MEETING DOCUMENT

**Task Group Management (TG-M 20-4)**

11 December 2020

Online meeting

**Agenda Item: 4. Implementation of the Leeuwarden Declaration**

**Subject: Draft marine litter cover note**

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At TG-M 20-3, TG-M agreed to prepare a cover note for the next TG-M meeting to clearly state the group´s involvement and activities in marine litter.

This document contains a first draft for this cover note, based on previous activities, as well as on recommendations of the QSR 2017 thematic report on marine litter.

**Proposal:** The group is invited to discuss the document and agree on content for a cover note to WSB 33 in March 2021.

# Marine Litter in the Wadden Sea, possible future strategy and activities of TWSC

**Problem:**

[The Marine Litter QSR-2017](https://qsr.waddensea-worldheritage.org/reports/marine-litter) section 4 (recommendations) states the following regarding research: “Current knowledge on macro- and microlitter in the Wadden Sea is still fragmentary”. Further is stated that an intensified data collection will provide basis for further research in the coming years, and with that it will be possible to apply appropriate methodology for the identification and quantification of microplastics from environmental samples. In this context are also mentioned that socio economic effects arising from marine litter within the WS ought to be addressed with research.

With regard to recommendations on management the report really only refers to actions and measures according to the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the OSPAR regional action plan for the Northeast Atlantic.

Further, litter in the Wadden Sea has not yet been dealt with in a holistic approach by TWSC that includes stakeholders, professional organizations as well as Non-Governmental Organization’s, researchers, public authorities etc. at the same time as many of these have developed their own agendas and profiling attempts.

Together this has resulted in a situation where TWSC will need to find the strengths of the cooperation on marine litter (if any) and to apply those to a more holistic marine litter approach for the whole North Sea/NE Atlantic.

**Background:**

Marine litter has specifically been on the Trilateral agenda since the inception of [The Wadden Sea Plan 2010](https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/resources/2010-wadden-sea-plan) (Section 2, “Water and Sediments”, followed by [The Tønder Declaration](https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/resources/2014-t%C3%B8nder-declaration), Annex 5, PSSA Operational Plans that addresses marine litter briefly.

In the preamble of [The Leeuwarden Declaration](https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/resources/2018-leeuwarden-declaration) the ministers pledge commitment to the problem and ties solutions to the development of circular economy.

In section 4.1 of the Declaration (“Sustainable Development”) a target is set up: “***Strive*** *to substantially reduce the amount of marine litter in the Wadden Sea by the year 2030;” and section 4.2 reads: “Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to make use of all relevant existing monitoring and action programmes, as well as existing action plans, taking into account local, national and multilateral initiatives to gain and exchange adequate additional knowledge on sources and impacts of marine litter (such as microplastics) on the Wadden Sea ecosystem and stimulate and support appropriate measures;”*

At WSB-31 the board noted the following information by TG-M:

*At WSB 30, TG-M had informed on an inventory on activities based on a Danish initiative/template which should contain corresponding information on UN, EU and OSPAR level under lead of Rijkswaterstaat (RWS). Due to interruption of RWS contribution to trilateral work, this information could not be presented in a summarizing document for WSB 31 as originally planned.*

*A presentation on “The container incident with the MSC Zoe: assessing damage and compensation for Arctic breeding migratory bird populations under the EU environmental liability directive” by Ms Katja Philippart from the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) was accepted for oral presentation at the International Symposium on Plastics in the Arctic on 21 – 23 April 2020 in Reykjavík, Island (<https://arcticplastics2020.is/index.php/en>). This submission was very much welcomed and supported by the chair of the TG-M and the CWSS, as the presentation would give insight in the connection of the Wadden Sea with the Arctic region, illustrated by ongoing prominent research on migrating birds between the two regions and as such also raising awareness at the policy level of the importance of these connections. Due to the COVID 19 restrictions, the symposium was postponed to September 2020.*

This note thus picks up from WSB-31.

**Discussion:**

Being aware that TWSC has limited resources due to it’s limited size compared with other marine litter “players”, i.e. [PAME under the Arctic Council](https://pame.is/index.php/projects/arctic-marine-pollution), [EEA](https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/europes-seas-and-coasts/assessments/marine-litterwatch) and [OSPAR](https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/marine-litter) it is perhaps more obvious to focus on the strengths of TWSC in a marine litter context rather than spreading initiatives and resources where comprehensive strategies and action plans have already been formulated.

This especially applies to the management and action angle, potentially meaning that TWSC do not formulate independent management and action strategy in line with i.e. MAPAS, Swimway and Flyway when it comes to Marine litter.

A potential strength of TWSC in the Marine Litter context attaches to the research recommendation, or to be more precise, remarks and preconditions mentioned about monitoring and data. Assuming TWSC is successful in creating easy access to data collected according to TMAP and other relevant data this might be the area to concentrate marine litter resources rather than formulating management and action strategies that would lean heavily on such already formulated by other organizations/stakeholders.

However as not to totally discard possible specific initiatives within the TWSC or from related stakeholders, a possibility to facilitate those can be obtained within the Partnership Hub concept.

**Possible scenarios of activities:**

In ascending order based on resource intensity as possible:

1. Maintain present ambitions regarding marine litter with focus on monitoring and QSR-reporting.
2. Evaluate the coverage of marine litter monitoring in NL, D & DK and subsequently make proposals for updating the national monitoring programs.c
3. To intensify efforts regarding systematic access to data thus also facilitating research initiatives.
4. To offer the Partnership Hub (and Center) as a place for stakeholder-activities and initiatives beyond monitoring/QSR and research.
5. More actively identify specific research gaps and facilitate project formulation
6. To supplement and actively participate in strategies/initiatives from other stakeholders, connecting to the note being prepared by RWS, NL.
7. To develop a Trilateral strategy and action plan for MC-2022 for inclusion as an annex in the new Declaration in line with other examples (SIMP, MAPAS, Swimway, Flyvay etc.) e.g. based on OSPAR’s regional Plan on Marine Litter.

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that TG-M discuss the above, and consider choosing to focus/restrict the TWSC effort on Marine Litter to monitoring, data access and QSR-reporting corresponding to activities A to D, and to consider the compliance of such a decision with the Leeuwarden Declaration, section 4.1. and 4.2.