



# The view of green NGOs: risks, chances and solutions for the energy transition in the Wadden Sea region

Wadden Sea Day, Wilhelmshaven,  
29 August 2024

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with contributions from Aline Kühl-  
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Fotos: Martin Stock, Hans-Ulrich Rösner (2), WWF-Archiv

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## 1. Introduction

- Wadden Sea is almost fully protected, and since 2009/2014 inscribed as World Heritage
- There are severe impacts from energy production and transportation (gas production, oil production, transport with ships, wind farms on- & offshore, LNG terminals, cables, pipelines, overhead lines, related traffic), and more of this to come
- This could be a risk even for the World Heritage status (see World Heritage Committee decisions in 2023 and 2024)
- Climate crisis is an enormous risk for the Wadden Sea, requiring global & regional climate protection, & regional climate adaptation
- The coast is privileged by the amount of wind there, and is very important for the energy transition

Let's have a look into some cases...



## 2. The case of oil production on „Mittelplate“

- Oil production began in the 1980ies after the designation of the National Park in the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea
- Drilling and production from a platform („Mittelplate“) within the protected area and also by horizontal drilling from the mainland
- Based on an exception in the National Park law, which also restricted the drilling to the Mittelplate platform
- To allow for the inscription of the Wadden Sea World Heritage in 2009, the Mittelplate platform and some potential drilling areas nearby became enclaves excluded from the property
- Green NGOs always rejected the oil production in the Wadden Sea, for both nature and climate protection



## Oil production in the Wadden Sea until 2041?

In 2024 the government of Schleswig-Holstein and the oil company Wintershall DEA reached an agreement about Mittelplate:

- Oil production to be ending by 2041, the platform being dismantled
- Other than applied for, there shall be no extension of the area from where oil production is allowed

Green NGOs supported the stop of the extension, but criticised 2041 as much too late, suggesting 2030 as the end date

The released enclaves should now be included into the World Heritage

### Aus für Ölförderung im Watt

Wintershall Dea zieht Anträge zurück / Einzige deutsche Bohrplattform Mittelplate wird bis 2041 abgebaut

**Kay Müller**  
In 17 Jahren ist die Ölförderung im Wattenmeer Geschichte. „Die Ölförderung im Nationalpark endet definitiv im Jahr 2041“, sagt Umweltsenator Tobias Goldschmidt. Der Grünen-Politiker hat sich in seinen Verhandlungen mit Wintershall Dea darauf geeinigt, dass der Energiekonzern seine Anträge für die Erschließung neuer Ölfelder vor der Bohrplattform Mittelplate in Dithmarschen zurückzieht.

**Sensibler Naturraum**  
„Mit dieser Einigung blauen wir auch im Wattenmeer endlich und definitiv das Ende des fossilen Zeitalters ein. Die Bohrtiefe Mittelplate war trotz hoher Sicherheitsstandards schon lange ein Fremdkörper in diesem extrem sensiblen Naturraum“, sagt Goldschmidt. „Das endgültige Auslaufen der Erdölförderung ist eine gute Perspektive für den Schutz des Wattenmeeres.“ Allerdings ist der Ausstieg erkauft. Bisher hat Wintershall Dea eine Förderabgabe von 21 Prozent an das Land gezahlt, die Goldschmidt jetzt auf einen Mindestsatz von 15 Prozent absenkt. Bundesgesetzlich ist eine Abgabe von nur zehn Prozent vorgesehen, von denen die Länder unter bestimmten Bedingungen abweichen können. Schleswig-Holstein hatte lange deutlich mehr verlangt, wogegen Wintershall Dea juristisch vorgegangen war und die Differenzbeträge vom Land zurückgefordert hatte. „Mit dieser Vereinbarung haben wir uns nun außergerichtlich geeinigt. Damit bewahren wir das Land vor dem Risiko, Rückzahlungsansprüchen im dreistelligen Millionenbereich ausgesetzt zu sein“, sagt Goldschmidt. „Diese Vereinbarung gibt beiden Seiten dauerhaft Pla-

**Warum erst jetzt?**  
**MEINUNG**  
**Kay Müller**  
lyrisch.de

Zwar bewahren beide Seiten Stillschweigen, aber jeder kann sich ausrechnen, wie der Deal um die Ölplattform Mittelplate gelaufen ist: Spätestens seit die Grünen vor zwölf Jahren das Umweltministerium in Kiel übernommen haben, war dem Betreiber klar, dass es keine Verlängerung der Fördergenehmigung über 2041 hinaus geben wird. Es galt also nur, den Preis hochzutreiben, den sich der Staat den Ausstieg lassen will. Nun ist man sich einig geworden. Das Land verzichtet auf zusätzliche Einnahmen, dafür zieht der Konzern Anträge auf neue Förderungen und alle Regress-Ansprüche zurück. Und die Plattform, die in einem Nationalpark nichts verloren hat, kann im nächsten Jahrzehnt endlich abgebaut werden. Ein fairer Deal, doch am Ende bleibt eben eine Frage: Warum erst jetzt?

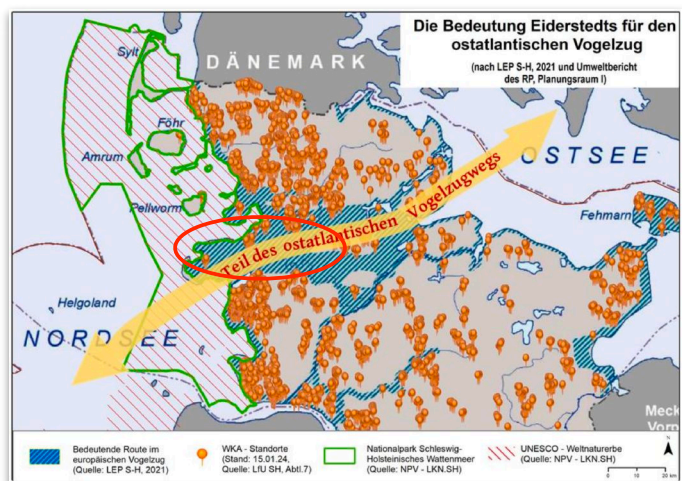
Wintershall-Dea-Sprecher Georg Hiemann sagt: „Wir werden weiter Öl und Gas fördern, solange es eine Nachfrage danach gibt.“ 40 Millionen Tonnen Öl seien bereits von Mittelplate aus gefördert worden. „Bis zu 15 Millionen Tonnen gehen noch ab.“

**Schleswig-Holstein** – Seite 4

SHZ 09.05.2024

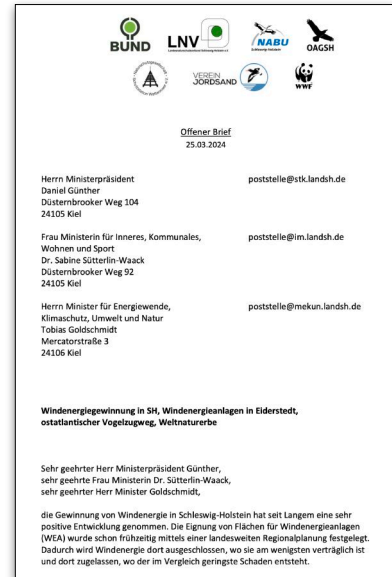
## 3. The case of wind energy on Eiderstedt

- Schleswig-Holstein, harbouring about a third of the Wadden Sea, organises the production of wind energy onshore via regional planning
- This is successful to allow for enough renewables to be installed, and also steers this in a way, that wind farms are built only where they cause the least damage
- There are almost no wind farms on the Eiderstedt peninsula due to its importance for bird migration to and from the Wadden Sea



## Probably no additional wind farms on Eiderstedt

- The federal government speeds up the transition to renewables and allowed also for the local level to develop wind farms in case there is no valid regional planning for this
- As the regional planning is in the update process, 7 green NGOs suggested to the government that Eiderstedt should remain excluded from wind farms, while they also support regional planning for wind energy
- The draft of the new regional planning for wind energy excludes Eiderstedt, which is important to keep for the final document



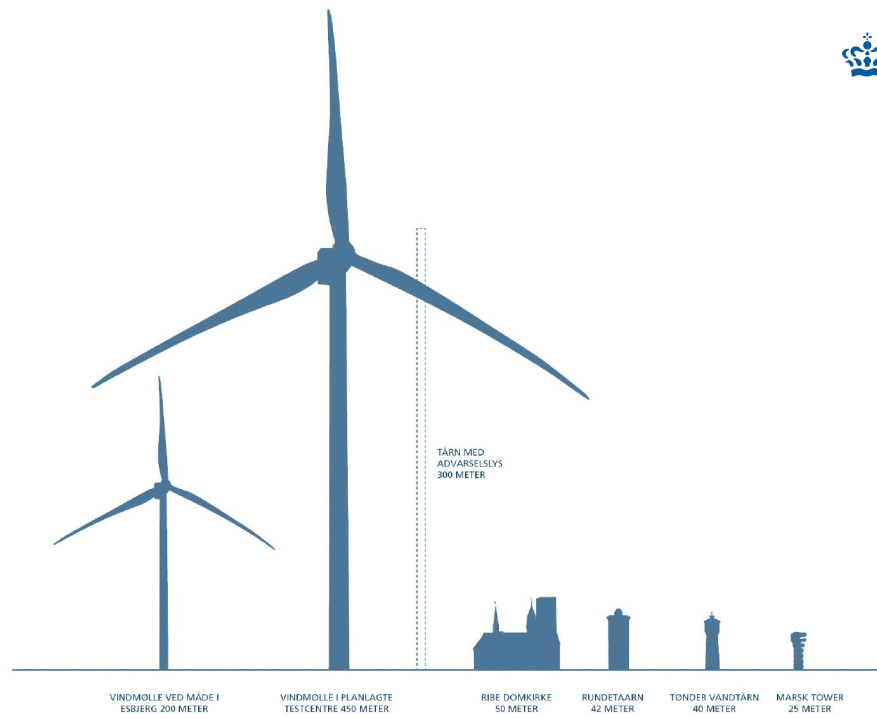
## 4. The case of a test center for gigantic wind turbines in the Danish Wadden Sea

Part 4 by Janne Liburd, Professor, D.Phil, PH.D., Chair of the Danish Wadden Sea National Park (2015-2023)

*„The purpose of the Danish National Park Law (2007) is, amongst other, to preserve and enhance the quality and diversity of nature as well as the landscape and geological values“ (§ 1, para. 1, no. 2 and 4).*

*„The construction of a third wind turbine test center within a National Park area will likely be difficult to reconcile with the law's objective of preserving and enhancing natural and cultural landscapes“ (Ministry of the Environment, 2022, p. 12).*





*This fight is about much more than a local threat in someone's backyard - it is about our collective responsibility to preserve UNESCO world heritage and protect our nature amid a global biodiversity crisis. It is high time to unite our voices and stand together against the destruction of our Wadden Sea, our heritage, our future.*

*We will make a human chain along the Ballum marsh along Kystvej. Join us Nov 26, 2023, 12 noon and hold hands with another Wadden Sea fighter.*

Greetings from Asbjørn, William, Jannik and Helena

JYDSKEVESTVEJEN HADERSLØV  
TIRSDAG 14. NOVEMBER 2023

8 TØNDER

**FAKTA SAGEN**

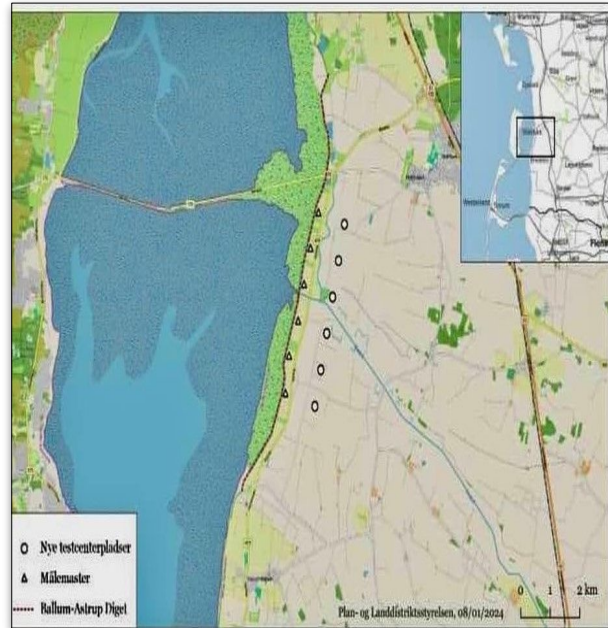
- Netop nu undertages gerningen og en bred på forhåndsevaluering for at etablere et tredje dansk testcenter for så vindmøller på nu op til meters højde.
- De to eksisterende er beliggende i Bstenild øst for Tønder og Håns Lemvig. Begge er kun og kendt til lavere møller.
- Brokket om et tredje center for helens marked begrundet med regeringsindsatsen om at løse kapaciteten af havvind mod 2050 og samtidig og en teknisk færdig position på verdensplan den for produktion af vejen energi.
- Af de otte områder, der er, ligger tre ved kysten og dermed ved den udde den nationalpark, der og en del af UNESCOs verdensarvsliste.
- Vindbranchen og for net her kasseres flere af områder, der er i spil. De gælder ikke for Ballum.
- Tønder Kommune har delt sagt fra over for at være et testcenter langs dehavet. Hovedbegrundningen er, at en placering her vil bringe UNESCO-udvalget i fare.

Vi har et kækkebrev om for at bevare verdensarven, påpeger (fra venstre) Asbjørn Sobarr, Helena Libard og William Møller Schmidt i deres optræd til et danske en menneskekæde i Ballum-mærket som protest mod, at et vindmølle-testcenter placeres ud midt vadehavssystemet. På billedet mangler den fjerde deltager til aktionen den 26. november, Jannik Lorenzen, Ballum. Foto: Uwe Iversen

**Unge kalder til kamp mod verdens største vindmøller**

## Together we did it!

On Feb 1, 2024 the decision NOT to place a national test center for gigantic ocean wind turbines in the Wadden Sea was announced after 1.5 years!



## 5. The case of linear infrastructure crossing the Wadden Sea

Part 5 by Prof. Dr. Aline Kühl-Stenzel, Policy Officer Marine Conservation, NABU

German Offshore Wind targets for the North Sea: **7-fold increase** until 2045 (from ~ 9,5 GW today up to **66 GW**)

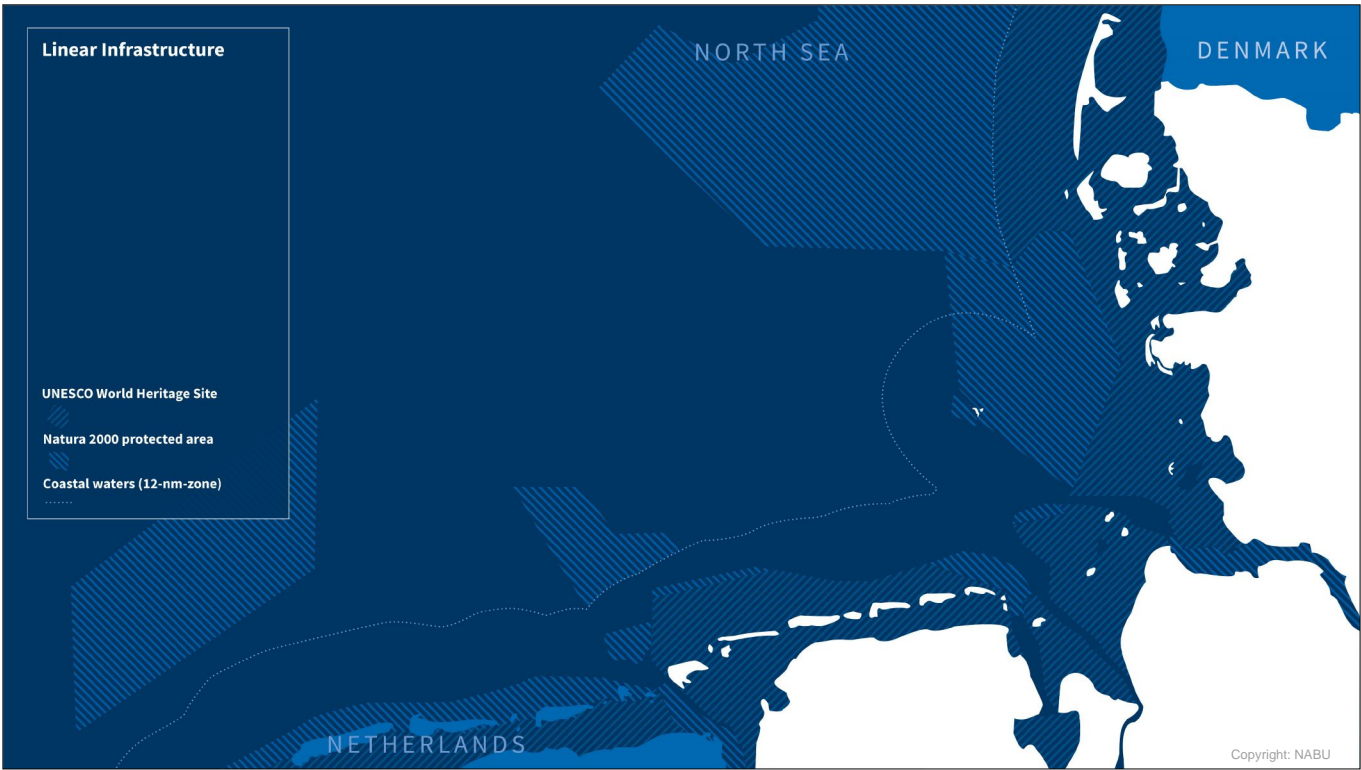
- Translates into ~ > 25 x 2 GW high voltage cable systems (3 cables each)
- Plus: international interconnectors & pipelines

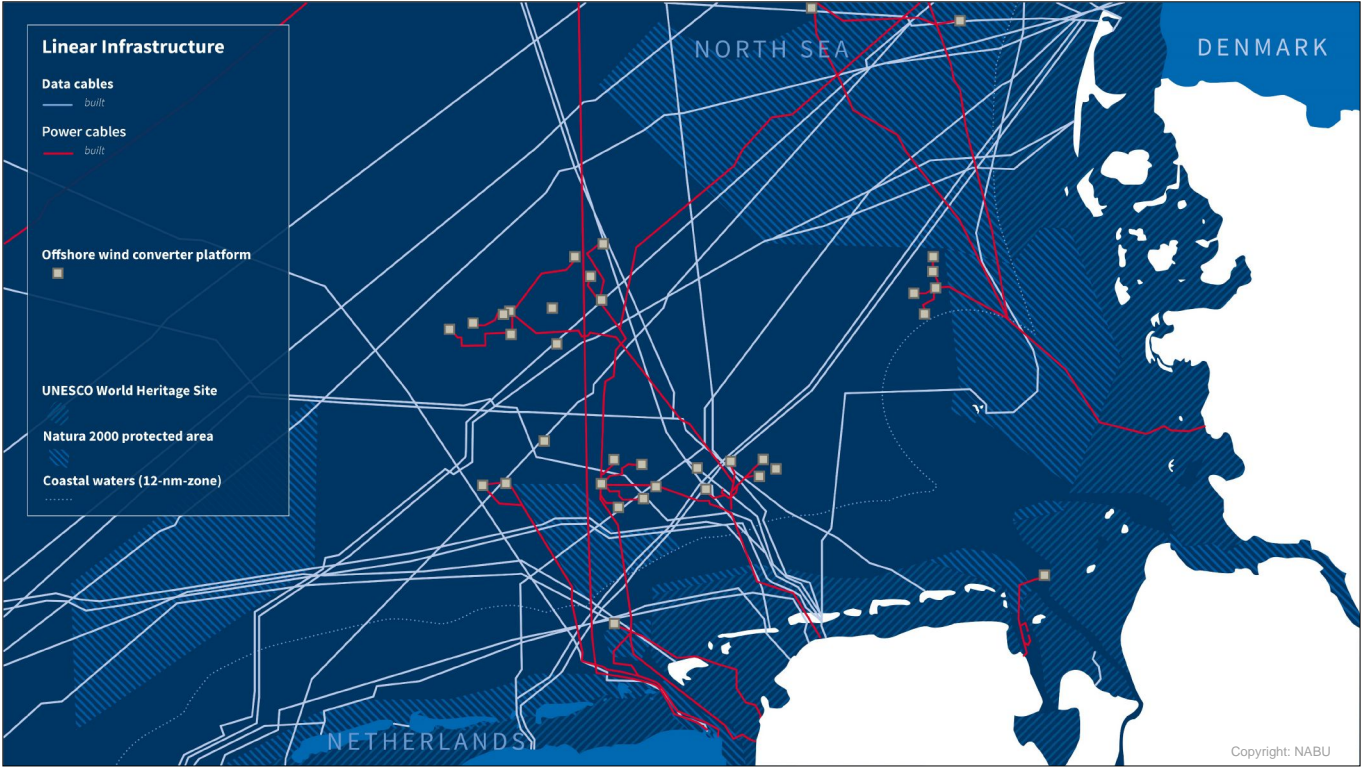
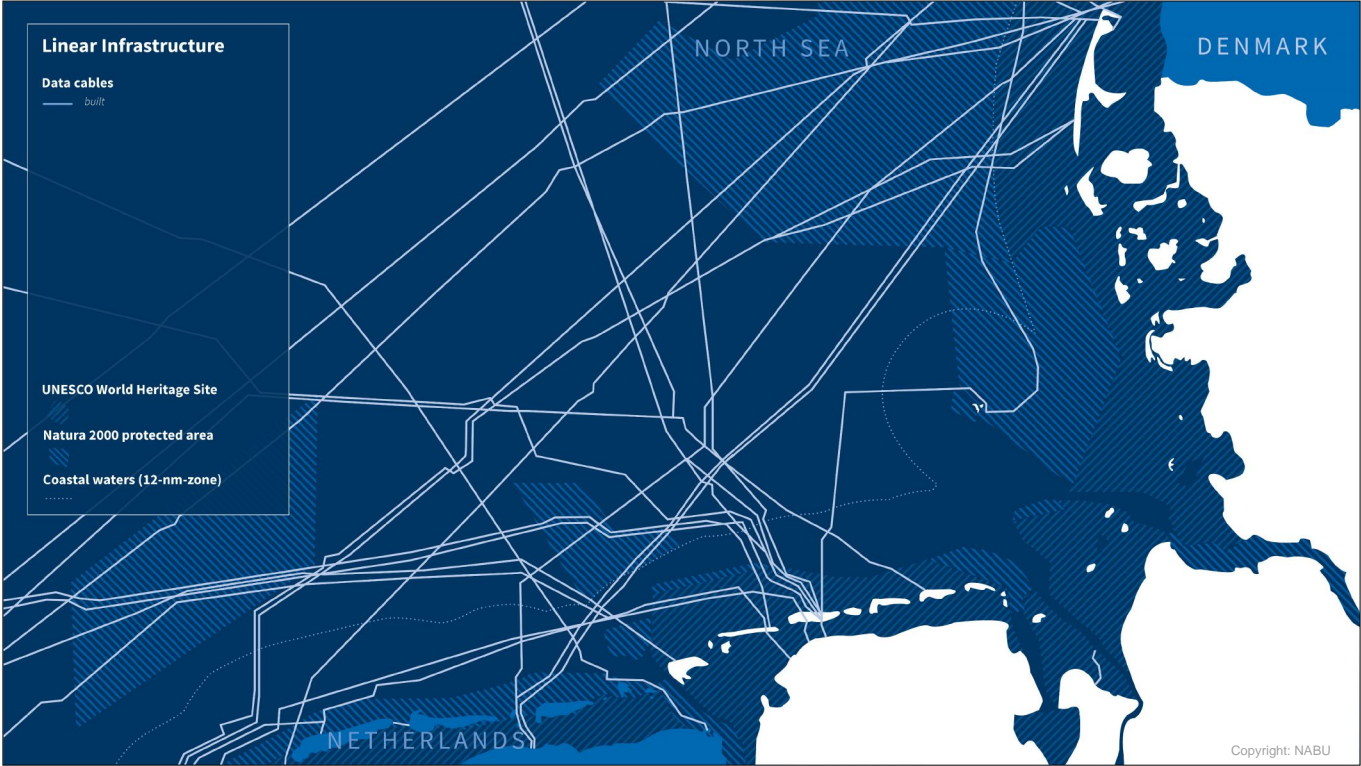
**Where** and **how** can these be built without harming the UNESCO World Heritage Site/National Park?

**Cumulative pressure** is already high and is likely to rise further (large scale construction works, loss of wilderness, heating of mudflats, repeated construction works when cables are damaged or natural dynamics expose them)



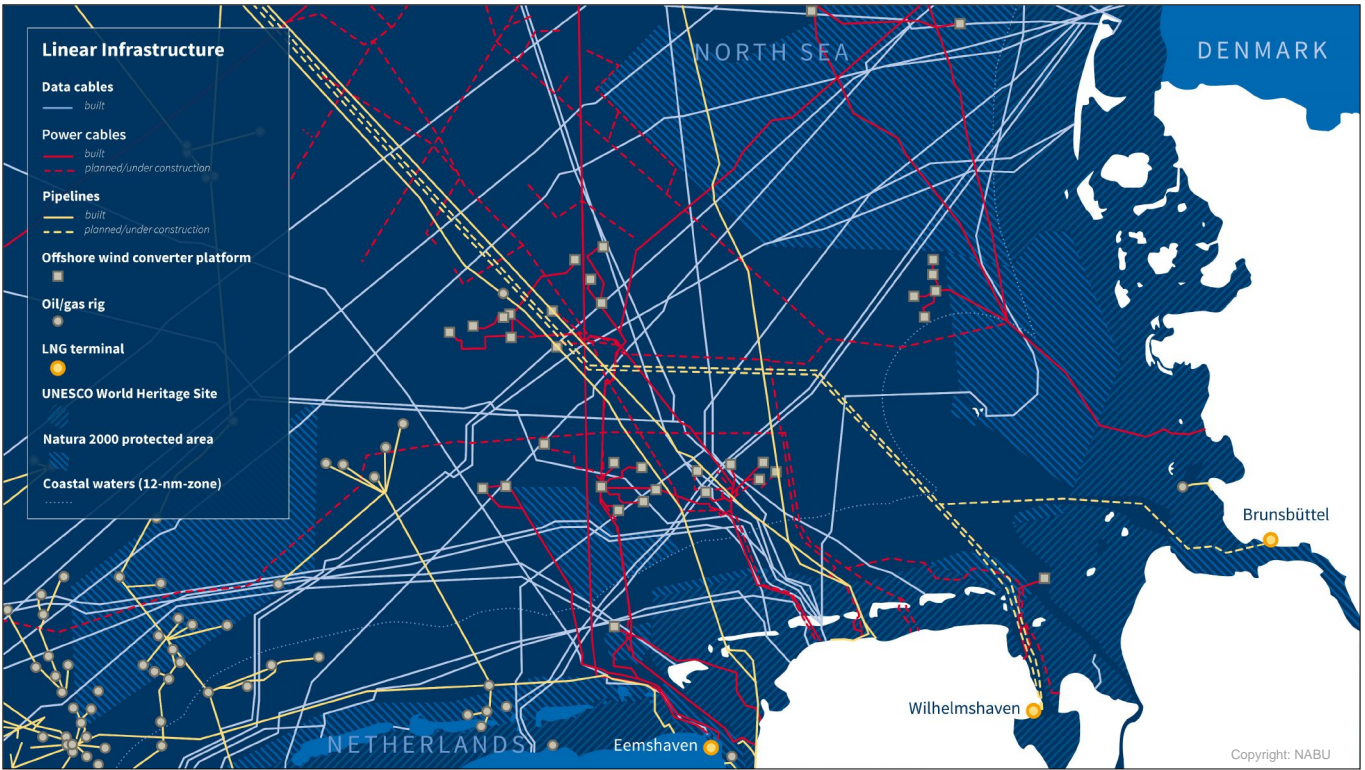
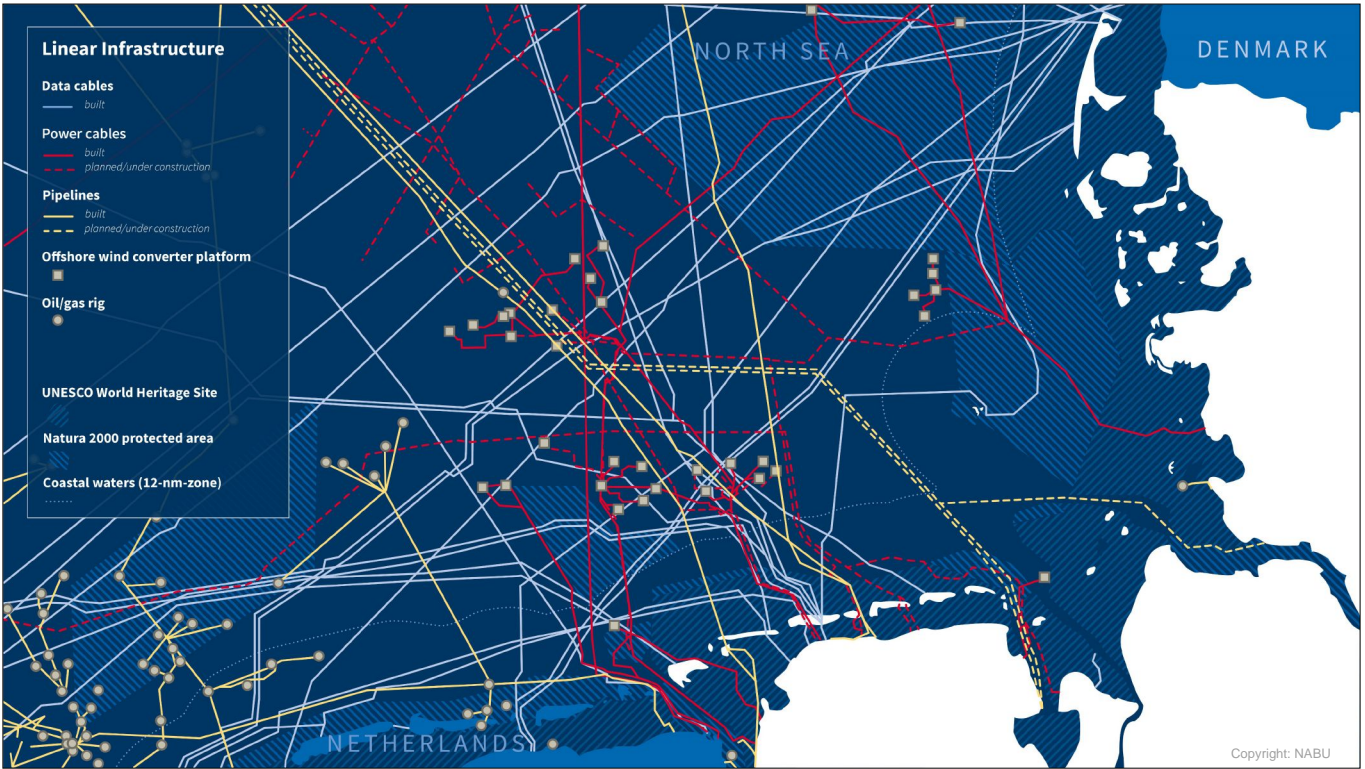
Where are the hotspots for the construction of high-voltage cables, pipelines and other linear infrastructure?

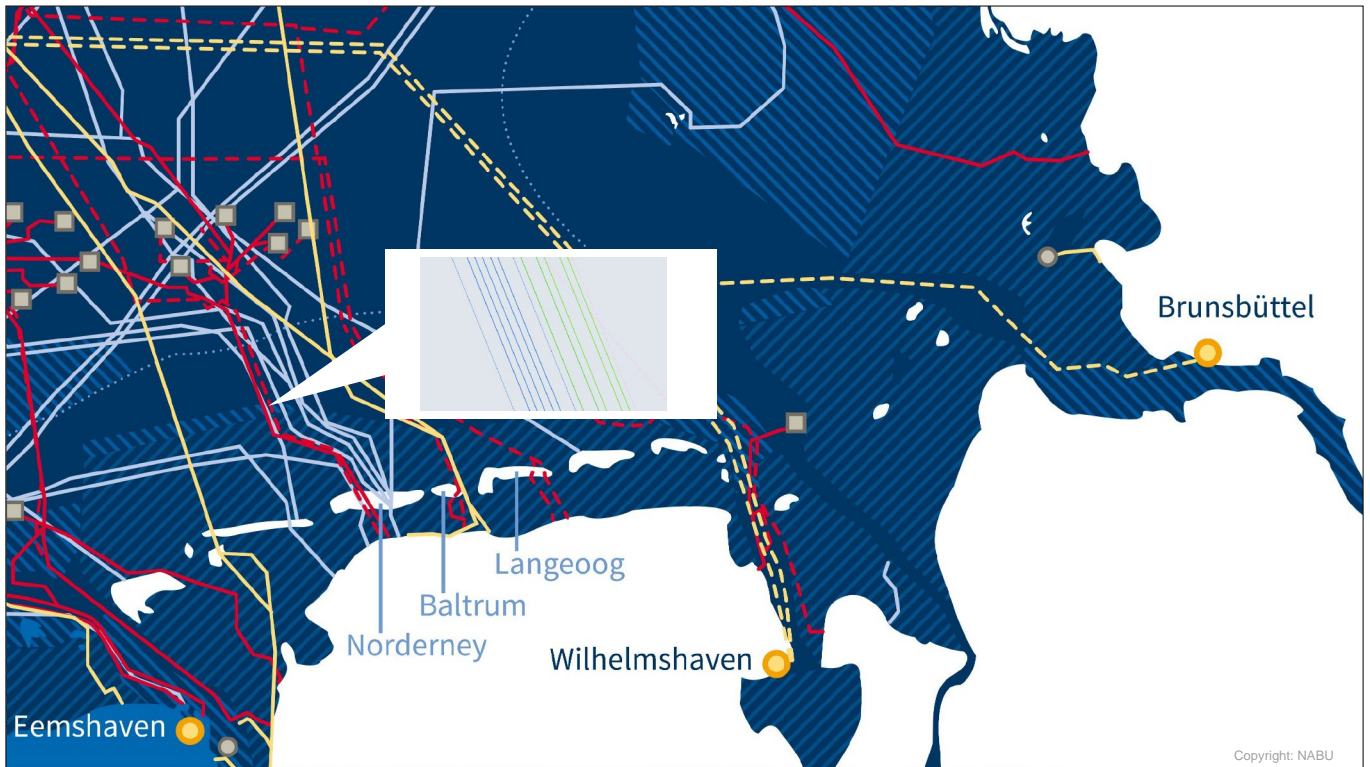












## No new infrastructure corridors within the Wadden Sea

### Alternative routes needed:

- **Shipping lanes:** cable installation in already ecologically damaged sites sensible, technical debate necessary
- **„Recycling“ of existing corridors:** upgrade existing corridors with higher capacity
- No „waste“ of cable routes for „mini wind farms“

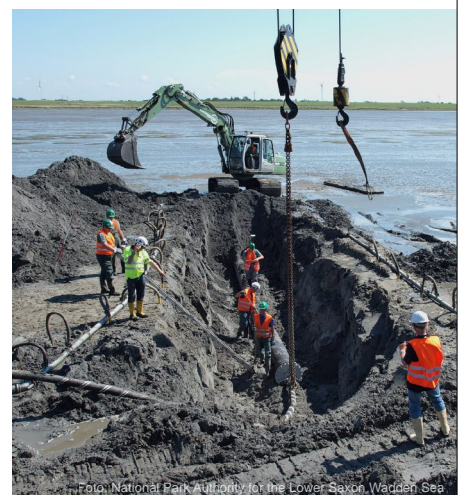


Photo: National Park Authority for the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea

## Minimising the impact

- **No „open installation“ in the Wadden Sea** – the challenge is that currently no non-invasive installation techniques (e.g. vibration sword) are available for the new 2 GW cables (almost double the weight of the 800 MW cables)
- Other issues: e.g. burying depth, time of construction, no coverage with stones in soft habitats, 2°-limit, modern equipment, cooperative construction companies, use of previous experiences, surveillance at construction
- **True compensation:** Long-term impact on protected areas requires long-term compensation (including reduction of other impacts and reversing human influences in certain habitats)
- **Coastal Marine Spatial Planning required** (find out more during spark talk)



## 6. Is there a risk for the World Heritage status?

- „*The **Guiding Principle** of the trilateral Wadden Sea policy is to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way.*“
- **Wadden Sea Plan 2010 about cables:** „*To concentrate cable crossings through the Wadden Sea within a minimum of cable corridors and a minimum of cables, using the best available techniques, e.g. cables with highest capacity available, and avoiding salt marshes crossing as far as possible...*“
- **Wilhelmshaven Declaration 2023 about cables:** „*... facilitate exchange and collaboration with the energy sector, competent authorities, including also relevant stakeholders, regarding high voltage power grid connections from offshore wind farms **with the intention to avoid, mitigate, and compensate for negative impacts** on the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, with the intention to develop a coordinated spatial strategy beyond 2030, striving to support the long-term expansion targets for offshore wind energy, making it more nature friendly in line with conservation objectives;*“

## Decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2024 (1)

- „**Notes with concern the potential cumulative impacts** on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property **from numerous activities and infrastructure developments** planned or established within and in the wider setting of the property, including extractive activities (oil, salt and gas)...“
- „Recalls its established position that **extractive activities are incompatible with World Heritage status**, and considers that the numerous ongoing and planned extractive activities in the vicinity of the property and its wider landscape, including oil, gas, and salt extraction and associated sea floor subsidence which, in combination with sea level rise, could have a negative impact on the OUV of the property;“

## Decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2024 (2)

- „Further requests the States Parties to ensure that any extractive projects in the wider setting of the property ... undergoes an appropriate impact assessment procedure and that **the project is not approved if it may cause negative impacts on the OUV of the property;**“
- „Acknowledges the importance and necessity to accelerate renewable energy production, nevertheless, notes with **serious concern the increasing number of onshore and offshore energy facilities (e.g., wind)** within the wider setting of the property, and requests moreover the State Parties to a) Adopt a joint strategic and systematic approach to the planning and implementation of projects to connect offshore infrastructures with the mainland with the aim of avoiding negative impacts on the OUV of the property...“

## The World Heritage status must not be lost!

The WHC-decision indicates that there is a risk, if „we“ are not careful with our World Heritage and do not protect it as it deserves.

The view of green NGOs on that is reflected in a letter by Waddenvereniging, Natuurmonumenten and Vogelbescherming to UNESCO World Heritage Centre (August 2024):

*„Our intention is not, and has never been, for the site to ever lose its World Heritage Status. We cherish and celebrate this .... Rather we strongly wish that all bodies under the World Heritage Convention, State Parties, local and regional authorities, citizens and NGO's all strive to their best efforts and in harmony to protect and conserve [the] Wadden Sea that has been so dear to so many for so many years already.“*

## 7. Take Home Message

1. No energy production **within** the protected areas of the Wadden Sea
2. **Ecosystem-based production of renewable energy** on- and offshore of the Wadden Sea in a nature positive way
3. **Production of fossil energy** within or adjacent to the Wadden Sea to be phased out until 2030
4. **Transportation** of energy by cables or pipelines through the Wadden Sea to be avoided by using shipping lanes and existing corridors – if not avoidable, impact must be mitigated (routing, size of cables, installation technique) and compensated
5. **Integrity of the Wadden Sea World Heritage** to be sustained – which is also a responsibility of the energy stakeholders!