



Ministerie van Infrastructuur
en Waterstaat

Participation plan

North Sea Programme 2028 – 2033

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Colophon

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1 Introduction

This participation plan describes how stakeholders in and around the North Sea will be involved in the creation of the North Sea Programme 2028 – 2033. This participation plan was made available for inspection at the same time as the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail (NRD).

Legal status of the North Sea Programme

The North Sea Programme is the programme with which the central government implements two mandatory programmes under Article 3.9 of the Environment and Planning Act: The Maritime Spatial Plan and the Marine Strategy part III, the MSFD Programme of Measures. The North Sea Programme itself is an appendix to the National Water Programme, which is also a mandatory programme under the Environment and Planning Act. This construction has been chosen so that, on the one hand, all North Sea policy can be found in one document and is established in conjunction, and on the other hand, the national water policy, including the management plan for the large waters, is an integral part of the National Water Programme. The North Sea Programme is an elaboration of the National Environmental Vision (NOVI) for the North Sea, drawn up in the spirit of the draft Spatial Policy Document, and contains an elaboration of the policy to be pursued for the development, use, management, protection or preservation of the North Sea. The North Sea Programme also gives substance to several agreements from the North Sea Agreement. Every six years, there is a review of the North Sea policy. The next North Sea Programme covers the period 2028-2033.

Reading guide

Chapter 2 describes the purpose and delineation of the North Sea Programme 2028-2033 (PNZ).¹ The connection with other plans is also explained. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the stakeholders involved in the PNZ. Chapter 4 describes what the participation process looks like, both in terms of legally required and non-legally required participation. Chapter 5 describes how international stakeholders are involved.

¹ The Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail provides further information on this.

2 Purpose and demarcation

2.1 Intention of the North Sea Programme 2028-2033

The North Sea Programme 2028-2033 (PNZ 28-33) is a complete revision of the Partially Revised North Sea Programme 2022-2027 (PH PNZ22-27). This means that all texts are updated. The government has made a choice with regard to the subjects for which the policy may also be substantively revised. This is the "intention" of the PNZ. The selected topics (partial intentions) will be discussed in detail in the NRD that will be made available for inspection together with this Participation Plan. The partial intentions are also included in the Letter to Parliament with which the NRD and this Participation Plan were sent to the House of Representatives. As explained in the Letter to Parliament, the selection is based on the necessity of policy adjustments and the feasibility of being able to implement these policy adjustments before 2028. The various sub-intentions are briefly explained in section 2.2.

In addition, the North Sea Programme provides an overview of all the policy that applies in the North Sea. Similarly, all policies that are established through independent legal frameworks, such as conservation measures in the form of fisheries restrictions adopted under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) or designated Natura 2000 areas under the Habitats or Birds Directives, will be included in the North Sea Programme. With the adoption of PNZ 28-33, a complete update will also be made of all developments in these independent processes. These are named and briefly described in Appendix A.

2.2 Partial intentions for the PNZ 28-33

a) Adjusting strategy for sand extraction

Sand extraction serves several purposes, namely firstly to contribute to coastal protection and the preservation of the coast by means of coastal nourishment, and secondly to provide raw materials for construction works and infrastructure. Due to sea level rise, more sand will be needed in the future. At the same time, the spatial pressure in the area reserved for sand extraction is increasing. This has further increased the importance of safeguarding the sand supply and keeping it accessible. This is reason to revise the current strategy for sand extraction in PNZ 28-33, in which deeper extraction is considered and a number of actions are formulated in the implementation agenda.

b) Adjusting the assessment framework for the use of the sand extraction reservation zone

With the Partial Revision of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027, the reservation zone for sand extraction has been expanded. In this reservation zone, sand extraction has priority as a national interest, but other uses are not excluded. Permits for this will be granted after going through an assessment framework specifically aimed at the (im)possibilities of other uses in the reservation zone². PNZ 28-33 provides for a number of adjustments to this assessment framework. These

² PNZ 22-27 refers to "assessment framework for the use of an area reserved for sand extraction", in this NRD "area reserved for sand extraction" is changed to "reservation zone for sand extraction".

are limited adjustments to a number of preferred corridors for cables and pipelines, which are in line with the current practice of granting permits. It is also being considered to designate a number of zones where the sand supply is extra scarce and/or where a lot of sand extraction will be necessary. The intention is to only allow temporary other uses in these zones and no permanent constructions, with a view to keeping the sand supply accessible.

c) Clarifying nearshore shellfish farming possibilities

The shellfish farming sector has a growth vision³ and the government tries to facilitate that growth where possible. That is why the government is researching how to provide more clarity about space for *nearshore* shellfish farming.

d) Designation of wind farm areas

The development of offshore wind energy is an important pillar of our future low-CO₂ and as independent as possible energy supply. Recently, the ambition for offshore wind energy was adjusted to 40 GW by 2040. With the adoption of the PH PNZ22-27, space has now been reserved for an indicative 42 GW. At the same time, there are considerable uncertainties as to whether sufficient installed capacity can be realised within this reserved space. Uncertainties concern the disturbance distance of guillemots, a new VR area overlapping with designated wind farm areas and possible additional space for mining. It may also be necessary to reduce the assumed power density of 10.5 MW/km² to improve the business case for wind energy. In that case, more space is needed per GW. In order to make sufficient space available for the ambition of 40 GW if these uncertainties turn out to be negative, the government is investigating whether alternative or additional space can be designated in PNZ 28-33. Areas to be investigated were selected on the basis of preliminary studies. As a result of the designation of wind farm areas, it may be necessary to agree on routing measures or to establish *clearways*. If necessary, PNZ 28-33 will indicatively add space to the MRP map for a *clearway* between Hamburg and Hull.

e) Making agreements on multifunctional use of space in the new zone between areas EHD 41 and EHD 42 in the event of expansion of defence activities for military readiness (NPRD)

For defence purposes, it has been decided to expand military training facilities. For this purpose, a new contiguous zone has been designated between EHD 41 and EHD 42. These are included in the National Programme for Space for Defence (NPRD),⁴ which was definitively adopted by the government on 19 December 2025. Partly on the basis of the views submitted on the design, further coordination will be made with other users about multifunctional use of space. This new zone therefore differs from training areas EHD 41 and 42, where there are now fewer freedoms for multifunctional use with fixed objects under the Environment and Planning Act. The Ministry of Defence will shape this process in conjunction with the PNZ and the result will be recorded in the PNZ as part of an integrated assessment.

³ Vision document Shellfish Sector 2030-2040. Offshore cultivation and marketing of healthy marine proteins from a sustainable sector. PO Mussel Culture and Shellfish Trade Association.

⁴ [Final National Programme Room for Defence | Parliamentary Paper | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

f) Broadening the area reconnaissance instrument to a North Sea-wide area reconnaissance for shared use

With the PH PNZ22-27, the aim is to give shared use a better and earlier place in spatial planning. For the new PNZ, work will be done on a further elaboration of this commitment. The intention is to broaden the Area Exploration instrument by positioning it earlier in the offshore wind energy process (prior to the start of the procedure for the site decisions). The aim is to use this instrument to provide better insight into the potential for shared use within wind farms on a North Sea-wide scale. Also with a view to the contribution that shared use can make to improving the balance between three transitions (nature, food, and energy) on a North Sea-wide scale. The Area Reconnaissance instrument itself is not part of PNZ 28-33.

g) Clarifying and possibly adjusting the shared use policy

The government is investigating whether the existing policy for shared use needs to be clarified and/or amended in parts. This involves enabling new categories of initiatives or enabling the scaling up of existing activities within wind farms. Concrete adjustments depend on the results of exploratory studies, in which at least active fishing, mining or CCS installation, and charging infrastructure (for electrification of shipping) are considered. In addition, for the function of rest as a passive form of nature restoration/development, a better legal anchoring will be sought. Passive fishing is already allowed within wind farms. With PNZ 28-33, the government aims to mark the transition to a professional roll-out of passive fishing.

h) Evaluating and possibly adjusting the passage policy

In the run-up to PNZ 28-33, an exploratory evaluation of the passage policy will be carried out with a view to possible updating of parts of the passage policy. If the results of the evaluation are available in good time and on the basis of them it is concluded that updating (parts of) the policy is desirable, then it must be estimated whether the intended adjustments may have an effect on the physical living environment. If that is the expectation, an analysis of these effects will be included in the EIA.

i) Amendment of the Programme of Measures to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

Together with the adoption of PNZ 28-33, the Programme of Measures of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD Marine Strategy part 3) will be updated. The government will publish this new MS3 as part (appendix 1) of the PNZ. A number of the measures to be adapted or added will have an expected (positive) environmental effect and possible effects for users of the MSFD area. These effects will be mapped out in full in the EIA for PNZ 28-33, so that PNZ can be determined in conjunction with the adoption of MS3.

At the same time, a Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) will be carried out in the context of choices about the new Programme of Measures. CIAs contribute to a more complete, integrated picture of the cumulative effects of various pressure factors on the North Sea in relation to the available (ecological) space for use and may prove to be an informative tool for the choices to be made about measures to be taken. To this end, sufficiently developed CIA methods and/or (international)

data generated with them must be publicly available. An SCBA is also carried out in response to any additional measures to be taken.

j) Adjusting the policy on cables and pipelines

The associated demand for space is increasing sharply due to the increase in landfall cables from wind farms, pipelines for the transport of CO₂ and, in the future, possibly hydrogen, the growing number of communication cables as a result of digitisation and the increasing number of initiatives from neighbouring countries that also use the NCP for cables and pipelines. In order to keep the space required for the landing of offshore wind energy free from other uses, the preferred routes decided in PVAWOZ and PAWOZ are laid down in PNZ 28-33. In current practice, when it comes to new initiatives, a choice of location is made in consultation with the competent authority in the context of a permit application or project decision. For the time being, this is the best way to achieve as much multiple use and efficient use of space as possible through customization. This method remains unchanged. However, PNZ 28-33 will clarify process steps and spatial conditions for cables and pipelines, and adjust the assessment framework for the use of the reservation zone for sand extraction (see also section 2.1.1.).

k) Adjusting shipping safety policy

Shipping safety is an important precondition for spatial choices, especially in relation to location choices for wind farm areas. The current shipping safety policy in the North Sea Programme 2022-2027 aims to maintain the safety level at a minimum and, where possible, to improve it. In 2024, the Dutch Safety Board (OvV) made recommendations on improving shipping risk management in the North Sea in relation to (the placement of) fixed objects⁵. The government is following up on these recommendations by revising the shipping safety policy in various areas. These include updating the risk management system including safety targets, updating spatial requirements (Design criterion for safe distances appendix 3 PNZ 22-27), and applying new insights and knowledge including scenario thinking. The central government aims to have updated the shipping safety policy before the adoption of PNZ 28-33 and to apply it to the corresponding spatial principles.

l) Include a description of the further development of the methodology for providing insight into the (cumulative) consequences of spatial restrictions for fisheries

For the food transition, there is a generic task of change towards a sustainable and future-proof fisheries sector as described in the food vision⁶. The fishing sector is facing major challenges: the climate is changing, fish populations are shifting and (heavier) bottom fishing is under pressure due to the major ecological impact and declining social support. Changes to the marine ecosystem also offer opportunities for switching to other target species with new techniques. Such a transition of the fleet requires innovative strength, motivation and significant investments from entrepreneurs and a robust sector with sufficient scale. All three benefit from clarity and perspective about available space. In recent years, there have been growing concerns about the accumulation of spatial restrictions for the fisheries sector in

⁵ Report of the Dutch Safety Board (OVV) 'Compromising with space Controlling shipping safety in an increasingly crowded North Sea'. June 13, 2024.

⁶ [Food from the sea and large bodies of water | Report | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

Dutch waters and in those of neighbouring countries, and the availability of sufficient space is no longer self-evident. That is why there is a need to provide better insight into the consequences of spatial restrictions in spatial planning processes. This concerns not only the consequences for the supply sector, but also the socio-economic impact on the fish processing chain and local fishing communities and the accumulation of effects of measures on the fisheries sector. The methodology that goes with this has largely been concretized in the Partially Revised North Sea Programme. For PNZ 28-33, it will be investigated how the methodology for impact assessment can be further developed and – if available in time – applied to the effect assessment of newly designated wind farm areas in PNZ 28-33.

m) Developing a policy for seaweed cultivation

The government is working on a generic policy for seaweed cultivation, which is expected to be developed in wind farms in particular. Seaweed cultivation is an emerging activity in the North Sea with promising applications. At the same time, there is a lack of targeted policy. LVVN is therefore working on a policy on seaweed cultivation that looks at possibilities for seaweed in the North Sea.

n) Adjusting the design process for the relationship between offshore mining and wind energy

PNZ 22-27 describes the design process for mining activities in relation to offshore wind energy. Both activities require space. That is why the PNZ describes the working method for coordinating the location of wind farms and installations for the extraction of oil and gas and the storage of CO₂ in the preparation of site decisions and the granting of permits for mining activities. Based on recent research into how much space is needed for safe accessibility of mining platforms in the vicinity of wind turbines and the intention for an adapted legal set of instruments under the Environment and Planning Act, this working method will be adjusted. Instead of using a generic starting point of 5NM distance between platforms and wind farms, the obstacle-free space required for helicopter accessibility is determined in the context of a tailor-made process. The required obstacle-free space depends on the location of the platform in relation to the wind farm, and the accessibility requirement for the continuity of the operation. Guaranteeing aviation safety is a precondition in this process. It also provides clarity on how to deal with the possible space requirements of any new mining activities. Such an adjustment may influence subsequent decisions on distances between wind farms and mining platforms, but an environmental impact is not expected. The intention is therefore not examined in the EIA for which this NRD has been drawn up.

o) Adjusting policy on the protection of critical infrastructure

The vulnerability and resilience of existing and planned (energy) infrastructure – including wind farms and cables and pipelines – is an essential point of attention for the continuity of vital functions for the Netherlands. The resilience of critical infrastructure must therefore be explicitly included in all relevant considerations. In addition, it may be necessary and desirable to formulate new policy for this purpose and to include it in the North Sea Programme, if this is also in line with confidentiality requirements.

2.3 Knowledge agenda

The previous policy intentions and the EIA plan lead to questions of knowledge about how the suitability of the use within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem, in accordance with the frameworks of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Nature Restoration Regulation, the Water Framework Directive and OSPAR. Knowledge questions can involve conducting applied and fundamental research, monitoring, data management, modelling and innovations. An integrated knowledge agenda will be drawn up on the basis of an inventory of these knowledge questions. It also allows knowledge questions for the benefit of national and international knowledge programming to be formulated in the sectoral chapters of the North Sea Programme. The ambition is to include an integrated knowledge agenda in the North Sea Programme (content) and also to give direction to the actual implementation and dissemination (governance). If possible, attention will also be paid to opportunities for public-private partnerships.

2.4 Coherence with other plans

The creation of the PNZ will build on existing plans and previous decision-making on spatial planning in the North Sea. This also applies the other way around, the policy described and the Maritime Spatial Plan map from the PNZ are guiding for a number of plans and visions. This relationship is explained below. These plans and visions have their own participation process and are not part of the PNZ.

National Environmental Vision (NOVI)/ Spatial Policy Document

The National Environmental Vision (NOVI, 2020) contains the main issues of the policy for the physical living environment and forms the current, current policy vision for the development of the physical living environment of the European Netherlands, including the territorial waters. The NOVI lists national interests. Several of these national interests also affect North Sea policy. National interests are the substantive interests in the physical living environment in which the central government sees a role for itself and for which the government can be held accountable in a political sense.

The government is working on a new national environmental vision entitled 'Spatial Policy Document'. The Draft Spatial Policy Document was published in September 2025. National interests have also been identified in the Spatial Policy Document. After the adoption of the Spatial Policy Document, it will replace the current NOVI. From that moment on, the North Sea programme will form a thematic elaboration of the Spatial Policy Document.

National Energy System Plan

The National Energy System Plan (NPE) is a strategic policy document that describes the Dutch government's long-term vision and plans for the country's energy system. The plan aims to promote the transition to a sustainable, reliable and affordable energy supply, with a focus on reducing CO2 emissions and increasing the share of renewable energy sources. Developments in the North Sea are essential in this respect because the NPE foresees that a significant part of the future energy supply and interconnection with neighbouring countries will have to come from here. The NPE indicates which offshore wind energy task is needed. An update of the NPE is planned for the autumn of 2026.

In 2025, the North Sea Wind Energy Infrastructure Plan (WIN) was presented to the House of Representatives. The WIN provides insight into the choices for energy infrastructure at sea that will have to be made in the coming years in order to achieve the government's goals for offshore wind energy in the longer term. The plan looks ahead to the period from about 2033 to the 2040s, with a view to 2050.

It is therefore a building block for the development of the next phase of the Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap after the achievement of the current target of 21 Gigawatt (GW). The analyses in the WIN show that for the development of offshore wind energy for the period up to and including 2040, a bandwidth of 30 to 40 GW of offshore wind energy is the most realistic to focus on. The Jetten cabinet is aiming for the upper end of this bandwidth.

Programme Connections Landing Offshore Wind Energy

The energy generated in the North Sea must be brought ashore via power cables and hydrogen pipelines and connected to the high-voltage grid/hydrogen network. The spatial integration of the routes for cables and pipelines affects many other (social) interests at sea, such as nature, fisheries, sand extraction and shipping, and interests that affect spatial integration on land. The Programme for Connections to Offshore Wind Landfalls⁷ (pVAWOZ) is investigating how and where these cables and pipelines can best be brought ashore. pVAWOZ also includes a view for the further growth of offshore wind energy. For the new search areas, additional exploration is being carried out into how they can connect to this perspective.

Marine Strategy Parts 1 and 2

On the basis of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Member States with marine waters are obliged to draw up a marine strategy. Marine Strategy Part 1 2024 describes the current environmental status, the (desired) good environmental status and the operational environmental objectives that have been set to achieve or maintain the good environmental status. In doing so, the Marine Strategy sets the frameworks for sustainable use within the boundary conditions of the ecosystem, taking into account international and European regulations. Indicators are used to determine the extent to which the current condition differs from the good condition. The threshold values have been formulated quantitatively where possible, and thus form applicable provisions in the context of environmental impact assessments and permit granting processes. The environmental goals formulated as SMART as possible determine the steps towards good environmental status, and in a number of cases attach conditions to the way in which activities can be carried out. The Marine Strategy Part 1 shows the information needs that determine the content of Marine Strategy Part 2 (MS2), the MSF monitoring programme. This monitoring programme is currently being updated with a view to adoption by the end of 2026. Based on the data and information resulting from the monitoring in accordance with the MS2, the current situation can be determined again in 2030, and for the first time also the progress on the environmental goals.

Parts 1 and 2 of the marine strategy are not mandatory programmes under the Environment and Planning Act, but are adopted in preparation for the MSFD Programme of Measures (part 3 of the marine strategy) in accordance with the Environment and Planning Act.

Food vision and implementation agenda

The elaboration of the food vision takes place at the so-called "working table" where all relevant stakeholders from the fisheries sector (supply sector and chain), local and regional administrators and nature organizations sit at the table. The implementation agenda will be adopted this spring as a joint product and consists of a list of concrete actions, clearly indicating who does what, with whom and when. The actual implementation of the actions takes place through existing and/or new bodies and projects. No further stakeholder participation will take place in the context of the preparation and implementation of the implementation agenda.

⁷ [Here](#) you will find more information about the Connections Connection Offshore Wind at Sea Programme.

However, it is being considered to organize a broader meeting around the summer to inform the supporters of all organizations about the intended actions.

Nature Restoration Ordinance

In order to implement the Nature Restoration Regulation, work is underway on the Draft Nature Plan that will be submitted to the European Commission in September 2026. The Draft Nature Plan sets out the task and the measures required to achieve this. A consultation process for the Draft Nature Plan will start in September. A final Nature Plan must be submitted to the European Commission in September 2027. In September 2027, the deterioration ban will also come into force. The Nature Restoration Ordinance may require measures for the nature tasking and these may also have spatial consequences.

New Natura 2000 sites

The Hollandse Kust site qualifies under the Birds Directive and must be designated as a Natura 2000 area in accordance with this directive. This designation will have spatial consequences for (future) shared use in the coastal area. Recent research has shown that bird concentrations occur in the northern part of the Dutch North Sea (NCP-north). In accordance with the European Birds Directive, the government is now investigating the designation of a new Birds Directive area and the possible consequences of this for other uses at sea, including wind energy. The participating parties of the North Sea Consultation will be informed about the progress of the necessary preparations. Designation will take place through the applicable procedures.

Natura 2000 management plans

Natura 2000 management plans must be evaluated and updated every 6 years. As the manager of Natura 2000 areas at sea, Rijkswaterstaat is responsible for this. The evaluation of the protected coastal areas Vlakte van de Raan, Voordelta and North Sea Coastal Zone is currently underway. A process has currently been started to update the management plans. These are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2028. The management plans can have spatial consequences in those areas. This year, the update of 3 management plans further out to sea (in the exclusive economic zone) will also start. These are Dogger Bank, Klaverbank and Friese Front. The updated management plans must enter into force on 1 January 2030.

National Programme Room for Defence

The Ministry of Defence needs more space to exercise so that the Netherlands and its allies remain safe. This is necessary because the security situation in the world is changing. The Dutch armed forces are increasingly focusing on protecting their own territory and that of NATO allies. In order to be able to carry out this task properly, the Ministry of Defence also needs more space at sea.

The National Programme Space for Defence (NPRD) describes the need for more opportunities than are currently available in the current maritime training areas in the North Sea to strengthen the readiness of the Royal Netherlands Navy. The current size of the EHD 41 and 42 exercise areas is too small for this. In addition, the current training areas also offer limited opportunities to practice in conjunction with other activities at sea, to practice as may also have to be fought in the event of a conflict.

On 19 December 2026, the government adopted the NPRD and thus designated, among other things, a contiguous zone between the areas EHD 41 and EHD 42. In contrast to the current EHD 41 and 42, the starting point for this zone is multifunctional use of space.

The relationship with other users (e.g. mining, shipping, fishing, etc.) and interests (nature and the environment) in the area will be coordinated with the parties involved and, if necessary, will be laid down in the North Sea Programme 2028-2033.

Project EIA sand extraction

In the North Sea, a large amount of sand is extracted annually in the zone from the continuous NAP - 20m depth line to the 12+2 nautical mile limit. Rijkswaterstaat extracts replenishment sand here for the maintenance of the Dutch coast in the context of flood risk management. The commercial sand extraction companies, united in the La MER foundation, also extract sand here for commercial purposes such as housing, infrastructure projects and more. Every 10 years, an environmental impact report (EIA) is drawn up, separately for replenishment sand and fill sand, in order to be able to grant the necessary permits for these activities under the Environment and Planning Act. Over the next ten years (2028-2037), it is estimated that a total of 300 million cubic metres of sand will be extracted from the North Sea: a maximum of 150 million cubic metres of replenishment sand for Rijkswaterstaat and a maximum of 150 million cubic metres of fill sand for commercial sand extractors. Parallel to PNZ 28-33, the project EIA is being drawn up. The EIA project also explores the option of extracting deeper.

National Water Programme

The National Water Programme (NWP) gives direction to water policy throughout the Netherlands and forms the overarching umbrella for various underlying national water programmes, including the North Sea Programme (PNZ). The NWP runs in parallel with the PNZ and is currently being updated for the period 2028-2033. With this update, the government wants to strengthen its control over the current and future water taskings and accelerate the approach. The NWP also contains the management plan for the national waters, including the North Sea. The PNZ is part of the NWP and is added as an independent appendix.

2.6 Follow-up process

After the PNZ has been adopted, a number of elaboration steps are taken.

Wind energy and surrounding shipping routes

- Area development for wind farm zone 6/7: an area development is planned with a further consideration of interests within (part of) this area. This elaboration is part of the phased approach as agreed in the PH PNZ22-27. This elaboration will partly take place in parallel with the implementation of PNZ 28-33.
- Roadmap for offshore wind energy: phasing, when in which (sub)area site decisions will be taken and investment decisions for TenneT. An update and expansion of the offshore wind energy roadmap is planned for the second half of 2026.
- Site decisions: a site decision is used to determine the exact location of a wind farm on the basis of the Offshore Wind Energy Act. Site decisions can only be taken within a designated wind farm zone.
- The adoption of the Offshore Wind Energy Connection Connections Programme (pVAWOZ) is scheduled for the end of 2026. On this basis, project procedures will be started for the individual connections under the Environment and Planning Act.
- Shipping routing measures and *clearways*: Routing measures and/or *clearways* for shipping in the North Sea may be required, based on the wind energy areas being designated. The *clearways* around and through wind farm zone 6/7 are an elaboration of agreements in the PH PNZ22-27. The search areas for wind energy for PNZ 28-33 take this into account. Given the location of the current

search areas, an additional *clearway may be* needed to keep shipping traffic between Hamburg and Hull possible. Routing measures will have to be approved by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The central government must draw up these measures together with neighbouring countries and submit them to the IMO. *Clearways* are determined after precise elaboration of the location in the context of the Environmental Regulations.

3 Stakeholders

The proposed policy changes may affect the interests of nature and other uses at sea. For example, the spatial reservation of wind farm areas has possible (spatial) consequences for nature, fisheries, shipping, mining, defence and energy infrastructure. Changes in co-use policy can have consequences for ecology, for shipping safety and *maritime security*, for recreational and commercial shipping, for energy products and users of co-use space, such as in aquaculture or solar-at-sea projects. Space for defence can have consequences for possible other uses or nature in those areas. Securing available stocks for sand extraction is crucial for the government itself as responsible for coastal safety or for market parties that extract fill sand. Stakeholders in the PNZ are civil society organisations, companies, parties that represent these interests and knowledge institutes.

Neighbouring countries are also interested, for example because of continuous shipping routes, possible cross-border (ecological) effects of wind farms, opportunities for international (energy) connections or fishing interests. The involvement of stakeholders in the PNZ therefore takes place at both national and international level.

Because the measures in the North Sea Programme are located outside the municipal coastal waters, there is less direct interest in residents and businesses "on land" in general in the decision-making process about the PNZ. There is a relationship with coastal protection, landing and use in the coastal zone. Coastal provinces and coastal municipalities are therefore approached where relevant in the participation moments.

In the participation process, a distinction is made between stakeholders and interested parties. Stakeholders are involved in a targeted manner. Interested parties form a broader group of individuals and organisations who have no direct interest in the PNZ but are interested in the subject. They are therefore not actively involved in the creation of the PNZ. Interested parties, also on land, are of course free to take note of the documents that are made available for inspection. They also have the right to respond to this by means of an opinion.

The North Sea Consultation

The North Sea Consultation (NZO) monitors progress in the implementation of the North Sea Agreement and conducts consensus-based consultations on key decisions taken by the government for the North Sea. The sectors of energy, nature, fisheries and shipping are represented in the NZO, in addition to the national government. The NZO has fifteen seats, which are divided equally among the sectors and the central government. The members of the NZO themselves sit at the table with the government, around which is a second ring in which the supporters of the NZO members sit. They feed their representatives in the NZO. The NZO is therefore an important consultative body to involve in the PNZ. Appendix B contains a list of the members of the NZO and the second ring.

4 Participation

This chapter describes what the participation process for the PNZ looks like.

4.1 Distinction in participation

A distinction is made between legally required and non-legally required participation. Statutory participation follows from the obligations for participation in decision-making in the Netherlands. These are both legal obligations and obligations from government policy. All participation moments that are organised in addition to the statutory participation fall under non-statutory participation. This involves, for example, consultations with parties from the North Sea Consultation or meetings to exchange knowledge with stakeholders.

4.2 Key Participation Moments

Table 4.1 below provides an overview of participation moments for parts of the plan for which a decision will be taken in the PNZ, including the planning and the target group. Partial intentions that have an independent legal procedure organise their own participation process and a description thereof falls outside the scope of this PP. For the sake of completeness, these are mentioned under 4.5.

Table 4.1: Overview of key participation moments

Generic participation moments (scope = PNZ 28-33)

When (indicative)	Description of participation moment	Who
Q1 2026	Discussing the PNZ approach and the main points of the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail (approach to the EIA) and participation plan	North Sea consultation
Q2 2026	Opinion procedure Memorandum on scope and level of detail and participation plan	Stakeholders and interested parties, including VNG, IPO
End of Q2/beginning of Q3 2026	Small-scale meetings for the exchange of knowledge about the impact assessments of proposed policy and the choices that have been made	NZO members and/or their constituencies
Q1 2027	Information meeting about the draft decision PNZ and the EIA during consultation	Direct stakeholders, by invitation, including VNG, IPO.
December 2027	Inform about publication of PNZ after final decision.	Stakeholders and interested parties

Participation moments focused on partial intentions

Partial intention	When (indicative)	Description of participation moment	Who
WoZ	Q1 2026	Discussing the PNZ approach and the main points of the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail (approach to the EIA) and participation plan	North Sea consultation
WoZ	Q1 2026	Discussing search areas for offshore wind energy	NZO members and/or their constituencies and North Sea consultation plenary
WoZ	Q3 + Q4 2026	Discuss results, effect estimates and emerging options for choices	NZO members and/or their constituencies and North Sea Consultation and North Sea Consultation plenary
Multifunctional use of space in the new zone between the EHD 41 and EHD 42 areas	2026 ff.	Bilateral and/or collective discussions with mining, shipping, cables and pipelines, nature and fisheries about opportunities and abrasives for multifunctional use of space in areas where military exercises and tests are also held.	With the relevant users and/or via at key moments in the NZO.
Assessment framework for shared use and passage	Q2/Q3 2026	Informing about the emerging intention to include new forms of shared use and legal anchoring of peace for nature	NZO-wg shared use within wind farms
Assessment framework for shared use and passage	Q3 2026	Informing about the results of the exploratory evaluation of the passage policy	NZO-wg shared use within wind farms
Assessment framework for shared use and passage	Q4 2026	Conclusions to ask the NZO plenary on the implementation of agreements on shared use within wind farms	Plenary NZO and NZO-wg shared use within wind farms
Sand extraction	Q1/Q2 2026	Inform about intentions in PNZ, main points NRD and broader assessment frameworks.	Relevant sand extraction stakeholders including Cascade, LaMER, OR ELSE, Vogelbescherming
MS3	Q3 2025	Broad meeting update of the MSFD Programme of Measures	Stakeholders and interested parties
MS3	Q3 2026	Consultation Stakeholders 75% version of the PvM (measures	Stakeholders and interested parties

4.3 Objectives of the participation process

With the participation process for the PNZ, the government aims to involve stakeholders in the development of the PNZ in good time, so that their interests can be properly weighed up in the decisions to be taken. Stakeholders are also involved so that they can contribute their knowledge and knowledge exchange can take place between the government and stakeholders.

4.4 Legal participation

Opinion procedure on the intention to draw up the North Sea Programme 2028 – 2033 and a plan environmental impact assessment (planMER)

A views procedure will be organised in which anyone can submit a response to the intention to draw up the North Sea Programme 2028-2033 and an environmental impact assessment. With a view, comments can be made about, for example, the subjects, depth or the assessment framework for the EIA.

The documents that are made available for inspection for this purpose are the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail (NRD) and this Participation Plan. The NRD describes which topics (scope) will be investigated in the EIA and with what depth (level of detail). A response to this Participation Plan can also be given.⁸ The government is responding with a response note to the views on the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail and the Participation Plan.

Opinion procedure for the draft PNZ 28-33 and the EIA plan

After publication of the draft PNZ, everyone has 6 weeks to respond to the draft, the appendices, and the accompanying planMER. After this period, the central government will deal with the views. The government responds with a response note to the views on the draft PNZ 28-33 and the planMER.

During this opinion procedure, the central government will organise an information meeting to which stakeholders will be specifically invited. During this meeting, the documents that are available for inspection will be explained and invitees can ask questions about these documents. This allows interested parties to obtain more information before submitting their views, or questions that would otherwise have been received via views can already be answered.

4.5 Non-statutory participation

Involvement of the North Sea Consultation

The central government takes key decisions when making decisions about the PNZ. In the NZO, consensus-oriented consultations will take place on this as agreed. To this end, the NZO will be updated on the state of affairs and the choices at hand, and members of the NZO can contribute their interests during the consultation.

The NZO is involved in a plenary session at least at the following two times:

- Q1 2026: The approach for the PNZ and the EIA was discussed during the consultation, prior to the start of the NRD's opinion procedure and the participation plan.

⁸ Under the Environment and Planning Act, the obligation to make the NRD available for inspection is no longer necessary and participation in the NRD is free of form. The government has chosen to make both available for inspection, so that interested parties can respond at an early stage.

- Q3 2026: The state of affairs of the PNZ and the choices that will be made by then will be discussed in the North Sea consultation.

In addition, NZO members, and if necessary their constituencies, are informed during the participation process and are given the opportunity to contribute knowledge and interests. In a joint session on areas with conflicting interests, spatial tensions and opportunities are discussed. In addition to TenneT (NZO member), Gasunie is involved.

Involvement of stakeholders who are not represented in NZO

There are other stakeholders who are not represented in the NZO but are involved in the PNZ. These include (not exhaustive):

- Market parties in offshore (mining⁹, offshore wind energy, contractors and suppliers)
- Market parties in sand extraction, represented by the LaMER Foundation
- Market parties with an interest in shared use of wind farms
- Helicopter operators
- Gasunie
- Coastal provinces and coastal municipalities
- Knowledge institutions

These parties are invited to the information meetings and, where necessary, to specific sessions as described in 4.2. Where necessary, additional consultation can be set up in addition to this. To keep coastal provinces and coastal municipalities informed, they are invited to relevant information meetings.

4.2 indicates for each participation intention which participation moments will at least be organised. This concerns those sub-intentions for which a decision will be taken in the PNZ. Partial intentions that have an independent legal procedure organise their own participation process. This concerns the following intentions:

Information exchange

Information exchange between central government and stakeholders is an important part of the process surrounding the PNZ, in order to ultimately be able to make a good balance of interests. In addition to the NZO members and their constituencies, other stakeholders are also involved. It is about exchanging practical knowledge and future interests in particular. This exchange of information is organised, among other things, when determining the spatial needs of various sectors in 2026, the development of measures under the MSFD, the knowledge agenda and around the impact assessments for the EIA.

⁹ Oil and gas extraction, CO2 storage, possible storage of hydrogen

5 International coordination and participation

At the international level, national governments of neighbouring countries/North Sea countries are also involved in PNZ 28-33, both during formal and informal participation moments. Table 6.1 below shows the planned international participation moments. In the context of the *Greater North Sea Basin Initiative*, in addition to Espoo contacts, the participating countries of this initiative are also informed. In addition, OSPAR (ICG-MSFD) discusses the coherence on a regional scale between MSFD measures.

Table 6.1: Overview of international participation moments

When (indicative)	Description of participation moment	Who
Q1 2026	Notification about publication of NRD via Espoo procedure and GNSBI contacts	National governments
Early 2027	Opinion procedure on draft decision PNZ 28-33 and environmental impact assessment	Stakeholders and interested parties
Early 2027	International meeting on draft decision PNZ and planMER, during consultation period	National governments
December 2027	Inform about publication after final decision.	Stakeholders and interested parties

Legal participation

On the basis of the Espoo Convention, the central government is obliged to announce the PNZ and the preparation of the associated EIA to neighbouring countries. To this end, a summary of both documents will be published in English at the same time as the NRD and the Participation Plan are made available for inspection.

Neighbouring countries and other international stakeholders must be able to respond to the proposed draft PNZ. The inspection will therefore also be made internationally accessible and announced, so that international stakeholders can submit views. The response to these views will be included in the response note.

Non-statutory participation

During the drafting process, the central government will coordinate with neighbouring countries about the PNZ in bilateral and trilateral consultations. In addition, information exchange takes place in a number of international forums, such as the *MSP collaboration group*, the *Greater North Sea Basin Initiative* and the *North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC)*. Government organisations from neighbouring countries are invited to an international meeting prior to or during the consultation of the draft PNZ and the EIA (Q2 2027).

Bijlage A Topics in independent trajectories

Developments in independent trajectories and coherence

The North Sea Programme is linked to a number of other plans and programmes that all deal with the North Sea and the activities that take place in the North Sea. PNZ 28-33 will be fully updated with regard to the outcomes of such independent processes, insofar as they have been completed in time. The processes that this is about are presented below.

Future vision for shrimp fishing

LNVN is drawing up a future vision for shrimp fisheries, in which a set of measures is laid down to ensure sustainable shrimp fishing for the next 10 years. This concerns both generic measures (e.g. on fishing effort or fishing gear) and spatial measures (zoning, restrictions on fishing within the Natura 2000 site of the North Sea Coastal Zone). Agreements on measures are made in consultation with Rijkswaterstaat and stakeholders.

Designation of Natura 2000 site Hollandse Kust

With a view to nature conservation and restoration, the designation of the Hollandse Kust site as a Birds Directive area will probably be a fact by the end of 2027 as a result of an independent procedure. The designation of this area will then be included on the Maritime Spatial Planning Map. The management plans of the three current protected areas along the coast are also currently being updated (Vlakte van de Raan, North Sea Coastal Zone, and Voordelta). Finally, it will be investigated whether the Borkumse Stenen and Vlakte van Raan qualify as a VR area. Insofar as available in time, all new instructions and measures laid down in management plans will be included in PNZ 28-33.

Study on the designation of a new Birds Directive area in the northern part of the NCP and its possible consequences for other uses at sea, including wind energy

Recent research has shown that bird concentrations occur in the northern part of the Dutch North Sea (NCP-north). In accordance with the European Birds Directive, the government is now investigating the designation of a new Birds Directive area and the possible consequences of this for other uses at sea, including wind energy. If decision-making based on further research is completed in time, the newly designated or to be designated areas will be included on the Maritime Spatial Plan Map in the context of an independent legal procedure.

Lifting of restrictive fishing measures in the Dutch part of the Plaice Box

In the context of room for fisheries and the implementation of the North Sea Agreement, the government is committed to the lifting of restrictive fishing measures in the Dutch part of the Plaice Box, outside the 12-mile zone, and with the exception of the MSFD area Borkumse Stenen. If the Dutch efforts lead to a decision by the European Commission on an adjustment of the restrictions, that result will be included in the PNZ.

New IMO policy to reduce harmful emissions from shipping

In recent years, agreements have been prepared in the IMO context on reducing harmful emissions from the shipping sector. IMO measures against air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions are legally enshrined through MARPOL Annex VI, and are implemented in the Netherlands through the Act and the Decree/Regulation on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. The North Sea Programme refers to these frameworks and is updated where necessary in PNZ 28-33.

Proposed new areas with which 15% soil protection will be achieved

The elaboration of agreement 4.38 in the North Sea Agreement (NZA) to safeguard 15% of the seabed within the NCP in ecologically valuable areas from all forms of bottom fishing will land in the PNZ. Currently, about 7.2% of the Dutch North Sea is completely closed to bottom fishing. In the coming years, this percentage will increase to 13.8%. In 2026, the decision will be taken on the locations of the remaining 1.2% of soil protection. This development will be included in the North Sea Programme 2028-2033 and the proposal for seabed protection will be submitted to the European Commission.

Nature Restoration Regulation (NHV) and implications for North Sea policy

The Nature Restoration Ordinance (NHV) sets spatial nature objectives for 2030, 2040 and 2050. Through the National Nature Plan Recovery Plan (NRP), member states indicate which restoration measures are being taken for various habitats. The measures included in the NRP to meet the 2030 targets must be in force in that year. In addition, from September 2027, a deterioration ban will apply to the current specific habitats, for which measures must also be taken. In this context, a draft NRP will be drawn up before mid-2026, including measures to be taken. The European Commission will assess the plan, after which it will be finalized by September 2027 at the latest. If knowledge about measures is available in a timely manner, this information can be taken into account in variant development and decision-making in the context of the MSFD Programme of Measures and the PNZ.

Development of Species Protection Plans

The central government is developing species protection plans in accordance with agreements 6.8 – 6.12 of the North Sea Agreement (NZA). The PNZ will be updated on the basis of the plans under development. The plans are being drawn up in collaboration with NZO working groups and consultations involving NGOs, fisheries, the energy and mining sectors, and other users.

Helicopter routes (aviation regulation)

The government will include the helicopter routes over the North Sea, as published in the Aviation Guide, in the North Sea Programme. Helicopter use is essential for, among other things, transporting personnel between the mainland and installations in the North Sea. The helicopter routes serve primarily to guarantee flight safety and predictability for civil aviation, in connection with activities at sea (such as mining, offshore wind energy and shipping). In principle, the helicopter routes follow the spatial planning of the North Sea, in order to prevent them from being located over wind farms where possible. In the case of new developments, it can be assessed whether relocation of routes is desirable and feasible.

Agreements on the protection of cultural heritage and landscape quality

It is important to protect archaeological values. In accordance with legal provisions, this is already taken into account in the implementation of projects, but it is desirable to include these agreements in the North Sea Programme as well.

Bijlage B NZO members and their supporters

Sector	Organization	Member of the NZO	2nd ring NZO*
Energy	Dutch Wind Energy Association	x	
Energy	Element NL	x	
Energy	Energy Management Netherlands	x	
Energy	TenneT	x	
Energy	Gasunie (via Tennet)		x
Energy	Dutch Marine Energy Centre		x
Energy	Oceans of Energy		x
Energy	Dana Petroleum Netherlands B.V.		x
Energy	Jetex Petroleum Ltd		x
Energy	Kistos NL2 B.V.		x
Energy	NAM		x
Energy	Neptune Energy Netherlands B.V.		x
Energy	ONE-Dyas B.V.		x
Energy	Petrogas E&P Netherlands B.V.		x
Energy	RockRose (NL) CS1 B.V.		x
Energy	TAQA Offshore B.V.		x
Energy	Tenaz Energy Netherlands Offshore S.A.R.L.		x
Energy	TotalEnergies EP Nederland B.V.		x
Energy	Vermilion Energy Netherlands B.V.		x
Energy	Wintershall Noordzee B.V.		x
Energy	XTO Netherlands Ltd.		x
Energy	Shell Netherlands (for CCS and E&P)		x
Energy	Port of Rotterdam (Port of Rotterdam Authority)		x
Energy	Port of Amsterdam		x
Energy	Port of Den Helder		x
Nature	North Sea Foundation	x	
Nature	Nature & Environment	x	
Nature	World Wide Fund for Nature / Bird Protection (share one seat)	x	
Nature	Nature Monuments		x
Nature	Wadden Sea Association		x
Nature	The Green 11		x
Nature	Netherlands Reef Restoration Alliance (NERA)		x
Fisheries/food	Producers' Organisation Delta Zuid/ Dutch Fishermen's Association	x	
Fisheries/food	North Sea Passive Fisheries Foundation		x
Fisheries/food	VisNed/PO Urk	x	
Fisheries/food	NetVISwerk	x	
Fisheries/food	Northern Fisheries Alliance		x
Fisheries/food	Administrative Platform Fisheries		x
Fisheries/food	Pelagic Fish Association		x
Fisheries/food	Fish Federation/Perch Fish Processing		x
Fisheries/food	The European SEAWEED association		x
Fisheries/food	PO Mussel		x
Shipping	Port of Rotterdam Authority on behalf of the Seaports Industry Association	x	
Shipping	Association of Harbour Masters in the Netherlands	x	
Shipping	Royal Association of Dutch Shipowners	x	

Shipping	Recreational Maritime / Water Sports Association		x
Shipping	Netherlands Maritime Country		x
Shipping	Marin		x
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management	x	
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Climate and Green Growth	x	
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature	x	
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Defence		x
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Housing and Regional Planning		x
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Finance		x
Government of the Netherlands	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Cultural Heritage)		x
Government of the Netherlands	Rijkswaterstaat		x
Government of the Netherlands	Coast Guard		x
Government	Coastal provinces		x
International	Neighbouring countries		
Civil engineering	Market parties in sand extraction		
Government	Coastal municipalities		
Aviation	Helicopter operators		

** at the time of publication of this document, the inventory of the members of the 2nd ring of the NZO has not yet been completed. This list is therefore subject to change.*

Bijlage C Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
EIPN	Energy Infrastructure Plan North Sea
EHD	Defence training area
GNSBI	Greater North Sea Basin Initiative
GW	GigaWatt
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
KRM	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
WFD	Water Framework Directive
I&W	Infrastructure and Water Management
MS3	Marine Strategy Part III
NHV	Nature Restoration Ordinance
NOVI	National Environmental Vision
NRD	Memorandum on scope and level of detail
NZA	North Sea Agreement
NZO	North Sea consultations
OSPAR	Oslo-Paris Convention
EIA	The environmental impact report (the booklet)
EIA plan	The environmental impact assessment plan (the procedure)
PNZ	North Sea Programme
pVAWOZ	Offshore Wind Landing Connections Programme