

## The Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme



*Investing in the future by working together  
for a sustainable and competitive region*

# PROWAD

PROTECT & PROSPER  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
IN THE WADDEN SEA

## Project Update 2: Developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea

6 February 2012

Prepared by  
Europarc Consulting



**EUROPARC**  
CONSULTING





# Protect and prosper: developing a sustainable tourism strategy for the Wadden Sea

**Objective:** To summarise the main outcomes of Agenda item 5 from TG-STC meeting, Bremen 20 December 2011

**Project aim:** To create a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site that will link conservation and tourism in a way so that the outstanding universal values of the area will be maintained, experienced and used sustainably.

The project will examine and analyse existing tourism and nature conservation data about the Wadden Sea and other World Heritage Sites for challenges and opportunities, including suggestions on how to prosper from the opportunities.

The draft strategy will be developed through participatory workshops to build a consistent and consensual approach and an action plan for all partners will contain short and long-term goals. It is intended that through this project mechanisms will remain in place for future cooperation, management, action and excellence of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.

### Note to steering group members

Please note there are several places where we need your feedback from this report. Please read it carefully and get back to us before **13 February 2012**.

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**10 YEARS 2001-2011**

Director: Wilf Fenten  
U.K. office:  
The Shaws, Selside, near SETTLE,  
North Yorkshire BD24 0HZ  
Tel.: +44 1729 860 003  
E-mail: wilf.fenten@europarc-consulting.org

**Introduction** Building on the work of the TG-STs at the meeting on 10/11 October 2011 we have been developing an overview of current World Heritage tourism activities, the gaps and synergies and have considered the implications and opportunities of World Heritage Status for the Wadden Sea, providing new strategic direction ideas.

This second project update captures the essence of this thinking and the task group discussions, shares progress and allows colleagues and partners to see how the Sustainable Tourism Strategy is being developed in a participatory and structured way – particularly through the stakeholder workshops to be held in February and March 2012. The contents of the Strategy and Action Plan will be informed by the views from the regional workshops and from the baseline inventory, other research and through discussions and agreement by the TG-STs.

We are pleased that Denmark is to be included within the Strategy and that a study visit for the TG-STs to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site is being considered.

We welcome dialogue, so please get in touch to share your thoughts. Team contact details are in section 9. Following the workshops we will be sharing with you the outcomes as well as the emerging draft contents of the Strategy.

With best wishes from the team at EUROPARC Consulting.

**Richard Partington, Project Leader, EUROPARC Consulting**

## 1. Opportunities and challenges of World Heritage designation

EUROPARC Consulting's research work on how the opportunities and challenges of World Heritage status may influence the development of the Wadden Sea sustainable tourism strategy was introduced at the TG-STS4 meeting.

The presentation was based on a EUROPARC Consulting prepared Discussion Paper– *The Implications of World Heritage Status for Planning and Managing Tourism in the Wadden Sea* (handed out at the meeting and circulated with the minutes of the TG-STS4 meeting).

Starting with basic principles and parameters, then looking at some global WH current experience and best practice tourism examples, it ended with suggestions for the future strategic direction of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea:

1. **Work from core principles** – base work on outstanding universal values and world heritage status
2. **Use the brand** – widely and jointly with businesses and communities, and in an organized way
3. **Raise the profile** – through a co-ordinated and shared platform
4. **Build pride in the area** – through education, understanding and economic investment
5. **Adopt highest standards** – management of tourism in the area should stand up to international scrutiny
6. **Work across national boundaries** – the trans-boundary status of the area should be used to develop a coordinated approach to the delivery of tourism across the whole site, with integrated services
7. **Play a part at international level** – consider twinning, partnerships, policy and advisory work at global level.

These are very closely aligned with the Baseline Inventory and together this will contribute to the detailed content in the emerging Strategy. 1-7 (above) are expanded below, in section 2 of this project update.

### *TG-STS Comments*

*WH Brand versus NP Brand*

*Schleswig-Holstein/Niedersachsen – German national parks will keep their partnership schemes but could be integrated to any 'new' scheme if established*

*How logos are used – where and by whom*

## 2. Baseline inventory and analysis

**An overview of current World Heritage activities in the Wadden Sea, an analysis of the gaps and synergies with ideas for future directions were presented, expanded and discussed.**

From our analysis we found the key missing links and gaps, under the topic headings below were:

### *Marketing & Communication:*

- Inner-marketing gaps
- Lack of knowledge about World Heritage among stakeholders (especially in the NL)
- Transnational marketing cooperation is still in its infancy
- Marketing is mainly done on domestic market only
- No branded products in all areas that "sell" the Wadden Sea World Heritage

### *Quality & further education / qualification:*

- Lack of service quality and quality of supply (a general finding): this challenge is being tackled by qualification projects on WH and need to be continued
- No joint eco label system / public private partnership model for World Heritage partners
- Lack of WH information - Training courses on sustainable tourism and World Heritage need to be further developed

### *Infrastructure / Investments:*

- A joint visitor guidance system is missing, using the same Corporate Design and information contents
- Visitor Centres need to be updated with information and interactive offers on the World Heritage Wadden Sea
- Sustainable transport connections need to be improved in all regions

### *Environmental Education:*

- The World Heritage theme is yet not integrated in all education offers & visitor centres, e.g. exhibitions, interactive games & school programmes need to be further developed in different languages
- The World Heritage theme needs to be better integrated at IWSS (International Wadden Sea School) and spread to all information centres
- There is no joint education material existing on the World Heritage theme that could be used at all schools, introducing the whole Wadden Sea Region to them

- The World Heritage is not a topic yet in school lessons. It needs to be integrated in curricula / lectures; Excursions to the World Heritage should become part of the school lessons.

#### *Market Research:*

- There are different bases for tourism statistics in all three countries, which are not comparable
- Market researches focus on different source markets with different trends & customer behaviors - there is no comparability
- There is no standardized regular survey that covers the whole Wadden Sea area
- Lack of specific knowledge of foreign markets concerning the nature tourism segment, target group's motivations & behaviors & market potentials (Denmark, Germany, Netherlands)
- Lack of market knowledge about further international markets beyond neighboring countries that have a potential for visiting World Heritage Sites

Collection of comparable data is currently difficult as there appears to be no standard data sets and often no existing data. Discussion around the structure of tourism in the regions, for example what current sustainable offers exist, are sold, the market data, target groups, tourism statistics may be required and additional statistical analysis of existing data undertaken to complete the inventory on tourism structure (deliverable 1).

#### **Future Directions**

We see a unique opportunity, and responsibility, for everyone across the entire Wadden Sea to work together to create an understanding of what the area can offer and how that can be developed, managed and marketed.

In reducing mass tourism or overuse and with a combination of visitor management, environmental education and political influence as well as through increased trans-national working, quality management, and in using the Wadden Sea World Heritage as the overarching Brand sustainable tourism will evolve.

The emerging ideas from section 7 of the Baseline Inventory and Analysis 'Future Directions' were expanded in a EUROPARC Consulting prepared Discussion Paper– *Future Directions for the Development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea Building on its World Heritage Status* (handed out at the meeting and circulated with the minutes of the TG-ST54 meeting). and are reproduced below:



### *1. Work from core principles*

- i. The World Heritage status of the site should be the central consideration for the development of tourism in the Wadden Sea.
- ii. The protection and enhancement of the site's Outstanding Universal Value should be paramount.
- iii. Tourism should be designed to give effective and authentic presentation to the area's Outstanding Universal Value.
- iv. Tourism that simply exploits heritage sites should be replaced by tourism that is an active contributor to conservation.
- v. The private and public tourism sectors should work together to provide infrastructure that meets both the needs of local communities and tourism demand.
- vi. Public, private and community interests need to work together in partnership in the tourism sector – and respect each other's perspectives.
- vii. Planning and management for tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage site should be set in a wider context and consider such contextual issues as buffer zones, broader social, cultural, political and economic considerations and the tourism supply chain.

### *2. Use the World Heritage brand*

- i. The Wadden Sea should use its World Heritage status as a 'brand' to appeal to discriminating tourists who seek places of high natural and cultural value.
- ii. Both public agencies and private providers should be encouraged to use the brand.
- iii. Local communities should be encouraged to identify with the brand as well.
- iv. A tourism marketing strategy should be drawn up which complements and reinforces the management of the site itself.
- v. The potential to create a market in "virtual tourism" to the Wadden Sea World Heritage site should be explored.

### *3. Raise the profile and strengthen the identity of the Wadden Sea*

- i. World Heritage status of the Wadden Sea should be used as a platform upon which to base a programme designed to raise the identity of the area.
- ii. This programme should aim to co-ordinate the efforts of the public, private and community sectors so as to create a strong, positive image of the area based upon the appeal of its Outstanding Universal Value.
- iii. This will require that priority is given to promoting sustainable forms of tourism that are based upon the area's identity and help to reinforce it; and discouraging those that are not.

#### *4. Build pride in the area*

- i. Tourism promotion in the Wadden Sea should not be only outward-facing to tourists: it should also be designed to build understanding among the local community of the significance of World Heritage status, pride in its existence and a determination to protect its qualities.
- ii. The significance of the Wadden Sea's World Heritage status should be used as a theme in education in the area.
- iii. Economic and related benefits must be delivered to the local community through successful sustainable tourism.
- iv. A significant proportion of funds generated through tourism should be invested back in the conservation of the heritage assets of the Wadden Sea.

#### *5. Adopt the highest standards*

- i. The planning and management of tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage site must meet the highest standards expected of such areas.
- ii. Tourist provision that fail to do this, should be improved, or if necessary removed.
- iii. Management should have sufficient skills, capacities and resources to ensure the protection and presentation of the area's heritage values and respect for local communities.
- iv. The managers of the Wadden Sea site should welcome international scrutiny of their record.

#### *6. Work across national boundaries*

- i. The transboundary World Heritage status of the Wadden Sea should be used to develop a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of tourism across the whole site, in both countries.
- ii. While individual places within the Wadden Sea should maximise the distinctiveness of their tourism "offer", they should do so within a co-ordinated approach to tourism planning, management and marketing.
- iii. There should be an overall, integrated service for visitors to the Wadden Sea as a whole, covering such issues as information, interpretation, transport, products and accommodation.

#### *7. Play a part at the international level*

- i. The Wadden Sea World Heritage site should play an active role on the international stage through the World Heritage system. It should:

- a. consider such issues as 'twinning' with other wetland areas (involving staff exchanges and community-to-community partnerships);
- b. examine what support it might offer for conservation efforts in developing countries;
- c. consider how it might play a full part in the policy and advisory work of UNESCO and IUCN on tourism in World Heritage sites;
- d. make use of the wealth of knowledge and advice available in the World Heritage network, in terms of staff training, best practice guidance, and case study material.

#### *TG-STC Comments*

*Positive work undertaken on inventory/baseline by EC*

*Need for an analysis on the structure of tourism in the regions as basis for the STS development*

*To include (also to be added in the Assessment section of Strategy) who are the tourists and where are they from; what current sustainable offers exist, are sold e.g. market data, target groups, tourism statistics. Collection of comparable data difficult as no standard data sets and often no existing data.*

*Wadden Fund in NL – co-funding issue and not available for infrastructure*

*Wadden Sea Gold products (Netherlands) are missing in the baseline*

*Stakeholder participation necessary - bottom-up (not top down) approach*

*Denmark to be included in the baseline study and strategy as partner of the PROWAD project – separate tender but possible time implications*

*The World Heritage Wadden Sea cannot become a brand on its own as there are existing strong brands, which will not be replaced - but the World Heritage should be used for co-branding*

*The idea to establish a World Heritage partnership is not feasible, it can never replace the national park partnership model, which has been successfully implemented by the German national parks*

*Future sustainable tourism activity needs to address:*

- *very fragmented picture" of activities across the area*
- *local knowledge of WH is missing as is WH branding*
- *varied audiences - authentic, education, tourism, conservation.*

- *joint visitor guidance system*
- *visitor centre information and offers*
- *training*
- *extend SOM survey across entire WHS*

Additional comments on the baseline and inventory, via email, to EUROPARC Consulting by 13 February 2012.

**3. Workshops** The TG-STs approved the proposal for the regional workshops as a joint framework for the project. The responsibility for the organisation of the regional workshops is with the local host, who will also invite the appropriate stakeholder to the workshop. Further details of each event will be discussed with the local host and EUROPARC Consulting bilaterally. The CWSS kindly offered support as rapporteur for the sub-groups. EUROPARC Consulting has a supporting and facilitating role. TG-STs comments have been taken on board and the arrangements/actions are:

1. The Netherlands, Leeuwarden, 13 February 2012, (Hosts in the Netherlands: Province of Fryslan)
2. Niedersachsen: Wilhelmshaven: 21 March 2012, (Hosts in Niedersachsen: National Park Administration and Nordsee GmbH)
3. Schleswig-Holstein, Husum, 22 March 2012, (Hosts in Husum, Schleswig-Holstein: Tourism Service and National Park Administration)
4. Stakeholders to be invited by local hosts on behalf of Wadden Sea Secretariat and the role of the hosts and EUROPARC Consulting should be made clear in the invitation.
5. A basic invitation text will be prepared by EUROPARC Consulting/liaise with CWSS).
6. Press invitations are the responsibility of the local hosts.
7. A common press release to be prepared by EUROPARC Consulting in consultation with CWSS and will be sent out by the local hosts after the workshops
8. PROWAD must be communicated on all levels, as the STS development is part of the project (work package 3), integration of EU and Interreg logo (refer Interreg guidelines).
9. Each workshop is moderated by EUROPARC Consulting
10. Two working groups at the German workshops and one working group at the Dutch workshop will be led by EUROPARC Consulting and 3 working groups at German workshops will be led by the CWSS

#### 4. Survey / Questionnaire

The TG-STS agreed that an online survey would be useful in getting input from stakeholders prior to the workshops. All comments taken on board and EUROPARC Consulting have developed through 'Survey Monkey' with Dutch and German online versions of the survey live from 21 January 2012. The questionnaire will also be distributed in the regions by the TG-STS members.

#### 5. Sustainable Tourism Strategy Contents

The aim of the strategy is to improve the quality of the tourism product across the entire Wadden Sea World Heritage Site while taking into account the conservation and sustainability objectives of the area. It is a blueprint for the whole Dutch, German and Danish Wadden Sea area and it offers the best possible direction for tourism activities and offers within the natural, cultural, economic, and social environment, and its coherent development in time and space.

The strategy will be based on research, discussion, dialogue and careful consultation and will be supported and understood by local partners and stakeholders.

*TG STS broadly agreed with the draft content structure as the working document subject to the following comments:*

*Use the WH logo in the strategy*

*The Strategy to include Denmark (trilateral)*

*Define who the Strategy is for/the owner – jointly owned and implemented*

*Section 1.1 - "Define" the geographical area*

*Section 2 (Assessment) - Tourism in the Wadden Sea is to be described (but needs to be covered as well in the inventory).*

*Section 3.4 the Vision should cover at least 15-20 years (the 5-year horizon is covered by the action plan)*

*Section 4.1 - include specific role of STS in maintaining the World Heritage*

*Section 4.8 – 'prevent' rather than 'reduce' negative impacts be monitored and influenced. Also visitor monitoring is difficult and costs a lot of money - this might be an action which is not feasible or an action to find resources*

*Section 5.1 – include/add the role of the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea and the role of NGO's*

*No top-down approach - participation of stakeholders is necessary*

*See the document as it develops, discuss again at July meeting*

Additional comments on the baseline and inventory, via email, to EUROPARC Consulting by 13 February 2012.

## 6. Conclusions /next steps

Publications/documents circulated at the meeting:

*Sustainable tourism and natural world heritage – priorities for action* - ISBN: 978-2-8317-1339-7.

*The Implications of World Heritage Status for Planning and Managing Tourism in the Wadden Sea* (circulated with the minutes of the TG-STS4 meeting).

*Future Directions for the Development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea* (handed out at the meeting and circulated with the minutes of the TG-STS4 meeting)

Presentations to be added to Member section of Waddensea web site.

## 7. Feedback, evaluation

TG-STS thanked EUROPARC Consulting for the Presentations and papers. Chair, Elze Klinkhammer, summed up that the work undertaken had been thorough and had added value and was a big step forward in the right direction.

Any other feedback welcome, via email, from TG-STS to EUROPARC Consulting.

## 8. 'Living' Project timeline

	Content	Proposed Date / Deadline	Remark
1	Meeting with the TG-STG (Bremen) to establish perspectives and parameters	10-11 October 2011	Completed
2	<p><b>Deliverable 1 Baseline study, objectives and perspectives (task 1 +2)</b></p> <p>(a) Inventory and review of the current status of tourism and recreation in the Wadden Sea Region based on existing information and market research.</p> <p>(b) Identify opportunities and challenges of the World Heritage designation and possible developments in tourism (e.g. scenario development, SWOT).</p> <p>(c) Analyse gaps in data and knowledge and prepare proposal if additional information has to be compiled and analysed (sufficient comparable basic tourism data and market research for WH).</p> <p><b>Deliverable 2 Development Framework</b></p> <p>(d) Proposals for contents of the strategy:            - cooperation of stakeholders;            - perspectives and opportunities resulting from the transnational World Heritage for socio-economic developments,            - nature conservation, marketing and branding.</p> <p>(e) Proposal for contents of a joint action plan.</p>	<p>By 1 December 2011</p> <p>By 1 December 2011</p> <p>By 1 December 2011</p> <p>By 1 December 2011</p> <p>By 1 December 2011</p>	<p>(a) To be <b>completed with data of tourism structure.</b></p> <p>(b) (to be completed with scenario and/or SWOT analysis)</p> <p>(c) To be <b>completed with analysis from inventory</b> (input into Assessment section of the STS).</p> <p>(d) <b>Completed.</b></p> <p>(e) <b>Completed.</b></p>
3	Discussion of Baseline study and Development Framework by TG-STG in Bremen.	<b>20 December 2011</b>	<b>Completed</b>
4	Preparation workshops, add Survey/questionnaire, results from TG-STG discussion on development framework	Dec 2011- Jan 2012	<b>Underway</b>

	Content	Proposed Date / Deadline	Remark
5	<p><b>Workshops:</b></p> <p>Discussion of development framework at regional workshops to create ownership for the strategy.</p> <p>Contents of the strategy, stakeholder cooperation; perspectives and opportunities resulting from the transnational World Heritage for socio-economic developments, nature conservation, communication, marketing and branding.</p> <p>Proposal for contents of a joint action plan</p>	February – April 2012	<p>Workshops: NL,(13 March 2012) Lower Saxony, (21 March 2012) Schleswig-Holstein (22 March 2012).</p> <p>Additional DK workshop aim for late March/early April</p> <p>To be organized in cooperation with the regional partners. Participation of EC.</p>
6	<p><b>Deliverable 3: First Draft of Strategy</b> First complete draft of the strategy for discussion by stakeholders and WSB to be submitted to TG-STC (strategy, cooperation, marketing/branding, communication).</p>	<b>22 June</b>	Date to be agreed
7	Approval of first draft of the strategy by TG-STC to be submitted to the WSB.	<b>10 July 2012 (as above comment)</b>	Meeting date confirmed. Participation of EC
8	Feedback on first draft strategy from stakeholders and WSB, e.g. in regional working groups in D, and workshop in NL.	30 Sept 2012	To be decided/organized by TG-STC
9	<p><b>Deliverable 4: Second Draft Strategy and first draft Action Plan</b> Discussion Draft S strategy and Action Plan with partners / stakeholders</p>	Mid October 2012	To be decided by TG (final workshop tbd)
10	<p><b>Deliverable 5: Final Draft Strategy and Action Plan</b> Adoption of Strategy and Action Plan by TG-STC and WSB</p> <p>Trilateral Ministerial Council Meeting - Adoption of Strategy Action Plan</p>	Beginning Dec 2012  18 March 2013	TG STC, WSB meetings

**Note 1.** Following TG-STC 4, Bremen 20/12/11 - Additional analysis on the structure of tourism in the regions - include who are the tourists and where are they from; what current sustainable offers exist, are sold e.g. market data, target groups, tourism statistics.(fact and figures of tourism structure from existing reports/data to be compiled by end of February, to complete Deliverable 1).

Collection of comparable data is currently difficult as no standard data sets and often no existing data. A bespoke piece of research work may be required with statistical analysis. EC could develop brief and manage specialist contract.



## 9. Team – roles and contact details

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role within project</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>Richard Partington</b>	Project lead, content and coordination	richard.partington@btinternet.com
<b>Hans Schiphorst</b>	Content and workshops lead (NL)	hansschiphorst@hotmail.com
<b>Romy Sommer</b>	Content and workshops lead (D)	romy.sommer@animare.net
<b>Adrian Phillips</b>	Adviser on tourism in World Heritage Sites	adrian.phillips@gmx.com
<b>Lucy Galvin</b>	Adviser on engagement and communication	lucyfrancesgalvin@gmail.com
<b>Anne Webster</b>	Project administrator	info@europarc-consulting.org
<b>Wilf Fenten</b>	Contract manager	wilf.fenten@europarc-consulting.org