sea region. It has already released an incredible amount of additional activity which has reinforced the management of the property, raised the profile of the area, created synergies and new partnerships, and brought new benefits and opportunities to the region in accordance with the aims of the World Heritage Convention. The Communication and Marketing Programme 2010-13 has directed the work of the Cooperation in the past period.

The extension with the Danish part anticipated for 2014 will help reinforce what we have already embarked upon and will significantly contribute to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention nationally and internationally and thus open new perspectives for the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. The extension will constitute a uniquely tri-national inscribed natural World Heritage property and safeguard its protection, management and awareness. It will strengthen the common responsibility for the site, support regional sustainable development and in addition promote, support and benefit of national and international cooperation and awareness on World Heritage, visualizing the global dimension of the Wadden Sea.

With inscription on the List the Wadden Sea States Parties have also entered into commitment to actively contribute to the objectives of UNESCO World Heritage Convention through enhanced international cooperation. Thus, the Wadden Sea, as one of the largest and most-experienced site, plays a significant role in implementing the Convention.

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) adopted by the World Heritage Committee is the basis for future protection and management of the property. It incorporates the guiding principle of the Trilateral Cooperation which is "to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way".

The Statement of OUV conveys what makes the Wadden Sea a unique place on earth. It is the largest unbroken stretch of barrier islands and mud flats in the world. An ever changing landscape of tidal flat and gullies of unparalleled scale and diversity, one of the last remaining natural large scale intertidal ecosystems where natural processes continue to function largely undisturbed with a multitude of transition zones with a high species richness

with an unmatched importance for the millions of migratory birds which travel from the arctic area via the Wadden Sea to the wintering areas in Westafrica. Biodiversity on a world-wide scale is reliant on the Wadden Sea.

Function of the Strategy

The function of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy 2014-2020 is to set out, based on the experiences gained with the Communication and Marketing Programme 2010-13, what the Wadden Sea Cooperation as site holders would like to achieve over the six year period until 2020 together with the (strategic) partners cooperating for and supporting the Wadden Sea World Heritage. It aims to bundle and actively communicate World Heritage activities in the regions and strengthen joint communication and consistent marketing to use the true potential of the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand for nature conservation and sustainable development. It is designed to give direction to and establish the strategic priorities which will be put into practice in three year business plans for the strategic partnership.

Bring together Competencies and Resources

The Wadden Sea World Heritage is a complex trans-boundary property in terms of its protection and management, its governance and the number of stakeholders involved and the different languages and cultural background. But rather than this being a challenge it is a huge opportunity to continue to create something which matches its Outstanding Universal Value. The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation has for more than 35 years demonstrated that it is possible to establish a harmonized world-wide unique protection and management scheme. The many organizations and people who have or wish to have a stake in the Wadden Sea World Heritage bring together ideas, competencies, initiatives and resources to form a strong and united society because there is a gain in working together.

2. THE AIM

In accordance with the Operational Guidelines the protection and management of the Outstanding Universal Value including the conditions of integrity of the Wadden Sea World Heritage is and remains the core task of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. There is a recognition that this responsibility can only be accomplished with the help of the community at large which will also be able value and enjoy the property and benefit from its unique designation. Whilst the property benefits from the UNESCO Convention it has also an obligation to contribute to and extend its global success. And by working together on commonly defined strategic aims across boundaries, responsibilities and interests more can be gained than working apart.

In line with the strategic objectives of the World Heritage Committee this strategy contributes to ensuring effective **conservation**, strengthening the **credibility** of World Heritage, increasing awareness and support through **communication**, promoting effective **capacity-building** and enhancing the important role of the **community** (the '5 Cs).

The Wadden Sea Cooperation together with its strategic partners within the framework of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Wadden Sea World Heritage property aim to continue to:

- 1) **Safeguard for current and future generations its outstanding universal value including integrity which at the same time inspire people to enjoy and value it, celebrate and learn about it.**
- 2) **Develop the brand Wadden Sea World Heritage to constitute a tool for the region's sustainable development benefiting inhabitants and visitors.**
- 3) **Contribute to the World Heritage Convention and its strategic objectives by being a model for international cooperation in a trans-boundary property.**

The key purpose of the strategy has been translated into corresponding work themes for the property:

- (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.

3. WORK THEMES

For each of the 6 work themes overall objectives have been formulated which outline what the partners wish to achieve during the 6 year period.

3.1 Conservation and International Cooperation

The protection and management of the property including its integrity in accordance with the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value remains the core task of the Cooperation. The Statement is basically in accordance with the current protection and management agreements as expressed in the Wadden Sea Plan and stipulates the future direction of the protection and management according to which the property will be monitored and assessed in a World Heritage context. It is therefore essential that current protection and management is continued and that the Statement is embedded in the future activities of the cooperation. The protection of the areas is effectively secured through legal protection as national parks and nature conservation areas. The Wadden Sea Plan should be reviewed in the light of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and be developed into a Wadden Sea World Heritage management plan.

The international dimension of the property is not only apparent in status as a World Heritage property but also in the fact that it sustains biodiversity on a world wide scale as regards migratory birds. The inscription on the World Heritage List also encompasses the obligation to contribute to the work of the Convention to protect and safeguard properties of outstanding universal value. The Wadden Sea World Heritage should continue to develop as a model for in particular trans-boundary World Heritage property management and provide their over 30-year experiences in protection and management to other sites.

Objectives

- (1) Continue to safeguard and protect the property in accordance with Statement of Outstanding Universal Value to be further integrated into the common protection, management and monitoring through the Wadden Sea Plan.
- (2) Give special attention to the key threats to the property as outlined in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.
- (3) Establish and extend the cooperation along the flyway for migratory birds to protect and manage the populations and assist with monitoring and capacity building.
- (4) Support the work of the World Heritage Convention in particular through the World Heritage Marine Programme as a model for protection and management of a trans-boundary property.

3.2 Establish, Extend and Manage the Wadden Sea World Heritage Brand

Whilst the UNESCO World Heritage is widely recognized, the concept and significance of the OUV of World Heritage properties is less well understood amongst stakeholders. A key issue is making stakeholders understand and appreciate the heritage values, and to explain these values in a way that it is readily understood and explains its significance in a local, national and international context adding value to existing brands such as national parks.

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. The consistent brand strategy is prerequisite to reach the hearts and mind of policy makers, managers and other stakeholders, helps to understand the responsibilities from the OUV and how to use its potential through all sectors and regions. The new brand will add values to existing brands on local, state and national level, reinforcing them and provide the framework for creating synergies and using the potentials resulting from the designation.

Objectives

- (1) Develop a Wadden Sea World Heritage Brand contributing to the Statement of OUV and the principles and objectives of the Conventions.
- (2) Develop a brand strategy and architecture which adds value to and building on the values existing brands enhancing communication, visibility, identification and appreciation of the property locally, nationally, and internationally.
- (3) Exercise a successful destination-brand management to coordinate relevant variables (such as tourism infrastructures, quality of local service) as well as other destination-brand users in order to achieve a coherent and desired destination-brand identity.

3.3 Outreach and Education

Outreach and education is an obligation that directly ensues from the World Heritage Convention and the inscription of the World Heritage List. In order to protect and manage the Outstanding Universal Value of the property its values must be known to current and future generation. Identification and appreciation of the values support protection and management of the World Heritage.

The educational activities demand a close interaction with the work field of information and education centres and integration of the different educational activities already ongoing, based on an education competency. The main function challenge remains to link the Wadden Sea information centres and education institutions dealing with the Wadden Sea to a partnership for the World Heritage and to develop and produce in agreement with the partners high level Wadden Sea World Heritage educational material in particular for use by school classes and in educational courses, but also for the general public. The International Wadden Sea School (IWSS) is the appropriate instrument for linking the information centres and educational institutions and programmes to a joint partnership with in property and to enhance the awareness of the Wadden Sea as one nature area.

Furthermore, information must continue to be disseminated to inhabitants and visitors to inform about the Wadden Sea World Heritage. Partners must be provided with update and effective information material, video films etc. and use must be made of internet and social media which also ensure that the information and awareness material conform to the common design to guarantee that the message is conveyed similar across the property.

Objectives

- (1) Develop the International Wadden Sea School into the environmental education institution of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property linking the information centres and education institutions to a partnership and develop and produce high quality educational material for use in environmental education and for the general public.
- (2) Produce high quality information and awareness material (measures) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage and extend the use of the internet, social media and other innovative media to promote and enhance the brand.

3.4 Develop and Advance Sustainable Tourism

As regards sustainable tourism a Sustainable Tourism Strategy has been developed by the Wadden Sea Cooperation together with all relevant partners pursuant to the request of the World Heritage Committee. The Strategy aims to enhance joint responsibility for the property, engage stakeholder in protection of the OUV through involvement in tourism planning and management, and consistent communication and marketing of sustainable tourism related to the World Heritage destination. This aims to create new partnerships, synergies and cross-sector cooperation, resulting in benefits for the conservation of the Wadden Sea as well as for local communities and businesses.

The strategy has been adopted by the states parties, national parks, ministries, tourism and marketing organizations, and nature NGOs as a basis for the cooperation of stakeholders on sustainable tourism in the Dutch-German-Danish Wadden Sea. The strategy is complemented by an action plan for the period 2014-17 and onwards to which all stakeholders have declared their commitment to contribute in a cooperative way within their responsibilities.

The tourism strategy shall be carried out as an integral part of the overall World Heritage Strategy.

Objectives

1. Ensure all stakeholders have a transnational understanding and appreciation of the values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage.
2. Ensure stakeholders take responsibility for and contribute to the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value through involvement in tourism management and product development.
3. Ensure the tourism sector provides consistent communication and marketing and promotes the high quality tourism offers of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.
4. Ensure nature conservation, tourism and local communities benefit from the World Heritage Status.

3.5 Promote Regional Sustainable Development

The Wadden Sea World Heritage has the potential to develop into a catalyst for regional sustainable development and help the region to change its image as a marginalized area to a vibrant and liveable region with a high quality of its environment. This demands a willingness of business and enterprises to buy into the Wadden Sea World Heritage and a readiness on behalf of the states parties to engage with the local and private partners. The engagement must constitute a mutual and equal partnership contributing to and in accordance with the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.

The engagement with the private sector and local partners can take many forms. The key element is the building up of partnerships where there is an active support and promotion of the Wadden Sea World Heritage as defined in the brand. The current partnerships programmes operating in the framework of the national park programmes is a key element in the further development of the Wadden Sea World Heritage partnership. Using the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand (in a commercial context) demands that partners are willing to support and buy into the brand including the overall World Heritage strategy.

Objectives

- (1) Develop and set up a partnership programme with the private sector, and relevant organizations to further the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand.
- (2) Investigate use of World Heritage status to stimulate commercial response from private sector and to facilitate strategic coordination of investments to promote sustainable regional development.

3.6 Promote Science and Monitoring

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value provides the direction for the protection, management and research. It is explicitly stated that the property is an outstanding example of unique biodiversity and of the large-scale development of an intricate and complex temperate climate sandy barrier coast under conditions of rising sea level. It is one of the best-studied coastal areas on the planet, providing lessons of wider scientific importance for wetland and coastal management of international importance. Research, monitoring and assessment of the protected areas that make up the property also require adequate resources to be provided it is stated.

Science whether fundamental or applied has played a central role in Wadden Sea protection and management and is essential for the future protection and management of the property. It is essential that a scientific programme is developed in the sense as agreed at the 2010 Sylt Conference to establish a research platform and a trilateral research agenda. This agenda should be aligned with the requirements of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.. Furthermore it is essential to maintain the world class expertise of the Wadden Sea related research institutes and extend the knowledge on better understanding the integrity of the site through linking and partnerships and research projects covering the whole site

Objectives

- (1) Establish and implement a Wadden Sea World Heritage research agenda based on the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value including the research requirements for maintaining the integrity of the property and its protection and management.
- (2) Establish a research platform including a funding mechanism for trilateral research projects and link the Wadden Sea related research institutes through into a partnership for Wadden Sea World Heritage research ("Wadden Sea World Heritage Research Partners").
- (3) Amend, as necessary, the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme to fulfil the requirements ensuing from the Statement OUV in the light of new information and results gained in order to continue to have a solid World Heritage proof basis for assessment and reporting.

4. GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES

Governance

The Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy is commonly shared by the partners of the Wadden Sea Cooperation together with its strategic partners¹.

The Wadden Sea Board establishes a tri-annual business plan together with the partners for the implementation of the strategy to ensure the necessary implementation.

The CWSS is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the strategy and the business plan and the daily operation of the work in the context of the strategy including supporting partners, developing projects and financial management.

Performance Monitoring

The implementation of the strategy is monitored through the business plan process. After the triennial business plan implementation an evaluation is carried out to inform and steer the second business cycle.

Finances

¹ The strategic partners are the regional authorities and the municipalities bordering property, the green NGOs in the WSB, the tourism marketing organizations, and the Chambers of Commerce in the region; the strategy must be approved by the strategic partners.