

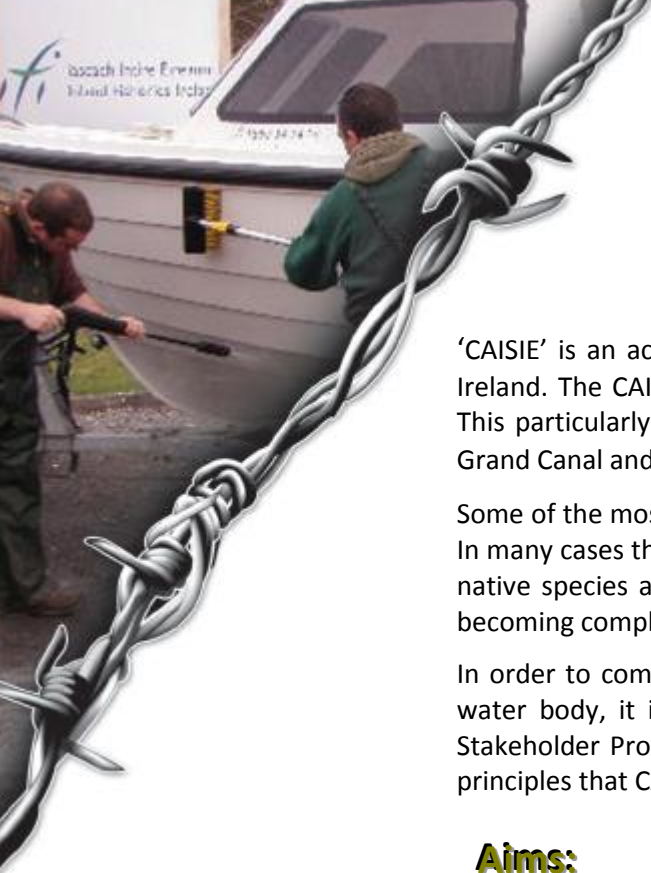


STOP!
The spread of
harmful invasive species
and pathogens

CAISIE

Guidelines on Effective Stakeholder Engagement Programmes for Invasive Species Management





Background

'CAISIE' is an acronym for the Control of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and the restoration of natural communities in Ireland. The CAISIE Project was developed in response to the increasing threat from AIS in Ireland's inland waterways. This particularly reflected the threat posed by the Curly-leaved waterweed in Lough Corrib and the recognition of the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation as a significant pathway for the spread of such invasive species throughout Ireland.

Some of the most environmentally damaging invasive species in Ireland are aquatic plants, fish species and invertebrates. In many cases the plant fills an empty niche and then expands rapidly and competes for additional niches. Oftentimes the native species are ousted and the ecology of the waterway can be changed dramatically. This can lead to waterways becoming completely choked by a single species impeding navigation, angling and other recreation.

In order to communicate the problems caused by unintentional and intentional introductions of invasives species to a water body, it is important to effectively engage with stakeholders at all levels and in a variety of categories. This Stakeholder Programme takes into account best practice in relation to information disclosure and outlines the general principles that CAISIE adopted to carry out the stakeholder engagement programme for invasive species management.

Aims:

The aim of the CAISIE stakeholder engagement programme for invasive species management is to:

- To act as a guidance document in carrying out the effective stakeholder engagement programmes for invasive species management.
- To clarify the goals and objectives of the stakeholder engagement programme.
- To set out the requirements needed to carry out the stakeholder engagement programme effectively.
- To aid in the identification of the key stakeholders and stakeholder groupings.
- To highlight the tools needed to establish a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme.
- Outline approaches for communicating effectively with different target audiences.
- Create an informed, dynamic and interactive engagement process.
- Evaluate the efficacy of the engagement programme in getting its message across.





Communication goals!

The goals of the stakeholder engagement programme are to:

- Create awareness of invasive species at all levels.
- Provide the stakeholder with the tools to control or manage invasive species.
- Provide the stakeholder with invasive species identification skills.
- Promote and implement biosecurity measures.
- Set up a legacy to carry out invasive species management on completion of the programme.
- Form an invasive species networking group to carry on the work after CAISIE has been completed.
- Encourage schools and educational institutions to continue to actively run and promote awareness programmes.

Invasive species management will be most effective when a local, national and international approach is taken. Stakeholders form a vital part in invasive species management programmes.

Stakeholders act as ambassadors of the word and are vital to any invasive species awareness programme.





Requirements for an effective Stakeholder Engagement Programme

- **Budget.** A sufficient budget is essential. Staffing costs/event fees/literature production/website hosting costs all need to be taken into consideration.
- **Timeframes.** Organising and planning can take up a lot of time. Be prepared to work unsociable hours to attend events and be aware of other work commitments that need to be fulfilled when preparing for events.
- **Methods.** Stakeholder engagement takes place in a variety of different ways. It is essential to plan carefully and ensure the aims and objectives are achieved.
- **Objectives & targets.** It is important to determine objectives and targets from the outset. Objectives will form the methodology, logistics required and techniques to use. It will also keep a focus on the desired milestones.
- **Logistics.** Venues, literature, teaching aids, staffing, stakeholder accessibility, promotional techniques all need careful consideration.
- **Engagement techniques.** Engaging people's attention at an early stage is important. Keeping new information flowing and disseminating information to stakeholders on a regular basis ensures a good engagement process. Build on a database of stakeholders and gather stakeholder information at every opportunity.
- **Maintain contact.** Consider your stakeholders needs. Determine how they can become involved and use their knowledge and support to the advantage of the programme.
- **Milestones.** Milestones are achieved by following through on your objectives. Original plans can change during the engagement process so be prepared to take different directions to enhance your programme. Stakeholders can often offer alternative and new ideas., Be open to all constructive suggestions.
- **Review objective & targets.** A review process on completion of the engagement programme will provide information on how to improve upon further programmes.





Identify key stakeholders

Key to having a good Stakeholder Engagement Programme is knowledge of the stakeholder's needs and being aware of how to reach them. The diverse nature of invasive species incursions and the habitats that they occupy requires effective communication methods to stakeholders at a variety of different levels. Aquatic, riparian or terrestrial invasive species will require different stakeholder engagement outreach programmes, as different stakeholder groups utilise the different habitat types. The CAISIE programme focuses mainly on aquatic and riparian stakeholders, but can be applied to terrestrial invasive species audiences.

The target audience groups include:

- The Government
- The general public
- State agencies
- Anglers
- Boaters
- Schools & educational institutions
- Community groups
- Outdoor enthusiasts & water users
- Horticultural sector
- The Media
- Local & national politicians
- State or County Councils



Publish guidelines:

Guidelines for stakeholders that outlines invasive species management techniques, biosecurity information and identification skills can be produced in a variety of ways. Posters and informative leaflets are useful dissemination items. Note that guidelines for management will differ to guidelines for volunteers. Outlining control methods, biosecurity methods and identification skills enable the stakeholder to participate in the management and containment of invasive species.

Create initiatives:

Develop and disseminate initiatives that will deliver on the aims of the programme.

- Set up biosecurity demonstrations
- Provide stakeholders with the tools and knowledge on how to disinfect items of equipment.
- Host workshops and invasive species displays
- Educate stakeholders on invasive species identification skills
- Disseminate informative and accessible literature
- Attend local and national events
- Set up volunteer programmes

Volunteer programmes:

Volunteer programmes work well on a variety of levels. Educating and training volunteers to carry out invasive species control works empowers individuals and makes them feel involved. National theme days (such as biodiversity or invasive species day) or a nature awareness campaigns provide opportunities to make volunteer days an annual event.

Many considerations need to be made before a volunteer programme is set up.

Guidance can be sought from similar projects, local County Council groups and various conservation groups.

An essential consideration when working with riparian and aquatic invasive species is the potential threat from the water body. Working in the outdoors brings with it dangerous hazards. Before any volunteer initiative takes place, a risk assessment of the proposed work and its location is essential. The Health and Safety of the stakeholder is paramount.

Biodiversity programmes / Community groups:

Connecting with biodiversity and community groups in the project area is a good way to resonate ideas and to spread awareness of your programme. Carrying out invasive species management is crucial to biodiversity enhancement. Biodiversity enhancement programmes take place on a national scale and will benefit both the stakeholder engagement programme and the biodiversity programme.



Website:

A website is an important information resource.

A website provides an information platform about the project that is accessible to a widespread and diverse audience.

A website will:

- Promote the aims and objectives of the project.
- Keep audiences up-to-date with news and information about the project.
- Provide a library of invasive species identification downloads.
- Provide a library of biosecurity downloads.
- Deliver regular news updates.
- Provide links to relevant scientific publications.
- Showcase photos and information on stakeholder events.

Social media:

Social media is an ever growing diversifying and is predominantly a free and effective resource. Social media can reach audiences on a local, national and international scale. Information through social media is conveyed to a broad range of individuals, groups and organisations.

Social media also relay information back to the user, such as advancements in research and information on invasive species management programmes worldwide.

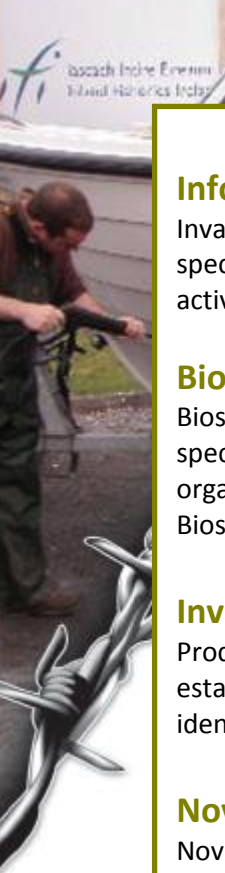
Media, Press releases & Project bulletins:

It is important to keep stakeholders continually informed on project news, new findings and project progress. Maintaining interest in the project through press releases and project bulletins is vital to the success of the Stakeholder Engagement Programme. Media coverage can be gained through local and national radio, local and national tabloids and broadsheets, special interest magazines and E-zines, posting project bulletins to the project website and by advertising this in social media.

Descriptive leaflets/Posters:

Invasive species identification leaflets and posters provide the general public with project information and an awareness of invasive species. Posters and leaflets can be distributed at events and presentations, at local schools, shops, libraries, universities, colleges and sports clubs.





Information boards

Invasive species information boards at prime locations such as slipways, view points and areas of busy footfall, inform local users of the presence of invasives species in the area. These information boards also provide disinfection guidelines for equipment that stakeholders may use in pursuit of their recreational activity.

Biosecurity guidelines

Biosecurity guidelines for anglers, boaters, paddle sport enthusiasts, scuba divers and other relevant stakeholder groups help to prevent the spread of invasive species from one water body to another. Dissemination of guidelines can take place at promotional or training events or by direct contact with groups and organisations.

Biosecurity disinfection stations at high profile events raise awareness and deliver the message on the importance of biosecurity.

Invasive Species Alerts

Produce invasive species alerts to warn about high impact invasive species that are not yet in Ireland but could readily be introduced and about newly established invasive species. Circulate these at all events and again through direct contact with interested groups. Alerts can inform stakeholder on the identifying features of a potential invader or a newly established invader.

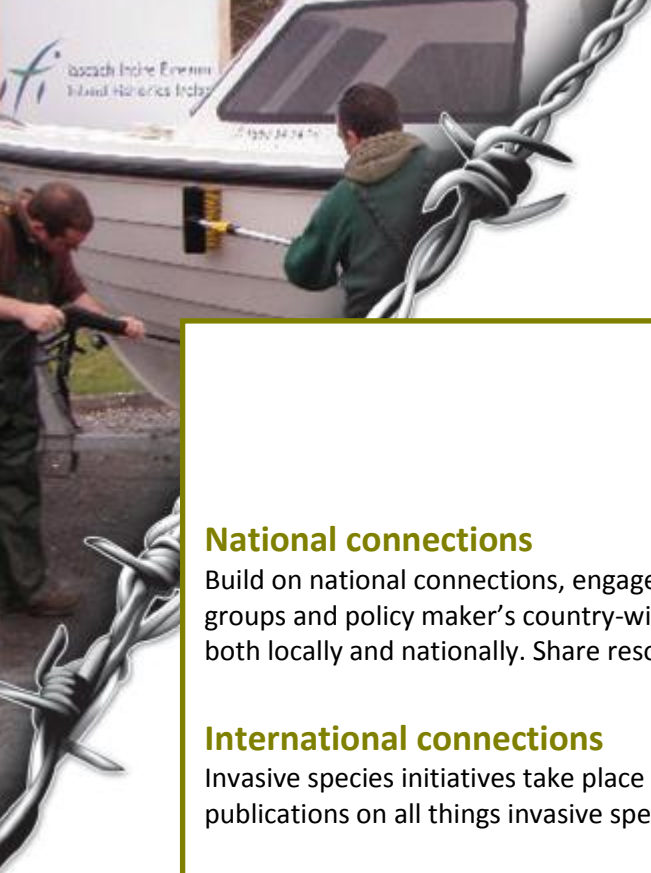
Novel items

Novel items such as Key rings, rulers, pens, badges, post-it notes, posters for schools, biosecurity stickers and T-shirts are some of the items that can enhance your display or information kiosk. These items provide awareness in fun and indirect way to audiences such as school-going children and most of the stakeholder groups.

Project video

To encapsulate the project, a documentary showcasing the works carried by the project team will enhance stakeholder engagement efforts. The legacy of the documentary will help to inform a variety of groups on the work involved when an invasive species becomes established in an aquatic environment. Informative video footage on invasive species identification skills uploaded to websites, or the use of YouTube to showcase footage on various aspects of the project will maintain levels of interest in the project.





National and International Networking

National connections

Build on national connections, engage with scientists, educational institutions, invasives species experts, governmental bodies, sister projects, community groups and policy maker's country-wide. Set up a networking community for invasive species. Invite visitors from related projects involved in waterways both locally and nationally. Share resources, enhance lines of communications.

International connections

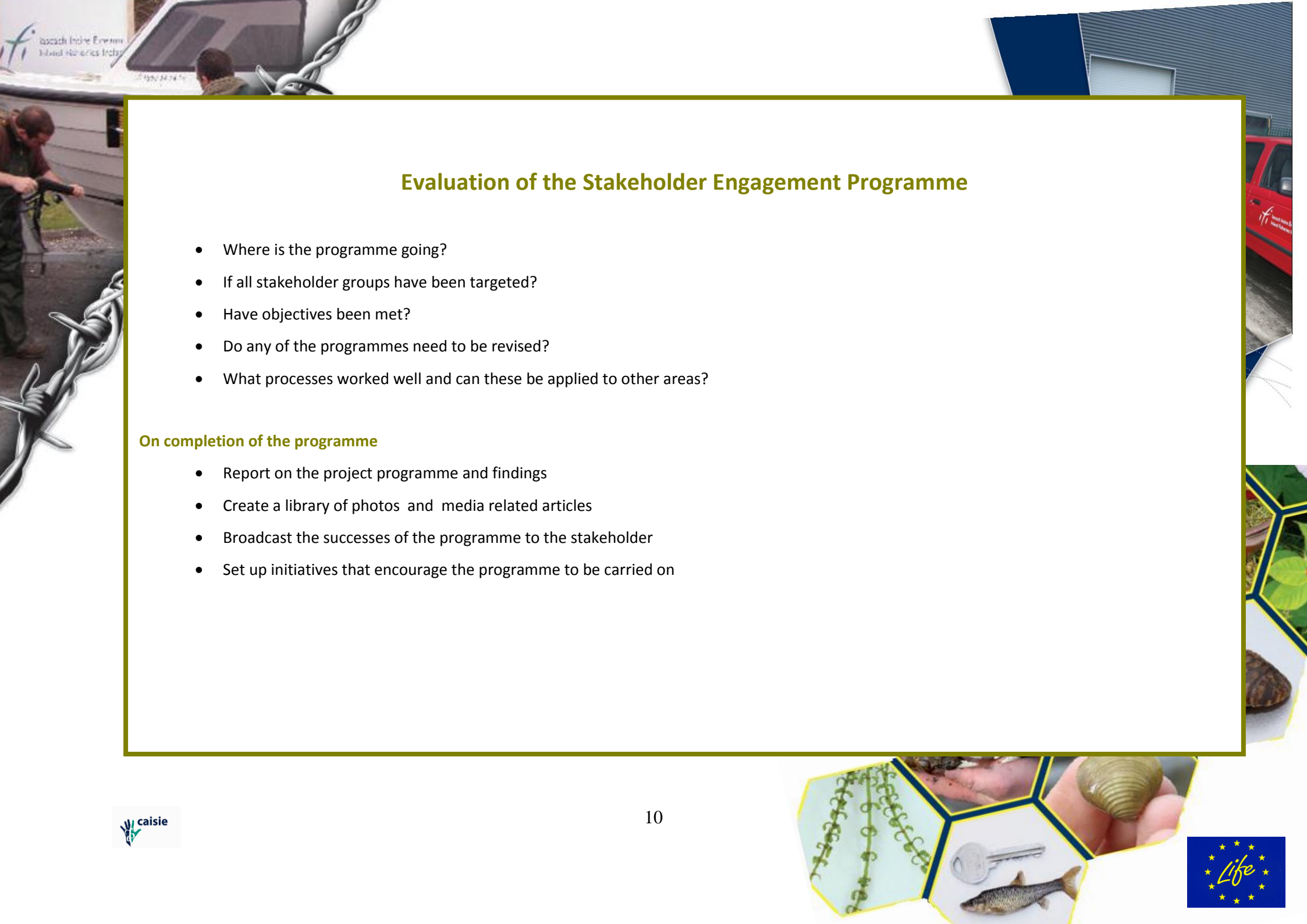
Invasive species initiatives take place all over the world. Sharing knowledge and findings benefits both parties. Keeping up-to-date with scientific publications on all things invasive species-related will inform and boost your project results.

International workshop/conference

An international workshop or conference provides an opportunity for expert's worldwide to present research findings and communicate ideas and actions in workshop sessions.

Hosting an international conference creates media attention, engaging all stakeholder group





Evaluation of the Stakeholder Engagement Programme

- Where is the programme going?
- If all stakeholder groups have been targeted?
- Have objectives been met?
- Do any of the programmes need to be revised?
- What processes worked well and can these be applied to other areas?

On completion of the programme

- Report on the project programme and findings
- Create a library of photos and media related articles
- Broadcast the successes of the programme to the stakeholder
- Set up initiatives that encourage the programme to be carried on



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