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The President of the House of Representatives
of the States General
Prinses Irenestraat 6
2595 BD THE HAGUE

Date 18 April 2025
Subject Structural Vision for the National Water Programme

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Dear Mr President,

The House of Representatives, also on behalf of the Minister of Housing and Spatial Planning (*Volkshuisvesting en Ruimtelijke Ordening*, VRO), the Minister of Climate and Green Growth (*Klimaat en Groene Groei*, KGG) and the State Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (*Landbouw, Visserij, Voedselzekerheid en Natuur*, LVVN), hereby receives the draft Partial Revision of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027 (hereinafter: Partial Revision). This draft constitutes a partial, interim amendment to the North Sea Programme (*Programma Noordzee*, hereinafter: PNZ) 2022-2027.

1. Ambition of the Cabinet

In the Coalition Agreement, it has been agreed that the ambition to achieve 50 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy capacity by 2040 will be achieved by establishing a new 2040 Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap in 2025. To this end, new wind farm zones must be designated through an amendment to the PNZ 2022-2027. This is that Partial Revision, and the aim is for it to be adopted before the end of 2025. As stated in the Coalition Agreement, the consequential costs of the integration of offshore wind energy must be covered at that time. Without this, the final Partial Revision cannot be determined[1].

The Coalition Agreement indicates that when designating wind farm zones in the Partial Revision, space for fisheries will first be considered. In addition to fishing, a careful balance must also be found with other activities in the North Sea, including mining, shipping and defense, nature, coastal defense, sand extraction and maritime heritage. Where relevant, coordination with neighbouring countries and European nature and environmental legislation has been taken into account.

With this draft of the Partial Revision, together with the Ministers of VRO and KGG and the State Secretary of LVVN, I am giving substance to these agreements from the Coalition Agreement. This also gives substance to the motion by member Erkens et al.[2]

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[1] Therefore, no rights can be derived from this letter if there is a delay in the determination.

[2] Parliamentary Paper 36 550 XIII no. 6

2. Assignment for the Partial Revision of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027

The PNZ 2022-2027 was adopted on 18 March 2022 as an independent appendix to the National Water Programme 2022-2027 and is a mandatory programme under the Environment and Planning Act. In this PNZ, wind farm zones have been designated for the realisation of the current Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap, for 21 GW.[3] This designation of wind farm zones is a necessary step to be able to make Site Decisions for wind farms in the North Sea under the Offshore Wind Energy Act. The PNZ 2022-2027 also announced an interim amendment, the Partial Revision, with the following aims:

- To designate wind farm zones for the period after 2031, in order to keep the intended ambition for offshore wind energy in 2040 within reach.
- Indicate where shipping routes (*clearways*) should be established to ensure safe shipping around the wind farm areas.

In the previous government's Letter to the House of Representatives entitled 'Partial Revision of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027'[4], the task for additional wind farm zones for the Partial Revision was set for at least 23-26 GW, and the aforementioned topics were expanded to include a number of subjects that were both urgent and the addition of which would not delay the desired adoption of the Partial Revision in 2025. These were:

- Sand extraction (expansion of reservation zone)
- Design process for mining in relation to offshore wind energy
- Shared use within wind farms
- Exploratory Programme for a Sustainable Blue Economy
- Protection of the Southern Dogger Bank under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and border corrections for Central Oyster Grounds and Borkum Stones in accordance with agreements in the North Sea Agreement
- North Sea Infrastructure Protection Programme (*Programma Bescherming Noordzee-infrastructuur*, PBNI)
- *Greater North Sea Basin Initiative* (GNSBI)
- Agreements on cables and pipelines in the buffer zone of the shipping route

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[3] Parliamentary Paper 33 561, no. 61
[4] Parliamentary Paper 35 325, no. 8

Shortly after publication of the Letter to Parliament, two subjects were added due to increased urgency:

- Solitary wind turbines
- Describe the importance of space for fisheries in a more concrete way.[5]

Two parts of the assignment could not yet be worked out:
The aforementioned Letter to Parliament announced a new search area map with a view to possibly identifying additional space for wind energy in the next PNZ 2028-2033. This was not possible, because the Government (in accordance with the Coalition Agreement) will first look at space for fisheries. As far as possible, a new search area map will be included in the Memorandum on Scope and Level of Detail for the PNZ 2028-2033.
The set of instruments announced in the Letter to Parliament "Spatial coherence between wind farms and offshore mining activities"[6] to be able to control, if necessary, where, how and when mining and offshore wind energy can be placed in coherence, also requires further elaboration. The Minister of KGG will therefore inform the House of Representatives about the design process for mining in relation to offshore wind energy later this year.
Below is an explanation of how, in light of the Coalition Agreement, the assignment described above, with the exception of the search area map and the design process for mining in relation to offshore wind energy, has been incorporated into the text of the draft Partial Revision now before you.

3. The Partial Revision in relation to the Coalition Agreement

The Coalition Agreement sets out the ambition to realise 50 GW of offshore wind energy capacity by 2040. The designation of wind farm zones in this Partial Review is an essential step towards achieving this ambition. When the new wind farm zones were incorporated into the Partial Revision, space for fisheries was considered first as agreed in the Coalition Agreement. In all steps of the process leading to the designation of the Doordewind Wind Farm Zone and Search area 6/7 (see map in appendix), the significance of these areas for fisheries was mapped out in consultation with the fisheries sector, both through bilateral discussions and through the North Sea consultations. The information from these discussions has been heavily weighted in the proposal now before us.

- The location of the search areas in the PNZ 2022-2027 had already taken into account the interests of the fishing industry, and previously designated wind farm zones off the Dutch coast had been dropped from the list of fish areas[7].

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[5] On 8 March 2024, the Vision on Food from the Sea and Large Waters was sent to the House of Representatives (Parliamentary Paper 29 675, no. 210). This underlines the importance of space for food. The Vision stipulates that the importance of space for fisheries in spatial considerations is better substantiated in order to be able to take it into account more firmly and with better motivation in the spatial planning of all use in the North Sea. This has been given substance in the Partial Revision.
[6] Parliamentary Paper 34 682, no. 161
[7] This concerns the previously designated wind farm zones Hollandse Kust (zuidwest) and Hollandse Kust (noordwest).

- The significance of the Lagelander area for sole fishing is the main reason for dropping this (previously designated) wind farm zone and no longer including it as a search area.
- An open zone will be set up in Search area 6/7 for the benefit of langoustine fishing.
- Furthermore, the starting point is to make active fishing possible in the Doordewind area with the aim of protecting the importance of this area for fisheries as much as possible.
- As mentioned above, no new search areas for wind energy are being identified at this time, in order to first further develop the space for fisheries.

Several topics from the Coalition Agreement could not be included in the Partial Revision, because legally required processes, such as the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), had already started and/or because the elaboration was not possible within the timeframe agreed in the Coalition Agreement for the adoption of the Partial Revision at the end of 2025. Therefore, these topics, for which preparations have already started, will be included in the next PNZ 2028-2033, which is scheduled to be adopted before end 2027. At the end of 2025, the House will be informed about the topics that will, in any case, be included in the PNZ 2028-2033.
The design provides for a careful balance with other activities in the North Sea, including mining, shipping and defense, nature, coastal defense, sand extraction and maritime heritage, in addition to fishing. All these interests have been weighed and examined in the EIA and the Appropriate Assessment. For example, the following were examined:

- Required space for fishing so that consequences for this sector are avoided as much as possible;
- The socio-economic value that the wind farm zones considered represent for fisheries, with estimates of the significance for the chain and regions;
- Ecological effects and uncertainties that need to be resolved in the follow-up process;
- Consequences for shipping safety and accessibility;
- Consequences for helicopter accessibility of possible future mining platforms and possible mitigation measures;
- Available space for wind farms and related amounts of energy to be generated.

4. Points of attention when designating the wind farm zones

Partly on the basis of the information included above, the Lagelander Wind Farm Zone will not be retained as a wind farm area or be considered a search area any longer. The Doordewind area and Search area 6/7 have been retained and/or designated as wind farm zones. This designates space for an indicative 21 GW of wind energy capacity.
When designating wind farm zones, the Government first looked at space for fisheries as agreed in the Coalition Agreement. Point 3 (above) indicates the decisions that have been made for this reason. These decisions are an important reason why less space is designated for wind energy than would have been possible

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without taking the interests of fisheries into account. As a result, a small part of the original assignment will be postponed to the next PNZ 2028-2033.
The quantities of wind energy capacity (number of GW) mentioned are indicative at this stage, partly because there are still uncertainties regarding the ecological suitability of the wind farms and because there are (possible future) mining activities in the designated wind farm zones. At the moment, the most realistic estimate is that the available space makes it possible to install a capacity of 21 GW of wind energy. The remaining space required to achieve 50 GW can be identified in the next PNZ 2028-2033 on the basis of an integrated assessment.
An open zone will be set up in Search area 6/7. This open zone is particularly important for langoustine fishing and for nature, and provides sufficient space for a *clearway* for shipping. Based on ecological research (specifically into the guillemot), it may be that the open zone still needs to be adjusted. For this process, the Partial Revision describes a phased approach, starting with realisation in the Doordewind area and the western part of Search area 6/7, with space for an indicative total of 13 GW of installed capacity.
For the wind farms in the Doordewind zone, the starting point is that active fishing will be allowed, provided this is safe, feasible and practicable. In addition, for the available space for shared use in wind farms in area 6/7, nature restoration and nature-enhancing measures are being implemented. To this end, efforts are being made to revise the shared use policy in the PNZ 2028-2033 in a timely manner.

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5. Stakeholder involvement and North Sea consultation

During the elaboration of this draft Partial Revision, stakeholders were intensively involved, for example through a number of discussions in the plenary North Sea Consultation (*Noordzeeoverleg*, NZO) and bilateral discussions and information sessions with stakeholders, sector representatives and NZO-members. On 23 October 2024, the decision information collected by the Government for the purpose of decision-making on the Partial Revision was discussed in the NZO. The consensus from this discussion is summarised in the letter from the NZO chairperson that was sent to the Ministers of Infrastructure and Water Management and KGG and the State Secretary for LVVN on 29 October 2024 and is sent to you as an appendix to this letter.

On behalf of the NZO-members, the chair expressed her appreciation for the way in which the members and their interests were taken into account in the preparation of the Partial Revision. The consensus reached on the Partial Revision in the NZO fits in well with the draft as now submitted to you.

6. Reading guide to the draft Partial Revision

The Partial Revision is a partial amendment of the PNZ 2022-2027 as described under point 2 above. Therefore, most of the texts are unchanged from the PNZ 2022-2027 as adopted in March 2022. The included policy changes have been added, as much as possible, as a continuous text to the PNZ text already been adopted. Table 1 explains where these texts can be found, per subject.
Table 1: The most important changes per subject in the text.

Subject	**Location in partial review**
Spatial planning, including the designation of wind farm zones for a total of 21 GW of wind energy capacity, a description of points of attention and a phased approach and the preparation of surrounding *clearways* for safe shipping.	H9a
Expansion of the reservation zone for sand extraction from 12 to 14 nautical miles to continue to meet the growing need for sand extraction for coastal protection and raw materials.	H7.1, H10.4 and 10.5
Adapting the process for current forms of shared use within wind farms, to increase the chances of success for these forms.	H10
Update developments around the Exploratory Programme for a Sustainable Blue Economy.	H8
Protection of the Southern Dogger Bank under the MSFD and border corrections for Central Oyster Grounds and Borkum Stones in accordance with agreements in the North Sea Agreement.[8]	H9a.2, H3 Appendix 1

[8] The "Protection of the Southern Dogger Bank under the MSFD and border corrections for Central Oyster Grounds and Borkum Stones" mentioned in the table above have been implemented in both the main text and in Appendix 1 of the PNZ 2022-2027, the Marine Strategy part 3.

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Describe the interdepartmental North Sea Infrastructure Protection Programme (*Programma Bescherming Noordzee-infrastructuur*, PBNI), established in 2022 to safeguard the strategy for the protection of North Sea infrastructure.	H7.3
Describe the *Greater North Sea Basin Initiative*, launched in 2023 to strengthen international cooperation between the North Sea countries.	H1.7, H9.6
Assessment framework for the safe and optimal placement of cables and pipelines in and around shipping routes.	H9a.2, H10.7
Enable the installation of solitary wind turbines to make mining platforms more sustainable under certain conditions	H10.5.3
Describe the importance of fisheries in spatial considerations in a more concrete way.	H4.3.2, H9a, H10.5.3

For the sake of consistency, these policy changes have also been incorporated elsewhere in the text, often with minor textual adjustments. To keep the changes traceable and understandable, the entire text of the PNZ, with both the Partial Revision changes and the unchanged text, will be presented as a whole during the consultation. To make clear what has been changed, new text has been made recognisable in green and deleted/replaced text has been made recognisable in red. This is also the way in which the texts will be made available for inspection, whereby only the marked, i.e. amended, texts can be commented on.
Unmarked texts are therefore unchanged. These reflect the policy adopted in 2022. As a result, this text contains, for example, names of ministries and laws that have since been amended, or other information now due for revision. This is inevitable during the life of any long-term policy document. Adaptation of the entire text falls outside the scope of the Partial Revision, which after all only concerned a partial revision with a limited remit. A completely new PNZ 2028-2033 will be published in 2027, in which all information will be updated.

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7. **Follow-up process**

This draft Partial Revision, the EIA and the Appropriate Assessment will be made available for inspection to the public and the competent authorities of other States for a period of six weeks from mid-May, giving them the opportunity to submit views.

At the same time, the EIA is submitted to the EIA Committee with a request for advice. On the basis of the Espoo Convention, the English and German translations of the draft Partial Revision and the relevant information in the EIA are also sent to surrounding countries.
The national and international views that come in will be taken into account in the realisation of the final Partial Revision. Rijkswaterstaat will also test the feasibility of the final design before adoption. The aim is to adopt the final Partial Revision by the end of 2025. As stated in the Coalition Agreement, the consequential costs of the integration of offshore wind energy must be covered at that time. Without this coverage, the final Partial Revision cannot be determined.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management,
B. Madlener

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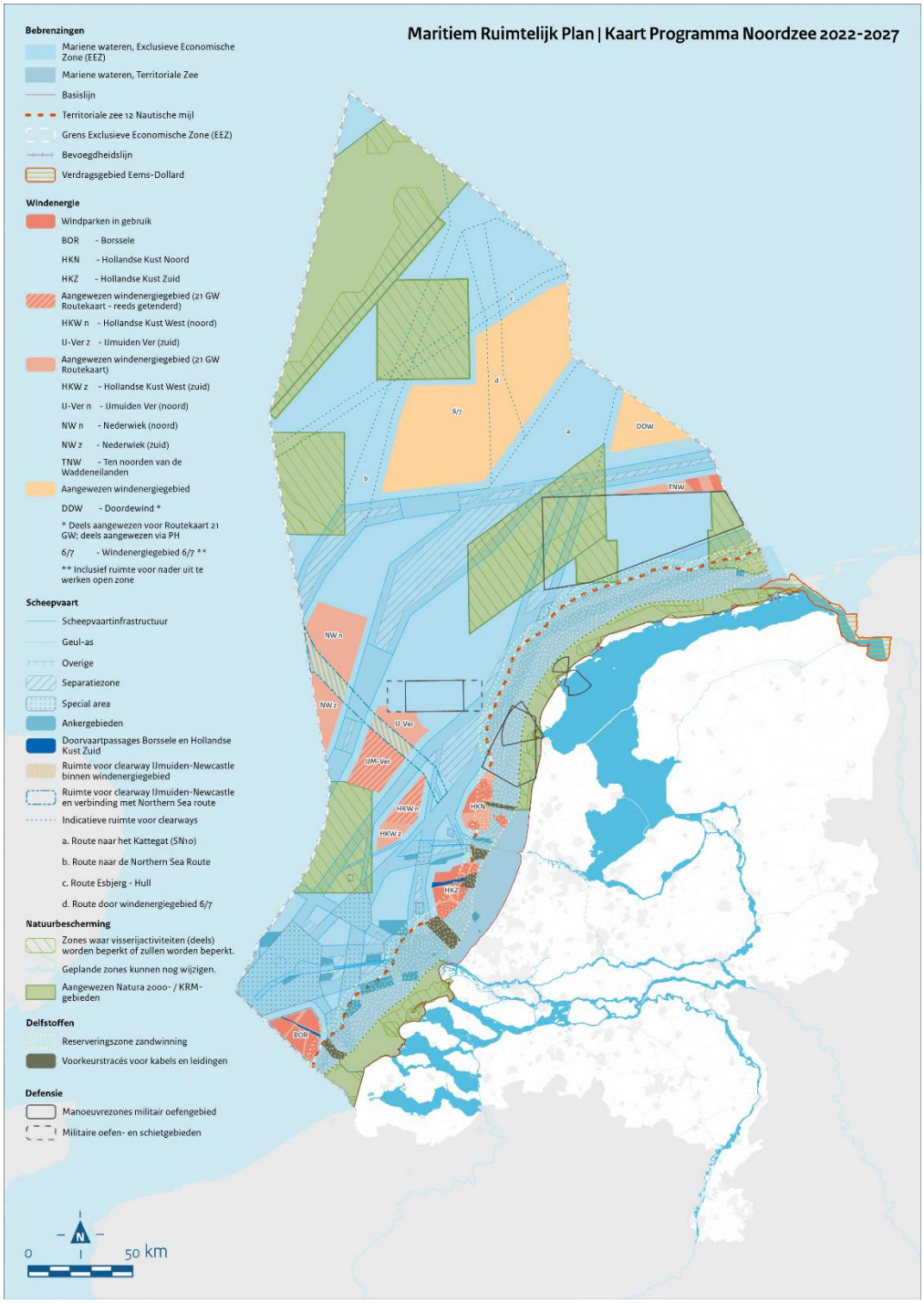
Appendix: Maritime Spatial Plan Map 2022-2027 (p. 158 draft Partial Revision of the North Sea Programme 2022-2027)