

SUMMARY

THE MARIMUS PROJECT – NEXT STEP IN THE PURSUIT OF A VISION - Morten Hahn-Pedersen, Fisheries and Maritime Museum, Esbjerg, Denmark

Over the past two decades the Fisheries and Maritime Museum in Esbjerg has pursued a vision of transforming the original fisheries museum with an aquarium attached to it into a museum, research centre and attraction focused on the concept of Man and Sea.

Since the vision was first launched in 1989 the museum has broadened its palette by adding still new aspects of the maritime and marine world to its collections, research and presentations. A research centre – the Centre of Maritime and Regional Studies – was established in 1994 and a number of extensions of the museum complex have been carried out; the major steps being an open air exhibition, a new aquarium and a new museum building containing hinterland facilities and a shipping exhibition.

Over the last couple of years the museum has worked intensively on the next step in the overall plan. MariMus – short for Maritime-Marine-Museum – has been chosen as work title for the project which is planned in two steps.

Step One is an up-to-date renovation and extension of the museum's presentations of seals (Grey Seals and Common Harbour Seals) and the Wadden Sea. The new seal tanks will be a design based on studies of seal

behaviour, environmental requirements, rational working procedures and best and most cost effective technique. Furthermore, wishes for new research possibilities and best experience for visitors have been a vital factor in the designing process. In comparison with the existing seal tank the overall concept of the new tanks will bring the seals much closer to their natural biotope. Apart from the seal tanks the extension will contain a Wadden Sea tank where visitors will be able to get an insight into this fragile biotope which is the closest neighbour to the museum.

The second step is located in the east wing of the museum which hitherto has been partly owned by the University of Copenhagen. The museum has bought the entire building adding an extra 800 square metres to the basement floors of the complex, and the additional space will primarily be used for research purposes in relation to the museum's work with stranded whales in Danish waters. Furthermore, an education department and a cinema/conference room will be located here. A new exhibition hall will be added to the complex. This hall will focus on the natural history of whales in Danish waters, and via the top floor in the east wing the exhibition on whales will be connected to the rest of the visitor area in an exhibition that will contain themes such as whaling, offshore oil and gas exploration, and offshore renewable energy production.

The total project, which will cost around 125 million DKK [*approx \$US 25 million – Ed*], has been approved by the municipality and all primary planning work has been sorted out. The City of Esbjerg has donated some 20 million DKK for the project and committed itself to taking over running costs and maintenance of the new buildings. Presentation material is ready

and the fund raising process is about to start. However, due to the present economic situation this process might take a while, but we are convinced that the project will come through.