



Background

The North Sea Region is steeped in maritime heritage. Mercantile and naval vessels have been sailing here for centuries, helping shape our coastlines with ports, dockyards and other shipping infrastructure. Unfortunately however, this history is being eroded, as new developments spring up along waterways and harbours, and planners aspiring to regenerate the land overlook the area’s historic legacy. A common example is the removal or shortening of slipways used in the maintenance of vessels. This can prevent a dock from being used for its originally designed purpose. In the southern North Sea, for example, very few slipways remain that are suitable for Thames sailing barges, so the operation of these historic vessels is now under threat. Similar problems include: pressure on traditional boatyards to reduce noise; reduced dredging limiting access to harbours and the further removal of port facilities such as wharfs and moorings. North SEAfaring believes this sanitisation of the distinct maritime character of towns and landscapes leads to cultural impoverishment of communities. As such, they are working with spatial planners to devise ways of incorporating historic features into regeneration programmes.



Shipyard buildings and artefacts provide strong structural elements as a focal point for regeneration.

Aim

The central aim of the North SEAfaring project is to raise the status of maritime heritage in regional and national spatial planning strategies. North SEAfaring is involved in the maintenance of existing wooden boats and structures, both for the transnational sharing of traditional skills and crafts and as a vibrant focus of living heritage, which attracts public attention to the programme. Evidence will be accumulated to develop a guidance scheme for the preservation and promotion of original port infrastructures, initially for local and regional planners in the North SEAfaring programme, but with a long-term view to its promotion throughout the North Sea Region. The aim is to find a sustainable approach in which future housing and business developments are not created at the expense of maritime history.

North SEAfaring also aims to raise cultural awareness and public access through the protection and restoration of maritime heritage, countering the tendency of planners to privatise areas which could otherwise be opened up to the public. On conclusion of the project, North SEAfaring will present in a best practice guide a set of general principles relevant to all Europe’s coastal regions.

Activities and Outcomes

Kingston University, UK, is undertaking spatial and development studies of each of the seven locations selected by the North SEAfaring project. International forums will discuss the issues raised,

Did you know... After a highly successful full restoration using only traditional materials, the Excelsior – a gaff rigged Lowestoft fishing smack – is now ready to take tourists out sailing. North SEAfaring is helping the Excelsior Trust to open a pontoon to improve access to the boat yard, and chargeable moorings, which will help make the continued running of Excelsior more sustainable.

such as risk factors and potential solutions, in order to create a common framework for the sustainable development of common maritime heritage. Work will then be carried out, marrying the range of experience gathered from research with the distinct requirements of each location. Discussion lines established between partners will ensure the rapid dissemination of concepts and conclusions. During initial research, similarities between coastal sites have already appeared. Dundee (UK), Lowestoft (UK) and Emden (Germany) all have coastal areas isolated from community centres in need of regeneration. Here, North SEAfaring is developing ideas not only to preserve original infrastructure but also to promote it as a focal point for visitors to enjoy. Further activities include: restoring the former hydrographic survey boat, Paster Pype, in Oostende, Belgium; reconstructing a shipyard in Emden; and

work is underway to redevelop Lowestoft’s harbour, including the construction of visitor facilities and evaluation of long distance sailing routes.

The Future

The North SEAfaring initiative is still young: considerable expansion is expected. Further developments will include a conference on sustainable maritime development in October 2006 and the fostering of links between partner organisations and local museums, such as those already made with the Rowhedge Museum, Colchester, UK. North SEAfaring will continue its commitment to prevent the loss of the distinct identity of the region’s coastline. The production of the best practice guide will help spread this care for maritime heritage to other waters beyond the North Sea.



Historic vessels bring vitality to waterside communities.

Lead Partner contact details

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List of project partners

- City of Emden
- Province of North Holland
- Stichting Industrieel Engoedbank 'De Hoop'
- Province of Zeeland
- Maritieme Site Oostende

- Autonoom Gemeentbedrijf Haven Oostende
- Excelsior Trust
- Waveney District Council
- Dundee City Council

Financial facts

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The Creative Rehabilitation, Protection and Development of Cultural and Natural Landscapes and Townscapes through Integrated Spatial Planning with a Focus on Seafaring Heritage