



**KOMMUNENES INTERNASJONALE MILJØORGANISASJON
LOCAL AUTHORITIES INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL
ORGANISATION**

PRESS RELEASE

Saturday 9th February 2008

British-Irish Council Supports Fishing for Litter Initiatives

At the recent meeting of the British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Group Ministers agreed to support Fishing for Litter Schemes within their jurisdictions¹. The proposal came from the Isle of Man who presented a paper highlighting Fishing for Litter, which is coordinated by KIMO UK, as an innovative response to the environmental and economic impact of marine litter on coastal communities. The meeting which was attended by Environment ministers from Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Guernsey and The Isle of Man agreed that members would investigate the costs of developing schemes with their relevant departments.

Mr John Mouat KIMO UK Coordinator stated *“Marine litter remains one of the most significant environmental problems yet to be addressed and affects the marine environment on a worldwide scale. Around 20,000 tonnes² is dumped into the North Sea alone every year. Therefore we are delighted that Ministers have agreed to support Fishing for Litter which aims to provide a practical solution to the problem. “*

Plastic, the predominate type of marine litter, can cause entanglement or be ingested by marine mammals and birds killing 100,000 and 1,000,000 respectively world wide each year³. Studies as part of the Save the North Sea⁴ project showed that 96% of Fulmars in the North Sea had plastic in their stomachs and a recent study by Plymouth University⁵ has shown the alarming prevalence of microscopic plastic particles in northern seas, which can be taken up by filter feeders such as barnacles and sand hoppers.

¹ <http://www1.british-irishcouncil.org/documents/environment8.asp>

² Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic, Summary Record, IMPACT 95/14/1-E Page 4

³ UNEP GPA, Marine Litter Trash that Kills leaflet

⁴ Alterra J van Franeker, www.savethenorthsea.com/fulmars

⁵ Lost at Sea: Where is all the plastic? Science 7 May: 838, R. C. Thompson

However not only does it cause damage to wildlife but fishermen's livelihoods suffer too. KIMO has calculated that marine litter costs fishermen approximately £1,300 per tonne in lost time alone with out considering damage to gear or lost catches.

Mr Mouat added *"Now that ministers have supported the concept we will be approaching them to develop national strategies for Fishing for Litter in both the UK and Ireland and will continue working with the Isle of Man and Scottish Governments where Fishing for Litter initiatives are already up and running."*

Notes for Editors

1) Background on Fishing for Litter

Fishing for litter is a simple idea. The participating vessels are given large (1m³) hardwearing bags to collect marine litter that collects in their nets as part of their normal fishing activity. Full bags are deposited on the quayside where the participating harbours monitor the waste before moving the bag to a dedicated skip for disposal. The project provides the bags and covers the waste costs and the fishermen and harbours volunteer their time. Operational or galley waste generated on board, and hence the responsibility of the vessel, is not part of the project continues to go through the harbour waste management system.

2) Web Link to British-Irish Council Press Release

<http://www1.british-irishcouncil.org/documents/environment8.asp>

3) Ministers attending the British-Irish Council Environment Sectoral Committee:

- Arlene Foster MLA, Minister for Environment was accompanied by Margaret Ritchie MLA, Minister for Social Development both represented the Northern Ireland Executive.
- The Irish Government was represented by John Gormley TD, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Guernsey was represented by Deputy David De Lisle, PhD., Minister for Environment Department.
- The Welsh Assembly Government was represented by Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing.
- The Scottish Government was represented by Michael Russell MSP, Minister for Environment
- The Isle of Man was represented by John Shimmin MHK, Minister for Local Government and the Environment, and Jersey by Senator Freddie Cohen, Minister for Planning and Environment

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