



Tidal flat gully structures © Klaas Kreuijer

# State of Conservation

## Wadden Sea World Heritage Site

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## Preface

The World Heritage Committee’s Decision 46COM 7B.23 expresses concerns about different human activities within, near, or beneath the transboundary World Heritage Site “The Wadden Sea”, including gas, oil, and salt extraction as well as infrastructure for renewable energy and their potential cumulative effects.

The World Heritage Committee therefore requested the State Parties to submit an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the decision, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47<sup>th</sup> session.

The States Parties of Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands received various requests which are addressed in this report as a joint answer of the three States Parties, organised within the Trilateral Governmental Cooperation on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, in short Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC).

This report responds to the requests in the World Heritage’s Committee Decision 46COM 7B.23 and summarises the most recent developments concerning the state of conservation and factors affecting the property, building upon information from the SoC report 2024.

In addition, the three States Parties remain active in the implementation of other related international policies and conventions that add to the management system of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. This includes the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Climate Action for World Heritage.

## The process of developing the SOC

After the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee (21-31 July 2024), the trilateral Task Group World Heritage followed up on the requests in Decision WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3 with regard to the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.

On 19 December 2024 the Wadden Sea Board approved the draft SOC report for stakeholder consultation. Consultation took place between 20 December 2024 and 10 January 2025. It involved the trilateral and national level.

The national consultation process, organised by each of the countries as far as appropriate and in accordance with their governance structures, involved:

In Denmark, the SoC has been prepared by The Agency for Green Transition and Water Environment as part of The Ministry of Green Transition (which took over responsibility for the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation from the Ministry of Environment per 1 October 2024 following a Royal Decree of 29 August 2024) and the ministry of Culture as the Danish UNESCO focal-point.

Further, the Regional Round Table (Det Rådgivende Udvalg For Vadehavet) facilitated by the four Danish Wadden Sea Municipalities is consisting of multiple Wadden Sea stakeholders, representing both public authorities as well as non-governmental organisations, has been consulted in the hearing of the SOC report.

In Germany, the National Park Advisory Boards received the draft version of the SOC report for information, with the opportunity to provide comments. Advisory Boards are representatives from the regional and local governments as well as regional stakeholders concerned with commercial, recreational, and environmental interests and of scientific institutions. The federal ministry of environment and the respective ministries of the three federal states (Länder) were involved.

In the Netherlands, all government layers in the Wadden Sea Region approved the State of Conservation report. This involved the provinces and municipalities, but also other ministries. Parliament was informed and given the possibility to steer on the content of the reply. The Stakeholder Advisory Board ('Omgevingsberaad') was also involved.

Trilateral NGOs were involved in the consultation process by CWSS via the Wadden Sea Board advisors.

This final SOC report was endorsed by the Wadden Sea Board.

# 1. Executive summary

The State of Conservation Report 2025 provides information at the requests of the World Heritage Committee in Decision WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3, Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands) (N 1314ter). It builds on and updates the State of Conservation Report (SoC 2024) from 2024 in those points that were already addressed in the previous WHC Decision 45COM 7B.23

The political commitment and efforts undertaken by the States Parties to enhance the protection of the property with respect to activities inside and outside the property as outlined in the state of conservation report 2024 remain. Cumulative impacts on the OUV of the Wadden Sea World Heritage site are within the scope of the joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (joint SEA) process (Decision para 3)

Also, the commitment, e.g., by the Wilhelmshaven Declaration, to enhance the protection of the property and the resilience of the Wadden Sea ecosystem to climate change remains strong. This is supported by the SIMP: Integrated Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage (SIMP) which follows a strategic approach to the long-term preservation of the property. The trilateral climate change adaptation strategy is currently under review and a thematic report Wadden Sea Quality Status Report on climate change was published in 2024 (Decision paras 4, 5).

While the World Heritage property has no buffer zone, the three Wadden Sea states have legislative protection regimes in place which reach beyond the designated World Heritage area, such as EU Natura 2000 Directives. These, as well as consideration of the OUV are outlined in the document.

Regarding new projects that may contribute to seabed subsidence in the property, the government of the Netherlands are no longer aiming for issuing new permits for gas and salt extraction under the Wadden Sea. The legislation proposal was discussed and accepted by the Dutch parliament in 2024, with the consequence that from 1 May 2024 no additional gas or salt production will be allowed in the Wadden Sea (Decision paras 6, 7).

New developments related to the GEMS project include that no relevant effects on the Wadden Sea are expected. Regarding Ternaard, the Dutch Government announced on 6 December 2024 that the government will enter into discussions with the operator. The goal is to reach an agreement to abandon gas extraction for the Ternaard gas field. Regarding Wintershall DEA, the government of Schleswig-Holstein reached an agreement with the concessionaire in spring 2024 to end all oil extraction activities by 2041. In the meantime, no new licenses will be granted for the development of any new oil drilling fields in the area. The information on hand on tap monitoring from the 2024 SoC report is still valid (Decision paras 8 -11).

Renewable energy developments, offshore as well as onshore, are addressed. The overall EU

policy aims to significantly increase the amount of renewable energy production by 2050 will lead to more offshore facilities and their associated grid connections to the mainland. As a first step, the trilateral LANICE project addresses these impacts on the Wadden Sea World Heritage and aims to identify appropriate mitigation instruments that can be applied in the three countries while informing about the process to develop a common strategic approach towards the next Trilateral Governmental Conference in Denmark, in 2026. Furthermore, the role of spatial planning and assessment considering the OUV become more important regarding the further development of sites for onshore wind energy farms (Decision para 12).

UNESCO will be informed by the Heritage Impact Assessment for PAWOZ<sup>1</sup> (Decision para 13) . The Dutch government aims to decide on routes going into further procedure, a project environmental assessment, after the summer.

The focus of the joint SEA will be on the potential impacts on the attributes which convey the OUV of the property, as well as other (nature) conservation values, in accordance with the principle of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context. A scoping report of the SEA is prepared as separate document and **will be/has been** submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review on **DATE** (Decision para. 14).

Other current conservation issues which may have an impact on the OUV are presented in Table 1 of this Report. These are grouped by the five SIMP key topics and other general issues and cover the time period since the last 2024 SOC report (Chapter 3).

For developments or projects which may affect the OUV of the property, to be reported in conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, it is referred to ongoing communication with UNESCO (Chapter 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Dutch Program on Landing Electricity Cables towards Eemshaven

## 2. Response to the Decision 46COM 7B.Add3

### 2.1 Cumulative impacts on the OUV and wider setting (Decision para. 3)

3. *“Notes with concern the potential cumulative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property from numerous activities and infrastructure developments planned or established within and in the wider setting of the property, including extractive activities (oil, salt and gas), ports and shipping, and energy facilities, which could be exacerbated by climate change, especially through accelerating sea level rise;”*

Cumulative impacts on the OUV of the Wadden Sea World Heritage site and its wider setting are part of the joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (joint SEA) development process (see 2.5 Joint SEA (Decision para. 14)). Within this process, a SEA scoping report is being developed, in which cumulative impacts from activities/ projects within the property as well as originating from the wider setting are further elaborated.

In the draft SEA scoping report, it is noted that the wider setting is not defined by a fixed radius around the World Heritage border but should rather be seen in the functional context of potential impacts of projects, plans and programmes, which may vary depending on their mode of action, different mechanisms, pathways and exposure of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Also, the precautionary principle will be taken into account in this process.

### 2.2 Precautionary and strategic management approach including long-term climate change projections (Decision paras. 4, 5)

4. *Appreciates the efforts of States Parties to address these challenges by strengthening joint strategic management of the property and enhancing its protection and resilience to climate change;*

5. *Requests the States Parties to jointly adapt and update management measures for the property in the light of the latest scientific data on climate change and to submit the updated thematic report on climate change in the Wadden Sea to the World Heritage Centre as soon as it becomes available;*

The basis for the joint strategic management of the trilateral World Heritage property regarding its protection and resilience to climate change is set by trilateral policy instruments and organisational structures which are in place to support the analysis of climate projections and the integration of climate change adaptation into management. An overview on these is outlined in the state of conservation report 2024, including The SIMP Integrated



Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage, the Wilhelmshaven Declaration, the trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2014) and the Wadden Sea Quality Status Reports (QSR). The latter include a thematic report on climate change published in 2024. This report is publicly available online (<https://qsr.waddensea-worldheritage.org/reports/climate-change>).

The trilateral Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is currently being revised by the trilateral Expert Group Climate Change Adaptation.

National and State climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are in place, which are revised as required.

The adoption of the Nature Restoration Law by the EU in Summer 2024 is also of importance for the preservation and restoration of habitats and its species in the Wadden Sea Area which supports the safeguarding of the OUV. Exchange on management issues as well as on best practices or foreseen activities can contribute to a common approach or the alignment of measures taken. Identifying benefits of cross-border action and similar goals based on the Wadden Sea Plan and the key values of the World Heritage site can also contribute not only to the enhancement of the protection but also to strengthening the resilience of the property to climate change.

## **The Netherlands**

Specifically for the mining industries, some updates are available in regards to the long-term climate change projections of sea level rise. Firstly, research institute Deltares evaluated natural sedimentation rates in the Vlie Basin and updates have been published on the new sea level rise scenario's.

### *Natural sedimentation Vlie Basin*

The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate (now: Ministry of Climate and Green Growth) has asked research institute Deltares to evaluate the natural sedimentation rates in the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea with improved hydro-morphological numerical models and new observations. Deltares has published a note on the natural sedimentation rates focusing on Vlie tidal basin of the Wadden Sea. An extended report is expected early 2025.

The analysis by Deltares confirmed that the sedimentation rate in the ‘hand on the tap’<sup>2</sup> for Vlie (5 mm/year) is very conservative as the critical rate of drowning for this tidal basin is higher than previously found (increase from 6,3 to 8,8 mm/year). Meaning that the hand on the tap assumes more conservative assumptions than Deltares currently expects. The note also contains information on the tidal basins of Pinkegat and Zoutkamperlaag, where the critical rate of drowning is even higher (25,6 mm/year and 17,1 mm/year).

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<sup>2</sup> See State of Conservation Report by State Parties 2024 for full explanation on the hand on the tap system.

## New sea level rise

In January 2024 a new advice on sea level rise was received by a group of experts formed by KNMI, TU Delft, NIOZ, Deltares, TNO and University of Utrecht. They advised on the short term (next five years) and long term (up to the end of gas production) sea level rise for the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea as input for the ‘hand on the tap’.

This advisers expect an increase in sea level rise from 3,60 mm/year in 2024 to 3,85 mm/year in 2029 and 6,8 mm/year in 2050. This advice has led to a change in the sea level rise scenarios which have been included within the hand on the tap system in April 2024, valid from 01 January 2024. These new sea level rise scenarios have impact on the existing mining industries within and around the Wadden Sea as less space is available forming in and around the Wadden Sea.

The last reported average subsidence rates (01-01-2024) within the ‘hand on the tap’ for the tidal basins of Pinkegat, Zoutkamperlaag, Vlie and Marsdiep are 1.52, 0.77, 0.3 and 0.0 mm/year respectively; these are well within the bounds of the ‘acceptable subsidence’ limit of 6, 5, 5 and 5 mm/year respectively even with the increase in sea level rise. This means that currently there is no risk that the mining industries in these tidal basins result in actual drowning of tidal flats.

## 2.3 Extractive activities below or in the vicinity of the property (Decision paras. 6 - 11)

*6. Recalls its established position that extractive activities are incompatible with World Heritage status, and considers that the numerous ongoing and planned extractive activities in the vicinity of the property and its wider landscape, including oil, gas, and salt extraction and associated sea floor subsidence which, in combination with sea level rise, could have a negative impact on the OUV of the property;*

Developments of ongoing and planned extractive activities concerning oil, gas, and salt extraction in the vicinity of the property since the state of conservation report 2024 are given in response to the subsequent paras of Decision WHC/24/46.COM/7B.Add.3 in this document.

*7. Also requests the States Parties to:*

*a) Operationalise the measures included in Paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines, which highlights that an effective management approach extends beyond the property to include its wider setting, as its management is related to its role in supporting the OUV of the property,;*

## **Trilateral**

The trilateral management instruments are organised in a cycle of short, medium and long-term actions to protect, conserve and present the nominated property and its wider setting. A selection of trilateral management plans, strategies, visions and action plans to support management planning and implementation is outlined in the SIMP.

The States Parties, in the recent Governmental Council Declaration, the Wilhelmshaven Declaration (WD 2023) also recognise the Wadden Sea as part of a wider marine and terrestrial system and under consideration of the World Heritage for planning procedures at trilateral and North Sea level:

*36. Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to take into account the connectivity and interdependence between the Wadden Sea, the coastal mainland, and the offshore zone when developing trilateral strategies or common approaches to monitoring and management issues, also taking into account the cumulative effects due to increasing pressures from more intensive use of adjacent areas, including the assumption of potentially increasing fishing pressure in parts of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site due the expansion of competing uses in the offshore zone;*

*37. Encourage the Wadden Sea Board to give due consideration to the concerns of the World Heritage Site and bring them into the respective planning procedures at trilateral and North Sea level.*

The wider setting of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property is taken up in the process of joint SEA development (see 2.5 Joint SEA (Decision para. 14)).

While the World Heritage property has no buffer zone, the three Wadden Sea states have legislative protection regimes in place which reach beyond the designated World Heritage area, such as EU Natura 2000 Directives:

## **Denmark**

Since 1939, where the first game reserve was established in parts of the Danish Wadden Sea, the area has been object to an increasing degree of protection until 1998 where the present level of protection was reached with the inclusion of provisions based on the Natura 2000 Directives. The Natura 2000 area “Wadden Sea” includes, in addition to the Wadden Sea itself, also diked marsh areas, the lower parts of the larger river systems with outlets in the Wadden Sea and designated habitat areas. In addition, Varde Ådal, the Marbæk area and salt meadow areas along are included as are mainland coast, dune, beach and marsh landscapes on Skallingen and on the islands of Rømø, Mandø, Fanø and Langli, as well as adjacent sea areas.

The national implementation processes of European Union legislation into national law and subsequently into binding management plans for the public authorities, also consider

trilateral strategies and plans, such as Declarations and most recently the SIMP. In 1985 a major update of the Statutory Order on conservation of The Danish Wadden Sea was derived from “The Copenhagen Declaration of 1982”. The latest example is the inclusion of the SIMP in the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) action plan, along with more specific action areas (fish, alien species, marine mammals, and birds) building upon some of the TWSC strategies approved by the three countries.

## **Germany**

In accordance with the relevant EU provisions on environmental assessments for plans, projects and in relation to Natura 2000 sites (SEA, EIA, AA), which have been incorporated into German legislation, the preliminary examination in the context of screening and scoping always also takes into account effects of potentially negative impacts from outside the property. Furthermore, the strict protection regulations of the German Wadden Sea national parks contain provisions that specifically refer to the surrounding area, for example in the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park (NWattNPG) with regard to the special protective purpose of the habitat for migratory bird species. In Schleswig-Holstein, the National Park is part of two wide-ranging Natura2000 sites, which ensures the ecological connection and exchange processes within the adjacent coastal area. The German national park authorities are well positioned to work professionally and effectively for the protection, conservation and presentation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage in their area of responsibility. They have the task of advocating that the relevant planning and approval authorities take the Outstanding Universal Value into account in their decisions, regardless of whether potential impacts originate from the property itself or from its wider setting. In Germany, the Wadden Sea is also recognised as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Three UNESCO Biosphere Reserves encompass the entire German Wadden Sea (in Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein). Their transition areas extend to large areas of the wider setting of the WSWH, which are systematically being developed into model regions for regional sustainability. Their extension has recently been assessed and (re)affirmed by the MAB Programme of UNESCO.

## **Netherlands**

The Dutch Agenda for the Wadden Sea Region 2050 (2021) gives an overarching regional strategy for a safe, healthy, and resilient Wadden Sea Region in 2050. Herewith, it is a policy tool to have control over the wider setting. The Agenda is a guiding and strategic perspective on the development of the Wadden Sea Region shared by national and local governments as well as water authorities, environmental NGOs, ports, fishery, agriculture, recreation/tourism and civil society. The main goal is to achieve “sustainable protection and development of the Wadden Sea as a natural area and maintaining the unique open landscape”. Challenges and strategies addressed in the Agenda include climate change and energy transition. The geographic scope is broader than the Dutch part of geographically

defined World Heritage property, but fully includes it. Herewith the Agenda for the Wadden Sea Region is an effective tool to address the wider setting of the UNESCO World Heritage site and supports a multi-functional area in balance with the Outstanding Universal Value.

Moreover, specific legal instruments are in place. The Dutch part of the Wadden Sea is protected under the European Birds- and Habitats Directives. Part of this protection is that activities (such as onshore wind farms) which take place outside the Wadden Sea but have a potential impact on the protected values of the Wadden Sea need to ask for permission. As part of the Environment and Planning Act (see recommendation below) attention need to be given to potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Value. It is expected that this also addresses the wider setting.

*b) Align the national legal frameworks related to planning procedures and decision-making with Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and ensure that impact assessment processes are systematically carried out for proposed projects that may impact on the OUV of the property, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, to fully consider the potential impacts on the property's OUV,*

## **Denmark**

An environmental assessment must always be carried out prior to decisions that can significantly affect the environment - this applies to plans, programs and projects, e.g., municipal plans and projects for construction which must be assumed to significantly affect the environment.

Environmental assessments use a broad environmental concept based on EU law. This means that in addition to the traditional pollution parameters, an assessment of the effects on the population and human health, biological diversity with particular emphasis on species and habitat types that are protected according to the Habitats Directive and the Bird Directive is also included. An environmental assessment does not in itself provide the answer to whether the plan, program or project should be implemented, but is part of the basis for decision making.

For projects in the Wadden Sea region the Danish National Focal Point sends UNESCO in Paris the SEA for information. Projects in the Wadden Sea area are encouraged to prepare a section in their EIA relating to the effect of the project to the Wadden Seas OUV.

## **Germany**

The regulations for environmental assessments applicable in Germany are based on EU law and, in particular in connection with the area-specific protection purposes set for the Wadden Sea national parks, provide a sufficient legal framework to be able to fully implement the core values of the OUV in the practical application of the assessments. These

regulations also require the examination of suitable alternatives.. Further improvements at implementation level are desirable in the specific authorisation practice to make this more transparent in this respect. In Schleswig-Holstein, the applicants shall consider the potential impact on the OUV in the assessment document which will be considered and approved of by the competent authority. In Lower Saxony, competent authorities are instructed to present the compatibility of plans or projects with the OUV in an editorially independent part of the statement of reasons for the decision. This valuation is substantively based on the legally prescribed assessment instruments of the respective Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Environmental Impact Assessment and/or the Appropriate Assessment. The procedural steps that are taken encompass those outlined in the abovementioned UNESCO Guidance.

## **The Netherlands**

Implementation of the World Heritage convention is done via various legal instruments in the Netherlands. The Environment and Planning Act, which came into effect in the Netherlands on January 1, 2024, guarantees the preservation of world heritage in various ways. The Environmental Act integrates legislation and regulations in the areas of spatial planning, the environment, nature and cultural-historical heritage, and aims to provide a more coherent and flexible approach to environmental management. The law contains specific provisions that are important for the protection of world heritage and ensuring the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of world heritage sites. Following the introduction of the Act, the government decree on general rules governing spatial planning (*Besluit algemene regels ruimtelijke ordening*, BARRO) was replaced by the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (*Besluit kwaliteit leefomgeving*, BKL). This Decree sets out planning regulations to protect larger world heritage sites such as the Dutch Water Defence Lines.

Furthermore, the Activities in the Living Environment Decree (*Besluit activiteiten leefomgeving*, BAL) sets out a duty of care for anyone who undertakes an activity within a world heritage site and knows or can reasonably be expected to conclude that this activity may result in damage to or destruction of world heritage or any part of it (section 14 (7)). In so far as this affects Outstanding Universal Value, the initiator is legally obliged to meet all reasonable demands aimed at preventing any such damage or destruction.

Sections 7 (3) and 7 (4) of the BKL are specifically aimed at the Netherlands’ five large-scale cultural world heritage sites. In these areas, the national spatial interest of conserving the world heritage site’s Outstanding Universal Value is safeguarded in the instrument known as the ‘tiered’ implementation rules for public tasks. Under these rules, the central government directs a provincial government’s environment and planning regulations and a provincial government, in turn, directs a municipal government’s environmental plan. The rules fundamentally prevent the approval of activities that harm core qualities. To facilitate the application of these rules, the Outstanding Universal Value of five world heritage sites (Schokland and surroundings, Dutch Water Defence Lines, Beemster Polder, Colonies of

Benevolence and The Lower Germans Limes) was again described in detail and made measurable in the form of core qualities.

With the implementation of the Environmental Act, the OUV of the Wadden Sea is for the first time explicitly included in the Dutch Law. This is a new legal protection regime next to the implemented birds- and Habitats Directive. Conditions have been included regarding activities that could lead to damage or destruction of World Heritage in the Netherlands. However, in some regards it is not yet fully clear how the law can be implemented. Further legal, ecological and political guidance is needed.

To facilitate and maximize usage of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, it has been translated into Dutch. This version has been published in March 2024. In practice it shows that the instruments, such as the Guidance and Toolkit, ran into practical complexities. For example, the translation of the abstract OUV into measurable and practical indicators is rather challenging for the Wadden Sea. Also, activities supporting certain aspects of the OUV might lead to additional pressures on other parts of the OUV, which makes them complex to assess. Even with the new Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context.

It has therefore been agreed between all involved Dutch government layers, as well as stakeholders, that a national guideline on the application of the Environmental Act, more specific, the Decree on the Quality of the Living Environment (*Besluit kwaliteit leefomgeving*, BKL), in regards to protection of the OUV of the Wadden Sea will be developed, supporting both the competent authorities and project initiators in applying this new legal tool. The guideline intends to refer to the Guidance and Toolkit as a starting point. In parallel unanswered legal and ecological questions will be further worked on.

*c) Not to authorise projects that may contribute to seabed subsidence in the property;*

## **Netherlands**

The authorisation of projects is based on the legal requirements as described here, in the nomination file and earlier communications.

The government of the Netherlands no longer wants to issue new permits for gas and salt extraction under the Wadden Sea. The legislation proposal was discussed and accepted by parliament in 2024, which means that from 1 May 2024 no additional gas or salt production will be allowed in the Wadden Sea. Current gas and salt production, including updates of current permits and permits submitted before 1 May 2024, are exempt. However from 1 May 2024 updates of production plans cannot include an extension of duration or production increase. Current gas production activities will continue until 2035. Salt mining activities have been permitted until 2052. In practice the ‘Hand at Tap’ method will probably limit salt production under the Wadden Sea earlier than 2052, depending on the sea level rise.

8. Further requests the States Parties to ensure that any extractive projects in the wider setting of the property, including the pending GEMS project application for a gas field exploitation, undergoes an appropriate impact assessment procedure and that the project is not approved if it may cause negative impacts on the OUV of the property;

9. Welcomes the decision by the State Party of the Netherlands not to approve the proposed gas extraction project at Ternaard based on the assessment by the supervisory authority that the risk of subsidence in the Wadden Sea was too high in light of new sea-level rise projections, and urges the State Party of the Netherlands to take an unequivocal decision not to approve the project, also in accordance with the legislation adopted in March 2024, not to issue any new gas extraction permits within and under the property;

10. Also welcomes the reported draft rejection of the pending application by Wintershall Dea for oil extraction below the property from an exclave encircled by the property, and requests furthermore the State Party of Germany not to grant final approval to this application, in accordance with the draft rejection and the State Party’s commitment under the Wilhelmshaven Declaration to work towards the closure of exclaves within the property, and therefore not to grant any new extractive activities within these exclaves;

11. Further welcomes the ongoing evaluation by the State Party of the Netherlands of the ‘hand-on-tap’ monitoring method in order to consider updated sea-level rise scenarios and reiterates its request that, in accordance with the precautionary principle, no further extractive projects be approved, and that consideration is given to limiting or halting existing salt extraction activities, as required, to effectively maintain and protect the OUV;

## ***The GEMS gas development***

### **Germany**

ONE Dyas B.V. intends to extract natural gas from the NO5-A natural gas field and from the surrounding prospects in the North Sea. For this purpose, a natural gas production and processing platform is to be constructed and operated in the area of the NO5-A natural gas field. The planned location of the NO5-A platform is in Dutch territorial waters, about five hundred metres from German territorial waters and about 23 kilometres from the coast of Borkum. ONE Dyas B.V. has submitted the general operating plan for the directional drilling from the NO5-A platform in the German sector of the North Sea, including natural gas production in German territory, to the responsible State Office for Mining, Energy and Geology in accordance with § 52 (2a) BBergG and applied for its approval. On 13 August 2024, the LBEG issued the approval decision. The environmental impact assessment comes to the conclusion that although the realisation of the natural gas wells and the production of natural gas on German territory may have environmentally relevant effects, these environmental impacts are not significant or can be avoided by appropriate measures. The approval authority rules out any relevant adverse effects on the Wadden Sea National Park.



For the aspect of seabed subsidence it is stated: A subsidence area of approximately 235 km<sup>2</sup> is predicted (in the case of elliptical subsidence), approx. 150 km<sup>2</sup> on German territory. In the worst case scenario, a subsidence of up to 4.6 cm in the center of the subsidence basin is assumed. The predicted distance of the subsidence basin to the island of Borkum is at least 7 km. The predicted subsidence (>1cm) is not expected to reach into the Wadden Sea World Heritage site. In relation to the natural sediment shifts/ dynamics, the project-related subsidence will not lead to any measurable changes.

The environmental organisation Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) filed a lawsuit on 7 October 2024 against the planning approval decision at the Higher Administrative Court in Lüneburg. The relevant authorities are currently awaiting the court ruling.

## **Netherlands**

All necessary permits have been granted to ONE-Dyas. An EIA has been drawn up for the project and all (environmental) effects have been assessed and there are no effects on the Wadden Sea due to the long distance between the project and the Wadden Sea. All parties appealed to this decision, but permits have not been suspended. ONE-Dyas has now placed the platform and drilled the first well. The legal procedure is still underway.

### ***Update on procedure for the gas extraction permit in Ternaard***

The Dutch Government announced on 6 December 2024 that the social and political sentiment around gas production under the Wadden Sea has changed, but the legislation has not. Therefore, the government will enter into negotiations with the operator. The goal is to reach a solution in close consultation over the next 6 months, which could make it possible to abandon gas extraction for the Ternaard gas field.

### ***Wintershall Dea’s oil development***

The government of Schleswig-Holstein reached an agreement with the concessionaire in spring 2024 to end all oil extraction activities by 2041. In the meantime, no new licences will be granted for the development of any new oil drilling fields in the area. Preparations for the decommissioning of the existing platform Mittelplate A will start in the 2030s. When a final agreement on the exact denomination of the exclave around Mittelplate A has been reached, the intended application for minor boundary modifications as mentioned in the Wilhelmshaven Declaration para 2 will be prepared.

### ***Hand on tap & other extractive projects***

## **Netherlands**

The information on hand on tap monitoring from the 2024 SoC report is still valid. Additionally, this report contains updates on the inclusion of latest sea level rise scenarios

The information on other extractive projects as outlined in the state of conservation report 2024 is still valid. Additional updates on hand on tap have been included earlier in the document.

## 2.4 Renewable energy – offshore and onshore (Decision paras. 12, 13)

### 2.4.1 Offshore and onshore renewable energy production (Decision para 12)

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

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

The task to develop a joint strategic and systematic approach by the three countries has been addressed in a first step that is part of the [North Sea wide acceleration of LANding offshore energy while mitigating Impact on the Coastal Environment \(LANICE\)](#) project. The Next Generation EU funded project of 500,000 € focuses on the identification of potential relevant effects of known installation methods and devices for connecting offshore wind farms to the main grid on the Outstanding Universal Value and appropriate mitigation. This process has been enriched by input from experts from the three countries. Based on it, the following activities are envisaged: The findings may serve as a basis to further develop a common so-called mitigation toolbox whose components could be applied case wise in the three countries. These tools and examples might range from planning processes, stakeholder involvement to actual restoration and compensation measures. In line with the Wilhelmshaven Declaration and the SIMP, this can lead to inform the concrete situation in a way to better integrate WH conservation goals.

Moreover, the trilateral discussions on a strategic approach towards avoidance and mitigation of negative impacts, while acknowledging the acceleration of offshore energy development, will lead up to the preparation of a political decision of the Trilateral Governmental Council at the upcoming Wadden Sea Conference in Denmark, in 2026.

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

## Denmark

Denmark has a long history of exploiting the strong wind at sea for the production of electricity. Denmark built the world's first offshore wind farm in 1991, and with the Climate Agreement of 22 June 2020, it was decided that Denmark must continue the tradition by building two energy islands – one in the North Sea and one on Bornholm. There is currently no development in the projects.

Since the recent decision not to place a test centre for wind turbines close to the Wadden Sea, there are currently no known plans for additional onshore wind energy that can affect the designated world heritage area in Denmark.

In addition, there are plans to construct a Power-to-X (PTX)-facility onshore, in the vicinity of Esbjerg. However, these plans are, at the moment, pending further national decisions on windfarms and infrastructure for hydrogen and electricity.

## **Germany**

In the German coastal states, onshore wind energy has been gradually expanded since the 1990s. Suitable areas have been designated in a planning cascade consisting of state spatial planning, regional spatial planning and urban development planning. At the same time, EU bird sanctuaries were designated in the coastal areas and other suitable designations for sensitive natural areas were made. The existing spatial development plans include specifications for the protection of nature in the form of priority areas for Natura 2000 sites. These areas, which are mostly Special Protection Areas (EU Birds Directive), located in the onshore vicinity, have a far-reaching exclusion effect on new wind farms and the repowering of existing onshore facilities and thus help to protect the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site from possible impacts from outside, especially on migratory bird pathways. In the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site itself the construction of wind turbines is prohibited.

In the context of the accelerated expansion of renewable energy forms on land, the federal legislator has set new statutory capacity targets for the federal states. 2% of the total surface area of each of the Länder should be designated as area for wind energy development. In Lower Saxony this target is implemented in Lower Saxony's Act on the Need for Wind Energy Sites (Windenergieflächenbedarfsgesetz, NWindG) of 17 April 2024. Schleswig-Holstein is implementing corresponding amendments to their spatial development plans. The implementation includes specifications for meeting the targets to the regional or municipal level, as well as spatial specifications in the form of suitable and prioritised areas. They consider the relevance of Natura2000 areas and the Wadden Sea National Parks as vital habitats for migratory birds as well as other important migratory birds pathways that will not be designated for wind farms.

## **Netherlands**

The construction of wind farms is assessed with a project specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EU Directive) and there is increasing attention on the ecological effects. If

Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity may be affected, an additional assessment of the impact on the ecological features is conducted (Appropriate Assessment). From the beginning of this year attention will need to be given to possible effects of the Outstanding Universal Value.

#### **2.4.2 Dutch PAWOZ Eemshaven Programme (Decision para 13)**

*13. Requests furthermore the State Party of the Netherlands to ensure the timely submission of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the PAWOZ-Eemshaven programme, as soon as it is available, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN;*

UNESCO will be informed by the Heritage Impact Assessment for PAWOZ (Decision para 13). The Dutch government aims to decide on routes going into further procedure, a project environmental assessment, after the summer.

#### **2.5 Joint SEA (Decision para. 14)**

*14. Further appreciates the updated information on the requested joint SEA to assess the cumulative impacts of extraction and infrastructure developments within and around the property, and requests moreover the States Parties to:*

*a) Ensure that the focus of the SEA is on the potential impacts on the attributes which convey the OUV of the property, as well as other heritage/conservation values, in accordance with the principles of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context,*

*b) Submit the scoping report of the SEA to the World Heritage Centre for review;*

The trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation stays in close contact to the World Heritage Centre/ IUCN whilst developing the joint SEA. Information on the status of the trilateral draft scoping document for the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) will be provided separately. Currently, the TWSC seeks technical advice by the WHC/ IUCN on the first draft. The focus of the SEA will be on potential impacts on the attributes which convey the OUV of the property, as well as other associated (nature) conservation values, in accordance with the principles of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context.

### **3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property’s Outstanding Universal Value**

Effective management of the Wadden Sea needs to secure nature conservation and an ecosystem approach that integrates management of existing protected areas with other key factors affecting the property. These include the most important economic activities in terms of impact, whilst safeguarding the OUV. Fisheries, tourism, shipping and ports, energy, and coastal protection are the most important socio-economic factors in the region. Nevertheless, the Statement of OUV (2014) also identifies these as key threats requiring ongoing attention. The information in this chapter focuses on these five SIMP key topics. Other general issues affecting the OUV of the Wadden Sea (in positive or negative ways) are presented at the end of Table 1 as an additional category.

For each of the five key topics, The SIMP presents objectives, a summary of main risks, the enabling environment, and activities directed to maintain and enhance the OUV of the Wadden Sea World Heritage; therefore, they are not repeated in the following table. The information given in the table provides an overview on developments since the state of conservation report 2024.

With the Nature Restoration Law being adopted by the EU in August 2024, the three member states are obliged to develop national restoration plans within the next two years. Different restoration targets apply to different ecosystems and Member States will decide the specific measures they will put in place on their territories. For this purpose, each Member State will develop a national restoration plan, setting out restoration needs and measures to fulfil the obligations and achieve the targets of the law adapted to the national context, and taking into account the diversity of different regions. In this context, measures include the aspect of both actively and passively assisting the recovery or re-establishment of habitats.

National restoration plans should include a timeline for implementation, the financial resources needed and intended means of financing, as well as expected benefits, especially for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Member States need to identify synergies with other policies, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation, disaster prevention, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and renewable energy development.

Member States must submit a draft plan to the Commission within two years from the date of entry into force (2024), setting out milestones for 2030, 2040 and 2050. These plans need to be developed openly and transparently, allowing the public and all relevant stakeholders to participate in the process. The Commission will support national authorities in creating these plans.

The Commission will assess the draft plans and may make observations that Member States must consider in their final plans. Within six months of receiving any observations, each Member State must finalise its plan, publish it and submit it to the Commission. The European Environment Agency will draw up regular technical reports on progress towards the targets. Member States must review their plans by 2032 and 2042 at the latest.

It is currently being considered to use the TWSC as a platform on exchanging knowledge and providing information which can be used to inform the national processes while at the same time exploring the possibilities and benefits of trilateral approaches. This will also contribute to the key values of the OUV as these are deeply intertwined with the conservation issues under the areas protected by EU law.

**Table 1.** *Activities at trilateral and national levels which may have an impact (negative or positive) on the property’s Outstanding Universal Value by SIMP key topics.*

Fisheries	
TRILATERAL	Review and update the trilateral Framework for Sustainable Fisheries 2014. <a href="https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/framework-sustainable-fisheries">https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/framework-sustainable-fisheries</a>
DENMARK	The information presented in the Nomination Dossier 2014 is still valid: in the inner part of the Danish Wadden Sea there is no fishing. West of the islands, beam-trawl based fishing activities continue unchanged.
GERMANY	The information in the SOC report 2024 on latest developments in mussel fisheries in Schleswig-Holstein, the management plan on blue mussel fishery in Lower Saxony and a dialogue process with the shrimp fishery sector in the German federal states is still valid.
THE NETHERLANDS	We expect to be able to issue a new nature permit for shrimp fishermen before July 1, 2025. A restructuring scheme is being developed for the Dutch shrimp fleet (including the Wadden Sea). We hope to be able to open this scheme next year, but it is dependent on permission from the EU. Furthermore, we will aim at issuing a new nature permit in Q1 of 2025 for the fishery on Smelt on very specific locations in the Waddensea for a group of in total four fishermen.
Tourism	
TRILATERAL	The <b>Evaluation of the trilateral Sustainable Tourism Strategy</b> (2014) in 2024 confirms that the strategy has largely achieved its objectives, with no need for fundamental revision. However, where some goals were not fully met, the reasons likely lie in either the clarity of the objectives or challenges in implementation, which warrant further investigation. The evaluation provides valuable insights for improving future efforts, particularly by refining implementation details. It also reinforces the importance of tailoring information sharing, coordination, and cooperation to meet stakeholder needs while aligning with clear objectives. Successful activities in parts of the Wadden Sea region have been identified as potential models for broader application across the entire World Heritage Site (WHS). As a next step, two additional workshops have already been organized to address these areas and further enhance the strategy’s impact. <b>Transnational and cross-border EU funded projects:</b> EU-funded projects such as

VaBene and WaddenVision play a crucial role in advancing the Wadden Sea’s sustainable tourism strategy. By equipping local stakeholders with resources and training, they foster sustainable practices that benefit both tourism and environmental conservation. The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, representing the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, strengthens project synergies and ensures a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism across the region. These projects contribute to shaping the future of tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, and continued support is vital to ensuring its long-term economic and environmental sustainability. Since the state of conservation report 2024, one additional project has started: [WattenVision/ WaddenVisie: https://deutschland-nederland.eu/de/projects/wattenvision-waddenvisie](https://deutschland-nederland.eu/de/projects/wattenvision-waddenvisie)

DENMARK

**Visitor management to protect nesting birds:** Due to excessive pressure from tourists on the beach areas of Rømø, Skallingen, and Fanø, specific areas are closed at critical times to protect nesting birds. Volunteers (guided by the National Park) fence nesting areas every season to protect birds - not only from visitors (humans) but also from predators. Bird nesting sites move almost every year so the fences are temporary.

The Danish National Park together with colleagues from Schleswig-Holstein have a 3-year Interreg funded program called VaBene - Visitor Activation for the Benefit of Nature. The project aim:

The Wadden Sea is the region's most important contribution to the world's nature and a major tourism destination with +20 million overnight stays annually. Tourism must work towards sustainable experiences, as a way to better protect the unique natural beauty of the area and in accordance with the economic importance of tourism. The visitors' reason for traveling here is the unique cultural and natural heritage, where they can be actively involved in the protection of the area and thereby gain a better understanding of the area. The task is to balance these demands on both sides of the border.

See <https://www.interreg-de-dk.eu/dk/projekter-og-resultater/vores-projekter/enkeltvisning-projekter/vabene/>

GERMANY

The information in the SOC report 2024 on latest developments in visitor management to protect nesting birds, and the implementation of the trilateral and regional action plans on sustainable tourism is still valid.

THE NETHERLANDS

**Visitor management:** In addition to information on visitor management provided in the SoC 2024. The four year hostmanship programme started in November 2024. The final objective is to become the most sustainable tourism destination of Europe. It will be about destination management based on carrying capacity of nature and people, codes of conduct, training of 200 guides in heritage interpretation and improved cooperation between the tourism sector and nature. At same time a new project has started to make the Wadden sea Area Plastic free through: cleaning, inflow prevention and developing alternatives for plastics in the tourism sector. In total this is an investment of 14 million Euro.

The management authority has developed a management plan which should reduce disturbance of nature and looks at potential areas for zonation of nature.

The New visitor centre for the Dutch Wadden Sea on Lauwersoog will be open its doors in April 2025

Shipping and ports

TRILATERAL

Led by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, the status of **implementation of the PSSA operational plans** is being reviewed trilaterally in collaboration with the competent authorities and other actors.

<p>Since reporting in the state of conservation report 2024 no further development within the initiated framework for collaboration of environmental NGOs, ports, ship owners and other stakeholders on <b>Sustainable shipping and ports operations</b> in the Wadden Sea took place. No shipping incidents have occurred since then. Hence, information in the state of conservation report 2024 is still valid.</p>
<p><b>DENMARK</b> Expansion of the shipping lane into Esbjerg is now finalised. EIA and World Heritage Impact assessment was shared with WHC (Letter 2 April 2020 Jour.nr. 18/02878. Response from WHC CLT/WHC/EUR/20/12866).</p>
<p><b>GERMANY</b> The information in the SOC report 2024 on latest developments in regulation of marine traffic and adaptation of estuaries to the requirements of marine traffic is still valid. The following recent developments are additionally reported: Concerning the plans for deepening the Outer Ems a public participation procedure took place within the planning approval procedure (<a href="https://www.gdws.wsv.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/20240318_Aussenem_sanpassung_Bekanntmachung_Planunterlagen.html">https://www.gdws.wsv.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/20240318_Aussenem_sanpassung_Bekanntmachung_Planunterlagen.html</a> ).</p>
<p><b>THE NETHERLANDS</b></p> <p>Pollution from discharge waste: Almost sixty companies do have permits to discharge wastewater into the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea. An overview of the permits for discharge is made in 2024 and sent to the Dutch Parliament. Permits with a possible impact on the goals of the Water Framework Directive will be reviewed no later than 2027. The emission test – now obligatory under law – will determine whether discharge is acceptable from the water quality point of view. Rijkswaterstaat, from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Quality, started with the highest environmental added value. No omissions in the permits have been found yet on reaching the goals of the Water Framework Directive. Accumulation will be included in the review through including the water framework measurements.</p> <p>Dredging for ferry traffic: The volume of dredging in the Dutch Wadden Sea has seriously increased in the past decades. The most important areas for dredging are the fairway to the island of Ameland (almost 50 % of total dredging volume) and the fairway from Harlingen to Terschelling and Vlieland. In 2024 The Dutch government announced starting research to explore the best option(s) to ensure the accessibility of Ameland. This includes the intentions to lower the dredging volume. Possible solutions are other types of ships and repositioning of harbours.</p> <p>In order to guarantee an affordable and reliable ferry connection, more and more new digital technologies are being applied within shipping. One of these new technologies applies to the control of ships. The trend is that there are more and more possibilities to have ships sail remotely. This has a number of advantages, such as reducing the crew on board and being able to use the expensive ships more optimally.</p> <p>The Interreg project FerryGo! wants to investigate step by step how we can safely move towards more autonomous control in the future. The project concerns a Dutch-German collaboration and has partners who have been providing the ferry connection on the Wadden Islands for many years. These partners endorse the importance of the Wadden Sea because the customers who use the ferry services come to this area precisely because of the unique characteristics and values of the Wadden Sea. Pilots will first be conducted with smaller cargo ships. And in a later phase, it can be scaled up if all the preconditions have been met. The requirements with regard to reliability are at least equivalent to the current mode of transport.</p>
<p><b>Energy</b></p>
<p><b>TRILATERAL</b> The topic of energy is addressed in the trilateral Task Group Coordination and Management with ad-hoc Working Group Renewable Energy (WG-RE). The WG-RE’s objective is to</p>



“Intensify the application of common best practices to protect the Wadden Sea, to support nature-friendly energy transition, and to foster a level playing field with the highest applied environmental standards for all three countries in a collaborative approach with the energy sector”. Within the trilateral project "North Sea wide acceleration of LANDING offshore energy while mitigating Impact on the Coastal Environment", which started in February 2024 on initiative of the WG-RE, a workshop was held to gather information on the environmental impact of grid connection planning, permitting, construction, operation, maintenance, and removal, as well as mitigation options. In addition, energy transition was tackled as overarching topic of the annual Wadden Sea Day titled “Safeguarding the Wadden Sea: Navigating Green Energy Development in the North Sea.” in August 2024 (<https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/experts-discuss-wadden-sea-protection-face-green-energy-developments>).

**DENMARK**

Denmark does not have any oil and gas development that directly affects the Wadden Sea, but there are potential indirect effects as the Port of Esbjerg is the base harbour for all Danish energy activities in the North Sea (oil, gas, and green energy).

**GERMANY**

The information in the SOC report 2024 on latest developments in the NORD.LINK project and LNG-Terminals in Wilhelmshaven is still valid. The following recent developments are additionally reported: A second LNG-Terminal in Wilhelmshaven is approved and under construction ([https://www.nlwkn.niedersachsen.de/startseite/wasserwirtschaft/zulassungsverfahren/oberirdische\\_gewasser\\_und\\_kustengewasser/lng\\_terminal\\_wilhelmshaven\\_voslapper\\_groden\\_nord\\_2/lng-terminal-wilhelmshaven-2-errichtung-eines-fsru-schiffsanlegers-mit-liegewanne-und-zufahrtsbereich-in-der-jade-vor-wilhelmshaven-224053.html](https://www.nlwkn.niedersachsen.de/startseite/wasserwirtschaft/zulassungsverfahren/oberirdische_gewasser_und_kustengewasser/lng_terminal_wilhelmshaven_voslapper_groden_nord_2/lng-terminal-wilhelmshaven-2-errichtung-eines-fsru-schiffsanlegers-mit-liegewanne-und-zufahrtsbereich-in-der-jade-vor-wilhelmshaven-224053.html) ).

The state of conservation report 2024 contains a description of submarine high-voltage power cables and pipelines (section 2.3, p. 21ff), which are needed for the expansion of offshore wind energy in the North Sea EEZ. The information is still valid. However, new projects are emerging. As such, there is the initiative for a hydrogen pipeline ‘Aqueductus’ (<https://aqueductus-offshore.de/de/wasserstoff-infrastruktur-in-der-nordsee/#offshore-pipeline>).

**THE NETHERLANDS**

Currently, the Ministry of Climate Policy and Green Growth is investigating the possibilities of constructing two nuclear power plants in The Netherlands. Eemshaven is one of the suitable locations for new nuclear power plants. However, as of now, a legal investigation is being carried out to see whether Eemshaven can be excluded from future investigations and procedures due a lack of public acceptance in Groningen.

If the legal investigation concludes that the Eemshaven cannot be excluded on these grounds, it means that all relevant regional stakeholders need to be involved, including UNESCO. The first formal consultation moment will be the draft of a scoping report as a first step in the procedure of the environmental impact assessment. Such a scoping document is aimed to be published in the second quarter of 2025. If Eemshaven will be part of the procedure, UNESCO will be informed and involved as soon as possible.

**Coastal Flood Defence and Protection**

**TRILATERAL**

Exchange on Nature-based Solutions for coastal flood defense and protection is on-going in the trilateral permanent Expert Group Climate Change Adaptation. Exchange is on-going also in the **Project MANABAS COAST**: Funded by the EU Interreg North Sea Region Programme, this project intends to set the stage for widescale application and implementation (mainstreaming) of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in coastal systems of the North Sea Region by developing a proven and accessible framework, tools, and guidelines based on pilot examples [www.interregnorthsea.eu/manabas-coast](http://www.interregnorthsea.eu/manabas-coast)  
In collaboration with the trilateral Expert Groups Climate Change Adaptation, Salt marshes

<p>and Dunes, and with project partners of MANABAS COAST, a workshop Nature conservation and coastal flood defence: How much salt marsh management do we want and need in a changing climate?” Was held in October 2024 <a href="https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/workshop-how-much-salt-marsh-management-do-we-want-and-need-changing-climate">https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/workshop-how-much-salt-marsh-management-do-we-want-and-need-changing-climate</a></p> <p>As the sea level is rising, all regions are preparing plans to further strengthen coastal flood defence and protection works. This will require additional space, either on the mainland or in the Wadden Sea. The challenge is to strengthen dike and dune systems without loss of space and important values of the Wadden Sea in the coastal zone. Applying Nature based solution can help achieving this, preferably even improving natural values.</p>
<p><b>DENMARK</b></p> <p>The Wadden Sea dikes in the Danish part of the Wadden Sea are subjected to regular safety and strength assessments. The aim is to adapt the dikes in the Wadden Sea in a timely manner in relation to future climate changes. Adaptation and reinforcement have been designed and completed for Kirkeby dike and Juvre dike on the island of Rømø. For the Darum-Tjæreborg dike, planning work is currently being carried out and it is expected that strengthening work will begin in 2025. For the Sønderho Dike project on the island of Fanø and the Ballum Dike, economic support has been allocated from The Danish Coastal Fund During 2023, a new survey of the Danish tidal basins started. The survey will include all topographical elements of the Wadden Sea, such as tidal channels, tidal flats, and salt marshes. Survey data for the entire Danish Wadden Sea is expected to be available in 2026. The purpose of the measures is to collectively contribute to a robust framework for coastal flood defence, ensuring that the Danish Wadden Sea can adapt to changing environmental conditions effectively.</p>
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> <p>The information in the SOC report 2024 on latest developments in coastal protection is still valid.</p>
<p><b>THE NETHERLANDS</b></p> <p>In the Dutch Wadden sea region dike strengthening is often projected in the Wadden Sea, driven by the wish to maintain values in the hinterland. It is a challenge to prevent loss of space for the Wadden Sea and plan dike strengthening in landward direction as this conflict with interests of the people working and living there. In the HWBP community of practice “Dijken en natuur” it was investigated how dike strengthening and nature improvement can be combined. Link: <a href="#">Dijken en Natuur: een symbiose   Innoveren   Hoogwaterbeschermingsprogramma</a></p> <p>In 2024 dike strengthening on the island of Vlieland was executed. As the village of Oost-Vlieland is located directly behind the dike, space was needed in the Wadden Sea. In the coming years, two dike sections (Koehool-Lauwersmeer dike (Frisian Wadden Coast) (with three sub-sections) and the dike section on Schiermonnikoog will be implemented to restore the strength of the dikes in accordance with the applicable requirements. In 2027, the dike and parts of the dunes on Schiermonnikoog will be strengthened, so that everyone can continue to live, work and recreate safely on the island in the future. The project aims to implement Nature based solutions and improve the overall quality of the area including the Wadden Sea. Preparations for the reinforcement have started via a strategic Environmental Impact Assessment. Right now a screening for a Heritage impact Assessment is in procedure.</p> <p>Various studies are also made for the dike section Koehool-Lauwersmeer (including EIA and Appropriate Assessments). These studies will be included as substantive information in the process for the required permits.</p>
<p><b>Other general issues affecting the OUV</b></p> <p><b>TRILATERAL</b></p> <p><b>Trilateral Partnership in Support of UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage.</b> The</p>

information in the SOC report 2024 is still valid.

**Dark Sky/Dark Sky Initiative.** The preservation of nocturnal darkness directly supports and further enhances the protection of the Wadden Sea World Heritage’s OUV, while creating chances for visitors to experience nature, admire pristine starlight skies, and make a valuable contribution to the sustainable development of local communities, as shown at the certified Dark Sky Places in the Wadden Sea region. The Interreg project Darker Sky is on-going <https://www.interregnorthsea.eu/darker-sky>

**Continuation of the International Wadden Sea School (IWSS).** Detailed information provided in Annex 5 of the 2016 SOC report. [www.iwss.org](http://www.iwss.org)

The WSFI's objective to strengthen capacity includes work with youth. The **East Atlantic Flyway Youth Forum** serves as an annual platform for young wetland conservationists to develop a useful skillset previously identified as needed, especially from a flyway perspective.

**Youth Engagement.** In September 2022 a first Trilateral Youth Conference was organised. Young people already engaged in the Wadden Sea came together to exchange, discuss challenges, and collect ideas that were transferred to the trilateral ministers during the 14th Trilateral Governmental Conference in 2022. Currently, a trilateral youth network is being built to further sustain the engagement of young people and the exchange among them across the three countries. <https://exchange.waddensea-worldheritage.org/node/129> In order to engage with future scientists, the TWSC and partners organised the first trilateral summer school on Wadden Sea World Heritage in August 2024. 18 BA-, MA-, and PhD-level students spent ten days learning about the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site and the intricate aspects of its ecology, nature conservation, sustainable development, and management. <https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/node/2254>

**Dutch-German science-call “Understanding complex pressures on the Wadden Sea and options for action”.** Five projects were selected for funding in phase I of the research call. In phase II the projects will have the opportunity to jointly submit one application for an overarching synthesis project.

The **Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative** (WSFI) has continued to strengthen close collaboration with local, regional, and international partners along the East-Atlantic Flyway. To further improve the flyway monitoring programme, the TWSC initiated an assessment of potential innovations for the monitoring, funded by EU DG REFORM. The aim is to gather more concrete information on abundances, vital rates and environmental conditions at key sites to inform concrete management measures through the WSFI capacity building programme, steps towards implementation are taken. <https://flyway.waddensea-worldheritage.org/>

## DENMARK

The second-generation **Marine Strategy Framework Directive Action Plan** is finalised. The plan includes Wadden Sea specific measures and brings together the decided actions that contribute to achieving and maintaining good environmental conditions in the sea, thus implementing specific Wadden Sea measures, such as the SIMP.

**Nature restoration projects; the National Park, the Nature Agency, the Danish Nature Fund, the Wadden Sea Municipalities,** and other partners, are involved in major restoration projects benefiting the OUV:

Nature restoration to increase habitats primarily for breeding birds on Mandø, see: <https://naturfonden.dk/natur/mandoe/> (in Danish)

Nature restoration and bird protection: <https://lifewaddenseabirds.dk/>

And a newly started project: <https://lifewaddenseabirds.dk/projektomrader/margrethe-kog>

**Regional partnership programmes:** For more than ten years, the Wadden Sea National Park has been facilitating partner programmes to support local communities, including local businesses. On a voluntary basis, partners focus on more sustainable development, especially regarding tourism. The World Heritage Partnership Programme provides education on the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site and its OUV. <https://nationalparkvadehavet.dk/udvikling-og-samarbejde/partnerprogrammet>

## GERMANY

**Expansion of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves:** The further development of the transition zones in the three German Wadden Sea National Parks in the federal states of Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Lower Saxony has intensified. New projects are under way which contribute to sustainable development, nature protection and education.

**Habitat restoration for increased CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration:** Salt marshes and seagrass meadows play a special role in natural carbon storage in the Wadden Sea ecosystem. With a spatial focus on Lower Saxony, the restoration measures of salt marshes already mentioned in the 2016 SOC report were continued by opening summer dykes and restoring a near-natural tidal drainage and watering system. Further restoration projects with the aim of increasing natural "Blue Carbon" storage capacities are also in preparation for the near future.

Projects evaluating the storage capacity of natural subtidal habitats as well as the actual restoration of sea grass and salt marshes will be part of projects taking place within the framework “Federal Action Plan on nature-based solutions for climate and biodiversity” (Aktionsprogramm Natürlicher Klimaschutz). These projects are intended to start in 2025. The National Park Authority of Schleswig-Holstein is involved in the research mission sustainMare, which conducts research on the sustainable use of marine areas in, among others, the North Sea and the Wadden Sea. The mission is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The first phase was completed in November 2024 and the second phase will continue until the end of November 2027.

<https://www.sustainmare.de/>

**Management planning for Natura 2000:** To supplement and concretise the trilateral Wadden Sea Plan 2010 as an overarching Natura 2000 management plan, the federal states have drawn up detailed sectoral plans for maintaining and restoring the favourable conservation status of Natura 2000 sites, some of which are problem-specific, for partial areas or region-wide. See for example:

<https://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/wissensbeitrag/ffh-massnahmenplanung-fuer-das-ffh-gebiet-001-nationalpark-niedersaechsisches-wattenmeer/>

**Marine Strategy Framework Directive:** In the course of implementing the MSFD, the second generation of German Programme of Measures was published in 2022. The implementation of measures is on-going. The programme includes measures to achieve and maintain good environmental conditions and strengthens the protection level, including in the German Wadden Sea, thus contributing to safeguarding the OUV and integrity of the World Heritage Site.

<https://mitglieder.meeresschutz.info/de/berichte/massnahmenprogramm-art-13.html>

**Education / visitor centres:** The Wadden Sea National Park houses and visitor centres in the federal states of Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Lower Saxony are to receive substantial additional funding from the Federal Government of Germany in the coming years to extend the existing network of facilities and modernise the exhibitions, among other things. National Park visitor centres interpret the World Heritage Site to interested guests and inhabitants, which thus supports protection of the Wadden Sea.

**Regional partnership programmes:** For more than ten years, the German Wadden Sea National Park Authorities in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony have been facilitating partner programmes, which they have been able to expand significantly in recent years, both in terms of the number of partner organisations and the range of sectors represented. They also exchange information across the Wadden Sea as part of the trilateral Partnership in support of the Wadden Sea World Heritage, the Partnership Hub. The certified partners of the National Parks and UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are ambassadors of the Wadden Sea region. With their commitment, National Park and Biosphere Partners raise awareness among guests and locals for the protection and sustainable development of the Wadden Sea region. <https://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de/mitmachen/kooperation/nationalpark-partner/>

## THE NETHERLANDS

**The Wadden Fund**, a fund of 600 million Euro, was established in 2007 to compensate for the gas drilled under and near the Wadden Sea. Its main objectives are:

- To strengthen nature and landscape of the Wadden Sea area.
- To reduce external threats to the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.
- Transition toward a sustainable economy in the Wadden Sea area, including sustainable energy.
- Knowledge development.
- Through the Fund, often with extra finance from the provinces and the central government, over 200 projects have been financed so far (see a full list of projects in Dutch: <https://waddenfonds.nl/projecten/>). Since the 2024 SoC they have added projects on:
  - ♣ Cleaning fresh water on recreational vessels
  - ♣ Research into alternatives methods for shrimp fishery leading to less seabed disturbance

The armed forces must be able to defend our territory and that of our allies. Within NATO, more is also being asked of the armed forces. More activities means that more space is needed: for exercises, for infrastructure, ammunition storage and new or modified permits. The Program Space for the Armed Forces (Ruimte voor Defensie – NPRD) is mapping possibilities for the full Netherlands.

Currently, a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (planMER) is conducted to investigate possible locations in the full Netherlands for the armed forces, including areas around the Wadden Sea. The planMER at the NPRD does not include a separate Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) as locations around the Wadden Sea are compared with locations not around the Wadden Sea. This relates to the following needs:

1. Needs in the Wadden Sea (including amphibious exercises Marnewaard/Vliehors and other needs on Vliehors (location-specific needs shooting with Apache, exercising from EHD-41 and EHD-42 and adjustment of unsafe zone).
2. Needs for maritime drones with flight routes over the Wadden Sea,
3. Need for low-flying helicopter exercise areas in relation to the location of the Beemster World Heritage Site, Hollandse Waterlinies and Schokland

This HIA will be drawn up in a possible projectMER phase for needs for which a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of one of the Dutch World Heritage properties cannot be ruled out. In this phase, a cultural heritage assessment will be drawn up that is in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context bij Unesco.

All information about the national interest of protecting the OUV (as recorded in the NOVI) is not presented in a separate HIA, but is an integral part of the planMER, appropriate to the level of abstraction of the decision to be taken. The plan is to organize decision making on the NPRD at the end of 2025.

Specifically, the nature permit for the flight practices for the armed forces above the Vliehors has been cancelled in a legal procedure. The nature permit can only be issued if there are no new adverse effects for the Wadden area, says the judge. And that is not certain. The Ministry of Defense will appeal to this decision.

We are currently working **on a policy framework to reduce the impact of human activities on nature**. The creation of the policy framework involves multiple steps. First, we look at the current state of the Wadden Sea nature. This research includes identifying ecological bottlenecks that would need to improve. Then, we look at the activities and the pressure on a particular bottleneck, and how much pressure needs to be reduced for improvement. This results in a list of potential ecological solutions. Next, scenario's of well

combining ecological solutions are created. This means that multiple scenarios are created including multiple potential ecological solutions. This is the phase we are currently working on. After this, all scenarios are run through a socio-economic impact analysis. This analysis shows us what the impact is of all scenarios on socio-economic factors in the Wadden Sea. In the end, the policy framework will describe multiple scenarios and their effects. The decision-making will consist of choosing one scenario that will be elaborated further on and worked out on how we are going to reach this scenario.

We are aiming for completion of the policy framework in Q4 2025.

## **4. Potential major restorations, alterations, and/or new construction(s) that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property**

For specific aspects of new developments or projects which may affect the OUV of the property to be reported in conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, we refer to the ongoing communication with UNESCO.

## **5. Public access to the state of conservation report**

The State of Conservation Report 2025 should be made fully available for public access on the World Heritage Centre’s State of Conservation Information System, as well as the webpage of The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation.

## **6. Signature of the Authority**

This report is signed and submitted by Denmark on behalf of the three States Parties.