



Press release: 1st December 2010

A step closer to protecting the Celtic Sea

Last week, major sectors operating in the Celtic Sea area* came a step closer to developing a unified approach to managing their activities more sustainably.

This was thanks to a workshop delivered by PISCES, a marine project funded by EC LIFE+.

Stakeholders from France, England, Ireland and Wales arrived at the two-day workshop in Cork to start planning a new code of working that will help to enable marine activities like coastal recreation, shipping, offshore infrastructure and fisheries to continue in harmony, while reducing their impact on the natural environment.

The idea behind PISCES is to develop a set of guidelines that every sector from participating countries can follow to promote a healthy marine environment. These guidelines should add up to an ecosystem approach, which means thinking holistically about all the elements of the sea – its wildlife, physical processes and even human interactions. The project recognises that flourishing ecosystems are vital for both wildlife and people's livelihoods.

During the workshop, stakeholders sketched out a set of principles and objectives to assist in making their day-to-day operations more sustainable. They also begun to think about the practical steps needed in order to achieve these goals. Such a diverse range of sectors and countries rarely have the opportunity to meet in a forum like this, let alone share perspectives and find common ground to plan future collaboration.

Roger Cook a stakeholder from the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers said, "It's great to be here with stakeholders who have a lot of information and knowledge of what's going on, and we're all coming here to share the objective that there are real advantages to us all if we can get this ecosystem based management thing right."

Francois Huber, a stakeholder from the French provider of offshore wind farms, Blue H Group, said, "I was very happy to attend this workshop for the last two days, because it was a unique opportunity to interact with other stakeholders in a free environment where you can really express your views, and there is nothing at stake but just to try and work better together."

Play this video for more stakeholder perspectives: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xclhseCVwOU>

The next step will be wider outreach and consultation with sectors operating in the Celtic Sea area. The PISCES stakeholders will also continue to review and shape a set of actions plans that will underpin their agreed objectives.

The final guidelines are set to be communicated to the wider world in 2012. This is perfect timing as countries work to identify the practical steps needed to deliver the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This EC Directive requires Member States to achieve or maintain 'Good Environmental Status' by 2020. If successful, the PISCES guidelines may well become the blueprint for making this happen.

This project is being delivered by WWF-UK in partnership with The Environment Council and WWF Spain. With thanks to country technical support from SeaWeb in France and The Coastal & Marine Resources Centre in Ireland.

**The PISCES Celtic Sea area also includes the Western Channel.*



The Environment Council



Notes to editors:

- PISCES (Partnerships Involving Stakeholders in the Celtic Sea Ecosystem) is a LIFE+ project designated to run from June 2010 to July 2012. Our goal is a healthy, well-managed ecosystem where marine wildlife can thrive and human activities are sustainable in the long-term.
- The Celtic Sea is an area of the North Atlantic that links Wales, Ireland, France and Spain. It is heavily used by European Union countries, which all impact this marine ecosystem in some way. The English Channel on its eastern boundary, for example, is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.
- **Funding:** PISCES is a €2.1million project which has been funded with the contribution of over €1 million from the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Community. LIFE is the EU's funding instrument for the environment. Most of the remaining funding will be provided by WWF and The Environment Council.
- **PISCES website:** www.projectpisc.es.eu
- **Partner websites:** WWF www.wwf.org.uk The Environment Council www.the-environment-council.org.uk SeaWeb www.seaweb.org The Coastal & Marine Resources Centre, University College Cork <http://cmrc.ucc.ie/>
- **Background to marine policy:** The UK government has recently introduced a Marine and Coastal Access Act, which will enable its seas to be managed and protected in a more strategic and holistic way. The European Union is driving something similar through its Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and advocates taking an 'ecosystem approach' to marine management. But currently people have a limited understanding of how this will work in practice. As yet, there is no legally recognised definition of what an ecosystem approach is or guidelines on how to implement it. We need urgent agreement on how best to manage our international waters. PISCES is working to promote a better understanding of an ecosystem approach and will be the first project to interpret this European policy and translate it into meaningful and practical guidelines for and by the people who use the Celtic Sea.
- **Ocean pressures:** The ocean, seas and coasts are under severe strain. Up to 70 percent of people rely on fish as their primary source of protein and more than 90 percent of our trade is carried by shipping, yet only 1 percent of the world's seas are protected. More than 46,000 pieces of plastic litter are floating on every square mile of ocean. Fish caught accidentally amounts to approximately 25 percent of all of those caught, and 761 marine species are on the verge of global extinction.
- For more information about PISCES, please contact Jodie Harris, PISCES Communications Officer, at JHarris@wwf.org.uk or Tel: +44 (0) 2920 454984