

## Press Release

**Date: 22 March 2017**

### **EU INVESTS €6.28 MILLION TO HELP PROTECT LIFE BENEATH THE WAVES**

**The SEUPB has announced that €6.28 million worth of funding, under the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, has been offered for a ground-breaking environmental project that will both protect and increase our understanding of oceanic life.**

The funding has been offered to the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) for the 'COMPASS' project, which will create a state-of-the-art network of buoys to effectively track, model and monitor aquatic life and oceanographic processes, on a cross-border basis.

The network will produce new marine monitoring data for emerging areas of environmental concern including ocean acidification and the long-term impact of ambient noise on sea-life. It will also help fulfil International, European and national biodiversity obligations.

A cross-border project, 'COMPASS' will deliver a clearer understanding of what changes in the oceanographic climate have on underwater habitats, fauna and flora across the region. It will also develop hi-tech acoustic tag programmes to understand the migration patterns, the behaviour and mortality of salmon and sea trout in the North Western part of the Irish Sea.

The interregional perspective will allow data to be captured and shared across Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland. The coordination of monitoring activities will help to prepare the data for outputs into regional and international monitoring programmes.

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in Ireland and the Scottish Government.

A spokesperson for the DAERA said: **The Department match-funded the COMPASS project to help deliver the first fully coherent network of marine monitoring buoys, connecting the core marine research institutions and government agencies operating in the coastal seas of Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. This network will generate essential baseline monitoring of animals, oceanographic factors and ambient noise in support of our Marine Protected Areas.**



**“The benefits of this AFBI-led research project include long-term monitoring strategies for highly mobile protected species such as marine mammals, and also fish such as salmon and eels which are of conservation and commercial importance. It will provide the department with key tools to enable sustainable management of Northern Ireland’s valuable marine resources and I am delighted to see this project coming to fruition.”**

Mr. Simon Coveney, TD Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, said: **“I am pleased to financially support this cross-border project, noting that the increased understanding of oceanic life to be delivered by the COMPASS Project will assist in protecting and supporting ocean biodiversity in a real, meaningful and sustained fashion.”**

Welcoming the funding the Scottish Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said: **“It is fantastic news that this ambitious programme of work is being funded. The monitoring will provide valuable information to help manage Scotland’s marine biodiversity and contribute to achieving Scotland’s vision of clean, safe, healthy and biologically diverse seas.**

**“I’m delighted that Scotland is playing such a crucial role in this collaborative international project, bringing significant skills and resources from both Marine Scotland Science and the Scottish Association for Marine Science,”** she continued.

Highlighting the importance of the project, Gina McIntyre CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which manages the INTERREG VA Programme, said: **“The breadth of experience represented by the various cross-border partners involved in this project will prove invaluable to the future protection of our marine environment.**

**“Collectively they exemplify one of the core objective of the EU’s INTERREG VA Programme, which has been designed to support cross-border solutions to issues of shared environmental concern,”** she continued.

- ENDS.

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## Notes to Editor:

### **COMPASS (Collaborative Oceanography & Monitoring for Protected Areas & Species) project background**

- The project will develop common, connected monitoring programmes and data management practices across Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland to improve cross-border capacity for monitoring and managing marine protected areas and species.
- Project partners - the project integrates the knowledge and expertise of five key regional organisations including the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI), the Marine Institute Galway (MI), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), Marine Scotland Science (MSS) and the Scottish Association of Marine Science (SAMS). Collectively they represent the main marine science organisations in the eligible region.
- These partners are responsible for delivering a significant proportion of the regions marine monitoring programmes, and will develop their connectivity and collaboration by implementing enhanced monitoring and modelling programmes supported by a co-developed collection of relevant data to ensure an effective legacy.

### **SEUPB**

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are 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 in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The INTERREG VA Programme has a value of €283 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu)