



Woodside and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology announce the first Woodside Irish Cetacean PhD Scholarship

Woodside Energy Ireland and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) are delighted to announce that the first **Woodside Irish Cetacean PhD Scholarship** has been awarded to Ms Myrto Tourgeli.

The scholarship will support Myrto's PhD for her work on assessing habitat preferences for sperm whales and long-finned pilot whales in Irish offshore marine waters and better understanding their main anthropogenic threats.

Woodside Country Manager Ireland Gareth Parry said the scholarship builds on the three-year relationship between Woodside and GMIT.

"We are delighted to continue our relationship with GMIT with the Woodside Irish Cetacean PhD Scholarship" Gareth said.

"The scholarship will build on our collaboration with GMIT in 2014, where we successfully completed one of the first static acoustic monitoring studies of whales and dolphins in Ireland's offshore waters."

"We recognise the value of collaborating with local experts to improve our understanding of the marine environment and our potential impacts. In turn, we can openly share the knowledge and insights from these studies to contribute to the wider understanding of marine ecosystems."

Woodside, working together with Curtin University's Centre for Marine Science and Technology and consultancy company RPS in Western Australia and the Marine Institute and GMIT in Ireland, deployed underwater acoustic recorders for six months of 2014 at three sites, two in the Porcupine Seabight and one to the south-west. The recorders are capable of detecting a broad range of sounds that whales and dolphins make during communication and feeding. The recording can be analysed to determine the presence of individual species in an area.

The data collected provided for the first time, detailed information on the occurrence of fin and blue whales, long-finned pilot and sperm whales and a group of whales called beaked whales in the areas in which they were deployed.

In 2016 Woodside deployed two additional underwater acoustic recorders in the Porcupine Seabight. Data from these recorders will be made available to scholarship recipient Myrto to provide a better understanding of the distribution and ecology of two of the most abundant and ecologically important species in offshore Ireland; long-finned pilot whales and sperm whales.

The collaboration with Woodside builds on the knowledge and experience GMIT has built up in recent years in the field of remote acoustic monitoring of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoise). GMIT are also currently delivering a €1 million offshore acoustic monitoring project funded by the Petroleum Affairs Division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment called ObSERVE, which will provide similar acoustic data from eight additional sites along the edge of the continental shelf.

Dr Simon Berrow, lecturer in School of Natural Science and a Principal Investigator on both these projects said “the acoustic dataset currently being collected in Ireland’s offshore environment on whales and dolphins is unprecedented in Europe and will provide a unique opportunity to increase significantly our understanding of the species present and their ecology. We welcome the opportunity to work with Woodside to pursue both our common interests to ensure the sustainable management of Ireland’s offshore resources”.

Fellow lecturer in the School of Natural Science at GMIT and an expert in marine mammal acoustics, Dr Joanne O’Brien, congratulated Woodside’s responsible approach to assessing the effects of anthropogenic noise on offshore populations of whales and dolphins adding “*it will allow us to derive appropriate mitigation in order to ensure the protection of offshore cetaceans and habitats*”.

About Woodside

Woodside is Australia’s largest independent oil and gas company with a global presence, recognised for its world-class capabilities –as an explorer, a developer, a producer and a supplier.

Woodside holds four Frontier Exploration Licenses and one Licensing Option in the Porcupine Basin, offshore Ireland. The company’s global exploration portfolio includes emerging and frontier provinces in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, the Atlantic Margins, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

Our operations are characterised by strong safety and environmental performance in remote and challenging locations.

We recognise that long-term meaningful relationships with communities are fundamental to maintaining our licence to operate, and we work to build mutually beneficial relationships.

About GMIT

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Woodside Country Manager Ireland Gareth Parry congratulates scholarship recipient and PhD candidate Myrto Tourgeli.