



sector can benefit from the scope provided in the NWP for experimentation focused on sustainability. The NWP allows pilot studies to be conducted into the feasibility of sustainable fisheries in offshore wind farm areas.

A new strategy has been developed for sand extraction. Sufficiently large, strategic supplies of marine-dredged sand are important for both coastal safety and land replenishment. Under the new sand extraction strategy, extraction companies are required to extract the entire permitted volume in a licensed area, thus achieving a more efficient use of marine sand supplies. The maximum extraction depth has been increased.

The NWP has designated two areas, off the coast of Borssele and IJmuiden, for offshore wind farming. These must be designed in a way that takes account of other uses, thus achieving maximum spatial efficiency.

The parties responsible for North Sea management must also factor in growing networks of gas pipelines and high-voltage power lines that transport electricity generated by wind farms. New cables and pipelines should be bundled where possible. In the short term, a cost-benefit analysis will be conducted into the effects of bundling existing cables and pipelines.

Integrated North Sea management also recognises the social

and economic importance of recreational uses of the sea and focuses on ensuring good water quality at bathing beaches and avoiding conflicts between the different uses of space.

### Organisation and management

Policy is aimed at making management more efficient and effective, for instance by establishing a central helpdesk for GIS-related knowledge and information. Another key aspect that has been improved in the revised IBN is the pooling of information for the purposes of North Sea users and permitting authorities.

Over the last few years, the Coast Guard has developed into an effective enforcement and assistance partner. In the years to come, the organisation will continue to optimise and streamline its operations.

Dutch organisations responsible for North Sea management and their counterparts in other North Sea countries could gain more benefit from cooperation, especially with regard to conflicts between economic uses in border areas. Progress is being made in developing a cross-border approach towards integrated marine spatial planning.

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# Integrated Management Plan for the North Sea 2015

## Management Summary



The management of the North Sea is governed by national and international legislation and national policy. Over the last few years, the combined effects of autonomous developments, the ambition for offshore wind farming, new scientific insights, the implementation of European directives and the dynamics of the North Sea itself have necessitated a revision of the Dutch policy on the management of the North Sea. This new policy is laid down in the National Water Plan (NWP) and its companion, the Policy Document on the North Sea. The way North Sea management is organised is also changing, becoming more integrated and proactive, and aims to find an optimum balance between economic uses and preserving the natural values of the North Sea.

In terms of content and practicability, the Integrated Management Plan for the North Sea 2015 (IBN), adopted in 2005, has been unable to respond satisfactorily to developments in recent years. The government therefore decided, when it was drawing up the NWP, to revise the IBN now, and not wait until it ends in 2015. The revised IBN, which replaces the original IBN 2015, is an elaboration of the North Sea chapter in the NWP and the companion policy document, both of which came into force in 2010.

- The main changes in the revised IBN 2015 concern:
- a new approach to marine spatial planning;
  - a streamlined framework for assessing the different uses;
  - the implementation of EU legislation on nature (Natura 2000);
  - the designation of areas for offshore wind farms and a new sand extraction strategy;
  - scope for sustainable developments.

### Three pillars of the IBN

The relationship between the three pillars of the Integrated Management Plan for the North Sea (healthy sea, safe sea and profitable sea) remains unchanged.

Policy under the 'healthy sea' pillar ensures that human uses do not harm the marine ecosystem. Important international instruments in this regard are OSPAR, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Natura 2000 and the Water Framework Directive.

The 'safe sea' pillar is about human safety and concerns coastal management, maritime safety and maritime emergency response.

The third pillar, entitled 'profitable sea', concerns the economic uses of the North Sea and describes the management strategy by sector or economic use. The overarching policy aims of the National Water Plan are more sustainable economic development and efficient use of the available space.

### Marine spatial planning

New marine spatial planning policy establishes a framework for the efficient and sustainable development of economic uses of the North Sea. The guiding principle is that the marine space and resources are used efficiently and sustainably. Where possible, multiple use (co-location) provides balanced opportunities for all forms of use. The spatial framework will be elaborated in transparent vision documents, plans and strategies, for instance, Natura 2000 management plans and a sand extraction strategy for Dutch territorial waters (0 to 12 nautical miles).

### Assessment framework

As economic activity in the North Sea continues to grow in terms of scale, intensity and diversity, it is necessary to safeguard the development of key activities, such as maritime transport and sand extraction, now and in the future. Experiments with new, more sustainable forms of exploitation should also be facilitated, provided these are in line with activities designated in the NWP as being of national importance. In the interests of integrated assessment, the IBN assessment framework for economic use of the North Sea has been combined, where possible and applicable, with the assessment framework under the Nature Conservancy Act.

### Development of uses and ecosystem services

With regard to water quality and biodiversity, progress has been made in implementing the EU Birds and Habitats Directives at national level. Coastal areas that had not yet been designated as Natura 2000 areas in the first IBN 2015 have since received this status. The implementation of the MSFD is also gradually moving forward.

The management of the North Sea with regard to maritime transport has been amended somewhat, but as a whole this economic use is fairly stable. Priority is given to ensuring maritime safety in the increasingly busy North Sea, and limiting the impact of shipping on the marine environment.

The oil and gas sector will have to comply with stricter conditions for drilling prospects and will be encouraged to concentrate exploration and drilling activities in the prospect areas and in designated wind farm areas. In principle, depleted oil and gas fields in the North Sea could be used for CO<sub>2</sub> storage. Suitable sites can be looked for in the entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

For some time now, the fisheries sector has been working to achieve a transition to more sustainable fishing practices. The

