

Marine education and marine environmental awareness for all. Expertise, partnerships, people but no funding?

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The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) is an internationally renowned aquatic scientific research and consultancy centre and also a prominent establishment and important employer within the local community. On a national and international scale, Cefas strives to achieve excellence in marine environmental, fisheries and aquaculture science. This, combined with the local maritime links past, present and future, provides an excellent basis for providing marine and coastal education initiatives within the community. However as a government executive agency gaining funding for marine education initiatives appears to be very difficult. Cefas has vast resources and expertise for everything from underwater acoustics to aging fish and even has a volunteering scheme which would allow some of our experts to deliver and assist in some of the education initiatives. In terms of funding, if we could provide extra jobs within the community or specifically include activities for groups such as women and girls or boys and men for example, there might be a light on the horizon but marine education and environmental awareness for the whole community (schools, youth groups, minority groups and the general public) is not so high on the agenda.

So we potentially have the perfect partners locally and nationally and a range of education initiatives and ideas such as a Coastal Outdoor Discovery (COD) and Beach Schools programme led by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and developed in collaboration with Cefas scientists. COD is aimed at 13 to 25yr olds. Targeting groups from high schools, academies, homeless adults and children, etc. The beach schools initiative is for school groups and will provide practical activities and recognises the importance of outdoor learning. The beach schools are to be complimented by in school marine workshops. Workshops include sights and sounds of the marine environment; beach litter; renewable energy; aggregate dredging; fishing industry; marine biodiversity; coastal erosion and leisure activities to name a few. All youth activities also promote personal capabilities and scientific skills such as team working skills, communication, investigation, critical thinking, problem solving and encourage students to think about their surrounding environment and its long-term sustainability.

The complementary skills of Cefas and Suffolk Wildlife Trust will provide information on the marine environment for an objective and thought-provoking discussion and programme of education initiatives regarding the marine and coastal environment. Cefas has a wealth of expertise and resources that can be accessed for the various initiatives and Suffolk Wildlife Trust has the expertise in outdoor education that will allow a safe, innovative and hands-on approach. So armed with a network of people, places, partners and ideas our remaining hurdle is to find funding for Cefas to facilitate and co-ordinate these initiatives in collaboration with the other funded partners so that the very experts in the environment, fisheries and aquaculture science are not left high and dry.