

NEW AD HOC SCIENCE BUDGET TO SUPPORT WORK ON REGIONALLY AND LOCALLY GENERATED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ISSUES

INTERIM CRITERIA AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

Purpose

1. The purpose of this budget is to provide flexibility to commission pieces of research or analysis on particular fisheries management issues as they arise in-year, something which Defra has hitherto found difficult to do as our R&D budgets tend to be committed to multi-annual projects. The Department sees this as an opportunity to promote a more active involvement of stakeholders in commissioning fisheries science by inviting regional and local organisations and stakeholders to submit proposals for funding. Proposals could come from Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) in which the UK has an interest, RAC member organisations, Sea Fisheries Committees, local fishermen's associations or other groups with an interest in fisheries management, or indeed individuals.
2. This initiative responds to a number of recommendations in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report on the UK fishing industry, in particular those on greater stakeholder involvement in science commissioning, greater management focus in fisheries science and on the need to provide practical support for the work of RACs.

Background

3. Following Spending Review 2004 Defra has allocated funding of £200,000 to this new ad hoc science budget for 2005/6 with the expectation that this figure will increase in 2006/7 and 2007/8.

Criteria

4. Defra proposes the following as interim criteria for 2005/06 in the light of the need to put an initial framework for spending this budget in place quickly if money available in the current financial year is to be used effectively (the Department intends to consult stakeholders on these criteria and the operating procedures set out below over the coming months and will adjust them in the light of stakeholder comments and experience with initial projects):
 - Proposals could include all types of research and analysis, including but not limited to biological, social and economic studies.
 - Proposals should address a fisheries management issue that is relevant to part or parts of the UK fishing industry and/or relevant to a current policy concern.
 - Proposals should be consistent with the Defra and CFP objective of sustainable fisheries.
 - Proposals should not duplicate work already being undertaken.
 - Priority will be given to relatively short term proposals on the basis that there are existing science budgets to fund longer term strategic science, but projects extending beyond one year are not necessarily excluded.

- Priority will be given to proposals which involve an element of stakeholder contribution (not necessarily financial, but could be in kind, in the form of making individuals or vessel time available to participate in projects).
- Proposals from scientists/scientific institutes are not necessarily excluded, but the Department's expectation is to fund work suggested by stakeholders rather than science practitioners.
- The Department would expect to give high priority to proposals in support of RACs' work, as the UK Government has identified the provision of effective practical support to RACs as a high political priority, and the May 2004 Council Decision does not provide for EU funding for RACs to commission their own science.

5. The above criteria are deliberately broad and open as we do not want to exclude any potentially worthwhile proposals from consideration in the initial period but recognise that the criteria may need to be tightened in the light of experience.

Procedure

6. The Department proposes the following interim procedures in order to get the initiative up and running in the current financial year. As with the criteria, these will be subject to consultation with interested parties over the coming months and will then be adjusted as necessary:

- All proposals should be in writing and include the following information
 - Objective of the project
 - Identify the need for the project
 - If possible identify how the project should be carried out
 - If possible identify the cost
 - If appropriate, identify the person or organisation that could carry out the work.
- Bids will be considered by an evaluation panel, including stakeholders and independent scientists, that will meet provisionally three times a year probably in February, June and September.
- Membership of the evaluation panel may vary from meeting to meeting but will be made up of stakeholders and independent scientists appointed by Defra from the membership of the Marine Fisheries Science Advisory Group, as well as officials from Defra and other UK Fisheries Departments.
- At the same time as evaluating bids, the evaluation panel will be invited to advise on whether proposals should be tendered for contractors to do the work or allocated to a particular science provider.