



Editorial

After approximately 10 years the formal project work on The North Sea Cycle Route (NSCR) is about to close on 31st December 2006. Lots of thoughts spring to mind at such a time. Those of us who have worked on the project from day one, and had leadership of the project in the Secretariat, feel that we have achieved a great deal. Taking a long look at our website www.northsea-cycle.com gives a good picture of what has been developed around the project in the 68 partner regions.

However there is one aim where we freely admit we have not achieved what we had hoped for, establishing a permanent management structure. Here the goal was to find a mooring for maintenance of the NSCR after the project period was over, not only for the physical quality of the route and its signing, but also for the marketing and information services.

Already early in the project it became clear that there was no natural home for these responsibilities in the EU-system or as far as we can establish in any other European organisation. We therefore used a great deal of time and effort working with The North Sea Commission (NSC), hoping they would take "ownership" of the network and web site. In so far as the internet base, which was developed in close co-operation with the North Sea Trail, presented broad information and marketing of most of the regions which were members of the NSC our hope was that the NSC would also acknowledge the potential the maintenance of the website represented in terms of marketing the region as a whole. Unfortunately, in the early autumn of 2006, after a long process the Steering Committee in the NSC said no.

Another alternative has been that the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) taking on responsibility for the route. This organisation is based in Brussels and has close contact with relevant European organisations. However, here the problem is who will pay for the services of the ECF? The partners in the project were unable to find the necessary economic resources to cover the expenses of the ECF after the project closes.

The International Management Group (IMG) of the project has however made two important strategic moves as the project closes. Firstly, all members are in agreement that we must maintain the network between the 8 member countries. Each country has appointed 1 or 2 representatives,

where one representative will address the infrastructure responsibilities and a second the tourism issues or a combination of both. This is a voluntary network where all network partners will cover their own expenses. The network plans to meet once or twice a year to document the status of the route, discuss the need for updating the website and the need for strategic initiatives on behalf of the route.

During the next 3 years Rogaland County Council will take responsibility for the web site and organise the first meeting of the new network. This first meeting will take place in conjunction with the Velo-city 2007 conference, "From Vision to Reality", in Munich between 12-15 June 2007.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those in municipalities, regions and at the national level who have worked so hard over many years to establish the North Sea Cycle Route. To all those talented and enthusiastic members of the IMG, many of whom have put in an enormous amount of time and effort, a sincere thank you. A special thank you to Giles Goyder who has been Vice Chairman of the IMG during both project periods and who has unfortunately been ill during the closing stages of the second project. Last, but not least, a big thank you to my capable staff in the Secretariat in Rogaland, who have delivered far beyond what is a "normal" working day throughout many years.

To the Interreg Secretariat in Viborg we extend a sincere thank you for good advice and co-operation. Finally I would like to stress that this is not the end but rather the end of the beginning. The North Sea Cycle Route is in place. We have delivered the platform for sustainable transport and tourism for which there will be an even greater demand in the future. It is the responsibility of all those who have tourism, recreation, transport, environmental protection, public health and planning along the NSCR to use the route and information now available in order to give the population of 68 North Sea regions an entrance ticket to the amazing number of fantastic experiences which are to be found along the 6000 kilometres of the NSCR.

Per Frøyland Pallesen
Chairman of International Management
Group



The IMG-7 was held in Varberg, Halland, Sweden between 11th and 13th September. Part of the meeting was held at the Grimeton World Heritage Site where the whole of the IMG and invited guests were photographed. The Final Conference was one of several main topics under discussion at the meeting and several guests, who were engaged in preparations for the event in the North of England, were also invited to attend the meeting. **From left, back row:** Colin Percy (England), Andrea Grimm (Tourismeusveiband Stade, Germany), Susanne Andersson (Sweden), Brittmarie Rothstein (Sweden), Victoria Hartland

The North Sea Cycle Route in brief

The North Sea Cycle Route has been developed by an international partnership with 50% funding from the European Commission's Interreg IIC North Sea Programme. The route is now being further developed under the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme. Co-funding is provided by approximately 70 counties in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Scotland and England. The present project period

commenced in September 2003 and will continue through December 2006. Rogaland County Council is the Lead Partner. The North Sea Cycle Route is some 6000 kilometres long, based on existing national, regional and local cycle routes, utilising existing signing. The route was officially opened in May-June 2001. The North Sea Cycle Route as a high quality tourist product will be ready for the cycling season of 2007.

Gramstad (Secretariat), Wenche Myrland (Secretariat), Eli Viten (Project Manager), Karen Sofie Therkildsen (Denmark), Jeanette Bergner (Niedersachsen, Germany). **From left, front row:** Anthony Wright (England), John Robertson, Newcastle City Council (England), Michel Giltè (Belgium), Henrik Duus (Norway), Ties Hazenberg (The Netherlands), Palle Grønland (Denmark), Gordon Ireland (Scotland), Jack Walton, Northumberland County Council, (England), Per Frøyland Pallesen (Chairman, Norway), Eric Nijland (The Netherlands).

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Conference and workshops in Newcastle 9/10/11 November 2006



Per Froyland Pallesen (Rogaland County Council) and Diane Packham (Lord Mayor of Newcastle)



John Holmes (One North East), Stephen Hughes MEP, Colin Percy (Newcastle City Council), Joanne Morrissey (Sustrans), Diane Packham (Lord Mayor of Newcastle), John Robertson (Newcastle City Council), Marie Fallon (Director of Regeneration, Newcastle City Council), Per Froyland Pallesen (Rogaland County Council) and Harvey Emms (Head of Planning and Transportation, Newcastle City Council).

The project's final public event was held in Newcastle upon Tyne in England in early November. A conference, looking at tourism, economic development and European funding, was held on Thursday 9 November. This was followed on the Friday by a set of technical workshops on providing information to cycle tourists and on the Saturday by site visits to view work in progress. Newcastle City Council hosted the event.

Delegates from all the partner countries attended together with representatives from municipalities, cycling and other organisations in the UK. The conference attracted 85 people and the workshops 65. Stephen Hughes MEP led off in the morning of the conference, looking at the wider European context. Key note speeches were from our leading supporters in the region. John Holmes of One North East (the regional development agency) outlined the wider context of tourism and job creation. Then Joanne Morrissey described how Sustrans had moved from a narrow focus of creating cycle routes to a much wider promotional and business development role in the north east of England and elsewhere in the UK.

The speakers following came from a variety of backgrounds and overall gave a fascinating insight into how cycle tourism (and of course the North Sea Cycle Route) might develop in future, with or without Interreg-type funding. We also had a look at our sister project NAVE Nortrail, which caters for those on foot rather

than cycles. Two speakers had a very personal story to tell. Eli Laupstad Omdal in the morning described how she had created the ultimate in niche hotels in her small town in Norway of Sogndalstrand. In the afternoon Mary Blanche from Norfolk in the UK gave a moving talk on how she had found great pleasure and spiritual uplift from cycling the route with her husband Lionel.

The workshops were aimed at a slightly more technical audience and brought together experts in a number of fields. Eli Viten from Rogaland opened on the achievements of the North Sea Cycle Route project and then Runar Bergheim of Avinet spoke on the project's dramatically renewed web site. From the UK we had sessions on map making, signing and promoting new cycle related business, plus reports on the project's monitoring programme, led by the University of Central Lancashire.

There was a strong contingent of speakers from Flanders, looking at cycling in relation to new technologies, public transport and new technologies. Floris de Jong and his partner Monique gave another personal account of using the route, accompanied by his fine photographs. Bernhard Ensink, Secretary General of the ECF rounded off the day with a look into the future of transnational routes.

On the Saturday some delegates stayed on to look at work in progress, mainly in and around the Port of Tyne terminal at North Shields. We saw how better facilities were being created for cyclists leaving the terminal, linking up also with

the national and regional route network. The brave then set off on bikes for a short, wet and windy ride down the river and then warming up again on the Shields Ferry (pedestrians and cyclists only). We then looked (very briefly) at the North Sea at South Shields before having lunch à l'ancienne in the reconstructed Roman fort at Arbeia.

A lot was spoken about and a lot was learnt over the three days and feedback from those speaking and attending as delegates has all been very positive. If you missed out you can still look at the photographs and read the presentations given - they are at www.tynebikes.org.uk/nsr.



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Monitoring the North Sea Cycle Route: Final Report

The purpose of the monitoring as part of Core Topic 4 was to examine how cyclists actually spend in local economies on the North Sea Cycle Route. The research team was headed up by Les Lumsdon and Richard Weston from the Institute of Transport and Tourism at UCLAN with Dr Paul Downward from Loughborough University and Dr Andy Cope from Sustrans in the UK. The researchers chose two study areas—the North East of England and the County of Rogoland in Norway.

The study has involved surveys of cyclists on the route and investigates key variables such as gender and age, income and purpose of travel to see which ones matter. Previous studies of cyclists on cycle routes have focused on measuring patterns of demand and levels of overall spending. Some studies have also reported the sub-division of expenditure by the cyclist into different businesses such as accommodation providers, hospitality providers such as restaurants and cafes and visitor attractions. These studies have been very useful so as to confirm the importance of cyclists in some areas, especially in very rural economies which would otherwise not attract visitors.

However, this study analyses the underlying patterns of behaviour which lead to visitor spending by users of cycle routes. The findings are worth noting so that planners of routes can design them to maximise benefits for the areas through which they pass. Income is important and so is the purpose of the trip. The cycle tourist will spend a greater sum per day than a local near to home trip. However, other factors have emerged as being important for modelling expenditure especially group size and the duration of time spent cycling. Other factors



Left: Dr. Richard Weston, rweston@uclan.ac.uk and Right: Professor Les Lumsdon Department of Tourism and Leisure Management Business School, University of Central Lancashire England llumsdon@uclan.ac.uk

such as age or gender are not significant.

The study also reports that small businesses have gained from cycle tourists during the development of the North Sea Cycle Route but that many are reluctant to invest in the market at this stage. Transport operators including ferry companies are also slow to realise the potential of cycle tourism. Finally, tourism offices also need to gear themselves more to the North Sea Cycle Route. Despite this, they are receiving an increasing number of enquiries about the route. At the recent conference in Newcastle Professor Lumsdon commented;

“The North Sea Cycle project is coming to an end, but for the route its life cycle is just beginning. Cycle tourism has considerable potential in a rapidly changing and less certain market and such routes will be well placed to capture this.”

The final monitoring report will be available in early January 2007 and a paper will be presented at Velocity at Munich to summarise the key findings.

Scotland latest news

Gordon Ireland and Stuart Knowles, the Scottish partners, recently met with Sustrans Scotland and Cycling Scotland to “hand over the baton” for the North Sea Cycle Route. These two organisations will therefore represent Scotland on the International Network Group in future. Sustrans has responsibility for maintenance of the route (National Cycle Route 1) in Scotland, and their staff are already familiar with the NSCR project. Cycling Scotland will maintain the Scottish section of the NSCR website. Earlier in 2006, Andrew Pankhurst of Cycling Scotland attended the website training day at Stansted Airport and has already been providing input to Scotland's section of the website.

In Scotland, a new agency, Transport Scotland, has been created to develop and implement an integrated transport strategy. At regional level, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) have been created. In order to ensure the best possible flow of communication, the relevant staff from the RTPs will be invited to attend a meeting with Cycling Scotland and Sustrans Scotland before the first International Network Group meeting in Munich. That meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 25th April in Perth.

The NSCR in Holland: LF1 Noordzeeroute and LF10 Waddenzeeroute

The route and signposts are in good condition. LF1 is being the most popular route of our 6.500 km national (LF-) cycle network.

Promotion and marketing

The roll up poster that we produced in 2005 helps to promote the route. It has been used at several tourist fares and cycle events. The leaflet also appears to work well, giving good information about the route. More than 8.000 copies are distributed, mostly by local tourist offices along the coast and at tourist fairs. A third print was produced in early autumn.

Our experience is that the NSCR-project inspires many Dutch cyclists to cycle at least a part of the entire route. In this way the NSCR helps to promote Netherlands' coastal routes, LF1 and LF10, and also indirectly the whole network. We are often asked questions about the NSCR, including those who are planning taking a 3 or 4 months break to cycle the whole route! A good example is the tour made by Monique Fakkeldij & Floris de Jong - they produced a very nice photo book (see www.florisdejong.nl). They were also present at the international press tour on 24 and 25 April in Haarlem and the Final Conference in Newcastle as guest speakers.

Fietsplatform have co-ordinated the development of the Dutch part of the revamped website on behalf of the five coastal provinces. It took a lot of time, but we believe it's a very important part of the promotion and marketing activities.

As a result of our marketing and promotion plan for our national network (finished this spring) we have decided to re-style all our guides: more routes will be combined in one guide, new design, better photos, and – very important – better maps. Further, we will emphasise



less on landscape and history, leaving this for the web site. The information that we print in the guides will not be outdated so quickly.

The production of a new guide for coastal cycle route in the Netherlands, the Dutch part of the NSCR – formed by LF1 and LF10, will start later this year.

An interesting point is the guide/map that Esterbauer Verlag produced about the Dutch part of the NSCR. They are preparing now a new edition – the existing edition will be sold out soon. Last week they asked us to check the information and data. We don't now how many copies they have sold, but the publisher informs us that this is one of their most successful titles.

Fietsplatform has many contacts and meetings with regional authorities because of our co-ordination responsibilities, especially with the provinces. This contact is not exclusively in regard to the NSCR, but for all the issues that have to do with the national cycle network as a whole. In partnership we have prepared an activity plan for the national network (including the NSCR in Holland) for the period 2007 – 2013.

Rogaland, Norway:

All 5 Cycle parkings in place



On 18 December the Mayor of the municipality of Sola, Mr. Håkon Rege, officially opened the new cycle parking and specially designed baggage chests at Regestrand.

The guests of honour were the 7th grade pupils from nearby Håland school accompanied by two of their teachers. Earlier in the autumn the same pupils cycled 60 km of the North Sea Cycle Route, from Håland to Brusand. "A memory for life", the pupils said.

THE NEW NETWORK, NORTH SEA CYCLE ROUTE

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