

UK signs agreement with ICES demonstrating commitment to international marine science collaboration

The government has set out its commitment to international marine and fisheries science by signing an agreement which will ensure continued partnership with the International Council of the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

ICES is a network of nearly 6,000 scientists from over 700 marine institutes in 20 member countries. The [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) came into effect on 1 January and sets out how the UK will work with ICES as an independent coastal State. It outlines how UK scientists will contribute to ICES and the advice ICES will provide to the UK on conservation, protection, the sustainable use of the marine environment and sustainable fisheries.

The partnership will assist the UK in meeting its international and domestic commitments to achieving a sustainable marine environment, support vital ecosystems and improve fish stocks which will in turn also benefit our aquaculture and fishing industries.

The UK has a long-running history with ICES as a founding member at its inception in 1902, before becoming a formal contracting party during the ICES Convention of 1964. Throughout our historic collaboration with ICES, UK scientists across Cefas, Marine Scotland Science, AFBI and ICES partner nations, have been key contributors to the development of a greater understanding of marine ecosystems and continue to do so to meet our vision of achieving a clean, healthy and sustainable marine environment.

Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis said:

Now that we are an independent coastal State, we are moving forward with a strong vision as world leaders in marine and fisheries science. UK scientists are key contributors to ICES, and we will continue to play a leading role.

We are committed to achieving a clean and healthy marine environment as well as promoting global efforts to protect and enhance marine ecosystems internationally. We must all work together to ensure our seas and oceans are sustainably managed for future generations.

Carl O'Brien CBE, Chief Fisheries Science Adviser at Cefas, said:

Science is strengthened through collaboration, and the signing of the MoU provides a basis for continued collaboration between UK scientists across our Devolved Administrations and our peers in ICES with its 20 member nations; embracing the rest of Europe and more widely. We will continue to work together to research and understand the challenges our oceans face and how we can meet them.

The working partnerships between Cefas and other organisations have been developed over more than a century and I look forward to the innovative scientific findings they bring in our efforts towards a sustainable marine environment, for human activity and healthy ecosystems; as well as to the continued sharing of marine data. This information and advice will support the UK in meeting its international and domestic obligations in sustainability.

The MoU outlines the advice and information ICES will provide to the UK on conservation, protection, the sustainable use of the marine environment, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, as well as marine data. This information and advice will assist the UK in meeting its international and domestic commitments to achieve a sustainable marine environment, support vital ecosystems and improve fish stocks which will in turn also benefit our aquaculture and fishing industries.

ICES will also provide annual advice on fishing opportunities as well as analysis of the status of our marine ecosystems so that we can manage our fisheries in a way that balances the needs of both our fishermen and our vibrant marine life.