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The Environment Council



## Partnerships Involving Stakeholders in the Celtic Sea Ecosystem - PISCES

### Background

The marine ecosystem in the Celtic Sea, like oceans and seas globally, is under major threat due to human activity. The implementation of an ecosystem approach to marine management is widely advocated as the solution to reversing damage to the marine environment. The approach encourages people to consider all the elements of an ecosystem; living and non-living, and to include the diverse human impacts and interactions.

The PISCES project will employ an innovative process to empower stakeholders to create their own practical guidelines that can deliver an ecosystem approach in the Celtic Sea. **This is a pioneering project - the first to translate EU and UK marine policy into practical outputs for multiple sectors and across a multinational area.**

The PISCES project is a partnership between WWF UK, WWF Spain and The Environment Council, with country leads in France and Ireland. The project will build on existing successful stakeholder partnerships and promote new ones in order to maximise the reach and impact of the guidelines. This much-needed project will develop important lessons for the implementation of marine legislation across the Celtic Sea and throughout the EU marine area and beyond.



### Aims and objectives of the PISCES project

PISCES enables people who use the Celtic Sea to develop their own guidelines to deliver an ecosystem-based approach to managing their marine environment. These guidelines could be used to directly influence working practices across sectors. This will be achieved by:

- **Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process.** In doing so, they will build an increased understanding of how collective activities have an impact on the marine environment; and gain an increased sense of ownership and duty to protect the Celtic Sea - which will result in greater compliance to marine legislation.
- **Developing practical guidelines for the ecosystem approach that will be widely applicable to emerging marine management policy and practice.** The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (being implemented during the life of PISCES) and the Common Fisheries Policy (being reformed during PISCES) rely on effective application of an ecosystem approach.
- **Demonstrating the opportunities and best practice for cross-border working both within the Celtic Sea and across the EU.**

## **What will PISCES achieve?**

- The PISCES project will result in a core group of at least 25 key stakeholders, representing all major human impacts, developing guidelines for the delivery of an ecosystem approach to marine management in the Celtic Sea.
- This will be the first project in the EU to deliver practical outputs for the implementation of an ecosystem approach in a multinational marine and coastal area
- The process of bringing people together to form guidelines will support development of national and EU marine legislation, particularly concerning marine spatial planning, which will be based upon an ecosystem approach. The guidelines can then be used as an example of best practice to be replicated in other sea areas.
- A major element of the PISCES project is learning from stakeholder engagement and disseminating knowledge and guidelines more widely.
  - Key audiences will include stakeholders and policy makers from all the countries in the Celtic Sea region. The EC is keen for lessons to be rolled out to other sea areas in the EU region; and other key organisations (e.g. OSPAR, United Nations Environment Programme) wish to see these findings disseminated to marine regions across the globe.
  - The guidelines will be disseminated to a further 3,000 stakeholders in the Celtic Sea region, stimulating significant changes in approach to marine management in the region that will form the basis of long-term sustainable use and a healthy marine environment.
  - There are a number of related initiatives (e.g. KnowSeas, Finding Sanctuary, North West Waters Regional Advisory Committee) to which PISCES findings and objectives are likely to be closely related. PISCES will develop agreements and cooperation with these projects through the sharing of knowledge and experience.

## **The PISCES Stakeholder Group**

The PISCES project depends on the involvement of a core group of stakeholders from England, Wales, Ireland, France and Spain, who will represent a range of key activities that occur in the Celtic Sea. They will have the opportunity to work collaboratively to develop guidelines for delivering the ecosystem approach based upon a shared understanding developed by the group during the project. National and EU legislation is increasingly requiring this type of approach and those involved in the PISCES project will be at the forefront of translating policy into practical implementation. The core stakeholder group will then be in a position to advocate the lessons learnt to wider stakeholders in their sector and beyond.

The stakeholders invited to constitute the core group do not require any understanding of the ecosystem approach but would be expected to have interests in environmental impacts, long-term planning, and developing a co-ordinated and strategic approach to managing activities in the marine environment.

## **Building capacity**

PISCES will provide an invaluable test-drive as to how other marine regions around Europe may be managed in the future, as emerging policies are put into practice. We will have a close interaction with government departments, NGOs and agencies across the UK, Ireland, France and Spain as well as reaching wider into the European Union and beyond. We hope to learn a huge amount from this collaborative process and plan to share what we have learnt with everybody with an interest in saving our seas.