

THE DEEP

Colin Brown

Chief Executive, The Deep

The Deep in Hull is a registered charity with trustees drawn from industry, commerce, local government and academia. To many it is little more than a nice day out, an aquarium of a quality and rigour which is rarely seen in those whose sole driver is profit. Opened in 2002 and constructed around a 2.8 million litre central tank, its unique architecture, storyline and blend of interactivity with stunning film and real animals made it something of an overnight success with almost 4 million people visiting since opening. In its first 12 months it generated over £50m of positive publicity, which established The Deep in people's minds as a major tourist attraction.

However this image is far from the whole story, like a shark's fin some of our most exciting work lies below the surface!

Hull has always had a special relationship with the sea. Home to The Bounty, port of exit to both Robinson Crusoe and Bram Stoker's Vampire Hunters. Salt water flows past the city's gates and into the hearts of its people.

Once the greatest whaling port on earth, then the largest deep sea fishing port, Hull has always made its living and taken much of its unique culture from the oceans.

Over the years whole industries have developed on the back of this relationship, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, logistics, food processing even caravan production using the same skills that once serviced the great fishing fleets of the Northern Trawl.

Whilst many of these spin-off industries still survive, the fishing industry itself largely disappeared after the Cod War leaving Hull to turn both physically and culturally away from the sea.

The task we set ourselves then for Hull's Millennium project was therefore nothing if not ambitious. It was and is to trigger a new relationship between Hull and the Oceans. It was to be a sustainable relationship based on science and education it was perhaps most ambitiously of all to transform Hull into a genuine short break tourism destination and a centre for environmental research. So to what extent have we succeeded?

Well, as an educational and environmental charity The Deep now runs a largely, but not exclusively, primary schools educational programme which this year will welcome over 30,000 students to our formal educational programme. For those who cannot make the journey we have established a video conferencing service where we take the sights and sounds of one of Europe's largest aquarium tanks right into the class room for an interactive conversation between our trained guiding staff and the child.

We have campaigned against shark finning and the keeping of inappropriate fish by hobbyists. We have developed breeding



Photo: Richard Bryant ARCAID

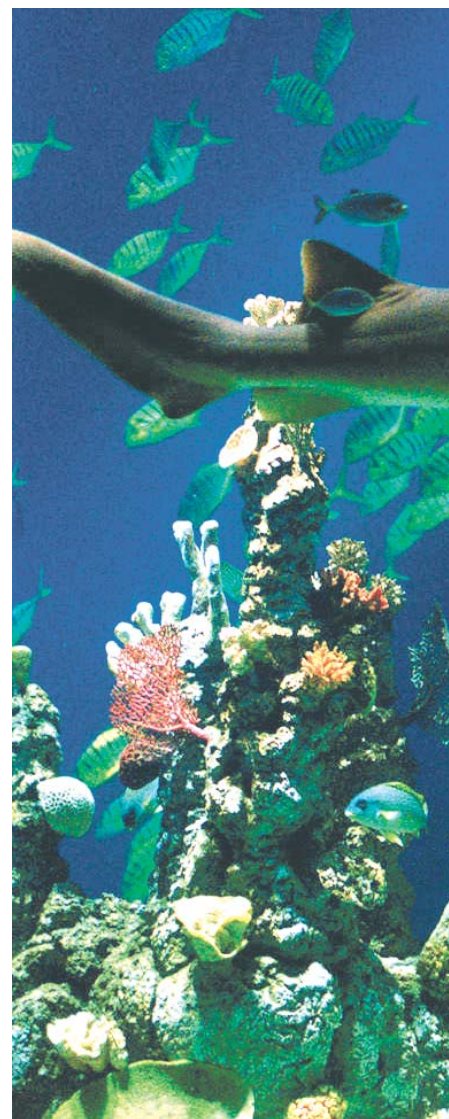


Photo: Kelly Timmins

programmes for rays, jellyfish and other species. But more recently it is the success of our in-situ research work which has really begun to show a way of delivering on that original aim to re-invent Hull's relationship with the sea in a new and sustainable way.

Firstly, The Deep houses the University of Hull's Total Environment Simulator (TES) – a key partner from the outset the Universities Total Environment Simulator can model river and estuarine environments in real time. A participant in the Hydralab III network, the TES is part of the 6th EC framework programme and has

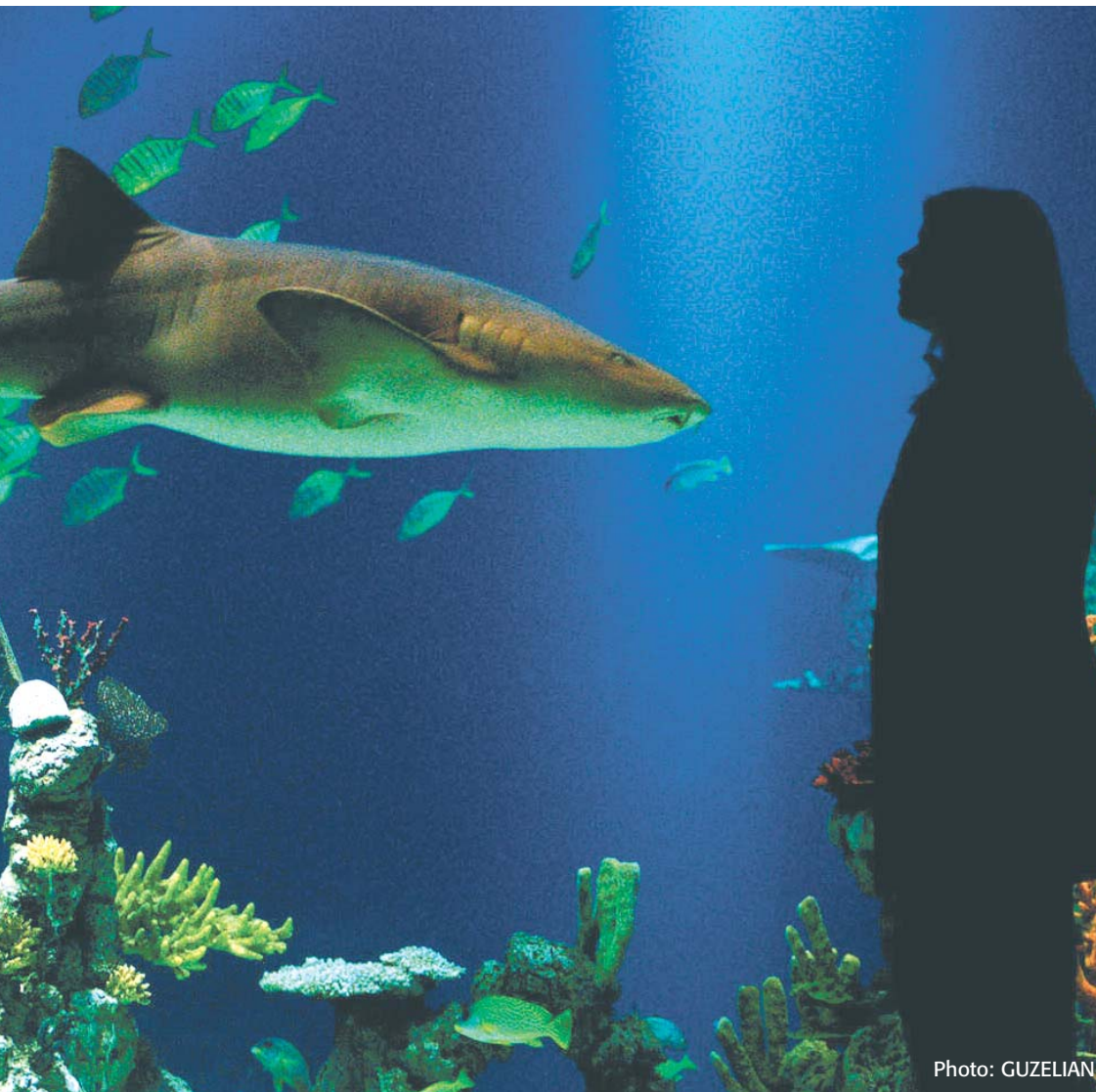


Photo: GUZELIAN

conservation project to protect the Giant Manta Rays of the Sudanese coast.

Closer to home we have spent some years now campaigning for a Marine Bill, and were therefore delighted with the recent legislation to establish a network of marine protected areas around our coast.

However, be careful what you wish for, as Natural England then approached us to chair the Project Board for "Netgain" the project charged with delivering such a network from the Scottish Borders almost to the Thames Estuary. Our role is to act as an honest broker and to establish the mechanisms and management structures necessary to achieve a genuine consultative process involving the many and varied groups who have an interest in our coastal waters.

Whilst we are well aware of the difficulties that lie ahead for Netgain, the prize will be well worth the pain – a network of scientifically legitimate marine protected zones which carry widespread public support, and of course ultimately a sustainable North Sea.

Whilst our education work is invaluable, it is our involvement in research, conservation and science that has transformed us from fun day out into a contributor to national policy and it is Netgain that could one day deliver our dream of establishing a new and sustainable relationship between Hull and the sea.

Perhaps, one day, even of re-establishing a fishing industry in Hull?

For further information about The Deep, visit www.thedeep.co.uk



been used to provide data on a number of projects, one of the earliest being to develop a more efficient tidal flow electricity generator, the first working prototype of which is now about to be installed next to our site in the Humber and which will provide us with a totally renewable and reliable source of power.

Again our links with the University have led to a number of collaborative partnerships including work establishing a sustainable sea-cucumber fishery in the Red Sea, a project which quickly became an urgent conservation project once the full extent of the threat to the fishery became clear.



Photo: GUZELIAN

We are also involved in SECORE (SExual CORal Reproduction) a multi-national project which aims to collect and grow on coral species in captivity and to build up a genetic bank as a resource against the ravages of ocean acidification and coral bleaching.

We have assisted on studies on the Great White Sharks of South Africa and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Recently we have been honoured to be a partner with the Equipe Cousteau Foundation and have agreed to commit both funds and personnel to a major