



CPMR
CRPM



Minutes

Channel Task Force

Monday 25 June 2018 (10.15-15.45) - Portsmouth (UK)

Venue: Portsmouth University, Winston Churchill Avenue, PO1 2UP Portsmouth

BACKGROUND

Together with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), Normandy together with Brittany and Hauts-de-France have expressed their interest in strengthening cooperation in the Channel area. The Channel Task Force views the Brexit process as an opportunity to redefine cooperation between the French and British regions and aims to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with Channel-based local and regional authorities to promote sustainable economic development in the area.

At a first meeting organised by Normandy and CPMR entitled “Opportunities for cooperation in the Channel in a post-Brexit context” on 15 November 2017, the group was able to identify areas of common interest for cross-Channel cooperation and explore cooperation arrangements for the period after Brexit (cf. [minutes](#))

This second meeting of the Channel Task Force enabled us to establish dialogue with the national levels in France and the UK to look at future cooperation frameworks in the Channel area and more generally between UK and European regional authorities, and to present concrete projects.

1. Content of the debates

1.1. Opening Session

- **Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor in charge of Research and Innovation at the University of Portsmouth**, welcomed participants and underlined how UK universities are involved in EU programmes such as INTERREG or Horizon Europe. Universities are pioneers in building bridges between countries and wished to remain so.
- **François-Xavier Priollaud, Vice-President for European and International Affairs, Normandy Region**, recalled the aims of the Channel Task Force, which are to share information on Brexit, drive forward political and technical initiatives to create a thriving Channel area and coordinate between regions, this being done through the work led by the CPMR. The approach remains bottom-up, pragmatic and open to suggestions from Task Force members. Mr Priollaud also paid tribute to Mr Cliff Jordan, former Leader of Norfolk County Council.
- **Didier Peralta, Normandy Regional Councillor, Member of the European and International Affairs Committee**, reminded participants of the conclusions of the first Task Force meeting in Cardiff in November 2017, especially in three main areas: trade, research and education, maritime affairs.
 - ➔ See [minutes](#) of the first Channel Task Force meeting.
- **Cllr Andrew Joy, Executive Member for Communities, Partnerships & External Affairs, Hampshire County Council and Chair of Southern England Local Partners (SELP)**, stressed that Hampshire was willing to work with European friends over the long term. He welcomed the European Commission's proposal on Cohesion Policy to include the UK among the potential beneficiaries of INTERREG programmes. In this regard, he mentioned the project [Everywhere International SMEs](#), a scheme to assist SMEs internationally, as well as cooperation in areas such as ports and airports, the motor industry, the cruise industry and the aeronautical sector.
 - ➔ See [SELP's position on Brexit](#)

1.2. Prospects for UK-EU cooperation

- **Cllr John Lamb, Leader of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Vice-President of the CPMR's North Sea Commission and Elise Wattlelot, CPMR Policy Officer**, presented the CPMR's work on Brexit. One of its successes is getting the UK included in the European Commission's legislative proposals on Cohesion Policy for some components of the European territorial cooperation programmes. Nevertheless, John Lamb stressed the slow bureaucratic process of INTERREG that was not adapted to the pace of innovation in the private sector. He also highlighted the need to find new ways to cooperate, as Brexit does not mean the end of Franco-British cooperation.
 - ➔ See [PowerPoint Presentation](#)
 - ➔ See [CPMR Cardiff Declaration on Brexit](#)

- **Stuart Summers, Head of the France, Italy & BENELUX Team, Europe Directorate, Foreign & Commonwealth Office**, affirmed that the FCO was keen to maintain bilateral contacts between France and the UK. During the Franco-British Summit in January 2018, some areas of agreement is of real interest to the regions:
 - Creation of a summit of local leaders towards the end of 2018 in Paris;
 - Setting-up of a Calais-Dover working group on maritime safety;
 - Support for shared heritage, e.g. the Normandy landings;
 - Creation of an advisory service for business innovation with the CBI and MEDEF;
 - Creation of a Task Force on climate change and carbon emissions;
 - Specific action to boost the grants system for youth mobility.

A mid-year annual summit will take stock of these deliverables. A committee of wise persons will be set up to gather and promote innovate projects. These wise persons have not yet been appointed.

➔ See [press release on the Franco-British Summit](#), January 2018

1.3. Keynote Speech by Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Ambassador of France in the UK

The Ambassador commented on the state of play of the Brexit negotiations and recalled the importance of close and necessary relations between the Channel coastal regions. In this regard, he applauded the quality of the Channel initiative and stressed his full support for it. He believed that cooperation on culture and tourism, energy, and industry in general (especially the chemical and food industries) as well as cooperation on youth were important for the Channel area. The involvement of local and regional authorities is essential for this.

1.4. Workshop 1: thinking out of the INTERREG box ...

- **Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Director for Cohesion Policy**, introduced the workshop by analysing the replies to the questionnaire sent to member Regions on the future of INTERREG.
 - ➔ See the [analysis](#)
 - ➔ See the [Powerpoint presentation](#)
- **Sam Lucas, Representative from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in charge of monitoring INTERREG programmes**, recalled that the UK has no firm position on INTERREG, apart from the fact that it wishes to take forward the PEACE programme. The government is listening to stakeholders. He expressed his interest in the Channel Task Force which goes beyond INTERREG to explore other frameworks for cooperation.

All participants wanted the UK to take part in INTERREG programmes. Nevertheless, they all pointed out that it was important to simplify administrative procedures and management so that project developers from small structures could be more easily involved.

- **Clr Bob Egerton, Cornwall Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy**, mentioned the MERIFIC project as well as the [bilateral cooperation between Cornwall and Finistère](#) (Brittany), facilitated through EU funding. He regretted the European Commission's proposal to exclude the UK from the 5th component of INTERREG.

- **Cllr Keith Kiddie, Norfolk County Council, Managing Authority for the INTERREG VA France (Channel) England programme**, underlined the interest to be a Managing Authority while recognizing the management difficulties encountered on the Interreg programme. He mentioned key cooperation areas for Norfolk, which were academic exchanges, technology transfer, biotechnologies, renewable energy, and challenges related to an ageing population.
- **Claire Le Tertre, Head of the Interregional Cooperation and EU Programmes Department of Brittany Region**, set out the proposal for a new regulation on Cohesion Policy. She highlighted the possibility for the Channel area to be included in transnational programmes as part of a cross-border sub-committee. She proposed to think about the interest of a transnational maritime program including territories covering the North-West Europe program, to deal specifically with Brexit issues.
- **Enfys Dixey, Policy Manager at the Welsh Government in charge of monitoring INTERREG Programmes**, also spoke about the bilateral agreement with Brittany and the memorandum that was being signed with Galicia, as well as the Declaration of Friendship with Noord-Holland Province. She recalled the interest of Wales for European Territorial Cooperation but also its willingness not to break the trade with the British government.
- **Kate Clarke, Hordaland County Council**, presented the Norwegian model for participating in INTERREG as an inspiration for the future cross-Channel cooperation.
 - ➔ See [Powerpoint presentation](#)
- **Bruno Bisson, Diplomatic Advisor to the Prefect of the Normandy Region**, presented how the fund dedicated to Franco-Quebec cooperation was being implemented, which provided some good governance example to draw on for the Channel area. However, it could not be replicated as such, as the question of the source of funding arises.
 - ➔ See [Powerpoint presentation](#)

1.5. Workshop 2: ... Tackling specific issues of the Channel area

Speakers:

- **John Napton**, Agency Director in Plymouth, Brittany Ferries
- **Pierre Marlin**, TUG Horizon Association representing the users of the Dieppe-New Haven line
- **Jean-Pierre Lucas**, Directeur général adjoint, Département de Seine Maritime.

Presentations focused on requirements for digitalising administrative procedures for maritime transport in the Channel. Another area of work is to promote cross-Channel lines and tourism on both sides of the Channel through cultural and sporting exchanges, town twinning, a tourist guide, cooperation between tourist agencies, and showcasing of regional products, etc. The French stakeholders present had many specific cooperation ideas but were seeking UK partners to implement them.

Speakers:

- **Nathalie Aubourg**, Normandy University, Vice-President for European and International Affairs
- **Dr Guy Hembury**, Deputy Director (Commercialisation & External Partnerships), Research and Innovation Services, University of Portsmouth

Normandy University wishes to bring together the universities of the Channel area during a Summit of cross-Channel scientific cooperation by the end 2018/early 2019. This event could help to identify strategic areas of cooperation. The British Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed interest in this initiative. Guy Hembury stressed that maintaining European research and education programmes is essential for UK universities, in order to keep partnerships and human resources and also to invest in research and innovation, thereby contributing the UK's competitiveness. In the eyes of UK Universities, the uncertainties of funding available for research beyond Brexit are a major obstacle to lifting before considering concrete actions.

Speakers:

- **Sheldon Ryan**, South Coast Marine Cluster (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire, Solent)
- **Guillaume Tirard**, Head of Investments Department, Normandy Development Agency

Sheldon Ryan highlighted the opportunities that the wind power sector ([See OECD Foresight Report](#)) and aquaculture represent for regional economies. He pointed out that it was important for the UK to implement the European blue growth strategy within the maritime section of its own industrial strategy. Guillaume Tirard presented the promotional campaign directed at British companies in March 2018 outlining the possibilities for investing in Normandy.

To sum up:

- **Perspectives:**

- The actors of the Channel Task Force could **identify concrete projects** especially in the abovementioned areas.

- **Actions planned:**

- Under the leadership of the CPMR, **a delegation will be led in Brussels to promote the Channel Task Force** and the maintenance of an area of European cooperation in the Channel area in autumn 2018;
- Normandy University will organise the **Summit on Cross-Channel Scientific Cooperation** at the end of 2018/beginning of 2019 in Normandy;
- A short note will be prepared by the CPMR Secretariat on the characteristics of the Channel Area.

- **Shared observations and issues for thought:**

- **Many bilateral cooperation initiatives** exist between regions either side of the Channel and show the regions' interest in working together;
- These projects are **generally supported by EU programmes, especially INTERREG**, which allow a direct participation of regions;
- But also sometimes by **dedicated regional or national funds**;
- **UK participation in INTERREG** programmes after 2020 is possible and important for the stakeholders present;
- Some good project examples have been identified by Channel stakeholders;
- Some INTERREG programmes could be dedicated to mitigating the impacts of Brexit (**e.g. North West Europe programme**);
- Nevertheless, everyone agrees that **improvements** need to be made to facilitate the **management** of programmes and **simplify** administrative procedures;
- New discussions with **national levels** are necessary to explore the different good practices.