**Operational Team Partnership Hub  
OPteamPH 14  
12.03.2020  
Hamburg**

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Agenda item: 3.2

Subject: Project ideas for the Trilateral WH Partnership: dark sky/ light emissions

Date: 02.03.2020

Submitted by: Wadden Sea Forum/ Vollmer

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Covernote:

The meeting is invited to take note of the status of the initiative of the WSF and to give input and comment on the WSF project proposal and to consider further involvement.

**Trilateral Dark Sky Project**

**Introduction**

The Wadden Sea Forum has elaborated on some basics for a possible trilateral project on Dark Skies. The aim is to reduce light emissions and to valorise the dark night sky to enhance and broaden awareness and perception of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. For a comprehensive project in the Wadden Sea Region a trilateral approach is necessary, which incorporates experiences from the different regions and promotes a learning process between the actors involved. The integration of the joint project into the partner-hub of the World Heritage Partnership Centre involves the various organisations such as science, nature conservation associations, education, tourism and various stakeholders from society, so that a Dark Sky Area Wadden Sea Region can gain wide acceptance.

To seriously consider a trilateral project, a brief inventory of running projects and activities on dark skies was carried out and potential partners were approached.

**Inventory of activities**

There are many local and regional initiatives to reduce light pollution and to raise awareness about dark skies. Visitor programs and guided tours are offered in the two Wadden Sea Dark Sky Parks in the Netherlands, Terschelling and Lauwersmeer. The islands of Spiekeroog in Germany and Mandø in Denmark are in the process to become a Dark Sky Island/Community.

Besides these concrete actions related to Dark Sky Parks, many other activities can be recorded in the field of reduction of light emissions, awareness rising, storytelling and tourism offers. An emphasis of activities under a dark sky are astronomical observations, documented by a big number of public and private observatories along the Wadden Sea coast. Also night walking tours to experience darkness and starry nights are quite common.

**Potential partners**

The partnership for a joint international project on dark skies is a crucial element to reach the defined objectives. Ideally, partners from the listed organisations/sectors should be involved:

* municipalities and regional government representatives
  + municipality of Esbjerg with the island of Mandø, the Wadden Sea National Park administrations in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony including their Rangers, the municipalities of Pellworm and Spiekeroog, and the Dutch partners on Terschelling, Ameland and Lauwersmeer
* science sector
  + The Dutch Wadden Academy, universities of Groningen Oldenburg, Hamburg and South Jutland
* green NGOs
  + the Wadden Sea Team with their national partners
* education
  + IWSS
* stakeholders and interest groups
  + various stakeholders like the tourism branch, amateur astronomers and story tellers as well as nature programs like “Programma naar een Rijke Waddenzee”

Not all, but some have been already approached. There is great interest to contribute to a trilateral project.

**Proposal for a joint project on Dark Skies**

For a joint project Dark Sky, the partners of the partner hub should be deeply involved in addition to the partners who have already taken initiatives on Dark Sky at local level. The existing Operational Team Partner-Hub can provide great support in this respect. The Wadden Sea Forum could take the lead, as a Dark Sky working group has already been established on a trilateral level under the umbrella of the WSF.

The project should work on the reduction of light emissions and develop proposals for accompanying programmes and concrete activities. These could include sky observation, educational events in schools and in the region, and adventure tours in the dark. The effects of light emissions on ecosystems as a whole, but also specifically on flora and fauna, should be addressed too.

To proceed, the trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage partner-hub could prepare an international symposium to bring all relevant partners together. Also the partnership of the Interreg Va project, Wadden Agenda 2.0, has to be approached to play a contributing role in preparing the event in autumn and possibly in the joint dark sky project.

A dark sky WSR across borders will probably receive a worldwide recognition too. The progress in implementing a dark sky WSR can be highlighted at the forthcoming Trilateral Governmental Conference 2022 in Wilhelmshaven.