



OceanEcology

Situated on the banks of the Severn Estuary, the marine consultancy Ocean Ecology Ltd specialises in undertaking a range of marine ecological surveys to feed into Environmental Impact Assessments, monitoring programmes and research projects. It was founded in 2013 by marine biologists who firmly believe in the protection of the marine environment, which can be achieved through sound regulation and governance alongside the sustainable use of the natural resources it provides.

They therefore set out to work with the UK's most forward-thinking organisations making use of and regulating the marine environment and have since worked on a number of the UK's most significant marine infrastructure projects as well as with the majority of the UK government's regulatory bodies. In fact, Ocean Ecology is now one of the UK's leading providers of specialist marine ecological services.

They offer a range of marine ecological survey, analytical and consultancy services for projects in both the coastal and offshore zones. This includes wind farm and pipeline surveys as well as providing solutions for the planning and installation of subsea cables to protect sensitive seabed habitats. The survey work is conducted on a variety of platforms ranging from their purpose built intertidal hovercrafts to state of the art offshore survey vessels. They also operate their own coastal survey vessel equipped for a range of environmental and hydrographic survey requirements. Several thousand samples, collected from coastal and deep-water habitats throughout the world, are processed annually by their team of highly skilled scientists in the fully-equipped laboratory facilities.

Before applying to LEADER, the majority of the seabed monitoring relating to marine developments and activities was conducted by collecting seabed sediment samples that primarily underwent macrobenthic (e.g. sponges, starfish) analysis. Ocean Ecology undertook this service at its laboratory alongside a limited amount of particle size analysis of the same sediments. However, it is now recognised that particle size analysis data is a more suitable indicator of potential impacts of these developments and activities. This has resulted in developers needing to collect large numbers of samples requiring particle size analysis.

There were however only a handful of commercial laboratories that undertook particle size analysis of marine sediments and only a few operated their own in-house but outdated laser diffractor equipment. Ocean Ecology recognised that investment in this equipment would put them in a very strong position for undertaking the increasing volume of particle size analysis that will be required by the industry over the coming years. Therefore, in early 2018 they successfully applied to Cotswolds LEADER for a grant towards specialist laboratory equipment, including a laser diffractor, with it being awarded to them a few months later.

Bringing this major component in-house significantly increased their capacity to undertake laser size analysis of sediments that they collect during their offshore and coastal surveys as well as substantially reducing the time and costs required to do so. It also allows them to take on more sample analysis from some of the largest infrastructure and engineering groups in the UK, which they were unable to fulfil due to a lack of capacity, relevant in-house equipment and the inability to meet the desired turnaround times.

The investment is expected to result in increased turnover, cost savings and business efficiencies. In addition to undertaking analysis of their own sediment samples they have also taken on an increasing volume of particle size analysis for both existing and new clients including a substantial contract with a consortium of aggregate extraction companies resulting in more than 800 samples to date. This increased activity enabled the business to create three new permanent positions; a highly skilled Laboratory Technician and two Marine Ecologists/Consultants.

Ocean Ecology now represents a cost-effective one stop shop solution for provision of marine ecological services to marine developers and stakeholders. The investment opened the business up to much larger projects and clients that require contractors to undertake the entire projects from start to finish in-house.

For more information on Ocean Ecology visit: www.ocean-ecology.com



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