



PRESS RELEASE

NAFC takes lead in marine mapping

For the first time, over 100 maps have been collated to show the extent of human activities and natural resources around Shetland by a pilot project hosted by the Marine Management Department at NAFC Marine Centre. The Shetland based Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative (SSMEI) pilot is one of four projects in Scotland, aimed at developing a local marine action plan.

The SSMEI project is intended to assist decision makers by providing an environmental overview of the area and investigating how different activities interact with each other. The project looks at everything which affects the coastal and marine area, for example: what is living there, the layout and consistency of the seabed, obstructions such as shipwrecks and activities such as aquaculture and fishing, tourism and leisure interests.

SSMEI Project Officer, Dr Lorraine Gray, said: *“The maps demonstrate a snapshot of what is where and when things occur. This should provide the information necessary to assist decision-makers in being better informed on how the sea is used, from safeguarding natural assets to recognising development potential”*.

With the collation of information into maps almost complete, an annual report has been written with the intention of helping other people do similar projects throughout the UK. The annual report has been published on the NAFC website www.nafc.ac.uk. The project is now entering its next phase – the production of a spatial plan with a wide consultation with marine users over the next two years. The final document will have policies detailing where a particular development is likely to be acceptable and where it is not.

Lorraine added that *“The concept is similar to the terrestrial planning system, but of course complicated by the fact you can’t always see what features are there with the naked eye”*. The Shetland pilot will draw from experience as far as possible, but generally a good deal of innovation and initiative is required – and most crucial is to pool valuable knowledge of those who know the marine environment best.



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NOTE TO EDITORS:

There are four SSMEI pilots in Scotland, and the Shetland project is at least six months ahead.

This is the second all-inclusive local marine spatial plan (MSP) in the UK (the other was the Irish Pilot funded by DEFRA).

The Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative (SSMEI) pilot project has recently complete its first annual report, available at:

http://www.nafc.ac.uk/Marine_Management/General/SSMEI

The benefit to Shetland is not just in the production of a MSP, but in the process taken to produce the plan. It is anticipated that, through working with all marine stakeholders, a framework for sustainable development in the marine environment will be developed.

In view of the increasing range and scope of the work being undertaken by NAFC, the decision was taken in September 2005 to change the institute's name from the North Atlantic Fisheries College to the NAFC Marine Centre.

Please note our correct title is now 'NAFC Marine Centre'. The 'NAFC' in our title identifies us with, and provides continuity from, our previous name – North Atlantic Fisheries College. In conversation 'NAFC' should be spelt out as 'N-A-F-C'. Similarly, we are no longer just a 'college', but a marine centre - providing education, research and commercial services to the marine sector.



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