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Metoc/ JNCC

Press Release

Metoc manage investigation of the marine environment and seabed habitats of the Dogger Bank offshore draft SAC

Metoc has won a contract from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to manage a research project, which includes geomorphological and biological surveys of the Dogger Bank draft Special Area of Conservation (dSAC), an area of more than 13,000km²).

In this role, Metoc will provide project management, quality assurance and checking of the research contractor's plans and reports, provision of client rep services during the surveys and final review of the survey reports and data deliverables. The research survey contract itself is being undertaken by Emu Ltd. Rachel McCall, Metoc's project manager, said "We are very pleased to be working closely with JNCC on this important project, utilising our range of skills in project and survey management..." .

The Dogger Bank is located in the southern North Sea and has been recommended to the UK Government as an SAC by the JNCC. It is a large sublittoral sandbank formed by glacial processes and submergence through sea-level rise. A large part of the southern area of the bank is covered by water seldom deeper than 20 m below chart datum. It is an example of a 'sandbank ...slightly covered by seawater all the time' as defined under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

The geomorphological survey is programmed to take place in November 2007, followed by the biological survey in March 2008. Data from these surveys will be used to map and characterise the different seabed habitats of the Dogger Bank, and their associated biological communities. Neil Golding, JNCC's Survey Manager, said "The Dogger Bank is one in a series of surveys we're commissioning. The information being gathered is crucial to successfully complete the UK network of Natura sites".

The survey work will also be a valuable opportunity to test and evaluate standards, protocols and recommended operating guidelines developed by the Mapping European Seabed Habitats (MESH) project. The MESH partnership, made up of a consortium of twelve partners from five European countries led by the JNCC, draws

together scientific and technical habitat-mapping skills, expertise in data collation and its management, and proven practical experience in the use of seabed-habitat maps for environmental management within national regulatory frameworks.

Note to Editor:-

Metoc plc provides EDRM (Environmental Design and Risk Management) expertise for resource development where the demands of engineering meet the constraints of the marine, coastal and river environments. Metoc's EDRM support extends through the project life-cycle – from strategic planning, through design to construction and decommissioning.

MESH - Mapping European Seabed Habitats (see www.searchmesh.net)

MESH has been undertaken by an international consortium of 12 partners across the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and France and is funded under the EU INTERREG IIIB fund. It began in the spring of 2004 and is due to complete this year producing a range of ground-breaking maps and reports, including a web-delivered geographic information system (GIS) showing the habitat maps, templates for future marine mapping projects with protocols and standards, a report describing case histories of habitat mapping, and a stakeholder database.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) is the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation. Its work contributes to maintaining and enriching biological diversity, conserving geological features and sustaining natural systems. JNCC delivers the UK and international responsibilities of the four country nature conservation agencies – Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. The website is at <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/>

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