



## PRESS RELEASE

04 July 2011

### **FILLING IN THE BLANKS: NEW PROJECT TO MAP IMPORTANT SEABED AREAS**

Today (Monday 4 July 2011) the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and six partner organisations launch the Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland Hydrographic Survey (INIS Hydro) project at the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office. INIS Hydro, which receives £3.2 million from the European Union's INTERREG IVA Programme, will produce a standardised hydrographic survey specification and accurate high-resolution bathymetric datasets for seven important seabed areas to the east of Ireland/Northern Ireland and off the west coast of Scotland. A total of 1400 km<sup>2</sup> will be surveyed by the partner organisation's research vessels fitted with multibeam sonar technology. High-quality bathymetric information is essential for producing accurate navigational charts and for the effective management and conservation of the marine environment. Despite recent technological advances in high-resolution seabed mapping, some 'current' nautical charts still include data from the mid 19th century when depth was measured by lowering lead lines to the seabed at wide intervals.

INIS Hydro will survey the Firth of Lorn and the SW Islay Renewables area in Scotland, Dundalk Bay (shallow and deep) in the Republic of Ireland, and Carlingford Lough and Approaches, Dundrum Bay and parts of the Mourn Coast in Northern Ireland. These areas were selected for their environmental significance, suitability for offshore renewables development, and in all cases to update nautical charts. The project will thus improve safety at sea and provide supportive data to enable effective marine conservation and management, eg relating to fisheries, marine protected areas and marine renewable energy development.

André Cocuccio, MCA Hydrography Manager and INIS Hydro Project Director, said: "Reliable bathymetric datasets are critical for safe navigation and the effective stewardship of the marine environment. We [MCA] are looking forward to working with our project partners from across the UK and Ireland and together map these little explored areas off our coastline."

To deliver this project the MCA have teamed up with the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland, the Geological Survey of Ireland, the Irish Marine Institute, the Scottish Association for Marine Science, the Northern Lighthouse Board and the UK Hydrographic Office.



INIS Hydro follows on from the successful European Union funded Joint Irish Bathymetric Survey (JIBS) project and receives some match funding from the MCA, the UK Natural Environment Research Council and the Northern Lighthouse Board.

Speaking at the launch Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Michelle O'Neill said: "I am pleased that the INIS Hydro Project was able to secure EU INTERREG Funding, allowing my Department and agencies between Ireland and Scotland to work together enabling the sharing of skills and transfer technology. This work is a key element in the spatial planning approach to the sustainable management of our fisheries and marine resources, and the outcomes from this project will be of significant long term value to our local fishing industry, renewable energy developers and conservation groups."

Howard Keery from the Special EU Programmes Body highlighted the expected benefits of the project: "The INIS Hydro project has the potential to provide invaluable data that will help the region benefit from natural resources still widely untapped. The coastal and marine area between Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland is uniquely positioned and offers access to a wide range of resources. The work developed by this project should make an extremely important contribution towards initiatives in the areas of tourism, renewable energy and marine conservation, which are priority areas identified by the INTERREG IVA Programme."

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#### **Notes to editors**

1. The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Finance in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU structural funds Programmes, PEACE III and INTERREG IV designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.
2. The INTERREG IVA 2007-2013 Programme, funded through the European Regional Development Fund, is worth €256 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It has two distinct priority measures to create co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu). The INTERREG IVA Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland is a European Union supported Structural Funds Programme which seeks to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. It supports



strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable region. For more information on the Special EU Programmes Body, please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)

3. The launch event will take place on Monday 4th July 1930-2130 at the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office. There will be short presentations by André Cocuccio, INIS Hydro Project Director, and Sir Alan Massey, Chief Executive of the MCA. A range of stakeholders from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland will attend including government representatives. Journalists are very welcome to attend but should register their intention with our media contact (below).

4. A project website will become available on the launch day and can be found at [www.inis-hydro.eu](http://www.inis-hydro.eu)

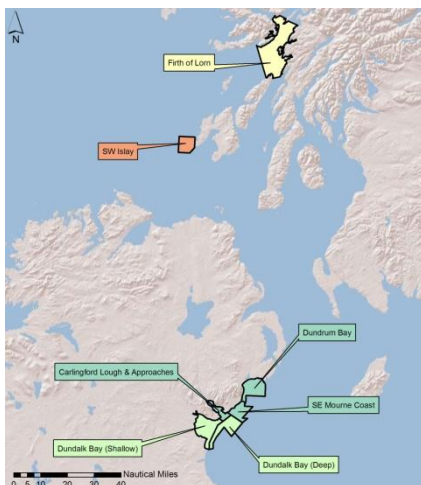
5. Multi-beam sonar is a technology used by hydrographic surveyors to determine the depth of water and the nature of the seabed. These echosounders can be mounted onto the hull of survey vessels and send broad acoustic pulses to the seabed. The signals 'bounce back' and the travel time and angle of the return beams provide information about the depth of the seabed and the type of seabed the outgoing signal encountered.

### Media contact

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### Image

A high resolution version of the map showing the seven survey areas can be downloaded from [www.inis-hydro.eu/news](http://www.inis-hydro.eu/news) on 4th July, or can be supplied before that date by the media contact listed above.