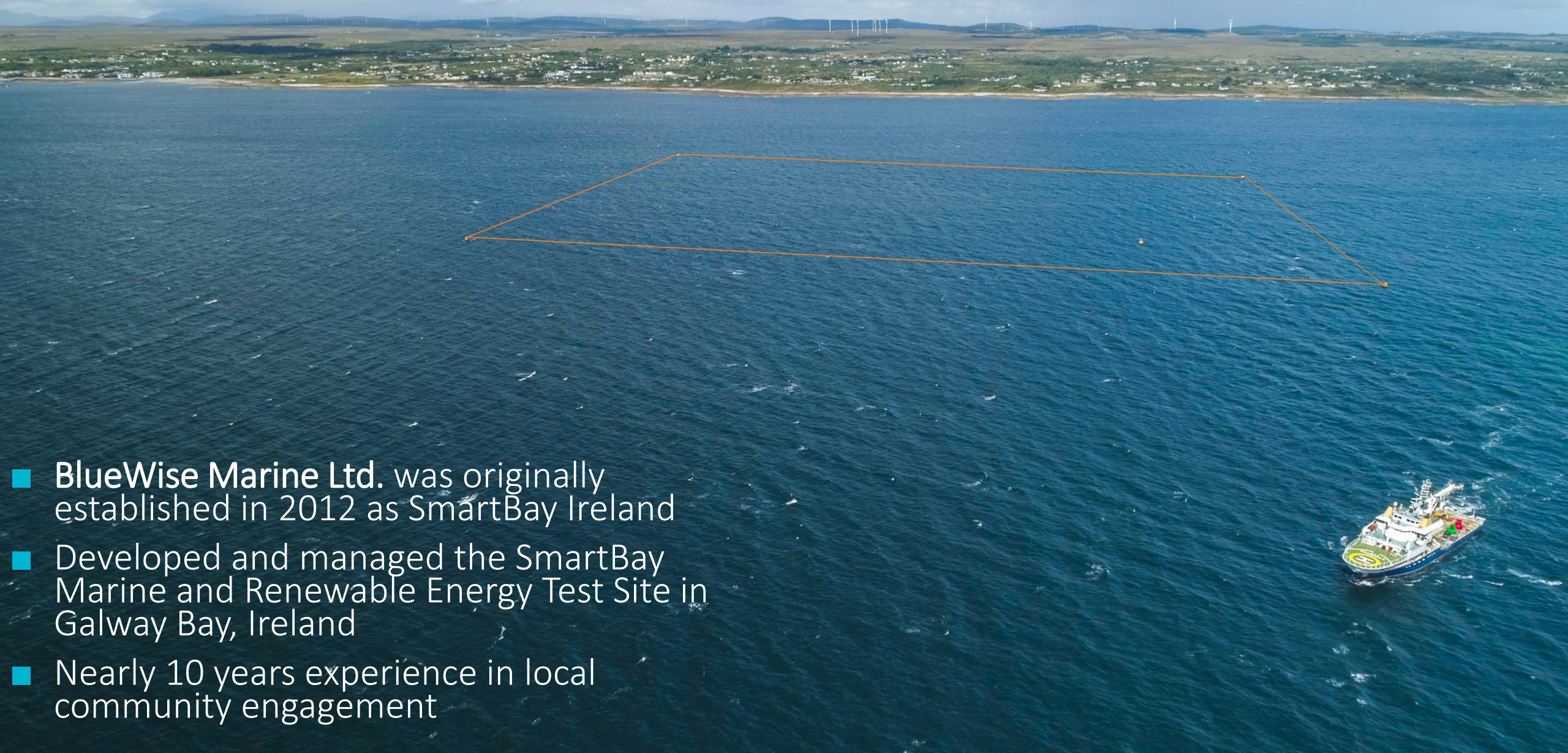# BLUEWISE MARINE

ETIP Ocean Webinar

Community engagement – approaches, benefits, tips and some lessons learned

John Breslin, Managing Director

- **BlueWise Marine Ltd.** was originally established in 2012 as SmartBay Ireland

- Developed and managed the SmartBay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site in Galway Bay, Ireland

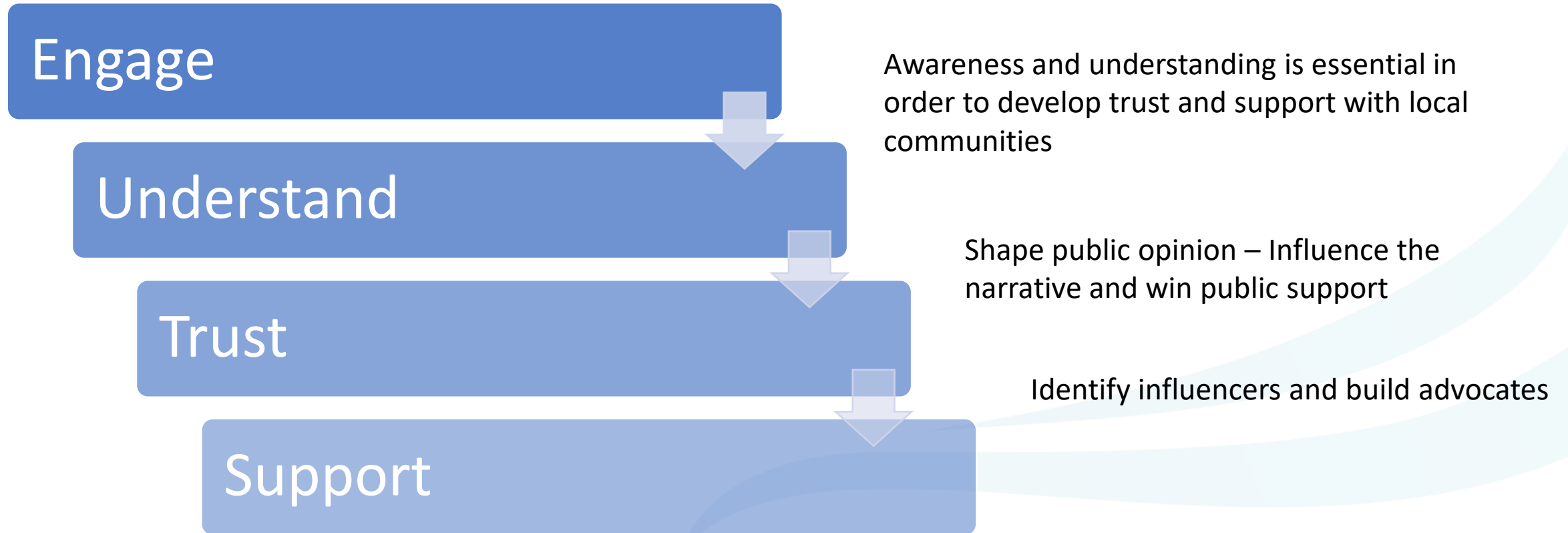- Nearly 10 years experience in local community engagement

SMARTBAY

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Foras na Mara

seai SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

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Why community engagement is important

Removing barriers through engagement

Engage

Awareness and understanding is essential in order to develop trust and support with local communities

Understand

Shape public opinion – Influence the narrative and win public support

Trust

Identify influencers and build advocates

Support

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Our Approach to Community Engagement

Timing – Start engaging as early as possible!

Speak their language – Consider language, is bi-lingual communication needed? Is the communication appropriate for the general public or is it too technical?

Clear, transparent and honest communication – Even when you know it might not be what they want to hear

Targeted communications – Consider your target audience(s) and tap into their needs, wants, fears and/or desires. Reflect an accurate understanding and appreciation of local interests and concerns.

People engage with people – The public want to see an individual speak to them directly and answer questions. You can't rely or hide behind your logo/brand.

Trust – Trust is the number one currency. If you lose the trust of the community, you will need to fight hard to win back their hearts and minds.

Bi-Directional Learning – Engagement is two-way communication. Provide local communities with opportunities to have their say. Harness local knowledge.

Timing

Trust   Transparency

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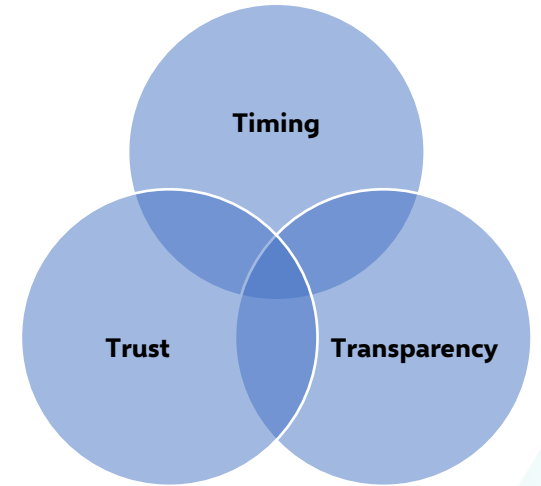
How We Engage

- Presence in the community is key i.e., a dedicated community liaison

- Carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise and develop a stakeholder management plan. Highlight key stakeholders e.g. fishing community

- Prepare a community engagement strategy

- Cover all angles when raising awareness and informing the public i.e., traditional, digital and social media

- Don't forget local media

- Public consultations and 1+1 meetings

- Raise your profile through collaborating with organisations and community groups working in the localities interest

- Visual representation in the community e.g. via sponsorship

- Inspire young people's interest in our marine environment

- Generate good will in the community. This can be done through:
  - Community events
  - Outreach events
  - Educational initiatives e.g. SmartBay Innovation Award Programme/Scholarship
  - School visits
  - Community benefit initiatives

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Lessons Learnt

- Start engaging as early as possible!

- Counteract fake news – It is hugely damaging to allow untruths and misrepresentations to fester, causing confusion and can instil fear among the public. Use FAQ's

- Presence in the community is key. People engage with people, don't rely on your brand.

- Dedicated information point in the community where people can drop by and learn about the project

- Open "drop in" events, focus groups as opposed to town hall meetings

- Don't forget 1+1 meetings, especially with those who are opposed

- Anticipate potential issues or concerns and be prepared and proactive in addressing them

- Letter drops are still important – Use recyclable material

- Generate good will where possible

- Get local politicians on board if possible

- Use local contractors and support the local community
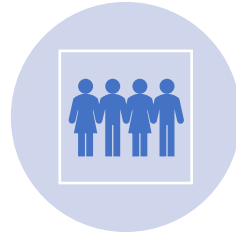
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Community Engagement Tips

Dedicated website - regularly updated information, Use Social Media

Easily accessible contact information for follow up communication

Be present and involved in the community

Virtual tour to aid with building awareness and understanding

Online meetings via– easy access and gives people anonymity if they wish

Community benefit initiatives – focus on educational initiatives if budget is an issue

Educational and outreach initiatives help to develop good will in the community

Engage with people who object 1 + 1. Cups of tea!

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Collaboration

Test Sites and Project Developers (wind, wave, tidal) working together

- Share best practice – what initiatives and approaches work well, mistakes to avoid

- Generate new ideas

- Collaborate on funding

- Support Research

- Stakeholder Management Plans

- Stakeholder Communication Strategies

- Engagement with fishers and their representative organisations

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Our Services

Marine Infrastructure Management

Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) support services

Marketing and Engagement

Funding Proposal Support

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Offshore RE Support Services

We support the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) projects involving offshore wind, wave, tidal, airborne wind and floating solar technologies. Our unique end-to-end range of services include:

- Coordination of resource assessment and environmental monitoring
- Consenting & permitting
- Community & stakeholder management
- Environmental survey – fish, birds and marine mammals
- Vessel selection, inspection and procurement
- Broker for Crew Transfer Vessels
- HSEQ management to ISO Standards
- Marketing and Promotion
- Tender preparation
- Supply chain selection and engagement

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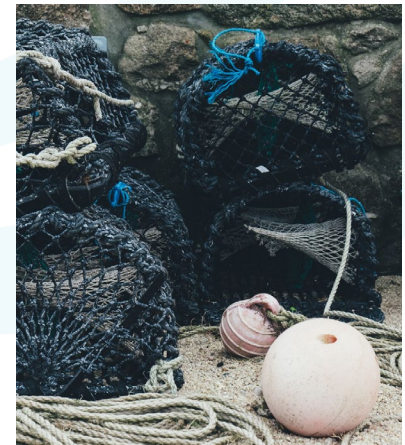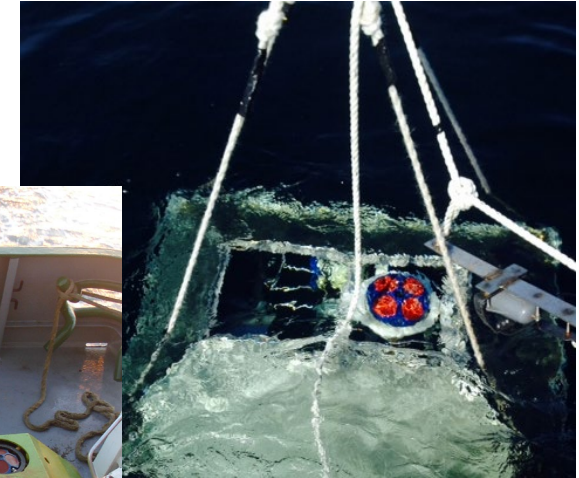
Thank you

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