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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY RECOGNISED

The Greenwich Maritime Institute (GMI), University of Greenwich and IRIS Consulting have been commissioned by Defra to develop proposals to help women in the commercial fishing industry to participate in the decision-making processes.

The project is not just confined to women directly involved in the industry. It includes the many women who are partners in local fishing enterprises, but who have no formal recognition.

At a conference in June 2004 on "The Changing Role of Women in Fishing Communities", Madame Lea Verstraete, Director of Structural Policy within the then Directorate General of Fisheries of the EU Commission, commented:

"The contribution of women is often not recognised when it comes to decision making. Access to work and professional training is frequently more difficult for women than men in fishing areas. Women rarely venture into enterprise management or organisations representing the workers or the industry.

It is imperative to increase the participation of women in the decision making process, as the survival and well being of fishing communities also depends on women and their partnership with men."

That position remains largely unchanged. It is believed that many women find themselves disenfranchised from decisions that affect their communities and businesses. The project will look at the evidence and how things might be changed. It will be exploring skills development and training, developing networks and support opportunities, information exchange, access to employment in the industry for women and whether the existing fisheries management arrangements need to be adapted to afford women equal opportunities.

The project will run for about 2½ months. The team will be arranging meetings with people in the industry across England and would welcome comments or information particularly from women involved in commercial

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fisheries - whether as owners of businesses, employees or partners of fishermen. The team are keen to build a better picture of the number of women involved and to hear their views.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

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