

39th Meeting of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC39) Aberdeen, Scotland, UK 17 & 18 March 2026

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Task 3.2.1.9 Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) / NSHC

High level summary:

- The meeting agenda focused on the regional progression with the implementation phase of the S-100 framework.
- It was agreed that NSHC, BSHC and USHC should investigate the production of a coherent S-100 offering, along North Atlantic crossing shipping routes between these RHCs once S-100 Phase 1 data services will have developed to the required level of maturity.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between NSHC and Seabed2030 was signed at the Meeting.

Details:

Established in 1962 in The Hague, the NSHC comprises Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. The Commission provides a longstanding framework for cooperation on hydrographic surveying, charting, and the exchange of maritime information, including coordination of survey activity beyond national waters.

The 39th Meeting of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC39), was held from 17 to 18 March 2026 in Aberdeen, Scotland, UK. The meeting was chaired by Rear Admiral Nigel Essenhigh, National Hydrographer of UK. 32 delegates from all ten Member States (Belgium, Denmark/Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK) participated in the meeting.

The meeting commenced with welcome words by the Chair. The meeting proceeded with the approval of the agenda and the matters arising from the previous NSHC38 Meeting and the respective list of actions. IHO Secretary-General Dr Jonas reported on the general progress on the global implementation of the S-100 roadmap and the preparations of the forthcoming IHO Assembly in April 2026.

Thomas Dehling, National Hydrographer of Germany, presented the Council and IRCC report; Magnus Wallhagen, Hydrographer of Sweden, presented the HSSC report. Both presenters put special focus on the respective Committee activities to promote the implementation of the S-100 roadmap in their segments. As it regards to the uptake of S-100 based data services the

Commission noted the increasing efforts of all members to reach operational level for supporting products such as S-104 and S-111 until 2029 which will come with frequent update rates between 15 minutes and one hour. This would be of specific value if the Commission would follow WENDWG's recommendation that NSHC, BSHC and USCHC should investigate the production of a coherent S-100 offering, along North Atlantic crossing shipping routes between these RHCs once S-100 Phase 1 data services will have developed to the required level of maturity.

A subject interrelated to a data-centric production of S-57 ENC, S-101 ENC and Paper Charts (triple fuel) was the discussion on the automated paper chart production. France reported progress through in-house creation of plug ins for their ESRI production system and indicated the preparedness to share the experiences with interested Commission members.

The Chair of the Capacity Building Sub Committee, Evert Flier Norway, reported on the ongoing and future activities of the Committee highlighting the indication received from the two RENC – IC-ENC and PRIMAR – for increased human and material support with special regard to the transition into the S-100 world of data production and services.



Group photo of the participants at the NSHC39 Meeting

Taking the opportunity of the meeting, the North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC) and the Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project announced a new partnership, bringing

together a regional network of hydrographic offices to support seabed mapping efforts across the North Sea and surrounding waters. By bringing together multiple national hydrographic offices under a single framework, the partnership strengthens regional coordination, supporting data sharing and reinforcing the collective commitment of North Sea nations to advancing seabed mapping. The new partnership was formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding signed at the 39th Meeting of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission in Aberdeen, Scotland, by Rear Admiral Angus Essenhigh OBE, UK National Hydrographer, on behalf of the NSHC and Seabed 2030 Director Jamie McMichael-Phillips.



The Commission took chance of the local conditions of the marine infrastructure in Aberdeen and paid visit to the harbour authorities to receive first-hand information and request on the relevance of hydrographic information for the ongoing expansion of the harbour and daily maintenance of its operation.

At the end of the meeting Mr Thomas Dehling took over the role of Chair for a two years term. The 2027 NSHC meeting will be held virtually and is scheduled for early March 2027. An in-person meeting will be held at BSH in Hamburg, Germany in March 2028.