

North Sea Project Portfolio



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I would like to welcome you to the INTERREG IIB North Sea Project Portfolio – the first publication that brings together all 54 of our approved projects and presents their achievements to date and their plans and hopes for the future. In the following pages you will find our projects introduced under six themes though we are aware that we do them an injustice by suggesting they only work with one of these themes!

We have gathered our projects into a portfolio: A collection that would be incomplete if any of them were missing. Reading through the following pages we hope you will be able to see how each project complements the others. Small steps in themselves, each project provides a vital contribution to an effort that has put the North Sea Programme at the forefront of developing integrated economic, environmental and social actions. Innovation and relevance remain our guiding principles.

The goals of the North Sea Programme and its projects are as varied and interesting as the region: A region that includes extremes from the most remote islands to some of Europe's fastest developing cities. One of the great strengths of the INTERREG programmes is that they allow us to see beyond such obvious differences to the underlying challenges and opportunities that unite our region. They allow partners to cooperate as equals in the development of the region and recognise that many of the problems we face can only be addressed effectively through joint action. INTERREG provides an effective framework for such action and our projects are a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of this approach. The Project Portfolio, however, only has space for a brief summary of our projects. Those who want to know more should visit the programme's website (www.interregnorthsea.org) where they will find much more information and contact details for every project.

We have also tried to cut through the jungle of EU jargon and professional terminology that surrounds a programme such as ours! In the next pages you will therefore find a short guide to the essential concepts that offer our region a future of continued economic growth while protecting our environment and the communities in which we live.

As a programme we are proud of our projects and the innovative solutions they are finding to problems that concern us all. I hope that you will enjoy reading about the work they are doing for our region. I hope also that you will be inspired to spread the word about their results and support them in future so that every part of the region can benefit.



Lorraine George
Head of Programme Secretariat
Interreg IIB North Sea Region Programme

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North Sea Project Portfolio

Spatial development

Spatial: To do with space, in this case the North Sea space (= all parts, natural and manmade, of the North Sea and surrounding regions).

Development: Growth or advancement. Therefore, **Spatial Development**, the advancement of all parts of the North Sea territory.

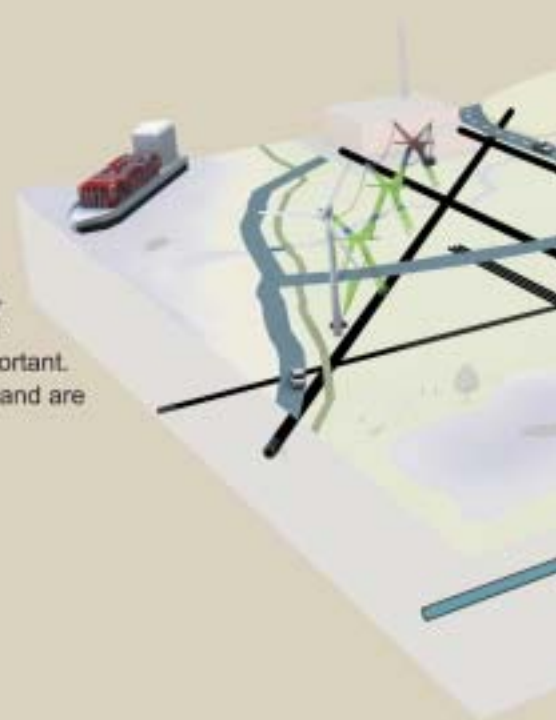


Land use

The ways that people make use of land for living, working and leisure. Changes here can be very rapid and can put considerable pressure on infrastructure and the natural environment.

Infrastructure

The basic structural foundations of a society. Some infrastructure elements such as roads, railways and bridges are obvious and visible. Others such as sewers, power cables and gas pipes are just as important but are often hidden. In the information age, telecommunications and computer networks have also become very important. Changes in infrastructure tend to be expensive and are therefore often gradual.



Natural Environment

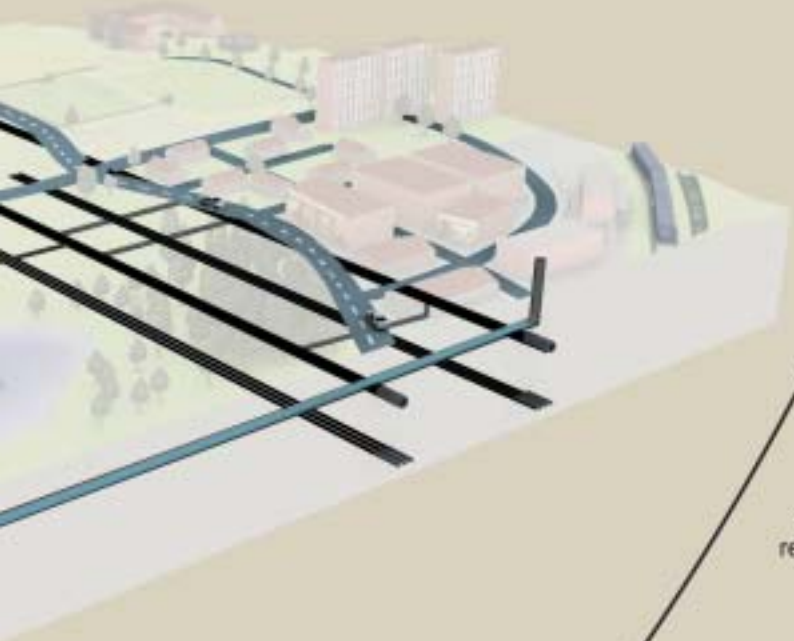
The hills, forests, rivers, lakes and other natural features of the region including very importantly the North Sea itself. People have been changing the environment of the North Sea Region for thousands of years and the landscape they have formed is an important part of the region's cultural heritage. Changes in the natural environment tend to take time. If something goes wrong, it also takes a long time to put it right again.





An integrated approach

Spatial development recognises that the natural environment, infrastructure and land use work together and are indeed related parts of the same system. Changes on one level will have an impact on the other two. The spatial development approach requires that developers and decision-makers take an integrated view and consider the consequences of their decisions on all three levels. They also need to be aware of the wider context of what they do and consider how this could influence neighbouring regions, seas, countries and islands.

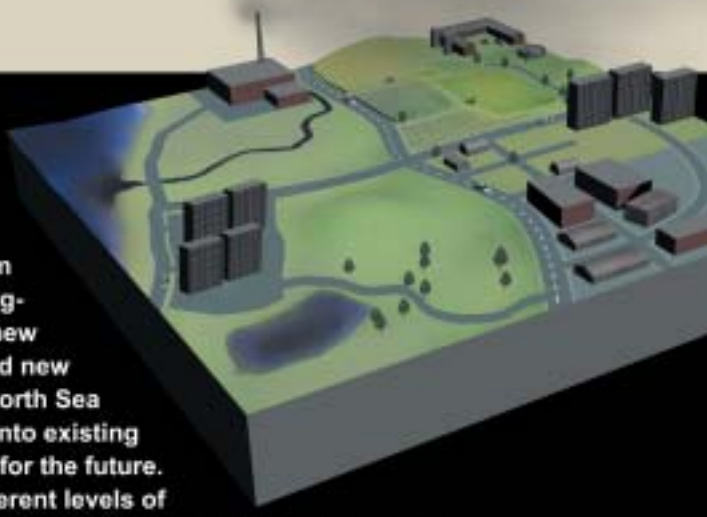


A new understanding

The idea of spatial development and the integrated approach are quite new. For thousands of years the development of the North Sea Region was normally decided by accident and convenience. Later development was better planned but was generally limited to answering the needs of only one sector of society such as businesses, farmers or car drivers and this often had negative effects on others. Nowadays, spatial development is gaining wider acceptance but there is more to be learnt about the complex inter-relationships that exist between the natural environment, infrastructure and land use. The North Sea Programme is at the forefront of efforts to enhance knowledge about these relationships and the most effective action to take.

When things go wrong

Policies based on short-term gains can have disastrous long-term consequences. New jobs, new housing, new transport options and new technologies are priorities in every North Sea country but they need to be integrated into existing structures so as not to destroy the region for the future. Decisions that fail to take account of the different levels of the North Sea space can start a spiral of economic, social and environmental decline.



INTERREG

INTER: Between. **REG:** Short for regions. Therefore, **INTERREG,** cooperation between regions. Cooperation without frontiers.

1: A Problem

A region identifies a problem with chemical contamination of their North Sea coast. This is a threat not just to human health but also to the environment and the region's vital fishing industry.

2: A Possible Answer

Another region has experience of tackling this problem and has ideas for new solutions that might be more effective. The regions establish contact.



3: Exchanging Ideas

Partners gain a detailed understanding of each other's situation, exchange ideas and develop joint plans for a cleaner North Sea based on a review of existing knowledge and their collective expertise. Pollution knows no borders and the problem can only be solved through the joint action of all of the regions concerned. The partnership grows...

4: The Partnership

With the assistance of the North Sea Programme, the partners contact other regions facing similar difficulties – and all with different ideas on how best to deal with them. After being approved by the North Sea Programme, the project starts work. Regular contact allows all partners to monitor progress and decide jointly on any adjustments needed to ensure the success of the project.

5: The Advantages of Cooperation

The project allows partners to pool resources and get European funds to cover half their costs. They use this money to experiment with innovative solutions and improve on the responses currently available. Joint action allows them to test several different approaches simultaneously (something they could never afford if working alone) and gives them access to a much larger pool of expertise.

6: Working Together

Working with different levels of government means that the partnership has access to the right people for the right job whether it is introducing a change in national legislation or informing local communities. Involving many different sectors in the project means that people are much more likely to accept and use the project's results.

The partnership

Transnational cooperation

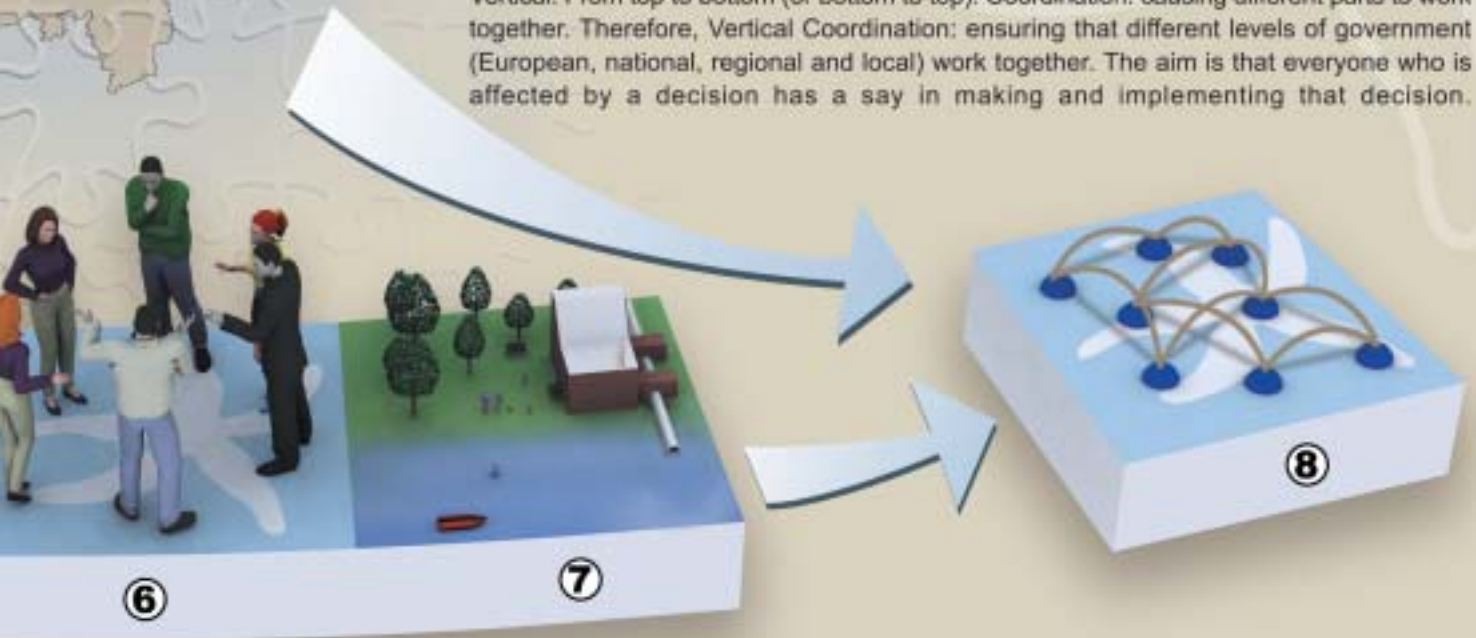
If international cooperation is cooperation on the national level between two or more countries, then transnational cooperation is cooperation between different regions in two or more countries e.g. North Jutland in Denmark and Friesland in The Netherlands. Regions have an in-depth knowledge of the opportunities and challenges that they face, which is often not available to national governments. The region can therefore be the best level for exchanging knowledge and experience on practical issues.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Modern societies are made up of many different sectors. The public and private sectors are an obvious example but there are many others, which are mirrored in the divisions between different departments such as transport, health, housing etc. in administrations. Unilateral action in one sector can, however, create problems for the other sectors, while cooperation can produce unexpected benefits.

Vertical Coordination

Vertical: From top to bottom (or bottom to top). Coordination: causing different parts to work together. Therefore, Vertical Coordination: ensuring that different levels of government (European, national, regional and local) work together. The aim is that everyone who is affected by a decision has a say in making and implementing that decision.



7: The Achievement

The North Sea Programme works with some of the most serious challenges facing the region and solving these problems is a long-term process. Projects solve some problems. Others show the way for the future.

8: Networks

Perhaps as important as the results of any one project, is the way that they are achieved. When the project is over, the networks established remain and give every participating region direct access to the knowledge and experiences of up to seven different countries. Ever greater numbers of people and organisations are discovering the advantages of transnational cooperation and getting involved.

The INTERREG North Sea Programme:

In the past, national borders normally set the limits in which action could be taken. But pollution and economic troubles, trends in society and threats to our future do not respect such borders. If we are to improve the region that we share, we must take action together. This is now possible after the seven countries around the North Sea came together with the European Commission to set up the North Sea Programme and provide the funding for effective cooperation.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development means fulfilling present needs without jeopardising the opportunities of future generations. Sustainability is not just about the environment: it is about balancing environmental, economic and social needs and finding solutions that integrate these needs.

For North Sea projects this means that the social and economic objectives for the development of an area must be measured against the environmental and ecological value of that area. And vice versa. Here are some examples of how North Sea projects integrate environmental, social and economic goals to achieve the balanced and sustainable development of their regions.



Social Issues

Sustain: To keep something in existence, to maintain it.
Development: Growth or advancement. Therefore,
Sustainable Development, allowing the region to grow while at the same time maintaining it for the future.

Economic Issues



Environmental Issues



Community awareness of flood dangers and ways of living with flood risks.



Flows

How to live with water and handle flooding

Climate change impacts on the environment and how we can find a way of living with these changes are the heart of the project.

Better decisions on where to site new buildings in flood prone areas and improved techniques for protecting existing homes and businesses.

People know the real dangers and know how to respond to these.

COMRISK

Reducing the risk of storm floods in coastal lowlands

New models and methods deliver a good level of health and social services, and improve quality of life.

Techniques for better adapting coastal defences to the surrounding environment.

Better risk management strategies make regions more attractive for investment as companies are assured of low or at least reduced flood risks.

NS Rural

Developing rural areas and preventing out-migration

Increased use of public transport in rural areas reduces negative environmental impacts and improves accessibility.

Existing economic development potential is exploited through awareness raising, marketing and branding of rural products.

The vitality and safety of town centres is increased by reducing traffic flows on main roads.

Shared Space

Reconciling people, places and transport

Road transport ceases to dominate our urban environment and existing roads are used more efficiently.

Rethinking road use saves the taxpayer money.

Plants are run in local communities with the backing of local farmers and SMEs.

ProBioEnergy

Supporting increased use of bio-energy

Local bio-energy plants offer sustainable energy production and reduce dependency on energy imports.

Generating bio-energy locally provides new markets for forestry and agricultural products, giving farmers and SMEs new development opportunities.

Information campaigns increase public awareness, especially among young people, and develop a sense of collective responsibility for how to make waste work.

Making Waste Work

Encouraging more sustainable waste management

Organic waste is recycled in composting schemes and harmful waste types are identified and removed from the standard collection system for special treatment.

Locally recycled materials are used by local businesses, reducing the need for transport and generating local economic opportunities.

Neither urban nor rural, urban areas sometimes suffer from the problems typical of both areas. Better understanding will lead to e.g. improved social services.

URBAL

Improved management of urban-rural spaces

Jobs sustain communities. Heritage based tourism strengthens regional identity.

CO2

Cycling on the North Sea cycle route

Activities to prevent urban sprawl and to preserve green and recreational areas.

Trade between urban and rural areas will be encouraged to the benefit of the whole urban territory.

The North Sea coast and its natural environment are made easily accessible for tourism and recreation in an environmentally friendly way.

A high quality tourism product that will attract visitors and investment to all regions around the North Sea.

North Sea Rural

Many rural areas at present find themselves in a difficult situation: they do not have sufficient funds to ensure the same level of services as is found in cities and this can cause people to leave - further reducing the funds available. North Sea Rural is an attempt to reverse this process and stimulate positive development.

Social and health services, transport and economic development have been identified as three key factors influencing out-migration. It has been realised that these factors are closely interrelated and that positive or negative developments on one issue are generally mirrored in the others. The project reconsiders current solutions in order to discover innovative ways of providing quality services within the limits of the resources available. Improved coordination is part of the answer but the project also proactively seeks to inspire completely new activities in rural areas.

Efforts have been made to reverse rural decline for many years but the project brings together some of the best new ideas available to try a new approach.

BESST

It is a common but mistaken belief that economic development is always in conflict with environmental protection. In rural areas economic development is, on the contrary, often dependent on preserving the environment.

The customer base for businesses in rural areas is often made up of visitors to the area who value a distinctive environment and regional identity. Rural tourism must therefore capitalise on these values. BESST plans to initiate a 'virtuous spiral': New tourism offers will attract people to the area. A range of offers makes marketing easier and therefore attracts more people. This promotes the development of regional qualities as a tourism asset. Finally, making clear the link between environmental and economic activity encourages the continuation of the one for the benefit of the other. This then leads to yet more tourism offers attracting even more people and so on.

By providing income opportunities based on environmental protection, the project offers a real chance for sustainable rural economic development.

Canal Link

Once vital transport corridors, canals have long since been overtaken by technology and most have been adapted to recreational use or abandoned. This has left North Sea countries with an extensive network of canals and the project explores new opportunities for using them.

Tourism is an obvious area of potential growth with strong possibilities for developing canal-side attractions that encourage visitors to spend more time (and money) in a given region rather than just passing through. Another alternative is to bring communities and businesses back to the canals by promoting their strong natural and cultural heritage. Finally, the original purpose of the canals should not be forgotten. Some are still important transport routes and canal boats are a sustainable transport alternative which could still be suitable for many cargos.

The region's network of waterways is an under-exploited resource but Canal Link will result in new strategies and provide the investment needed to change this situation.

For more information see www.canal-link.net

North Sea Cycle Route 2

The North Sea Region offers visitors a spectacular range of landscapes and cultural experiences. The only trouble is that until now many of them have been very hard to get to! The North Sea Cycle Route seeks not only to solve this problem but also to make the journey itself into an unforgettable part of the experience.

Established under the last INTERREG programme the route, which goes all around the shores of the North Sea (and is included in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's longest), is now benefiting from a follow-up project to consolidate the work already done. The project will raise awareness of the route and the attractions that can be seen along the way. It will also identify weak sections and implement low cost improvements to remedy problems as well as conducting a study into the real economic benefits of the route.

The route allows the region to compete for visitors with a world-class tourism offer and brings visitors and the money they spend to some of the most remote parts of the North Sea coast.

For more information see www.northsea-cycle.com

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

The North Sea Region contains large rural and peripheral areas and they too need access to development opportunities if we are to maintain balance across the region. Distance from economic centres and main transport routes present particular challenges and these have led to problems such as increasing out-migration and fewer employment options for remaining residents. For these areas it is particularly important to identify new opportunities for development.

This has been recognised by many actors around the North Sea and they are now working together on projects to jointly develop their regions. Reversing existing trends is a major challenge which has defeated many past policies and it is therefore essential to share existing knowledge and develop new ideas. Despite the challenges, rural and peripheral regions do enjoy a number of inherited strengths such as an unspoilt natural environment and strong cultural heritage. These unique qualities represent a potential for development.

Small towns also play a key role in such areas. They act as regional centres of economic and social activity and it is important that this role is preserved. Action is therefore being taken to make peripheral towns more attractive and ensure that they can provide a good level of service. Such initiatives are not only of direct benefit to inhabitants but also make the area as a whole more attractive for people to live and invest in.

**New opportunities for rural and
peripheral areas**

Nave Nortrail

If cycling doesn't appeal, you could try walking! This project is setting up a walking trail around the North Sea. The rationale and the method are similar to that of the cycle route but there is one important difference: the market segment targeted.

We can't change the weather so the North Sea Region is disadvantaged when competing in the market for sun, sea and sand holidays but it can compete on equal terms by developing quality services for more specialist market sectors. Walking holidays are a good example and the existing network of tracks and trails provides a good foundation.

The project will link up existing paths so walkers can follow one uninterrupted route (with ferry links). Walking brings visitors into closer contact with the landscape than any other form of transport and the project is also providing information along the route so they can find out about what they are seeing. There is of course no requirement to do the whole trail so the route also provides a valuable recreational facility for the local communities through which it passes.

MOPARK

National parks were established to protect some of the most valuable natural areas in the North Sea Region. On holiday weekends though, many visitors spend more time waiting in traffic jams than enjoying nature and the parks risk becoming victims of their own success.

MOPARK attempts to balance the demands of visitors and the environment. One answer is to use environment friendly technologies and tackle previously experienced problems related to the cost involved and lack of knowledge. The project will introduce information and communication technology to make people more aware of natural assets. Transport measures include methods for integrating public and private transport by creating transfer points

at railway stations and making park and ride facilities and interchanges more attractive. The project will also consider sustainable vehicles such as electric and solar powered boats and bikes designed for disabled visitors.

These measures will improve visitors' experience of national parks while at the same time preserving the natural qualities that the national parks were established to protect.

For more information see www.mopark.net

Farmers 4 Nature

The countryside of the North Sea region is beautiful and varied. But it is generally not a natural landscape. It has been altered by many years of human activity and its familiar appearance today is a sign of that continuing activity. Farmers are the key players in managing the landscape – a part of their work that is often unrecognised and unpaid.

Reductions in agricultural subsidies over coming years could lead to the abandonment of some farms or the spread of ever more intensive farming and both would have a harmful impact on the countryside. The project plans to offer a third alternative by starting schemes that generate income from protecting the environment. The project encourages farmers to preserve biodiversity and rare species, and maintain and strengthen the unique qualities of the landscape in which they work. Other activities ensure the profitability of this new way of farming by stimulating new markets and encouraging cooperatives so farmers can share costs and labour.

A wide range of pilot actions is proposed and the resulting findings will allow farmers to create a countryside that is both a viable workplace for those who live there and a pleasant destination for visitors.

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

LANCEWADPLAN

The Wadden Sea extends along the coastlines of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Protected as a World Heritage Site, it has a valuable natural environment and unique cultural heritage. For the people who live in the region it is important, however, that its special status does not prevent development and this requires careful integrated planning.

The project builds on the recommendations of an earlier INTERREG project to develop a strategy for the whole region, which will allow it to make use of its landscape and heritage while also preserving these for the future ('protection by use'). The project will look at land use, agriculture, tourism, urban development and the environment to identify potentials and resolve any conflicts of interest that arise. Regular contact with the people of the area will ensure that they have a voice and that project aims are widely understood, while a ministerial conference will secure political backing.

An action plan of steps to preserve the delicate balance between people and nature in the region will be created and could serve as a blueprint for any region working with the integration of conservation and development needs.

NorthSeaFaring

The decline of maritime industries in the North Sea Region has often been remarked but is only a half-truth. The region's harbours are full of small boats and every summer weekend the sea is alive with sails: Water and seafaring continue to draw the people of the North Sea. This shift to leisure sailing has not, however, offset lost fishing and shipbuilding incomes and has not generated alternative uses for many of the region's docks, shipyards and other monuments of maritime heritage.

The project seeks to exploit the undoubted development potentials that exist here. On the one hand, it will protect our maritime heritage. On the other, it will ensure that this heritage has a proper place in planning and that our seafaring past becomes a positive value in maritime regions. The tourism benefits are obvious but steps will also be taken to develop living heritage by ensuring the survival and development of skills and jobs linked to the sea.

It would be a mistake to assume that our links to the sea are only a thing of the past. The project will redefine these links to find the present day potentials of a heritage that is such a strong part of our regional identity.

New opportunities for rural and peripheral areas



FLAWS

Flood plains are the natural solution to flooding, providing areas where excess water can be retained until levels return to normal. They have, however, attracted human settlement for thousands of years and in the North Sea Region are often heavily populated residential and economic centres. They are now at risk because more and worse flooding can be expected as a result of global warming and rising sea levels.

The project looks at ways of ensuring that development on flood plains takes account of their important role and does not interfere with it. Also being studied are the modification of existing buildings to protect them against floods and ways of providing the public with better information about flood risks and the measures that can be taken to minimise them. A final element involves mapping and modelling so planners are better able to predict the behaviour of floodwaters.

The North Sea Region contains many low-lying areas and the measures developed by FLOWS are an essential tool in the fight against an increasingly common threat.

For more information see www.flows.nu


Safety@Sea

When ships go down the results can be disastrous and affected regions pay heavily in clean-up operations and lost income. It is therefore vital that regions have a say in defining and implementing maritime safety policy and the measures they can take to prevent or limit damage if an accident does occur.

Safety@Sea is one part of a multi-programme cooperation that will hopefully cover an area from Russia to Spain. The project and others like it add a regional dimension to maritime safety and coordinated responses to emergency situations. Activities include monitoring existing sea corridors, ports and terminals with a view to suggesting possible route changes and other low cost safety measures. National and regional agencies will also work together to identify acceptable 'safe havens' to which ships can be towed if they are in trouble while another analysis will study the causes of accidents and effective preventative measures. New data sources will ensure that such analyses will be more effective than in the past.

From offshore wind farms to the transportation of radioactive waste, there are many risks in the North Sea. Safety@Sea will show how to manage these risks.

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org



Some regions around the North Sea are at greater risk of natural threats than others because of their location. This is particularly true of areas along rivers and coasts. Many people in such areas have experienced the damage that can be caused to their homes and land by flooding. Individual regions have developed significant knowledge and expertise on how to manage these risks during recent years but all concede that there is still more to be done.

One particular focus is on how to prevent flooding and minimise the damage it causes by removing features that increase flood risk, developing flood control areas where water can be stored when water levels are high and including flood risk information when making spatial plans in order to channel development away from high risk areas. Despite these measures future floods are inevitable but projects also work to ensure that regions are better prepared with improved contingency plans and better systems for monitoring high water and evacuation possibilities.

The North Sea itself is also at risk. Busy shipping lanes cross the region and some of the cargos carried are extremely hazardous. It is important to manage such risks and take sensible precautions so many of the authorities around the North Sea that are responsible for ensuring safe sea transport are now working together to harmonise their strategies. Once again, it is impossible to guarantee that problems will not occur but cooperation provides effective strategies for reducing risks and coping with the aftermath when things do go wrong.

Risk management along rivers and coasts

COMRISK

The coastal lowlands of the North Sea Region are home to some 12 million people all of whom are at risk from flooding. Some can be protected by building new sea defences. For the others, new techniques are urgently required.

COMRISK brings together planners from the five North Sea countries most at risk to assess national and regional policies and strategies and develop new approaches from the best of these. The ideas developed will be tested at three very different but equally threatened pilot locations and a new monitoring system will allow measurements of the effectiveness of the action taken. Another key element of risk management is to minimise the effects of problems once they do occur. The role of the general public is just as important as that played by professionals in this respect and the project therefore also aims to improve understanding of and participation in flood control measures.

The project cannot prevent all flooding but it will contribute to minimising the loss of life and resources in emergency situations.

For more information see www.comrisk.org

FRaME - Flood Risk Management in Estuaries

The estuarine areas at the mouths of the region's rivers face a particularly strong flood risk that will never be entirely eliminated.

The best solution available is to develop ways of managing floodwaters so they can be diverted to areas where they will cause the least damage. Estuaries include many areas such as wetlands, which can store vast quantities of water and are ideal for this purpose. The project works with these Flood Control Areas, identifying suitable areas and ensuring that water flows will be directed towards them when floods hit.

Equally importantly, the project also addresses the use that can be made of such areas when there is no flooding so they provide economic and social benefits rather than just lying empty. Recreation, nature preservation and the harvesting of natural resources are all being studied. Several estuaries have also been identified as Natura 2000 sites of special natural value and the preservation of these sites will be an additional benefit to the measurable decrease in flooding that the project plans to achieve.

For more information see www.frameproject.org

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

COMCOAST

Sea defences are an essential line of protection in the North Sea Region but what are we to do about rising sea levels? The option of protecting ourselves behind ever higher walls is costly and impractical and our coasts would be altered beyond recognition if we tried to establish such a firm divide between land and sea.

COMCOAST is experimenting with an alternative: Coastal defences that allow some water to come over but still provide an effective barrier to flooding. The water would be stored in the often unused areas behind sea defences and could even be beneficial in the creation of new wetland habitats, water storage areas for freshwater flooding and as a barrier preventing salt intrusion into agricultural land. There is, however, one problem. This is a new idea and current coastal defences are quite simply not strong enough to withstand such 'overtopping'. The project will therefore pilot new strengthening techniques so infrastructure can cope with these new demands.

This is a project that prevents floods by working with the sea rather than trying to stand against it: a timely development for tackling the increased risks expected in future.

Escape

In 1953 flooding caused by a storm surge led to devastation in the Netherlands, Belgium and UK and resulted in the loss of 2164 lives. Flood defences have since improved but not to the extent that they would be able to withstand such overwhelming forces.

It is therefore a question of when and not if such a disaster occur again. Despite such dangers, however, many people living in flood prone areas are quite simply unaware of the risks and as such would have very little idea about what to do in a serious flood. It cannot be doubted that this would lead to additional and unnecessary loss of life. The project aims to improve planning so authorities and others can react quickly and effectively, and to raise public awareness so that people know about the essential role they need to play in saving life and limiting the damage caused. An improved system for monitoring high water levels will give greater warning of developing problems while flexible evacuation plans will allow responsible authorities to keep up with the rapidly evolving situation in a disaster.



Risk management along rivers and coasts



Northern Transport-Political Network

Most of the goods transported across Europe move along corridors: main transport routes providing shorter travel times between key locations. The areas along these corridors attract a lot of investment because of their good connections with the rest of Europe and there is a danger that regions which do not have good access to the corridors will fall behind.

Much of Scandinavia finds itself in this position and this project therefore promotes the development of a corridor from southern Norway and western Sweden, through Denmark and northern Germany and onwards to Central Europe. Political backing is one condition for success as is a good understanding of how existing infrastructure and regional transport strategies and plans could be integrated with the corridor. The project works on these issues and is also seeking to integrate sustainable transport solutions with the corridor. The result will be a realistic plan for developing the corridor, which could serve as a template for similar developments in future.

For more information see www.ntn.dk

Shared Space

Our need to travel and the convenience of the car have led to profound changes in our streets, towns and countryside. The car has tended to play the dominant role in this process and this has both eroded the space available for people and fragmented communities. Despite these difficulties road transport remains, of course, an essential part of modern life and this project is not about forcing the car out but rather about rethinking traffic so cars and people can share the space available.

This new approach requires a radical rethink of traffic engineering, safety measures and spatial planning, as road design in the past has generally been based on the belief that cars and people don't mix.

The project therefore calls on experts from a truly comprehensive range of fields from traffic planning and landscape architecture to sociology and cultural history. Roads that are integrated into their surrounding space will improve safety, the quality of landscapes and the built environment, pedestrian movement and the space available for social activities. The range of participants could make this difficult vision possible.

REMARCC

A key advantage of moving freight by road is the convenience of door-to-door service but the environmental cost paid for this convenience is high. Moving goods by sea is more sustainable and also offers cost savings. If sea transport is to increase its market share, however, it must be as convenient as road transport, flexible, competitively priced and effectively marketed.

The regional maritime competence centres being set up by this project should assist in achieving these objectives. The centres promote the integration of shipping services with other sustainable transport modes such as railways so that users are assured of trouble free transport of goods from producer to supplier. The project will also ensure that the necessary skills and infrastructure are in place to provide such services. Finally, targeted marketing will be focused on companies in the region to persuade them to change over to these new services.

Sea transport has to overcome the image of being outdated and unreliable. REMARCC II will mean that it will be able to do this by marketing services that have adapted to modern requirements and service expectations.

For more information see www.remarcc.net

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

Good transport within and between regions is essential for the development of the North Sea Region, connecting us with each other and with the rest of Europe. Road transport has, however, become dominant in the North Sea Region as elsewhere. In addition to obvious concerns about traffic safety and pollution, road transport also creates noise, disturbs social activity and is often inefficient in terms of fuel use (to mention but a few of the associated problems). In many cases better alternatives exist and the North Sea Programme funds projects promoting these and the more efficient use of road transport.

Transport routes run across administrative and national borders and cannot be developed effectively if different administrations act independently to develop their parts of a route. Rather, the routes must be seen as unified systems and services must be developed according to this vision. In the North Sea Region a number of different types of route require particular attention. Firstly, sea transport is already important but there is still considerable potential for increasing the share of goods and people carried by ship. Then there is a need to better integrate different forms of transport service (rail, sea, road and others) if sustainable modes of transport are to win a bigger market share. This intermodal transport, which allows goods and passengers to move easily between different services to reach their final destination requires excellent coordination if it is to work and detailed but easily accessible information if it is to attract passengers. Finally, the remote parts of the North Sea Region depend on good air services and much can be done to ensure that services are reliable and affordable.

The aim is a North Sea Region where transport is both convenient and sustainable.

Improving transport

Northern Maritime Corridor

For this project the programme has teamed up with the Northern Periphery Region to cover an area running from northern Russia to the major ports of the North Sea Region. Ever greater volumes of shipping are expected in coming years on the routes running from Russia along the Norwegian coast and down into the rest of Europe and no one country working alone can guarantee the safety and development of this route.

The opening up of the oil fields in the Barents Sea will lead to much more tanker traffic and with such potentially hazardous cargo action is needed to manage the associated risks. Increased shipping, however, also represents an opportunity for ports in the region. As use of the sea corridor develops, it will also open up for transport of other goods. The project is therefore helping ports to organise into clusters so they can compete together to promote and secure contracts for goods shipment within the region. Seafood is one potential growth market and a regular service for shipping paper has already been established.

For more information see www.northern.maritime.corridor.no

HiTrans

Public transport is the best solution for our towns and cities, reducing pollution and traffic congestion and offering the chance for people to take back some of the space that has been taken over by cars in recent years. The success of public transport schemes depends, however, on their ability to deliver reliable, reasonably priced services that meet travellers' needs.

HiTrans will support the development of new public transport schemes by producing a best practice guide based on services that have proved successful in the past. The project will also create a

set of standards that transport authorities can use to assess new proposals. The project gives partners an important opportunity to reassess their conventional public transport solutions in the light of each other's different experiences.

The future of public transport requires services that develop in line with evolving user needs. HiTrans will provide the tools that make sure that the right decisions are taken in this process.

For more information see www.hitrans.org

Target

Getting us out of our cars once in a while would improve our environment, our quality of life and even our health. Before most of us will do this, however, we need knowledge of and confidence in the alternatives as well as an occasional reminder that the car is not the only answer.

Target works with an extensive package of mobility management activities aiming to promote the use of alternative, more sustainable forms of transport. For example, travel to work schemes promote the use of car pools while school children are encouraged to use public transport (where quality and safety are also being improved). Popular visitor destinations and attractions are being encouraged to provide detailed public transport information and are also being integrated into more flexible and improved services.

These individual measures are small steps in a wide campaign to raise the profile and image of car alternatives. The goal is to change people's perception of how best to travel so they make lasting changes in the way they travel.

For more information see www.eu-target.net

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

Seaplane

The peripheral regions around the North Sea depend on the airports that make them accessible and therefore allow them to participate in the European economy. Traffic volumes through these small regional airports are limited and the project seeks to strengthen their role so the service they provide can be secured for the future.

Building on a successful Baltic Sea project, Seaplane will analyse passenger transport needs in order to propose new services and routes to both international airports and other regional airports within the network. Safety measures at airports will also be considered as will the efficiency of airport operations and links between airports and the areas they serve with improved public transport services.

Given the importance of the role these airports play, it is essential that they are supported by policies at all levels. The project will also therefore prepare a policy paper for relevant EU institutions to ensure that the needs of regional airports are considered in future development strategies for the North Sea Region.

For more information see www.seaplane-project.net

SustAccess

The transport network allows travel to and from even the remotest parts of the North Sea Region and gateway cities are key points in this network. They are the towns through which most passengers and goods enter different parts of the region and the starting point for services that take them to the smaller towns and villages in the surrounding area. In the North Sea Region, however, parts of this network are weak and some rural and peripheral areas are therefore difficult to reach and seriously disadvantaged.

The project works to strengthen the links and key points in the network. Measures for passengers include improving access to public transport services and interchanges and increasing the speed and efficiency of changes between different services. For goods transport, sustainable routes will be developed and promoted between the key points in the network and out into surrounding areas. Through a combination of analysis and practical action to remedy weaknesses in the existing system the project will increase the attractiveness of sustainable transport options for all users.



BurVal

Buried valleys are a common feature of the North Sea Region. Although invisible to the non-expert they serve as vital fresh water reservoirs and are therefore a classic example of the need for good information and professional input in planning processes if problems are to be avoided.

The water systems of which such valleys form a part are insufficiently understood at present. Water flows along buried valleys just as it does in normal valleys and this represents a risk of contamination that has rarely been considered in the past but the unique properties of buried valleys need to be further studied to prevent such risks. The project aims to address the knowledge gap that exists about buried valleys by carrying out six pilot projects examining their structure and hydrological properties.

By developing the necessary knowledge and methods for studying buried valleys the project will ensure that they are considered in future development strategies and will thus prevent or remedy contamination of an important resource.

POWER

The countries of the North Sea Region are among the European and indeed world leaders in the development and implementation of wind energy projects. The environmental benefits of wind energy are beyond doubt but there is often resistance to extensive new land sites. The obvious response is to turn to the sea but here too there are barriers to be overcome.

POWER offers support and ideas for any region wanting to develop offshore wind energy. The project looks at decision support for making the right wind energy choices, business structures and supply chains for implementing them and training for those who will work with wind farms. Also considered are the economic potentials for coastal areas (many of which have high unemployment levels) and the concerns of groups like fishermen and tourism organisations.

Offshore wind energy is a real alternative to fossil fuels but large-scale development will be required to secure a significant share of energy production. The project gives regions the expertise to move ahead and allows them to develop a common approach for addressing the impacts of wind farms on the waters that they share.

TEN 3

The expansion of human activity in the North Sea Region has put many wildlife species on the endangered list. Habitats have shrunk and in many places the number of animals left is too small to provide a viable breeding population. If we are to prevent the disappearance of these species, we must take action now, as losing these animals, fish and plants would be a serious and permanent loss.

Securing existing habitats is one step but is not enough. Animals move and this ensures that wild populations are provided with new genetic stock. Over recent years, however, the land routes they have always used have been blocked by motorways, railways and towns, while locks and dams have closed the waterways. TEN 3 works to re-open these essential corridors so that wild populations can survive and even repopulate the North Sea Region. Links between Natura 2000 sites of special natural value are a particular but not exclusive focus. The eventual aim is to establish a network of corridors so that wildlife can once again move freely across the whole of Europe.

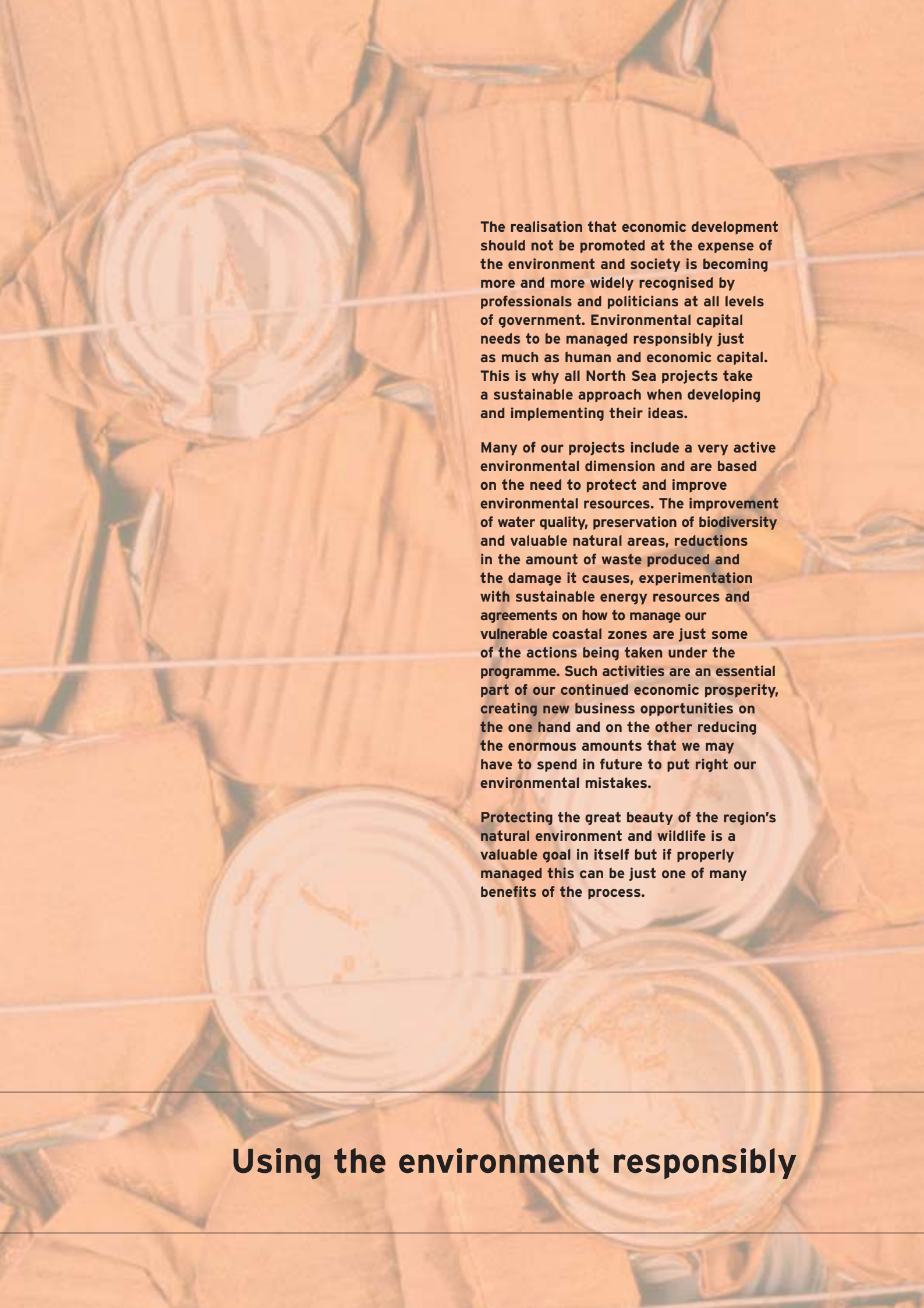
Save the North Sea

The North Sea is many things to many people: the place where they work, the source of their livelihoods, a recreational area... and a rubbish dump.

This project sets out to document the true extent of the litter problem, trace the worst offenders and conduct campaigns to change their behaviour and clean up the North Sea. Bird stomachs may sound like an unpromising start but the rubbish that dead birds have eaten has proved to be an effective indicator of the amount of rubbish floating, often invisible to the human eye, in the North Sea. The project has also sent fishermen out fishing for litter and an analysis of their catch has allowed researchers to estimate how much of the litter comes from the oil industry, fishing, shipping or other sources. Campaigns focus on the long-term consequences that litter will have for those who depend on the North Sea while other initiatives such as the development of a machine for recycling fishing equipment aim to provide people with an alternative to dumping.

For more information see www.savethenorthsea.com

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org



The realisation that economic development should not be promoted at the expense of the environment and society is becoming more and more widely recognised by professionals and politicians at all levels of government. Environmental capital needs to be managed responsibly just as much as human and economic capital. This is why all North Sea projects take a sustainable approach when developing and implementing their ideas.

Many of our projects include a very active environmental dimension and are based on the need to protect and improve environmental resources. The improvement of water quality, preservation of biodiversity and valuable natural areas, reductions in the amount of waste produced and the damage it causes, experimentation with sustainable energy resources and agreements on how to manage our vulnerable coastal zones are just some of the actions being taken under the programme. Such activities are an essential part of our continued economic prosperity, creating new business opportunities on the one hand and on the other reducing the enormous amounts that we may have to spend in future to put right our environmental mistakes.

Protecting the great beauty of the region's natural environment and wildlife is a valuable goal in itself but if properly managed this can be just one of many benefits of the process.

Using the environment responsibly

Fisheries Partnership

Have the cod gone or just moved to deeper water? The controversies surrounding remaining fish stocks, fish quotas and the perilous state of the North Sea fishing industry have been much in the news lately. Nobody wants to see a North Sea without fish and fishing but there is profound disagreement about how close we are to that scenario and the measures that need to be taken to prevent it.

In the past, quotas have tended to be set according to the estimates of experts but every time a new quota is introduced fishermen point to their continuing good catches as evidence that such estimates are alarmist. The Fisheries Partnership brings the two sides together to discuss the evidence behind their claims and try to achieve consensus about the true state of fish stocks in the North Sea. Fishery managers, conservation groups, fish processors and merchants are also deeply affected and have therefore been involved.

The aim is sustainable management of the North Sea in which both fish and fishing will have a continued role.

For more information see www.northsea.org/fisheriespartnership

Water4All

We cannot survive without clean water but we understand surprisingly little about how different pollutants enter our water supply. This is largely because of the complexity of water systems and the ways water moves through different ground types and landscapes. The effects on water supplies of releasing contaminated water in different areas may range from the negligible to the catastrophic and we need to understand these processes better if we are to ensure clean water supplies.

The project is therefore setting up pilots in widely differing locations and studying the movement of different pollutants through the water system and into the water supply. Combined with research this will provide insights into the relationship between different pollutants and ground types and will ensure that future actions have a minimal impact on water systems.

We tend to take the water that comes out of our taps for granted and by working to secure the supply, Water4all will help to ensure that this essential continues to be a normal part of our everyday lives.

For more information see www.water4all.com

NOLIMP

The Water Framework Directive has secured a place for water on the agendas of national, regional and local administrations throughout Europe. The directive sets ambitious targets for water quality to be met by 2015 but the knowledge does not always exist on how these targets should be achieved.

NOLIMP investigates the implementation measures currently available and pilots innovative new techniques, providing a framework for participating regions to experiment with different measures and arrive at an understanding of what works best. The key activities are pilot schemes running in five countries to improve water quality, reduce emissions of pollutants and increase biodiversity. The project also considers water management and procedures and will assess how much room for improvement there is in the basic ways we approach water.

Much is already being done to meet the requirements of the directive but the final results will generally need to be achieved through changes made on the regional and local level. NOLIMP will provide a toolbox to help local and regional administrations do this and meet the targets.

For more information see www.nolimp.org

Forum Skagerrak

Competition between different regions was often the way of the past but when regions are united in depending on a common resource, cooperation is a far more effective solution. Skagerrak – the waters between Denmark, Sweden and Norway – is just such a resource. The project focuses on improving the marine and coastal zone environment of this part of the North Sea and combines this geographical approach with a wide thematic approach addressing all of the different activities that affect Skagerrak's marine environment.

Immediate problems to be tackled include the reduction of eutrophication (excessive water nutrient levels leading to algal blooms and oxygen depletion), handling hazardous substances, developing more sustainable fish and shellfish farming and testing new waste reception technologies for ports. Knowledge about these activities and about the unique value of the Skagerrak and its coastal zones will also be spread to both professionals and the public. The project will end in the establishment of a permanent Forum Skagerrak organisation to safeguard the long-term sustainable management of this part of the North Sea.

For more information see www.forumskagerrak.com

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

NORIS

Every country in the North Sea Region has plenty of experience with rain! Nowadays when it falls on our towns and cities it is immediately channelled away - out of sight and out of mind.

It is increasingly recognised, however, that this is not a good solution. It prevents rainwater from entering the natural water system and instead mixes it with dirty water in the sewer system, greatly increasing the amount of water that needs to be treated and leading to localised flooding when the sewer system is overloaded. It would be much better to separate rainwater but how is this to be achieved when our infrastructure is designed to take this water into the sewers?

The project works with a combination of measures that may provide an answer. Some measures aim at 'disconnecting' rainwater from sewer systems while others will use 'no-dig' techniques to create sewer systems with separate pipes for rainwater. The new techniques developed are expected to have a strong impact on water quality, flooding, the environment and biodiversity. These local changes will be carefully monitored and will form the basis for a comprehensive set of practical recommendations that can be used anywhere in the region.

Making Waste Work

All of us produce enormous amounts of waste every year and the amount continues to grow. The waste of resources that this implies is terrible but the problems do not end there, as conventional ways of disposing of rubbish are potentially dangerous for the environment and human health. Recycling schemes exist but it is clear that much more needs to be done if we are to tackle the problem.

The project promotes waste management to reduce the amount of rubbish we produce and deal more effectively with unavoidable waste. Measures include removing organic material and difficult waste from regular waste collection systems so that it can be handled more appropriately, exploring the business opportunities created by waste, and motivating communities to take responsibility for their waste. Each partner will use a combination of presenting the true extent of the problem and stressing the benefits of taking action, while piloting innovative approaches so that more sustainable waste options are readily available in participating regions.

Success will require changes to deep-rooted habits and the project is an effective framework for providing the prolonged and focused effort needed.

For more information see <http://waste.tec-hh.net/uk/>

ProBioEnergy

The technology for bio-energy plants already exists and while large-scale implementation will require improvements to this technology and a more secure fuel supply, there is little to prevent the start up of small bio-energy plants. Rural areas are ideal locations as they offer a ready supply of bio-fuels and small energy markets whose needs can be met by this kind of plant. What is lacking is awareness that this type of opportunity exists.

The project therefore aims to raise awareness among key groups (especially farmers and SMEs) and thereby create regional networks of bio-energy experts who can then persuade others to try this new technology. They will be assisted by a number of subsidiary actions such as the establishment of a virtual marketplace for bio-energy trading which will help to ensure that plants can operate effectively once established.

Such regional action represents the best opportunity for initiating widespread implementation of bio-energy but for regional actors the investment and hence the risk is large. Transnational cooperation brings together expertise from across the region to give this important experiment the best chance of success.

Wadden Sea Forum

Policies developed without the backing of those who will be affected by them can never be effectively implemented. This is particularly true when long-term goals such as protection of the environment seem to be in conflict with immediate needs for jobs and development. Such needs can, however, be balanced by establishing dialogue to define policies that satisfy demands without compromising fundamental goals. The forum is a platform for stakeholders around the Wadden Sea with participants from Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. Its objective is to support long-term sustainable development by developing scenarios and strategies that enjoy the backing of both user groups and local and regional governmental organisations.

The issues to be covered include energy, agriculture, fishing, industry, harbours and how the countries around the Wadden Sea can work together to make progress in each area without having a negative impact on their own environment or that of their neighbours. These proposals and scenarios will be submitted at a ministerial level Wadden Sea Conference in 2005. They will be a valuable input for future policies and will provide a unifying vision to guide different sectoral policies.

For more information see www.waddensea-forum.org



Using the environment responsibly



ICTs for SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises play a vital role in North Sea Region economies particularly in rural and peripheral regions where they are often the main employers. When faced, however, with new information and communication technologies they are at a disadvantage because they do not have access to expertise and often cannot afford the expensive and sometimes risky investments required.

The project tries to improve this situation by providing advice on the real potentials of technology for individual companies. Such advisory services have previously been concentrated in urban areas but the project will provide equal access for rural SMEs, whose take-up of new technologies has been slowest in the past. The potential for growth is substantial, particularly in the business-to-business sector, and the project will put special focus on this to ensure that companies have the equipment, confidence and skills needed to participate fully. Eventually guidelines will be produced on how different types of company across the whole North Sea Region can best use ICTs.

For more information see <http://ictsmes.rkk.no>


North Sea Bio-Energy

Bio-energy offers the prospect that we might one day be able to meet many of our energy needs with renewable resources produced in the North Sea Region. Many of the technologies required for this are, however, still new and barriers in implementation have meant that they have not always been economically viable when tested.

The project seeks to remove these barriers and ensure both an adequate supply of bio-fuels and a market for the energy produced. New and existing fuels will be studied ranging from straw to wood pellets to pig manure. Growing energy crops offers farmers new income opportunities and additional project work will ensure that these are economically viable. The project will also find out how waste from these energy production processes can be used as fertiliser – thus completing the sustainable cycle.

The project takes an integrated approach that considers all of the components necessary for workable bio-energy schemes. It offers the chance therefore not just of achieving European targets but also of securing a sustainable energy supply for the region.

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org



The European Union's Lisbon strategy clearly recognises the role of innovation and increased competitiveness in Europe's future. The economies of the North Sea are increasingly knowledge-based and we are among the world leaders in the use of new information and communication technologies. Maintaining this advantage will, however, require sustained research and development and innovation support.

Information and communication technologies offer real opportunities for all parts of the North Sea Region but use of such technologies tends to be concentrated in urban regions. The challenge now is to continue the spread into sectors and regions that have been slow to take-up these new technologies. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are one group that could draw particular benefits but the collapse of the IT bubble has made many companies suspicious of the claims made on behalf of new technologies. As these companies are key employers in the North Sea Region it is vital that they be given support to explore the opportunities.

Information technologies can also improve democratic processes. By improving the flow of information from administrations to citizens and vice versa, new technologies allow people to contribute to and influence developments. The use of this kind of e-democracy is relatively new and there are many ideas for increasing participation. The multimedia potential of computers is another interesting area, as it makes possible the representation of data in easily accessible forms and thus helps people to gain the background knowledge essential for making informed decisions.

Innovation and new technologies are not limited to computers. Other projects draw, for example, on regional strengths in environmental technology to develop new products and processes. In this section we present projects whose main focus is innovation but it should also be remembered that almost all projects include an element of innovation whether of methods, tools or procedures. The new ideas being generated in the North Sea Region have already attracted attention from Japan, Chile, South Africa and many other countries as well, of course, as the other parts of Europe.

Making use of innovation and knowledge

Green North Sea Docks

The World Wide Fund for Nature has called TBT, 'The most toxic substance ever deliberately put into the sea.' Use of the substance has been much reduced and alternatives are being researched but it is still used in marine paints to prevent barnacle growth on ships. Given the importance of shipping and the severe effect that barnacles have on performance, TBT may not be completely banned in the near future.

In the meantime, the most dangerous concentrations of TBT are found in ports and especially around the docks where such paints are used. The project is therefore researching innovative filtration techniques to remove TBT (and heavy metals) from dock wastewater. At the same time research is also being carried out to study and remedy weaknesses in the real-world applicability of the technology and stakeholder willingness to pay for such improvements (already completed with positive results). Decision-makers will thereby gain a fuller picture of the options and implications when taking action on TBT.

For more information see www.greendocks.de

Sutranet

There exist many promising ideas for increasing the role of sustainable transport but the task is a complex one and new research is constantly suggesting alternative approaches.

The project brings together researchers from across the region to consolidate existing knowledge and develop a region-wide understanding of transport flows. The role of shipping and the development of 'maritime motorways' will receive particular attention as will services for moving goods to and from ports. The potential market for these types of services is large but will not be fully exploited unless they can be proved to be efficient and convenient. The project will therefore also develop the role

of regional transport and logistics centres, which can play a key role in ensuring that these conditions are met. Finally, specialised skills will be required if integrated transport solutions are to work and the project will therefore develop a training programme to address the current skills gap.

The project joins theory and practice and will provide valuable results for the region and other transport projects.

Geoshare

Vast amounts of geographical information exist about the North Sea Region. If this information could be gathered and shared it would be an invaluable resource. Different regions, however, collect different data, use different standards and store data in different formats. As a result it is often impossible for two regions to share their information so decision-makers and the public work from a fragmented picture.

One solution is to produce maps, as they make it possible to present varied data in an easily accessible form. Geoshare develops computer applications for producing such maps from different data. The representation of complex geographical and environmental information is only one possible use. Other options include maps to show employers where best to recruit, interactive maps with information on schools, doctors and other services, holiday maps that let you to plan your route by just moving a mouse... the options are almost endless and easily generated from existing data.

Maps change the way we perceive the world and by greatly adding to the information displayed Geoshare offers us a chance to develop a more nuanced view of the region.

For more information see www.geoshare.net

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

E-Voice

In recent years the democracies of the North Sea Region have seen a decline in numbers of people voting, joining political parties and standing for election. At one stage it was hoped that the internet would change this but experiments in 'e-democracy' have often had only limited success.

The project aims to change this by taking a much more structured approach to using technology for promoting interest in democratic processes. The new media do not work well in isolation and will therefore be combined with old media such as TV and newspapers to create greater interest and awareness. A library of tools will provide all partners with what they need to set up on-line debate, discussion and dialogue. The project will also consider the content of these new forums by offering training on how regional governments can develop information that is easily understood and can address the varying needs of different target groups of citizens.

The initial focus is on regional issues, which clearly affect citizens and which they in turn can clearly influence. By reactivating the link between citizens and politics, however, the project can be expected to have far reaching effects.

LOG-IN

The local level is where all policy levels come together. Hence the local level is where the best possible knowledge and information should be available. Information and communication technologies make this possible but shortages of money and skills often mean that the potentials are under-exploited, particularly in rural areas.

The project is working on a wide range of activities that should eventually be applicable in all parts of the North Sea Region. Connections between different levels of government, between local governments and businesses and between governments and the public are all addressed. The project will therefore assess the real needs of all of these groups and develop databases, tools and applications that answer these needs in a cost effective way. Action will also be taken to ensure that new technologies are fully integrated into current practices and that new services are actually used.

Local governments should play a strong role in local economic development and LOG-IN will give them new ways of doing this.



Liveable City

Many of the cities of the North Sea Region are monuments to hundreds or even thousands of years of history. There is an obvious threat that development could destroy the unique character of these cities but less clear perhaps is the danger of halting development and allowing cities to become museums. The vitality of city centres is the key to their success and a difficult balance must therefore be found between continued vitality and preserving their history.

Liveable City addresses development, management and maintenance to find new ways of ensuring this balance. Attractive public spaces, improved security and innovative facilities and events can all play a role in bringing people to the city centre and keeping them there without having a negative impact on a city's historical value.

The project is thus a very clear example of the sustainable development approach. Economic prosperity, enhancement of the environment and social inclusion develop in parallel and if any one of these areas is neglected, there will be no lasting progress in the others.

For more information see www.liveablecity.dk

B-Sure

Just one small change to a neighbourhood can sometimes provide the trigger that brings investment and redevelopment. These Pin Point Initiatives are obviously attractive to cities and towns where problems can be extensive but funds are often limited. It is a simple idea but like many of the new methods being pioneered in the North Sea Region, there is one problem: we do not know which investments will produce this trigger effect and if we do not develop this knowledge, we will never be able to use the method effectively. Trial and error would be an expensive and inefficient option. B-Sure recognises that working together is a much more effective approach.

The project focuses on waterside areas, as it is here that the development potential is greatest. Pilots will investigate which investments produce the most substantial effects while close cooperation with decision-makers and local inhabitants will secure backing for these measures and raise awareness of the potential of such sites.

Many of the region's towns and cities developed because of their rivers and canals. Now B-Sure offers them a cost-effective chance to counter urban decline by using their water as a catalyst for renewed growth.


SmartLIFE-International

Success can sometimes generate new problems. SmartLIFE brings together three North Sea growth areas where rising population has led to a shortage of affordable housing.

It is essential for the long-term future of these areas that the intense pressure for new housing does not result in quick fixes and that new housing areas are integrated into the natural environment and infrastructure. This can in turn make it difficult to keep pace with demand so the project focuses on providing training, advice and practical technical support for construction professionals and self-builders. This approach not only increases construction capacity but also ensures that builders are trained in the latest methods and can therefore provide quality sustainable housing. The general management of growth areas is also addressed to ensure that new development is integrated into existing structures.

In this way the threat posed by the housing shortfall can be transformed into an opportunity to create new sustainable communities where people are happy to live, work and relax.

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org



In many regions the cities and towns are key centres for development and innovation. Ensuring the development of more competitive cities and towns is then often an important step in strengthening the regions as a whole. The typical challenges facing many urban areas such as lack of housing, social exclusion and a polluted environment are familiar and often deep-rooted. A range of actions are generally required to produce lasting results and cities and towns have much to learn from each other.

A number of town networks have been established between the North Sea countries. They are involved not just in exchanging knowledge and experience but also in deciding practical actions that are then implemented in the partner cities on behalf of the partnership. These pilot actions provide valuable information for future actions and tools and guidelines generated then make this knowledge available throughout the North Sea Region and beyond.

Developing more competitive cities and towns

Water City International

Water can act as a magnet for all kinds of economic and social activity, from canal-side office developments to picnicking sites in a park. Water benefits are, however, dependent on water quality and stagnant or polluted water can just as easily become a serious limiting factor. Additional complications arise from the dynamism of water systems: water is always on the move and problems in one area soon spread to others.

This requires that cities do not look at water problems in isolation but rather as part of a complex system and then develop water plans that take account of the whole system. The project unites experienced cities with others that are new to integrated water planning. The plans they develop help cities to understand the wider changes needed to address particular problems. Practical actions such as the dredging of polluted canal beds, improving water circulation and technological innovations such as methods to separate water flows all play a role. These environmental improvements allow cities to exploit water as a valuable economic and social resource.

For more information see www.watercity.org

Seaport

The maritime industries that used to sustain the small ports in the region have been in decline for many years. Goods flows are increasingly concentrated on a few major ports and it is difficult for smaller ports to attract sufficient business. In many cases this has led to economic and social decline and there is an urgent need to stimulate new economic activity.

The project looks at the economic development options open to ports and the changes required to ensure the success of such initiatives. Many factors need to be taken into account including not least location, transport options, the provision of business premises and promotion of the ports as attractive locations for investment. Partners will also work on ways of maximising existing resources by exploiting the potential of waterfront locations, the appeal of a strong maritime heritage and the historical buildings connected with this heritage. The network encourages participation by other ports facing similar challenges and is working on guidelines applicable to the regeneration of any small port in the region.

Waterfront Communities

Gateway cities are the access points for visitors and goods entering a region. They have considerable development potential but must offer attractive services and facilities if this potential is to be exploited.

All too often, however, the decline of traditional maritime industries has created rundown areas along the very waterfronts that first greet a visitor's eye. These areas are prime redevelopment sites but this requires major investment. The project brings together nine cities to develop innovative methods that will avoid costly mistakes and exploit waterfront potential to the full.

The project is a good example of being able to spread risk across a partnership: not all of the methods tested will be equally effective but all of the partners will eventually have access to those that have been proven to work. The nine partner cities are therefore receiving funding to pilot these new ideas on behalf of the whole North Sea Region and other cities will subsequently be able to make use of the tried and tested methods available in a best practice toolkit

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

URBAL

The division between town and country has long been recognised but increasingly there is a third and expanding zone where urban and rural areas merge together: the urban space. Existing as it does on a boundary, urban space has been subject to both urban and rural policies and is frequently split between different administrations.

The project aims to raise understanding and awareness of urban space as a separate entity that requires its own set of policies and the cooperation of different administrations and sectors if it is to be managed effectively. Particular focus will be put on healthcare, economic development opportunities and managing urban expansion to prevent the unnecessary destruction of green areas.

Cooperation and an understanding of the varying situation of urban areas in different countries and regions are essential if a set of generally applicable policies is to be developed. The project's results will be presented to European policy makers and will be a key contribution to the debate on the future management of urban zones.

VISP

As big cities continue to grow, smaller towns are increasingly absorbed or become dormitory suburbs for their larger neighbours. Services, business and entertainment are often concentrated in the large city, attracting high skilled professionals and leading to imbalances of population and income.

These towns therefore need to establish strong independent identities, improve their competitiveness (many have experienced the decline of major economic activities in recent years) and ensure good transport connections if they are to enjoy the same development opportunities. Transnational cooperation offers the best chance to

gather the expertise that will be required to address this complex pattern of major challenges. One key will be to ensure that such issues are considered in future planning but a wide range of practical actions will also be implemented and tested.

In this way, smaller towns will be able to develop effective strategies for offsetting the disadvantage of having such powerful neighbours.

Town-Net

In many cases the role of small towns is under threat and they need to find strategies for attracting new opportunities and maintaining their existing position and population. Cooperation in town networks has proved to be an effective way of sharing successful strategies but Town-Net is now taking this cooperation further by exploring how towns can actively work together on common opportunities and challenges.

As well as economic development and trade links the towns involved are looking at, amongst other things, providing better sustainable transport solutions, improving links to surrounding rural areas and enhancing their environment by establishing 'green-blue' (nature and water) belts around the towns. Cooperation will make them more competitive and more attractive to live in. Each town also needs to promote these achievements to potential residents, investors and visitors and the partnership offers the chance to market all of the participating towns across the whole North Sea Region.



**Developing more
competitive cities and towns**

Revitalisation of Harbour Towns

Image problems can be every bit as important as economic, environmental and social problems, and can be a key limiting factor in development. This was one of the key conclusions of a study conducted under the last INTERREG programme and this project is exploring what can be done to solve the problem.

The partners are small harbour towns but they have discovered that the waterfront locations they can offer do not always provide the image boost expected. In some cases the problem is that work needs to be done to make the waterfront more attractive but just as frequently the problem is that connections to the rest of the town are weak. Waterfront areas need to be integrated with other parts of the town if they are not to be isolated and underused. The project involves the people and businesses that use the waterfront so the solutions adopted are shaped to their needs.

The result will be renewed activity and the chance to reverse the image of waterfront developments as deserted and disconnected from life in the rest of the town.

Urban Water Cycle

Fountains, shady pools and riverside cafes. Blocked drains, flooded cellars and dirty canals. Water has enormous positive and negative potential in our towns and cities, and urban water systems need to be carefully managed to maximise the benefits and minimise the problems.

It is sometimes easy to forget that the different countries and even different regions around the North Sea have very different ways of doing this, which vary considerably in effectiveness. The project is about 'learning through doing' and learning from the experiences of the partner regions. Pilot schemes work with issues from innovative filtration technologies for storm water and treated

water to the establishment of self-supporting water cycles and using water to improve quality of life in disadvantaged areas. Other subjects to be addressed are as diverse as the privatisation of water companies, the effects of global warming on urban water systems and implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

Urban water cycles are complex and the optimal solutions will only emerge over time. The project will accelerate this process of discovery and ensure that the whole North Sea Region is able to enjoy the benefits.

PURE North Sea

Many river catchment areas are sites of intensive human activity and this can create conflicts between the environment and land use. The need for intervention is particularly acute on the urbanrural fringe where the environment is under pressure and at the same time poses a threat to human development (often largely because of human action in the past).

The project focuses particularly on improving water quality on the one hand and reducing flood risks on the other. Activities include developing ways of reusing water so as to make the most of a valuable resource and reduce the amount used. Water risks are reduced by improving storm water management and restoring the natural water systems best able to cope with water surges. Public participation is vital for people to understand and accept the changes required and the project devotes considerable effort to explaining the role that water plays. Professionals are also targeted to ensure that water is integrated into planning and that there will therefore be less need for corrective action in future.

For more information see www.purenorthsea.com

For more information see www.interregnorthsea.org

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The Swan, the Nordic eco-label

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