

# National marine mapping project to deliver five-fold benefits during lifetime

## Minister Power commits to continuation of INFOMAR

Dublin 30 December, 2008

Minister of State at the Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Seán Power, today set out detail of upcoming projects in the National Marine Mapping Programme (INFOMAR), and pledged Government commitment to the continuation of “the most valuable resource for marine research in Ireland and beyond.”

Covering some 125,000 square kilometres of underwater territory, the INFOMAR project is producing integrated mapping products covering the physical, chemical and biological features of the seabed. It provides seabed surveys, which are used in planning for offshore renewable energy projects and to ensure shipping lanes are safely charted, for example.

The decision to continue the project was taken following a full independent review of its first three years. The review, undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, concluded that the benefits to the state of completing the project are between 4 and 6 times the cost.

In the three years since it began, the INFOMAR project has conducted detailed surveys along the South and West coast and in the Galway, Sligo and Donegal Bays as well as other priority areas. The next phase of the project will include the Shannon Estuary, which is a Special Area of Conservation and contains one of Europe’s largest populations of dolphins, Dingle Bay and the completion of Dublin Bay.

Commenting today, Minister Power said: **‘I am delighted to announce the continuation of the INFOMAR project. This is a world class undertaking which is providing crucial information towards the development of Ireland’s 220 million acres that lie under the sea. Earlier this year, I launched the INFOMAR website which aims to make the vast amount of data collected available, at no cost, to as wide an audience as possible. I was very please to hear that to date, more than 200 research projects have utilised the data available which further reinforces the importance of the project.’**

### Note to editors:

INFOMAR stands for Integrated Mapping for the Sustainable Development of Irelands Marine Resource.

The INFOMAR website is available at [www.infomar.ie](http://www.infomar.ie)

The INFOMAR project is an ambitious joint venture to map Ireland's most productive and commercially valuable inshore waters and is being undertaken by Geological Survey of Ireland and the Marine Institute. Covering some 125,000 square kilometres of underwater territory, the INFOMAR project is producing integrated mapping products covering the physical, chemical and biological features of the seabed. INFOMAR follows on from the Irish National Seabed Survey, which mapped all of Ireland's deeper waters between 1999-2005, and taken together they represent one of the largest such projects undertaken anywhere in the world.

Use of the data obtained under the project include:

- the development of offshore energy, with the mapping key to identifying suitable sites and cable routes for wind, wave and tidal generators.
- safer offshore navigation
- supports work being carried out under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, whereby Ireland has been successful in extended continental shelf submissions
- simulation of tides which is useful for the aquaculture and coastal protection engineers
- production of maps on the nature of the seabed (whether mud, sand, rock or gravel) which is used in both environmental protection and more efficient fishing practices.
- provision of updates for the national shipwrecks database maintained by National Monuments Service and used by sport fishermen and divers.

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