

49th Meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 49)

Meeting Document No. WSB 49/5.1

16 April 2026
Online

Agenda Item	5.1 Protect and Strengthen the Outstanding Universal Value (paras 1-16)
Document Title	WSB 49/5.1 TG-WH Progress Report
Submitted by	CWSS/ TG-WH
Submitted on	1 April 2026
Proposal	The WSB is invited to 1. note the information.

This progress report from the TG-WH provides an update on the development of the SEA for the Wadden Sea.

TG-WH Progress Report

1. Progress on SEA for the Wadden Sea

PROCUREMENT PROCESSES FOR THE SEA

For the trilateral Joint SEA, the consortium led by Haskoning (Netherlands), with Ramboll (Denmark) and BioConsult (Germany) as partners, has been selected. The work commenced with a kick-off meeting of the SEA Subgroup on 17 March.

Germany and the Netherlands will select consultants for their respective national SEA components during the first weeks of April, with Denmark to follow.

EXPERT REVIEW OF THE DRAFT SCOPING REPORT

The expert review conducted by the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) is nearing completion.

A draft of the final advice report was discussed on 25 March during an in-person meeting involving representatives from NCEA, expert panel members, the SEA Subgroup/TG-WH, the trilateral consortium, and CWSS. Based on this discussion, NCEA will finalise its report, which will be published on their website and accompanied by a press release between 13–15 April.

The draft advice provided by NCEA was clear and comprehensive. Among several recommendations, it strongly highlighted the need for close coordination among the three national SEA components to ensure methodological comparability and for simultaneous execution of all three national components to enable meaningful integration into the Joint SEA.

In response, the SEA Subgroup, the trilateral consortium, and CWSS stressed the importance of distinction between requirements essential for the SEA and suggestions that would be nice to have additions particularly in the context of achieving a fair and positive evaluation from UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. Several of NCEA's suggestions may have consequences for the overall approach and next steps of both the Joint SEA and the national components. The main risks and issues, and mitigation measures identified by the SEA Subgroup, the trilateral consortium and CWSS are presented in Annex 1.

Proposal: *The WSB is invited to **note** the information.*

Annex 1. Risks and issues Joint SEA

Proposed mitigation measures may have impact on the scope and approach of the three national SEA processes and the overall Joint SEA process. These consequences, including budget impacts, will be identified in the coming weeks.

Risks & Issues	Mitigation
<p>Ownership of joint SEA results The Joint SEA is not connected to decision making on specific plans, programs or projects, which is usually the case for SEAs. To secure that the Joint SEA leads to improved coordinated decision making the commitment and ownership of TWSC parties for the SEA results is essential.</p>	<p>Explicitly link Joint SEA outcomes to national decision-making, trilateral monitoring and accountability to strengthen ownership and coordinated action.</p>
<p>Timing of Danish component For the Joint SEA, alignment of the three national components is critical. Delay in one of the processes will require additional alignment activities affecting the overall process.</p>	<p>Begin Joint SEA groundwork with German and Dutch teams to create a foundation for Denmark to mobilise quickly and realign without delaying the joint process.</p>
<p>Status and impact of NCEA advice Unclear distinctions between essential and optional advice may affect UNESCO’s review and reduce predictability in the process.</p>	<p>Request clarity from NCEA on the ‘minimum level’ required, involve them during key Joint SEA steps, and maintain informal alignment with UNESCO’s WHC to reduce unpredictability of later advice.</p>
<p>Need for a joint, data-driven baseline It is recognised that a joint baseline is critical to ensure alignment and a coherent Joint SEA.</p>	<p>Investigate a shared digital data environment enabling consistent baseline development for all three national components and the Joint SEA.</p>
<p>Navigating national legal, institutional and procedural differences Because the Joint SEA is based on EU Directives implemented differently in each country, agreeing on a minimum level of alignment and being transparent about remaining differences will be essential.</p>	<p>Prepare a legal brief summarising requirements, differences and the minimum alignment needed to ensure coherence across national components.</p>