

Major contract awarded to consortium to produce new Integrated Biostratigraphic & Lithostratigraphic Framework of Offshore Ireland

A consortium led by Merlin Energy Resources Ltd and comprising; Riley Geoscience Ltd; Network Stratigraphic Consulting Ltd; IGI Ltd; and G. Dunford Exploration Ltd has secured a €1.9 million contract from the Irish Petroleum Infrastructure Programme (PIP), which was set up by the [Petroleum Affairs Division \(PAD\)](#) in 1997, to complete an integrated chronostratigraphic, biostratigraphic and lithostratigraphic framework study of Offshore Ireland.



The 12-month project will deliver an illustrative ‘Atlas’ reference document as well as a comprehensive final report providing details of all analyses completed together with accompanying digital databases. The study will also tie the Ireland stratigraphy to that of offshore East Canada and the North Sea, will establish a new sequence stratigraphy for the region and generate depositional environment maps and play fairway maps. The study will be based on all available well and seismic data from the region, and will include the following basins; Porcupine, Rockall, Slyne, Erris, Donegal, Goban Spur, Fastnet, North & South Celtic Sea, Kish and Central Irish Sea.

The Merlin-led tender team encompasses over 400 years of combined relevant experience that can be applied to the study. Dr Nigel Ainsworth, Lead Researcher for the project and formerly based at Trinity College Dublin’s Applied Geology Unit, is a world-renowned biostratigrapher, with over 35 years of acknowledged stratigraphic expertise in offshore Ireland. Together with Drs Les Riley, Haydon Bailey and Keith Gueinn, Nigel has also completed stratigraphic standardisation studies for the conjugate margin of Eastern Canada.

Merlin Energy has completed many stratigraphic studies of the North Atlantic conjugate margin and offshore Ireland, and Dr Phil Copestake, who is the overall Project Manager, co-authored the Lower Cretaceous Chapter in the Millennium Atlas published by the Geology Society of London. Merlin staff have in addition carried out extensive subsurface prospectivity evaluation studies in the area over several years.

Following confirmation of the contract award, Phil stated that *“We are excited by the prospect of undertaking such a prestigious and challenging study and we believe that the team’s unrivalled experience and skill set will deliver an outstanding atlas, report and accompanying databases to PIP.”*

The resulting integrated biostratigraphic and lithostratigraphic regionally–correlative framework across the offshore Ireland areas will assist future workers and oil company technical staff in their search for hydrocarbons in this area.

Further information about each of the Consortia Members can be found by clicking on their websites whose addresses are provided below:

- Merlin Energy Resources Ltd: www.merlinenergy.co.uk
- Riley Geoscience Limited: www.rileygeoscience.com
- Network Stratigraphic Consulting Ltd: www.network-stratigraphic.com
- IGI Ltd www.igiltd.com

Notes for Editors:

Merlin Energy was formed in 1998 and provides high quality geoscience and data management consultancy services to the oil and gas industry, both domestically and internationally. Its team of 17 staff is based at two offices, with the head office in Ledbury, and the data management division in Colwall, Herefordshire, UK.