

Knowledge Exchange within the Marine Ecosystems Research Programme: Making links with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF-UK)

Third Sector (or “Civil Society”) organisations are having a growing major and political, economic and social influence in the UK. Environmental third-sector organisations can play a very strong role in public engagement and influencing how people, governments, businesses and industry think and act in relation to the world around them. They require independent environmental science to shape their communications and policies.

NERC, in its Delivery Plan 2011-2015 identifies Third-sector organisations as potential partners and beneficiaries of its strategic research programmes.

As such, links have been made between the Marine Ecosystems Research Programme and the Celtic Sea Partnership run by WWF-UK. The following information demonstrates how Marine Ecosystems can work within such programmes to maximise the impact of NERC-funded science (in accordance with the policy-focussed overarching objective of the Research Programme):

The Celtic Seas Partnership (CSP)

This WWF-led programme is concentrating on the OSPAR III region (referred to below as the Celtic Seas Marine Region), which is essentially all the European Shelf to the west of the UK.

A bid has been made to the European Commission LIFE+ funding scheme to fund this programme. Funding is now confirmed and the 4 year project is due to start in 2013.

Building on the experience and outcomes of the PISCES programme, the CSP programme will engage stakeholders from sectors across the Celtic Seas to contribute to the development of marine strategies for supporting the implementation of EU environmental and maritime policy, in particular the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**, for the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) of marine waters.

The CSP programme has 2 specific objectives:

Objective 1: Development of stakeholder engagement mechanisms for the Celtic Seas Marine Region (CSMR): *By 2016 effective engagement mechanisms will have been established with key sectoral interests and the most appropriate scales/mechanisms for engagement (eg Celtic Sea Forum, Irish Sea Platform) recognised to support delivery of ecosystem-based and integrated management.*

Objective 2: Demonstration of Ecosystem-based management approaches: *By 2016 successful ecosystem-based management techniques and methods to support integrated marine management have been developed and demonstrated through multistakeholder collaboration, to guide practical implementation of European maritime policy including the MSFD.*

Engagement with the NERC community: During the CSP programme, platforms for facilitating exchange and collaboration between marine resource users, scientist and policy makers at the regional and transboundary level will be provided. These include conferences, workshops and

communication networks and should strengthen links between national administrations and sectors to raise awareness and understanding of trans-boundary MSFD implementation.

Three Celtic Seas Conferences will be run throughout the lifetime of the programme bringing together marine users/sectors, policy-makers and scientists. This provides a significant opportunity to NERC to maximise its knowledge exchange impact arising from its marine Research Programmes in shelf-sea and marine ecosystem research by ensuring their contribution to the management of the marine environment (specifically by providing better evidence and knowledge to inform the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive on areas such as the definition of Good Environmental Status and the optimisation of monitoring strategies).

These communication platforms offered through CSP will enable scientists to engage with directly with stakeholders to:

1. Ensure that the types of data and analyses and products being collected and developed are of most use to the different sectors using the region:
2. Ask for feedback on scientific developments within the programmes
3. Discuss potential partnership opportunities with stakeholders and help develop best practice for collaborative working, including an appreciation of each other's needs and limitations.

Additionally, under Objective 2 (above) NERC science can be used to develop a Celtic Sea Web Portal, presenting data and information tailored towards the end-user (facilitated by the British Oceanographic Data Centre). This tool and its development can be demonstrated via the communication platforms offered by CSP.