

IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER

# MARINE TIMES

JULY 2023 - PRICE €3



Margaret Katie south of the Fastnet - Photo courtesy Damien McCallig



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## Wind Farm Developers Accused of Not Giving Information to Fishing Industry

**W**ind farm developers and the Government have been accused of failing to properly engage with the fishing fleet about locating wind farms in rich fishing areas. See pages 3 & 9

## IFA Aquaculture Calls for Support for Next Generation of Producers

**I**FA Aquaculture has called for appropriate funding and resources to be made available by the State to ensure the next generation of aquaculture producers are sufficiently supported. See pages 3 & 10

## Everything Seems to Be Directed to Forcing People Out of Fishing

**P**atrick Murphy, CEO of the Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation says: "I am really coming to this conclusion, from having to deal with recent decisions and implementation of new regulations by the SFPA and the Marine Survey Office. New requirements on Watchkeeping mean that vessels over 15 metres and under 24 will effectively mean that they need two Skippers, because of the way in which the requirements are being put." See page 9

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# the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

## They Also Serve Who Only Stand and Wait

**In the past few weeks there have been a number of really good articles in the Local Press in Donegal based on interviews with local fishing industry spokespeople. The information and sentiments expressed in these articles need to reach the national audience lads because they are absolutely valid.**

It would be a big help if those articles can feature in the National Press.

I wonder if our friends in the Far Right understood the way in which a perfectly good Irish indigenous industry is being damaged, would they make some noise about it?

There is no doubt that the main issues facing the Industry are founded on lack of fishing quota. This is made all the more hateful by the share of fish caught in Irish

Waters by Irish Vessels being paltry when compared to the quantities caught by Non Irish vessels.

**This not rhetoric lads - this is fact.**

Of the fish caught in Irish waters, our fleet catches 15% and the other 85 % is caught by other fleets.

How can this be right.

The Blame Game is in full swing as we blame those fronting negotiations over

the years since we joined the EU and even more so those fronting the Brexit Negotiations which basically hung us out to dry.

Quota negotiations are something over which we have limited power or control as the other member states "Gang up" on us for whatever reason we can do little.

The De Commissioning Scheme was aimed at improving the capacity of those remaining in the industry to be viable because of fewer vessels relying on the Quota.

On paper that makes sense so let's hope the results next year when all of the vessels have been commissioned the results will be positive.

The most recent annual Business of Seafood Report from BIM indicated a decline in the industry which is not good but not a cause for panic.

In a recent paper from Nordea who are huge lenders to the Seafood Industry, they show that overall sales of Seafood were down due to various conditions in the TAC and international markets.

They have observed that they are continuing to lend to the Industry which is a positive thing.

I have always claimed that nobody understands the Fishing Industry better than FISHERMEN - NOBODY !!!!!

There are movements to improve the efficiency of the fleet - in some cases with the support of Grants but to a greater extent by Industry Investment either direct or by Bank Borrowing (when it can be arranged).

I take comfort from the willingness of those who are modifying and improving their vessels and indeed onshore processing facilities to invest.

While we readily recognise the difficulties caused by OUTSIDE FORCES, I wonder if we fully recognise the effects of the Management or Lack of Management of the Industry at local level.

We are dealing with NATURE here lads and restrictions in landing times and dates which really do not take account of the fact that the Mackerel and Herring don't operate Office Hours.

The system is understaffed at Registry and Licensing.

Not maybe at Control level????

We frequently compare the staffing to that in the Health Service but the problems at Licensing and Registration can be cured with very little increase in staff but maybe some reorganization of procedures.

Is there not an element of National Self-Mutilation of a perfectly good industry at play here?

I have always claimed that it is possible to manage a business to death .....

Things are being overmanaged at so many levels in so many areas - not just in fishing lads - and are creating unacceptable levels of delays.

There appears to be no embarrassment expressed any more about delays - ANYWHERE.

I will be 75 next month and I am becoming tired - not of the work which I love - but of the delays in getting even the simplest of tasks done.

John Milton the poet in 1651 in his Poem "On his Blindness" coined the phrase "They also serve who only stand and wait"

I am weary from waiting.

Stay safe lads.



Colourful as always - Greencastle Harbour. Photo courtesy Catherine Turner

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Gillnetter Kalicoba in the Celtic Sea - Photo courtesy Damien McCallig

## IFA Aquaculture Calls for Support for Next Generation of Producers

Marine Times Reporter

**I**FA Aquaculture has called for appropriate funding and resources to be made available by the State to ensure the next generation of aquaculture producers are sufficiently supported.

One such initiative, in relation to training and skills, must be the provision of an incentive for succession/new entrants into the industry, it says. This, it identifies, as the initiation of 'Blue Cert' incentive similar to the 'Green Cert' available in the agriculture sector.

IFA Aquaculture is the representative body for all sectors of the Irish industry, including stakeholders that farm fish, shellfish, seaweeds, around the Irish coastline. Members must have an aquaculture licence.

"There are a lot of progressive moves being made in many areas of the Irish Aquaculture sector opening the way for opportunities for the next generation to step into the industry," it says. "However, to continue making such progress and ensure the next generation of aquaculture producers are sufficiently supported, appropriate funding and resources must be made available to implement objectives and specific

actions outlined in the draft National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030 and the EMFAF Operational Programme."

The IFA has highlighted again the need for "sufficient funding, adequate and appropriate resources to be allocated to facilitate implementation of all recommendations of the Independent Aquaculture Licensing Review," as well as the provision of core work programmes, statutory monitoring programmes and supporting services within the remit of the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and its State Agencies.

"These must be appropriately resourced to support the next generation of aquaculture producers and implement reforms necessary to facilitate them," according to IFA Aquaculture.

• Read more in the monthly column by IFA Aquaculture Executive, Teresa Morrissey, on Page 10

## Wind Farm Developers Accused of Not Giving Information to Fishing Industry

Marine Times Reporter

**W**ind farm developers and the Government have been accused of failing to properly engage with the fishing fleet about locating wind farms in rich fishing areas.

"The richest fishing grounds are often in areas favoured by wind farms and the naïve view of wind farm developers is that fishermen can simply move," according to the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO), which has called for "meaningful and not token co-operation" in the development of offshore wind energy.

"Co-operation is vital to protect food and energy security," according to Aodh O'Donnell, Chief Executive of the IFPO who says in a statement issued that "the fishing and wind energy sectors must work together if Ireland is to protect both our energy and food security."

"The choice of location for most of these projects was driven by considerations revolving around optimal grid connections and project cost. It appears that even basic considerations about traditional fishing activity and sensitive spawning areas have been discounted or largely ignored. The richest fishing grounds are often in areas favoured by wind farms. These sea basins have been fished traditionally for genera-

tions, particularly for Dublin Bay Prawns. This is a significant sustainable wild-caught fishery, which ranks as Ireland's most valuable seafood. The seafood sector is willing to engage and work on a co-existence approach. There is an abundance of sea in the Irish EEZ (European Economic Zone) to locate Wind Turbines and technological developments have enabled new possibilities. Wind farm developers must seriously consider the need to mitigate and minimise impacts on traditional fishing grounds.

"To avoid the worst outcomes, developers and fisher stakeholders alike must adhere to the Communications Standard developed by the Seafood Offshore Energy Working Group convened by the Minister in 2022. Our key concern is that the fishery sector is still not receiving adequate information about turbine details and locations. This is a basic prerequisite for proper engagement and meaningful consultation.

"The fishing industry deserves recognition and respect for our role in Irish society and in peripheral coastal communities."

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An interesting and apt name for an Irish fishing vessel spotted in Cork



## Minister's Stance on EU Mackerel Quotas Welcomed

**The fishing and seafood industry has welcomed the Minister's call to the EU to address the "detrimental impact of Brexit on Irish fishers in particular."**

"In particular, we welcome comments made by Minister Charlie McConalogue on the need to protect the EU's mackerel quota from threats by non-EU countries," said Aodh O'Donnell, chief executive of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO). "What we need now is affirmative action to prevent the collapse of our seafood sector and promote its growth instead."

"Ireland took the hardest hit when EU quotas were transferred to the UK post-Brexit. We agree with the Minister that this new reality has not been addressed by the EU. It must be addressed as a matter of urgency during negotiations for 2024 quotas. We echo the Minister's call for the EU to analyse the impact of quota transfers and to develop a comprehensive strategy for quota deals with non-EU countries."

"Non-EU Coastal States have been abusing the passive position of the EU. For example, Norway's quota to fish blue whiting in the Irish EEZ is over 5 times the size of Ireland's. Irish vessels are tied to the pier whilst our Northern Atlantic neighbours are hard pressed to catch their enormous quotas. This type of quota arrangement is unjust and should never have been agreed."

Brendan Byrne, chief executive of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association (IFPEA) said Europe needs to "realise Ireland is going to take no more of being walked over. We have suffered enough and paid far too high a price for too long."

He said the position adopted by Ireland at this week's Fisheries Council was "an important first step in dealing with the legacy of the Brexit fallout. More importantly it also provides an opportunity to deal with the ongoing arrangements with third (non-EU) countries."

"The IFPO and IFPEA were to the fore in highlighting the gross unfairness of the bilateral arrangement with Norway in terms of access to the Irish EEZ. There is nothing equitable about the massive volume of blue whiting the Norwegian industry is allowed to catch."

Aodh O'Donnell said 2023 will without doubt be the worst year for the Irish fishing industry. "We anticipate a major drop off in the volume of landings and loss of income from both the catching and processing sectors."

Brendan Byrne added that the processing sector is set to record its worst year in history. "I anticipate that turnover in most processing plants will drop in 2023 by 20-25%. This follows an already drastic drop last year, when the volumes of production fell by 12% on average."

"The true impacts of the Brexit Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) have now been realised and the reality is the viability of the entire Irish fishing industry is in jeopardy. Furthermore, we are approaching a point where the lifespan of the current TCA is ending and grave concerns exist as to what is to happen next."

"Ireland has contributed 40% of the overall cost of the TCA, so we have lost 25% of the true value of our quotas/TAC's. At the same time, our fishing grounds are the waters that sustain the entire EU fishing industry either directly or indirectly."

Aodh O'Donnell said the EU can no longer be permitted "to trade access to Irish fishing grounds as a commodity that benefits other EU and non-EU members while not materially benefiting Ireland. The EU needs to realise that the decisions reached at Brexit are destroying the future of the Irish fishing industry. Unless action is taken massive job losses will result in our coastal communities."

"All we request is a level playing field within the Common Fisheries Policy and a fair access to our own fishing grounds. We deserve to be respected as members of the EU, and no third country should get a greater right to our fishing grounds than we ourselves are granted. The time for action is now - time to end inequitable and unsustainable quotas and give Ireland's fishing industry what it needs to grow, not perish."



Chris Forsythe's Boy Bradley heading into Kilkeel - Photo courtesy Leslie Campbell

## Government Islands Policy Gets Differing Reaction

**"Missed opportunity to support island fisheries" says IIMRO**

**"Broadly welcome" according to Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann**

**Report by Tom MacSweeney**

**The Government's 10-year national policy for the off-shore islands - Our Living Islands - has got a mixed reception - broadly welcomed by Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann, the national representative organisation for the offshore islands, but criticised by the Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, IIMRO, as "a missed opportunity to support island fisheries."**

Issuing the policy in June, the Department of Rural and Community Development said: "Our coastal islands and their communities are an integral part of the fabric of rural Ireland. They are also an integral part of the State's heritage and have a special significance in Irish culture."

But, rather surprisingly, it did not say exactly how many islands it was dealing with: "There are **around** 30 islands off the coast of Ireland that are cut off daily by the tide, are not connected to the mainland by a bridge or causeway, have permanent year-round populations and are not in private ownership."

**"Around"?**

Giving a specific number would have been better.

"The aim of this policy is to ensure that sustainable, vibrant communities can continue to live - and thrive - on the offshore islands for many years to come," the Department said. "Good transport services and a developed infrastructure are important prerequisites for maintaining island populations. The Department's aim is to seek to meet these requirements through current and capital investment via the Department itself and through other relevant Departments and organisations. This whole-of-Government policy has been developed following an extensive consultation process with the island communities and other stakeholders."

The Department's Minister Heather Humphreys went to Arranmore Island to launch this first dedicated Government policy for the islands for 27 years. The last was in 1996. During the intervening years the population of the offshore islands has fallen by nearly 13%. Island populations have been campaigning for better recognition and support over those years.

"Comhdháil is very pleased that there will be on-going consultation with island communities through the establishment of an implementation reviewing system, which includes representation from the Minister, Government officials, and island representatives," the islands' representative federation said. "This collaborative approach enables that the voices and perspectives of those directly impacted by the policy are heard and considered."

However, there was a more guarded and critical response from the representative organisation for island communities across the marine sector, IIMRO: "It is IIMRO's assessment that the action plan is a missed opportunity to support island fisheries with

a differentiated approach that recognises their unique circumstances and requirements.

"We will be expressing our disappointment to the Government with a view to improving delivery of the Report's objectives. Our expectation was that "Our Living Islands" would present a blueprint for resilience and sustainability in island fishing communities - a vision which, unfortunately, is yet to be realised."

Minister Humphreys said the policy is underpinned by five high-level strategic objectives, identified by islanders themselves as being of key importance for the sustainable future of their communities: Revitalise population levels on the islands; Diversify island economies; Enhance Health and Wellbeing services; Empower Island Communities; Build smart sustainable futures.

"The policy is accompanied by an Action Plan for the period 2023-2026 that includes 80 time-bound actions which will be implemented by various stakeholders, led by a nominated Government Department or State Agency."

**The Department identified some of the proposed specific actions:**

- Providing island-specific additional grant support under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (Croí Cónaithe) to encourage utilisation of existing properties for the provision of long-term residential accommodation.
- Deliver high-speed broadband to broadband connection points (BCPs), digital hubs and schools on the islands under the National Broadband Plan (NBP), and drive remote working from islands and enable greater access to education and training courses.
- Pilot eHealth Pods on islands and utilise BCPs and remote working hubs to improve access to online health appointments.
- Ensure that island communities' voices are heard through the establishment and support of a forum for ongoing dialogue between the island communities, Local Authorities and relevant stakeholders.

Read more on Page 29 Islands Notebook and Page 13 IIMRO Column

The full policy document can be read on: [www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/a7188-our-living-islands/](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/a7188-our-living-islands/)



## Minister Presses For Protection of EU Mackerel Quotas and Secures Support For Report On Impact of Brexit Quota Transfers

**A**t the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council on Monday 26th June, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D. highlighted the need to protect the EU's Mackerel Quota in the face of external threats from third countries.

Minister McConalogue said: "At Council, Fisheries Ministers held an initial discussion on the preparation for the negotiations on setting quotas for 2024. I set out clearly Ireland's priorities, including the need for action to prevent the unsustainable actions of other Coastal States, outside of the EU, diluting the EU's Mackerel quota share."

Fisheries Ministers also discussed the Conclusions on the European Commission's Fisheries Policy Package, which was published in February. The Minister acknowledged the considerable progress that has been achieved to date through the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy and the key role played by stakeholders in this regard. However, the Minister also highlighted the need to take account of the significant changes over the past number of years especially Brexit.

"The Package did not, in my view, address the real and detrimental impact of Brexit on Irish fishers in particular. Neither did it address the new reality that the majority of EU fishing opportunities are determined by annual negotiations with third parties."

The Minister added: "At my insistence, the Conclusions now include a demand that the Commission fully analyse and report on the impacts of quota transfers, as well as the need to develop a comprehensive strategy for relations with Third Countries. This demand was supported by the majority of Member States."



'Rare Blue Lobster' caught by Ben Hooper (Aine 11) off Galley Head, West Cork, on 16th June 2023

# Killybegs Says ICES Data Is Wrong and Closure Decisions Must Be Changed

Report by Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney

**T**he Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation has challenged the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to examine and withdraw its recommendations on closing areas of EU waters. It says that there are several errors in the data ICES used, which the KFO has identified and which make ICES decisions incorrect.

"We have carried out a major amount of work in looking at the underlying data and we have found several errors in the data used by ICES," KFO Chief Executive, Sean O'Donoghue, told the MARINE TIMES. "The upshot of this is that there are significant errors in such as Area 6 which is off the Donegal coast indicating that there is no scientific basis for their decisions. We have notified ICES, the Commission, the STECF and the Minister.

"There is no way that the existing closures on the ICES advice can be carried forward, because they are not based on a scientific basis."

ICES is an intergovernmental marine science organisation, whose advice and recommendations are sought by the European Commission.

On September 15 last year, the Commission published an Implementing Regulation (2022/1614) which closed 87 areas in EU waters to bottom fishing. The closures were based on the ICES VME Advice issued in January 2021.

"The fishing industry has major concerns about the VME process and advice, regarding a number of key macro-areas," the KFO says. These it has identified as:

- Lack of Transparency and review of the ICES VME Database and assessment.
- Errors in the VME dataset and VME Portal.
- Validity of the assessment approach.
- Lack of support for the current delineation of five out of nine polygons in the study area.
- Inconsistencies between the VME Index layers in the 2021 and 2023 VME advice.
- Inappropriate definition of the depth zones that are the foundation of the assessment.

- Inappropriate delineation of VME Habitats at the c-square resolution level.
- Potential confounding of the VME Confidence Index.
- Questionable exclusion of the VME Confidence Index.
- Biasing of the VME Index due to the exclusion of absence data.

The KFO has requested ICES to "retract its advice and perform a full and transparent review."

"In the interim period the European Commission should suspend the enforcement of the closed areas listed in the September 2022 Implementing Regulation (2022/1614). It is evident that the delineation of a significant proportion of the VME closed areas in ICES Division 6.a are not supported by any scientific evidence.

In a statement the KFO says: "It is important to stress that the KFO recognises the need for conservation and restoration of sensitive marine habitats and ecosystems. This is important not only for addressing the biodiversity crisis but also for supporting sustainable fisheries which are critical for food security. The KFO acknowledge that there is a need for areas to be closed to mobile contact bottom gears but these areas need to first be identified based on robust scientific evidence, which is currently not the case. Where data is lacking then resources should be focussed on collecting real empirical data to fill those gaps.

"There is an increasing focus on putting significant resources into creating increasingly complex models to fill the place of real data. This often leads to vast extrapolation of underlying data, the development of inappropriate and ineffective management measures and the loss of trust and confidence in the scientific advice. This trend must be reversed and more resources focussed on basic data collection and biological research."

- Read more in Sean O'Donoghue's CEOs notes on Page 8



Glenaveena preparing for a days potting out of Howth - Photo courtesy James Grandfield



# MARINE TIMES

**The Strong Voice for Ireland's Fishing,  
Marine and Coastal Communities**

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## Imagine If You Will the Scenario .....

Today, Dáil Éireann will engage in a decisive debate centred around a motion introduced by TDs. If approved, this motion will put an end to the government's alarming plans to cull Irish fishermen and the Irish fishing industry. Not only does this motion strongly oppose the culling but it also serves as a resounding show of support for the nation's fishermen.

A spokesperson for the motion states: "Our motion acknowledges and celebrates Ireland's longstanding heritage of fishing and seafood production, nurtured by generations of dedicated fishing families."

"Additionally, the motion sheds light on the conflicting messages conveyed by successive governments over the past decades, which has seen our industry devastated by so-called voluntary exit schemes over the past decade, tearing apart the fabric of coastal towns and villages.

"We implore every TD to wholeheartedly endorse this motion. It provides a meaningful opportunity for TDs to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the well-being of Irish fishermen and the sustainability of rural communities. TDs cannot merely claim support in their constituencies and then vote or remain silent in Dublin, enabling the government to pursue a fishermen cull agenda. Our motion challenges TDs to make a choice: either support the culling of the Irish fishing industry or firmly stand by the side of fishermen. It is impossible to have it both ways or selectively address this critical issue."

Sadly, the debate in the Dáil on the proposed cull of the Irish fishing industry revealed a shocking display via the absence of any government TDs during this critical discussion and has exposed a profound disregard for coastal communities and the hardworking fishermen who sustain them. Their silence speaks volumes and makes them complicit in the face of such blatant neglect.

... back to reality – all of the above was an imagined scenario whereby we swapped the actual proposed culling of cattle situation to that of Irish fishermen.

The sad truth is a robust and badly needed debate on the reality facing Irish fishermen, their industry and the coastal communities has never really taken place in the Dail over the past number of decades – can anyone truly remember one?

In a real time situation where our fleet has been eviscerated, traditional in-shore fisheries have been eradicated, fishermen are losing their jobs, coastal communities are losing their ancillary industries and employment, foreign fleets are reaping the benefits of our waters, environmentalists are pushing to have what remains out of the sea and Minister 'Windy Miller' Ryan is squeezing what's left of our fishing fleet out to make room for his offshore wind empire ..... isn't it high time a little bit of discussion takes place on the floor of our elected representatives – **ALL of our elected representatives?**



Gene O'Neill from Oldcourt, a lifelong fisherman out of Baltimore pictured on a family holiday in France, where allegedly he refused to leave home without his copy of the latest Marine Times. He read it at least 10 times back and front! Many thanks to his daughter Siobhán for sending us the photo and the story - it's always great to hear of people enjoying the Marine Times Newspaper and all of its contents.

## The Carbon Footprint of Irish Sea Fishing

Report by Benen Dallaghan and Emmett Jackson, BIM

**Findings from the recently published report by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) on the carbon footprint of the Irish seafood sector reveals how greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the Irish fleet are relatively low when compared to other sectors of the economy.**

Food production globally accounts for approximately 30% of all carbon emissions from human activities. However, the Irish fishing fleet generates less than 0.5% of total GHG emissions for Ireland. Two key aspects are responsible, firstly, Irish fishing is much smaller than other sectors and secondly, the emissions per tonne of fish landings are relatively low.

The Irish fleet is diverse with vessels fishing a variety of species, ranging from mackerel to lobster, at various locations, using different techniques. In essence, the fleet is made up of numerous sub-sectors and each of these has a unique GHG emission profile or carbon footprint. In general terms, fish that shoal in high density, such as mackerel and herring, caught by the Irish pelagic vessels, have a very low carbon footprint. On the demersal side of the fleet, the emission profiles for the *Nephrops* and whitefish sectors are comparable to those of chicken when compared on a per kilogram of harvest basis. The recent BIM study has found that most emissions for the Irish fishing sector can be attributed to the burning of diesel at sea. This will be a key area for climate action (decarbonising) in the future.

The fact that Irish wild caught seafood has a low carbon footprint, could potentially be promoted in the marketplace through positive messaging to environmentally con-

scious consumers and by including labelling on seafood products to highlight their low carbon credentials. Studies have shown that products that boast positive environmental attributes can generate a premium for food products in the marketplace.

Research by Bord Bia indicates that consumers are increasingly concerned about carbon emissions and that this influences their food purchasing decisions. These sentiments are also reflected in the purchasing strategies of buyers in large food retail outlets, where there is an increased focus on reducing emissions in supply chains and improving environmental performance overall. Statements such as 'low carbon' are already appearing on product packaging as are carbon footprint estimates, generally expressed in terms of carbon equivalent emissions per kilogram of food (kg CO<sub>2</sub> eq./kg). Carbon dioxide equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub> eq.) consider all greenhouse gases (GHGs) in addition to carbon dioxide and include methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and many more gases that absorb heat in the earth's atmosphere.

The above article draws from the BIM *Seafood carbon footprint report of the Irish seafood sector*, published in February 2023. You can view or download a copy of the report by visiting [bim.ie](http://bim.ie)

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27 November - 01 December 2023

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28 August - 08 September 2023
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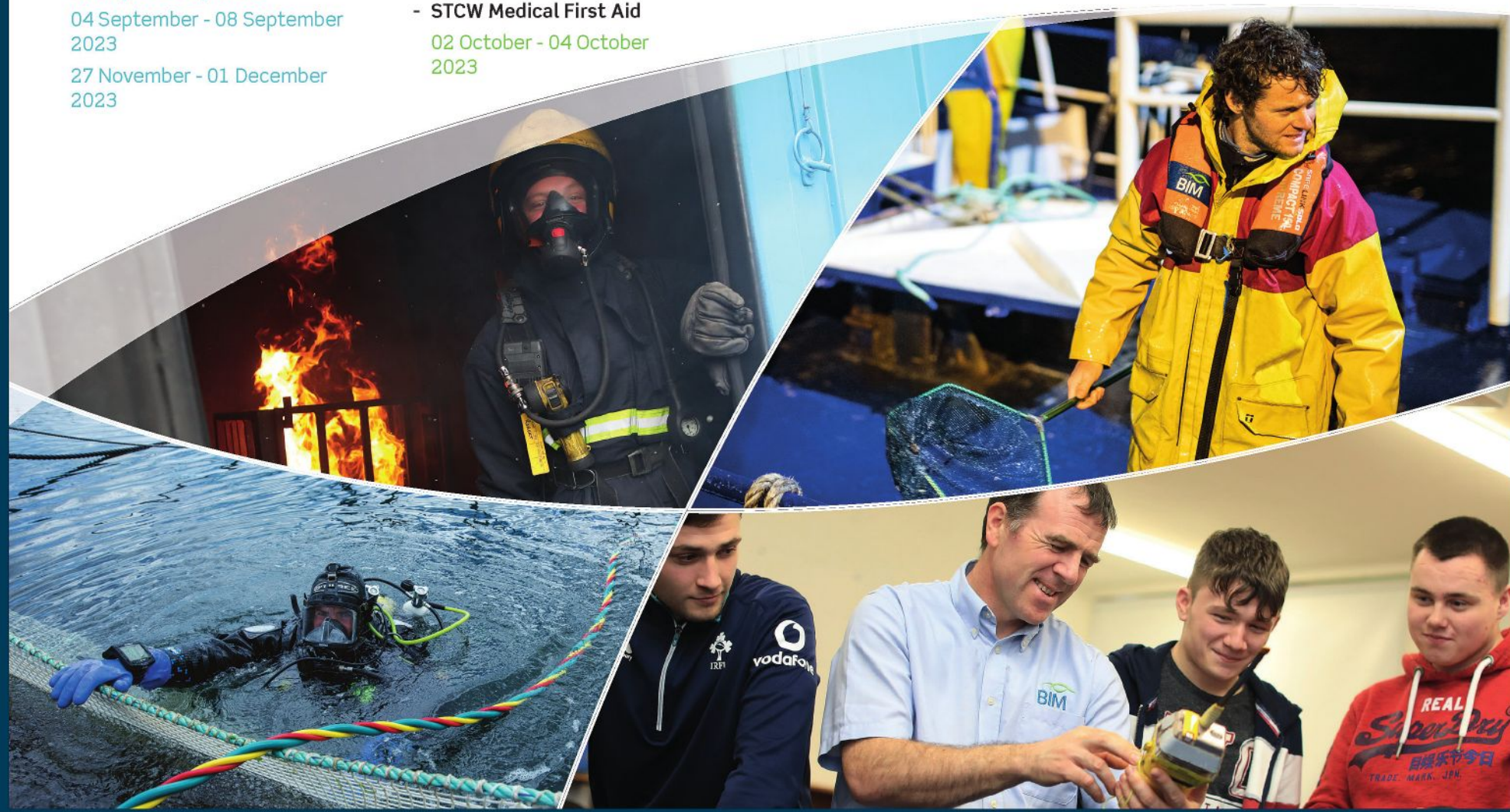
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Riailtas na hÉireann  
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## INDUSTRY OPINION: Chief Executives of the FPO's discuss the latest industry news.



**Killybegs Fishermen's**  
ORGANISATION LTD.

### ICES Must Re-Examine Incorrect Data

**S**ean O'Donoghue, CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation says: "We have asked the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea to examine and withdraw its recommendations on closing areas of EU waters. There are several errors in the data ICES used, which the KFO has identified and which make ICES decisions incorrect."

We have carried out a major amount of work in looking at the underlying data and we have found several errors in the data used by ICES.

The upshot of this is that there are significant errors in such as Area 6 which is off the Donegal coast that there is no scientific basis for their decisions. We have notified ICES, the Commission, the STECF and the Minister.

There is no way that the existing closures on the ICES advice can be carried forward, because they are not based on a scientific basis.

We intend to pursue this very strongly. There is a meeting coming up of the Commission's Scientific Committee, the STECF in July and we hope that they will look at our review which is a thorough analysis carried out by our Scientific and Sustain-

ability Officer. We are making a big issue of this situation.

It has to be sorted out.

The closures that are in place at the moment need to be significantly changed.

ICES needs to go back to the drawing board and take out the data errors which we have systematically identified.

There is another matter which I have been repeatedly identifying which is very important. I mention this every month. It has to be up there on the top of the agenda and this is the Review of the Common Fisheries Policy. I note that the Minister has taken this up recently at the Council and it is calling on the Commission to take notice of the effects of Brexit which have changed fundamentally the stability issue which we have to keep pursuing at all levels.



**IS&EFPO - Working For The Fishermen**

### Marine Protected Areas Cannot Go Forward Without Dealing with Major Issues for Fishing

**J**ohn Lynch, CEO of the Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation says: "The Irish Sea is a very busy place with a lot of marine activity in it. That has to be properly analysed, accepted and applied in the establishing of Marine Protected Areas."

The Ecological Sensitivity Analysis of the Irish Sea report shows that the strongest areas for Marine Protected Areas are also the strong areas for fishing. This will have to be dealt with. What is being protected? That issue will have to be identified and dealt with.

What is being protected and what is it being protected for. Will it affect fishing, is it for species, or a structure that is being protected? These are issues that must be dealt with before things can go forward. Any area could be shown to be one for protection, but what is it being protected for and from? How will it affect fishing? These are questions that must be answered and issues dealt with before we can go forward with marine protected areas.

There must be an examination, a very careful look at wind farms co-located with marine protected areas. That is another issue. How would they coincide, that is another issue?

The sensitivity analysis is good in that it shows how busy a place the Irish Sea is and how much marine activity there is in it, so that establishing marine protected areas must take into account that all those activities that must continue to take place, including in particular fishing for food security.

This is a very important issue for the fishing industry.

Another issue of concern at present is the new requirements in the Safe Manning' document for fishing vessels. The requirements are onerous enough on Skippers and owners in obtaining crew qualifications.

There is a strong request and advice from our organisation that we need for a further derogation for training as there has been not enough time to get crew trained. We don't have a problem with the regulation but we need a further derogation to allow for training. Crew members taking over Watchkeeping will need a Certificate. Each crew member aboard who would take over a watch will have to have a certificate and there is no course in Ireland for fishing boat crew members for that. There is one in the UK. So more time is needed for training.

## Positive Instead of Negative Headlines for Fishing



**T**he 'Fishing Industry Schools Hour' (FISH) is a voluntary initiative to promote the Irish fishing industry to fish eaters.

It was set up to help promote the fishing sector to future fishermen/fisherwomen. We hope it would encourage more fish-eating in households around Ireland, as well as enticing more workers into the industry in the future. There were four primary schools visited by volunteers from the fishing sector

NIFA/NIFO are grateful that Neil Michael (Irish Examiner) asked us to take part in this worthwhile initiative, bringing part of our organisation and members' everyday lives to the attention of the youngest members of Irish society.

For far too long the negative aspects of the Irish fishing industry have made the headlines and it is great to see some positive stories about the inshore fisheries, its people and how it has sustained coastal communities for generations



**NIFA**  
National Inshore  
Fishermen's Association

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## Co-operation Vital to Protect Food and Energy Security

**Adh O'Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation says: "The fishing and wind energy sectors must work together if Ireland is to protect both our energy and food security. Meaningful and not token co-operation is needed.**

Irish fishing communities deliver one of the lowest carbon footprint sources of healthy renewable protein. We deserve recognition and respect for our role in Irish society and in peripheral coastal communities.

But wind farm developers, and for their part, the Irish Government, have failed to properly engage with the fishing fleet about locating wind farms in rich fishing areas. This could have a fundamental impact on how much fish the Irish fleet can catch and ultimately on our food security.

We are particularly concerned about plans to locate large sea-based wind farm projects in the Irish Sea. The choice of location for most of these projects was driven by legacy considerations revolving around optimal grid connections and project cost. It appears that even basic considerations about traditional fishing activity and sensitive spawning areas have been discounted or largely ignored.

The richest fishing grounds are often in areas favoured by wind farms and the naïve view of wind farm developers is that fishermen can simply move," he adds. "But these sea basins have been fished traditionally for generations, particularly for Dublin Bay Prawns. This is a significant sustainable wild caught fishery, which ranks as Ireland's most valuable seafood."

The seafood sector is willing to engage and work on a co-existence approach. There is an abundance of sea in the Irish EEZ (European Economic Zone) to locate Wind Turbines and technological developments have enabled new possibilities. Wind farm developers must seriously consider the need to mitigate and minimise impacts on tradi-

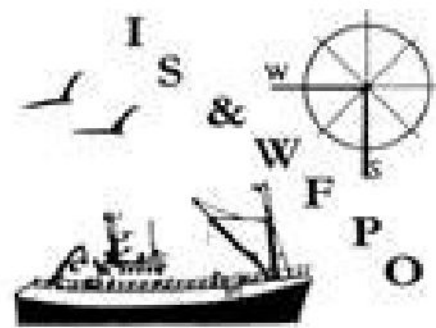
tional fishing grounds.

To avoid the worst outcomes, developers and fisher stakeholders alike must adhere to the Communications Standard developed by the Seafood Offshore Energy Working Group convened by the Minister in 2022. Our key concern is that the fishery sector is still not receiving adequate information about turbine details and locations. This is a basic prerequisite for proper engagement and meaningful consultation.

We appreciate that the external environment is much changed, with an energy crisis driven by the Ukrainian war - and the need for energy security has accelerated the priorities. But there must be a balanced, informed, and coherent process between energy security, environmental impact, food security and fisheries interests.

This is a playground with new players and fishermen are entitled to equal treatment and an equal share of the socio-economic benefits. Our members are familiar with the sea and can engage so that the adverse environmental impacts are minimised. If not managed, then displacement is inevitable and a challenge to resilience and a way of life. If we are to adjust to what is coming, then a fair outcome for fishery stakeholders must be factored into the next phase of planning applications and in the Environmental Impact studies.

This is a fast-forward process requiring a responsible transition and fair treatment for all. The Offshore Renewable Energy sector should engage in a meaningful and transparent way in sharing the space. They must take account of the long-term socio-economic impacts on commercial fishermen and their families.



## Everything Seems to Be Directed to Forcing People Out of Fishing

**Patrick Murphy, CEO of the Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation says: "I am really coming to this conclusion, from having to deal with recent decisions and implementation of new regulations by the SFPA and the Marine Survey Office. New requirements on Watchkeeping mean that vessels over 15 metres and under 24 will effectively mean that they need two Skippers, because of the way in which the requirements are being put.**

We outlined a training scheme on how this could be done efficiently, safely, in the best interests of everyone, but our proposals were not accepted. A situation is being implemented from the first of July which will put extra pressure on fishermen, on Skippers for the operation of their boats. Fishing is not like the commercial marine where the Watchkeeping duties are of a different nature. The Skipper is also a fisherman, doing a fishing job. Watchkeeping is just that, watching the vessel. Now there is a situation being created of an issue of two Skippers. So which will make necessary decisions?

It is not a situation that is the best for the industry or the vessel operations and it is being implemented without consideration of the special aspects of fishing. We want the Minister for Transport, under whose aegis the MSO operates, to meet with us so that we can work out an acceptable way, in everybody's best interests and those of safety, which is what we are all concerned for. But the imposition, what is being done is not helping the industry. It is an incredible departure from what has been the situation until now.

There is a lot of pressure on fishermen. Unlike anyone else Skippers face, after a day of fishing, sitting in front of a computer

to account for the fish caught. Who else is asked to do this for the job they do?

Everything seems to be directed to getting people out of fishing, rather than giving the industry encouragement and yet we hear Ministers talking about skills deficiencies in industries and jobs that could be created and they don't encourage ours, which is vital to coastal communities. Why is this attitude being taken towards fishing? They have lost the plot, we are not being supported as we should be.

You could get very cynical and wonder what is the end aim? Is it to get rid of fishing? The timing of these regulations and restrictions comes after the decommissioning.

Our organisation encourages Skippers training fishermen on board to what they must do, yet a Skipper can't be allowed to train a Watchkeeper for the boat on which that person would be working, which they need to know? We are not against competency, against training courses, but there is a reality in fishing which must be understood and appreciated in regulations and introducing them.

It is time to respect the industry and value what it does for the nation and what it provides as a food source.



Resurrection II off Kinsale. Photo courtesy Carroll O'Donoghue, Kinsale Deep Sea Angling

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## Opportunities in Irish Aquaculture for the Next Generation



*In her monthly column IFA Aquaculture Executive Teresa Morrissey highlights the importance of supporting the next generation to step into the Irish aquaculture industry and tells the story of a seafood visitor centre that was formerly a milking parlour.*

### IFA Aquaculture

**T**here are a lot of progressive moves being made in many areas of the Irish Aquaculture sector, opening the way for opportunities for the next generation to step into the Irish aquaculture industry.

BIM have engaged the next generation of oyster producers in an effort to further development and networking within the group of oyster producers keen to become involved in the sector and aims to help provide a more cohesive oyster industry for the future.

The enthusiasm of the up-and-coming next generation of oyster producers was palpable and visible at the recent BIM/IFA Oyster Workshop in Dungarvan and also the IFA Aquaculture Conference, both held earlier this year. The input and contributions from this cohort formed an important aspect of both events, as well as their ideas on how best they could be supported to take on the role of continuing to develop Irish Aquaculture. Coupled with the growth of the Aquatech sector in Ireland, which is showcased by the BIM/Hatch Aquatech innovation studio for aquaculture businesses, which will take place again this year in Kiltloglin in October, this provides a platform for encouraging new ideas, innovation and thinking among a new generation of Irish aquaculture producers ready to take on the challenge of bringing Irish Aquaculture to the next generation.

However, as ever to continue making such progress and ensure the next generation of aquaculture producers are sufficiently supported into the future, appropriate funding and resources must be made available to implement objectives and specific actions outlined in the draft 'National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture

Development 2030' and the EMFAF Operational Programme.

One such initiative, in relation to training and skills, must be the provision of an incentive for succession/new entrants into the Irish aquaculture industry – the initiation of 'Blue Cert' incentive similar to the 'Green Cert' available in the agriculture sector.

Sufficient funding, adequate and appropriate resources must also be allocated to facilitate implementation of all recommendations of the Independent Aquaculture Licensing Review, as well as the provision of core work programmes, statutory monitoring programmes and supporting services within the remit of DAFM and its State Agencies. These must be appropriately resourced to support the next generation of aquaculture producers and implement the reforms necessary to facilitate them.

Finally, IFA Aquaculture, along with CEO of BIM Caroline Bocquel, members of the board of BIM and the BIM senior leadership team, recently visited a number of aquaculture producers in Clew Bay.

As part of the visit, we attended the opening of Croagh Patrick Seafoods new visitor centre, breathing new life into a building that was formerly home to milking 10 cows a day in times past – a nod to past generations and all the hard work that has kept such communities alive throughout generations and setting the path for the next generation to come.

Irish Aquaculture is well placed to play its part in sustaining coastal communities into the next generation, however, securing the necessary support and resources to sustain the aquaculture sector will be vital. Wishing Pádraig and all the Gannon family every success into the future with this new venture and very successful summer season ahead!



Croagh Patrick Seafoods is near Westport, right on the Wild Atlantic Way and beside the Great Western Greenway. Address: Roslaher, Westport, Co. Mayo, F28 AV96

## Crops From the Sea - Strategy Sets Out Plan to Increase Volume of Farmed Seaweed in Ireland

**S**eaweed farming is in its infancy in Ireland, however, a new strategy, BIM Irish Macro-Algal Cultivation Strategy to 2030, published by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) sets out a roadmap for the development of a sustainable and profitable Irish seaweed aquaculture sector.



Michael O'Neill, CEO Pure Ocean Algae

Seaweed is increasingly being viewed as an important sustainable raw material, containing many active substances for use in different industries including, food production, pharma and agriculture. The commercial cultivation of seaweed has increased significantly in the last two decades. Annual global seaweed output is now in excess of 35 million wet tonnes, 97% of which is cultivated biomass. Most of the farmed seaweed is from Asia (China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea & Philippines).

In referring to the ambitions of the new strategy, Caroline Bocquel, CEO BIM, said: "To ensure a sustainable and economically profitable aquaculture industry in Ireland, the volume of farmed seaweed must increase. This new strategy sets out a roadmap for the seaweed sector to realise its potential. Ireland's long coastline and clean, cold waters present the ideal conditions to cultivate seaweed, and to sustainably develop this crop that is highly resource efficient, requiring minimal resource input."

There are currently 25 licenced seaweed farms in Ireland, located along the North West, West and South West coastline. Farmed seaweeds are grown on ropes and

nets, and are exceptionally fast growing plants.

Michael O'Neill, seaweed farmer, in Allihies, West Cork welcomed the new strategy and spoke of the need to unlock the potential of the seaweed sector in Ireland to meet the growing demand for sustainably produced food.

"The seaweed industry has the highest potential for growth in the Irish aquaculture sector. Ireland has always been a supplier of high-quality seaweeds for various uses,

but there have been limitations, to date, on the scalability of the industry.

"The advances in cultivation technology and processing, leaves Ireland extremely well positioned to

become a major player in the international seaweed industry, with the demand for seaweed biomass and seaweed-based products outstripping supply for the foreseeable future.

"Pure Ocean Algae welcomes the new strategy and looks forward to playing its part in the implementation of the findings of this review."

To read the strategy in full, visit [bim.ie](http://bim.ie)



Red seaweed, Dulce, in the hatchery at Pure Ocean Algae located in rural coastal location of Allihies, West Cork



# BIM Deckhand and Engineering Training Programmes



The BIM Deckhand Foundation Course is a six-week programme providing essential skills to prepare for a career in the fishing industry.

This is followed immediately by the Fishing Vessel Engineer Programme. This 14-week course provides the necessary skills to work towards an Engineer Officer Certificate of Competency.

Whilst the Fishing Vessel Engineer Programme can be completed independently, for new entrants, it is designed to be completed immediately after the Deckhand Foundation Programme.

## Deckhand Foundation Programme

Learn essential skills from experienced trainers including Basic Net Mending, Rope Work, Stability, Chartwork, Care of the Catch, Sustainability, Food Safety and Marine Engine Operations.

An introduction to these skills will allow you to successfully start your career as a deckhand in the fishing industry. A range of sector certificates will also be obtained during the course if successfully completed.

### CERTIFICATES

STCW Certificate in:

- Personal Survival Techniques
- Elementary First Aid
- Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities
- Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting
- Issued with a BIM Safety Card
- GMDSS Short Range Radio Certificate issued by the Department of Transport.

### COURSE DATES

Six-week programme running from Monday 4 September - Friday 13 October 2023.

## Fishing Vessel Engineer Programme

Gain essential skills from experienced instructors in Marine Engineering Processes and Operations, General Engineering, Maths and Control Systems and Health & Safety.

An introduction to these skills will allow you to successfully start your career as a Marine Engineer in the fishing industry. Successful completion of this programme meets the initial training requirements for a Class 3 Certificate of Competency.

### CERTIFICATES

Subject to QQI validation, successful participants will receive a Level 5, 60 Credit Special Purpose Award in Fishing Vessel Engineering Skills.

- The BIM Deckhand Foundation Programme is a prerequisite for new entrants to this programme.
- Experienced crew may enter through alternative route.

### COURSE DATES

14-week programme running from Monday 16 October 2023 - Friday 2 February 2024.



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# The Whitewashing of An Industry



**“With an inshore sector trying to survive on mere scraps, a demersal sector left on its knees and a pelagic sector with massive quota cutbacks (and probably more reductions to come), I hereby challenge Minister McConalogue and the DAFM to publish a report which shows how Ireland has and is utilising the €600 million BAR money it received compared to how other Member States spent their share in genuine compensation to their fishermen” - Cormac Burke, Chairman of the IFSA**



**C**urrently much in the international news is the continuing accusation of ‘image washing’ where certain nations, such as Saudi Arabia, are being accused of investing heavily in high profile sports such as Premiership football and international golf tournaments in a bid to raise their global image whilst at the same time neglecting to deal with serious allegations of human rights’ atrocities in their own countries.

On a somewhat smaller but equally serious scale we see a similar agenda being enacted in the Irish fishing industry and one that is being driven by Ireland’s Coalition Government and semi State bodies where the fishing industry and ‘Seafood sector’ is being portrayed to the public as enjoying a wonderful period and is highly sustainable and profitable when in fact the opposite is the case.

Ask any fisherman, vessel owner or fish processor nationwide and they’ll all give the same well-founded pessimistic opinion that this is an industry on its knees, an industry abandoned by a Government who clearly have an alternative agenda for the marine sector - an agenda consisting of lucrative licences for wind farms, increased focus on tourism, assisting other groups in proposed closing of traditional fishing grounds and, most criminal of all, making no effort to challenge the EU powers in a bid to halt the ever-decreasing share of fish quotas for Irish fishermen.

**What the public are being told:**

One only has to have a quick read of the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM) website to see the high potential they preach of this industry to the general public:

“The seafood industry is based on the utilisation of a high quality, indigenous natural resource, which has excellent potential for added value and makes a significant contribution to the national economy in terms of output, employment and exports.

“Over the next decade, consumption is projected to grow by 42 million tonnes per annum according to the Food and Agricul-

ture Organisation (FAO) as the world population is set to reach eight billion by 2025.

“It is clear that a huge expansion in food production, including seafood, will be required worldwide to meet this need. The value of Irish seafood exports in 2019 was estimated to be in the region of €577 million, maintaining the value of 2018.

“The strategic goal of the department (DAFM) is to deliver a sustainable, growth-driven sector focused on competitiveness and innovation driven by a skilled workforce delivering value added products in line with market demands.”

Meanwhile, in its latest industry report BIM proudly announced that the value of the Irish seafood economy increased to €1.3 billion in GDP terms in 2022, an increase of 4% compared to the previous year and declared that “this was largely driven by an increase in domestic consumption of seafood in Ireland in the food services sector as well higher prices, both domestically and on the main export markets.”

**What the public should be told:**

The fact is that in 2022 the Irish fishing industry in real terms declined by 17 to 19% once you extrapolate the inflationary price rises in fish products and this year will see the largest ever decline in the fishing industry with early indications that our industry could contract by as much as 25%.

In a bid to paper over the cracks, the BIM report also includes aquaculture figures elsewhere in Europe that they are able to lump in with the wild caught fishery figures – a blatant statement that the powers that be in Ireland are too ashamed to show the extent of their failure.

Twenty years of total mismanagement of the industry by an incredibility dysfunctional marine department has destroyed the

Irish fishing industry. One of the greatest natural resources left to fail due to an anti fishing anti marine approach by a few within the Department.

Neither DAFM nor BIM make any reference to the fact that as a result of Ireland’s failure to put up any challenge in the

EXAMPLE OF GIVE AWAY IN IRISH WATERS	
<b>MONK FISH</b> Ireland gets 8% France gets 59%	<b>PLAICE</b> Ireland gets 13% France gets 42% Belgium gets 23%
<b>HADDOCK</b> Ireland gets 22% France gets 67%	<b>RAY</b> Ireland gets 13% France gets 41%
<b>HAKE</b> Ireland gets 6% Spain gets 29% France gets 45%	<b>POLLOCK</b> Ireland gets 8% France gets 71%
<b>SOLE</b> Ireland gets 3% Belgium gets 62%	

BREXIT negotiations the Irish fishing fleet have been left with only approximately 18% of the fish in its own waters, has seen overall quotas in demersal and pelagics slashed by at least 30%, lost access to the once Irish-held lucrative Rockall grounds, and are in the process of decommissioning one third of the white-fish fleet (approximately 57 vessels) due to a lack of quota remaining for the Irish demersal sector.

And the Irish fishing industry have yet to be told why

the Minister took it upon himself to be the ONLY EU Member State fisheries minister to refuse to give Irish fishermen even a small fuel subsidy during the height of the recent crisis.

Also, the infamous (anti) industry monitoring ‘authority’ SFPA continue to increase staff numbers and open new offices nationwide at the same time as the Irish fishing industry has been reduced in size by more than one third.

Meanwhile the “innovation driven by a skilled workforce” that the DAFM statement refers to avoids mentioning that every vessel that is currently being decommissioned represents at least five skilled fishermen now out of work (therefore a ball park figure of 300 fishermen in total) - and that the reduced quotas that Ireland is now trying so survive on also means a forced decrease in the numbers of equally skilled staff employed in seafood processing companies & retailers and, the knock-on effect of reduced numbers working in the ancillary industry service companies such as net making, engineering and electronics.

And, embarrassingly for Ireland, EuroStat figures show that the Irish fish producing and processing sector has tumbled down from a lofty position on the league table to now sit in 10th place (below nations such as Belgium) and are only slightly ahead of Lithuania - - to put this in perspective, Spain leads this table with 24% of the seafood production share and Ireland, an island nation with the richest waters in Europe, on 2% - yes, TWO PERCENT...

**Where’s the compensation?**

While every EU Member State utilised the EU’s Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund (BAR) to its fullest by giving actual financial compensation to those whose suffered as a result of BREXIT, Ireland introduced ‘measures’ which, on the face of it and for the public’s digestion, are dressed up as compensation but not one cent of compensation was ever actually handed over to a fisherman.

1. A ‘tie-up’ scheme was introduced whereby a vessel not going to sea to catch his quota entitlement was given an approximate ‘equal’ amount to remain ashore for a month - - but this is not ‘compensation’ - this was just a replacement for the amount of money that vessel would have earned during that time anyway;

2. A vessel decommissioning scheme that, again, was dressed up to look like somehow the Minister and the DAFM were doing fishermen a big favour in paying them to scrap their vessels in return for an amount of money - - but, as in the tie-up case, this is not compensation - when you hold a gun to a man’s head and say you can stay fishing but there wont be enough quota for you to make a living (because WE bungled the Brexit negotiations) or you can scrap your vessel at a bare minimum payment to ensure that you dont actually make any kind of profit from giving up your venture and your traditional way of life, then surely that’s more like punishment than compensation.

With an inshore sector trying to survive on scraps, a demersal sector left on its knees and a pelagic sector with massive quota cutbacks (and probably more reductions to come), I hereby challenge Minister McConalogue and the DAFM to publish a report which shows how Ireland has and is utilising the €600 million BAR money it received compared to how other Member States spent their share...

... and when they are finished all the little projects around the coast that should be funded by Ireland & EU Structural Funds, what plans do they have when the remaining BAR money ‘use it or lose it’ rule kicks in at the end of this year?

Unless the Government urgently takes an active interest in fishing it is going to fail in plain sight of everyone... and meanwhile every other EU State will thrive on the backs of us and benefit directly from Irish fishing stocks – but, it would appear that is what our marine department have always wanted and we have yet to see a minister even slightly embarrassed that he will be remembered for being at the wheel when a once-thriving industry was brutally murdered.





The importance of fishing, seafood and the marine to the fabric of island communities cannot be overstated says Seamus Bonner, but the national policy for the offshore islands was disappointing for island fisheries.

## Small Offshore Islands Which Are Dependent On Fishing Should, Where Appropriate, Be Especially Recognised and Supported in Order to Enable Them to Survive and Prosper

Report by Seamus Bonner, Secretary IIMRO

The long-awaited national policy for the offshore islands, “Our Living Islands”, was launched on Arranmore Island, Co. Donegal on June 7 by Minister Heather Humphreys. The policy report and associated action plan aims to be a whole-of-Government approach to ensure that “sustainable, vibrant island communities can continue to live - and thrive - on the offshore islands for many years to come.” This coordinated approach to the future of our islands is to be welcomed and many of the proposals to address island issues will have an impact.

The importance of fishing, seafood and the marine to the fabric of island communities cannot be overstated. IIMRO awaited the proposals in these areas from the 2023-

2026 action plan with a mix of hopefulness and apprehension. Regrettably, the initiatives related to fisheries were a let-down, significantly falling short of the support



The launch of the long awaited policy 'Our Living Islands' took place on Arranmore.

necessary to sustain fishing in our offshore communities.

The 2013 EU Common Fisheries Policy regulation clearly recognises the need to support fishery dependent islands:

“Small offshore islands which are dependent on fishing should, where appropriate, be especially recognised and supported in order to enable them to survive and prosper.”

And while the report recognises the importance of fisheries to island communities, it disappointingly fails to deliver on any significant island specific measures which will be needed to sustain fishing communities here.

It is IIMRO’s assessment that the action plan is a missed opportunity to support island fisheries with a differentiated approach that recognises their unique circumstances and requirements.

- Measures such as tailored small scale onshore infrastructure investment for direct sales of seafood and short supply chains. Measures to decrease dependence on fossil fuels through new technology and renewable energy investment.

- Measures to reduce barriers and increase support for new entrants to the fishing community ensuring generational renewal.

- A measure such as a ring-fenced island heading in the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund to ensure that small-scale island projects do not have to compete with projects from the mainland for resources.

- Measures to include island fishers in the co-management of fisheries around our islands. Implementation of recommendations from the 2014 all-party Joint Oireachtas Committee report on sustaining island communities.

The list goes on.

The Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO), a representative organisation for the rights of island fishermen, will be expressing our disappointment to the Government with a view to improving delivery of the Report’s objectives. Our expectation was that “Our Living Islands” would present a blueprint for resilience and sustainability in island fishing communities – a vision which, unfortunately, is yet to be realised.

## €55m Needed for Marine Protected Areas

“Modest cost” according to environmentalists

Marine Times Reporter

The coalition of Irish environmental non-governmental organisations and networks says €55m of Government funding will be needed to implement MPAs in Irish waters,

It has published what it describes as the “first of its kind in Europe” – a finance report of the cost of implementing and managing Marine Protected Areas, (MPA) highlighting the cost to conserve and restore them and what funding would be needed and where it might come from.

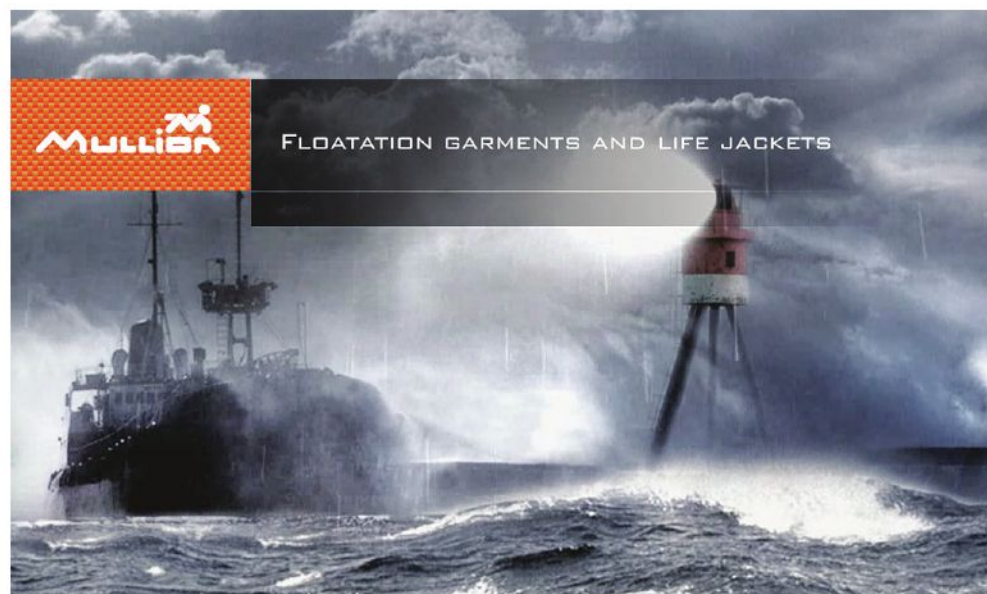
The Report ‘Sustainably Financing Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network’ estimates that of the €55 million needed to adequately fund MPA designation and ongoing management until 2030, approximately €7 million would be required over the next 12 months to reach the target of fully protecting 10% of Ireland’s ocean and seas in that period.

“Full protection of the marine ecosystem would be cheaper, and more effective, than partial protection,” it says, outlining the type of operating expenditure costs to be

incurred - staff salaries, scientific studies, boat fuel and maintenance as well as capital expenditure like boat and car purchases, demarcation buoys, scuba diving equipment and surveillance equipment such as radar and drones.

Funding options range from EU grants and philanthropic donations to “revenue generating mechanisms and potential reallocations of funding” by government.

“The key purpose of this report is to identify potential mechanisms which the Government could use to finance its goal of creating an effective network of MPAs by the end of this decade,” according to Aoife O’Mahony, Fair Seas Campaign Manager. She describes the €55m needed as “a modest cost” which would reap considerable benefit for communities, the economy and nature.



# Designed for and by fishermen

For further info contact Adrian Towey

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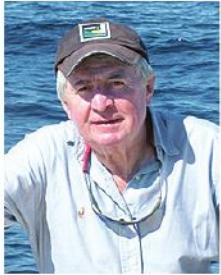
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# Tom MacSweeney's Maritime Diary

## Sea Horses – Near Mythical in Irish Waters

**Three years ago there were reports of seahorses being seen at Youghal Beach and Lough Hyne in County Cork, but it has not proved possible to find anyone who can actually prove that they saw them.**



The Atlas of 'Mammals in Ireland,' which lists a vast number of species, does not have a record of seahorses, a strange, small, often described as "mythical" species, with the head of a horse, a tail and males that have a pouch which is said to carry eggs of the female partner until birth. Between 40 and 60 species of seahorse are reported around the world, but little is known about wild seahorses in Irish waters. Two species - the Short-snouted Seahorse and the Spiny Seahorse - were listed as 'data deficient' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List survey in 2017.

Dave Wall is Citizen Science Officer for the National Biodiversity Data Centre. He would be very interested to hear from anyone who can provide actual evidence of a seahorse in Irish waters.

"I am regularly asked about seahorses," he told me. "I've never actually seen a live one, nor has evidence of one been produced to me. I would be pleased to see actual evidence of this creature in Irish waters."



Dave is Citizen Science Officer for the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Its head-

quarters are on the South East Technological University Campus at Carriganore in County Waterford. He is also Conservation Officer with the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group.

I discussed seahorses with him at a meeting of the Irish Ocean Literacy Network in Cork. This group brings together institutes, agencies, researchers, small and medium-sized enterprises, non-governmental organisations, educators and the public, with the aim of creating "an ocean literate society across the island of Ireland which understands the ocean's influence on humankind."

It is a laudable purpose, but challenging to achieve in this island nation.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre purpose is to make biodiversity data and information freely available, to encourage better understanding and protection of Ireland's biodiversity. Its website of marine species lists 3,000 types of crustaceans recorded in Ireland, 26 cetacean species, six types of seal, nearly 600 of 'fishes' and much more about the maritime sphere.

Dave is responsible for the Centre's 'Explore Your Shore' project, leads its citizen science programme and is in charge of marine biodiversity activities. Project partners and citizen scientists provide surveys and reports, "all of which help us better understand where and when marine species occur around our coast and how they are being affected by climate change, water quality and other human impacts."

'Adopt a Rockpool'; 'The Great Rocky Shore Bioblitz'; 'Seashore Spotter'; 'Seasearch Ireland'; 'The Big Jellyfish Hunt'; the 'Marine Recreational Angling Survey'; 'KingSearch - a survey for King Ragworm' and the 'Round Ireland Coastal Bioblitz' are amongst research projects.

The Heritage Council established the Biodiversity Data Centre in 2007. It is funded by the Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It provides an opportunity for everyone interested in the maritime sphere to take active participation by getting involved in a recording scheme or survey to help monitor Ireland's marine biodiversity.

## Rosslare Gets €2.5m For Offshore Port

Rosslare Europort has been awarded €2.5 million funding from the EU Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding towards the development of its Offshore Renewable Energy project, which will be used to finance the full design and planning application processes.

The ORE facility will be the first of its kind in the State, including the construction of two additional berths of between 240 metres and 330 metres in length, 20+ hectares of ORE quay side space and a dredging programme to create a nine metre access channel with berth pocket depths of up to twelve metres.

## Four Pots Restored

The iconic Four Pots structure alongside the Grand Canal towpath between the Leinster Aqueduct and Digby Bridge in Co. Kildare has been restored in an initiative involving Waterways Ireland and the Historic Structures Fund administered by Dept Housing/Local Government/Heritage.



Built originally as an overflow, the Four Pots is the only remaining structure of its kind on the Island of Ireland and was constructed to facilitate the building of the Leinster Aqueduct, which was completed in 1783. Its purpose was to maintain canal water levels to facilitate the movement of vessels and discharge surplus water to a stream beyond the canal bank. No records regarding the design, construction, or operation of the Four Pots remain, but research undertaken on related features and analysis of the site itself has allowed the system to be better understood.

## Ship's Bell Returned To Dundalk

The bell from the torpedoed SS Dundalk has been presented to Louth County Museum.



Divers who found the bell off the Isle of Man will bring it to the town. It is 105 years since the ship was sunk by a German U-boat on a voyage from Liverpool. Twenty one people died.



Dublin Port Company (DPC) and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Ireland recently welcomed the arrival of the German Navy's Tall Ship "Gorch Fock", carrying a crew of 182, most of them young naval cadets. Pictured above with its tall masts mixing with the iconic Poolbeg towers in Ringsend in the background, the vessel is used as a sail training vessel for the German Navy, Gorch Fock is visiting Dublin for the sixth time, the first since 2015. She is named after the German writer Johann Kinau who wrote under the pseudonym 'Gorch Fock' and was killed in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Photo: Conor Healy / Picture it



## Endorse your Certificate of Competency with BIM

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency, is urging all skippers of vessels of 15 metres in length and above that hold a Second Hand Limited (SHL) certificate to ensure their Certificate of Competency is endorsed for service as Second Hand Special.

BIM is an approved provider of maritime training on behalf of the Marine Survey Office.

**To apply to endorse your certificate of competency please contact BIM to discuss and book any training you need. Contact details for BIM's two colleges are detailed below:**

### Castletownbere College

National Fisheries College of Ireland,  
Castletownbere, Co. Cork

Della O'Sullivan, College Administrator

**T:** + 353 27 7 1220

**E:** [della.osullivan@bim.ie](mailto:della.osullivan@bim.ie)

### Greencastle College

National Fisheries College of Ireland,  
Greencastle, Co. Donegal

Maria McCarron, College Administrator

**T:** + 353 74 938 1068

**E:** [maria.mccarron@bim.ie](mailto:maria.mccarron@bim.ie)



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# Seeing the Light On A Simple Improvement in Catch and Energy Efficiency

## Latest BIM gear trial on improving energy efficiency demonstrates a 51% increase in catches of haddock by using green LED lights on the headline at nighttime

Report by Dr Ronán Cosgrove, Fisheries Conservation Manager, BIM

**The drive towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is encouraging development and transition to use more sustainable fuels and more energy efficient fishing methods. BIM and Irish fishing Industry gear-based research on improving energy efficiency has focused on Nephrops and whitefish trawl fisheries which generally use more fuel than other fisheries.**



Virtuous at the pier

This work includes development of more hydrodynamic trawls, reduced drag otter doors, and enhanced catch detection using acoustic sensor technology in the Nephrops fishery. In the whitefish fishery, efforts have focused on pairing up on trawl operations to reduce energy use and boost profitability with further pair trials in the commercially important demersal seine-net fishery due to occur shortly.

Artificial lights are another potential method for improving catch and energy efficiency in terms of kg of produce per litre of fuel. Depending on the species and type of light used fish can display negative or positive phototaxis i.e., they move toward or away from the light. Studies have shown

attraction of species like snow crab and mantis shrimp, and negative responses from turtles and fish such as smelt and yellow tail, and a bit closer to home, Celtic Sea cod.

BIM previously assessed lights on raised-fishing line trawl gear, a BIM/Irish Industry developed gear measure which successfully mitigates catches of low-quota cod in the Celtic Sea. Results showed a significant 62% reduction in cod but also some reductions in haddock, hake and whiting with fish likely moving away from the light and dipping under the fishing line to escape. Potential negative effects on commercial viability made it difficult to recommend use of lights on the raised fishing line but the

study did raise some interesting questions around potential energy efficiency applications.

Led by Martin Oliver with assistance from Matthew McHugh and working in close collaboration with Kevin Granville and crew on board the MFV Virtuous, our latest trial aimed to take advantage of this negative phototaxis to try and improve catch rates of target species and operational efficiency. 14 green Lindgren-Pitman® light emitting diode (LED) lights were attached at around 150 cm spacing on the headline of a standard trawl targeting fish species off the southwest coast. Catches were compared with a standard trawl with no lights. Haddock was the dominant species corresponding to 90% by weight of all commercial species landed with 60% of haddock catches occurring at nighttime.

Results showed a significant 51% increase in haddock catch weight with lights on the headline during night with no significant effect during daytime. These differences could be caused by the absence of day light penetration potentially linked with differences in haddock depth preferences during nighttime. Greater quantities of

larger haddock were retained corresponding to a 64% increase in the value of haddock caught with lights during nighttime.



Lindgren-Pitman® Green LED and on the trawl



Whatever the reasons behind these differences, adding green lights to the trawl fishing line is a simple inexpensive option to improve efficiency in this fishery with the lights effectively paying for themselves in around one night-time haul.

Observed hake catches were 28% greater with lights on the headline at nighttime but catches were too low to tell if this is likely to be a consistent result. Further testing by whitefish vessels could help understand the effects of lights on species like haddock, hake and cod in standard and raised-fishing line trawls, and also potentially seine-net or gillnet fisheries.

BIM would like to thank David, Kevin and Jamie Granville and crew of the MFV Virtuous for a successful collaboration. This work was funded by the Irish Government and part-financed by the European Union through the EMFAF Operational Programme 2021 – 2027. Full reports on the lights and all BIM work on improving energy efficiency are available at [www.bim.ie/publications/fisheries](http://www.bim.ie/publications/fisheries)

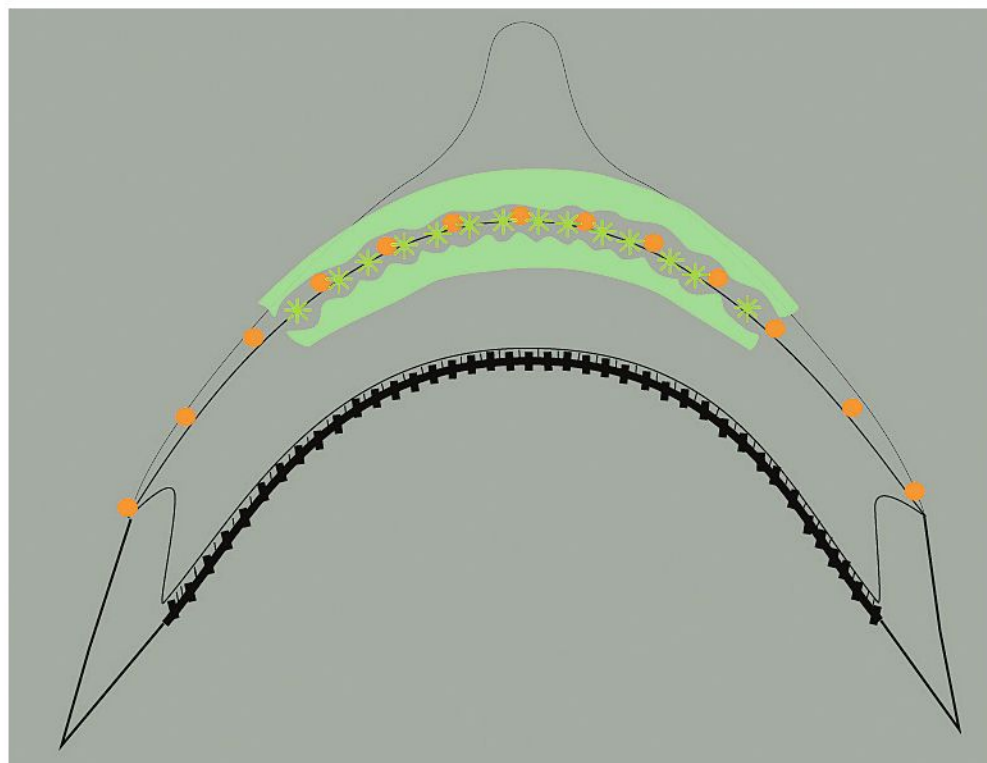


Illustration of lights on headline

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# THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

## Living In a Piece of Paradise on Inishofin Island

Marie Coyne is a native of Inishbofin off the coast of Cleggan in Connemara, an author, photographer, poet, genealogist and, particularly important to her, custodian of island heritage. She led the campaign for the return of the Inishbofin skulls to the island, from where they had been taken in 1890 and held since in Trinity College, Dublin. They will be returned by the College to the island this month – 133 years after they were taken. Tom MacSweeney meets her for this month's **MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW**

**“Inishbofin is a piece of paradise. We are honoured and lucky enough to be born to this and we should look after it,” Marie Coyne tells me as we sit outside her home in the sunshine, overlooking the island’s harbour. “Any part that needs it, you take care of it, think of an island that is physically alive and needs to be minded and you do that.”**

We are talking the morning after a meeting of islanders has taken place in the community centre the previous evening about a project to which she is deeply committed— creating an island museum. She had a small one, down near the harbour she tells me, but what she plans now is a bigger project, located in a field she owns near her bungalow home which she will provide. She tells me she has already spent €20,000 of her own money on the plans.

The meeting was in support of the project and there was good support, with a decision to seek public funding from appropriate State and local authority programme schemes.

As part of her interest in local history, she set up the Inishbofin Heritage Museum in 1998, containing everyday items from island life and an impressive collection of photographs, some of which she shows me. They represent many aspects of island life. Documenting history and memories of island life, she also set up the Inishbofin Genealogical Project, researching the families of Inishbofin and the surrounding islands. She has published impressive books chronicling their lives and work. It is a great resource record of island communities.

At 53 years of age she recalls the changes she has seen of life on the island, talks about how the map of America



Marie is a charming, interesting, knowledgeable woman who is fascinating to talk with and listen to her commitment to island life, which became widely, publicly known nationally when she demanded the return of the Inishbofin skulls from Trinity College, Dublin.

Alfred Cort Haddon, a British anthropologist and ethnologist, removed skulls from the ruins of St Colman’s Monastery on Inishbofin in 1890. Andrew Dixon, a young Irish medical student, took a photograph at the site as evidence of the skulls’ provenance. Haddon told the Royal Irish Academy that the Inishbofin remains were part of “a collection of Irish crania” which he gave to the Anthropological Museum of Trinity College Dublin in 1890.

Campaigning to get them back after she discovered what had happened during research work she told me that she asked a simple question.”

“You should never be afraid to ask a question. What I asked was – How are we going to go about getting them back?”

She pursued the issue with Trinity and was helped by Dr Ciarán Walsh of the Department of Anthropology at Maynooth University.

It was “quite a battle” with Trinity, she tells me, outlining the frustration she often felt during the campaign, trying to get the College to understand that the skulls of people had been taken without permission of anyone, “the skulls of children, women, men.”

Under the pressure Marie exerted and the public support she got, Trinity College decided to return the 13 skulls it had held.

Provost Linda Doyle issued a formal apology: “I am sorry for the upset that was caused by our retaining of these remains, and I thank the Inishbofin community for their advocacy and engagement with us on this issue.”

The skulls are due to be taken back to the Inishbofin on Saturday, July 15th “and they will be buried on the 16th, which is a hundred and thirty-three years to the day when they were taken. That’s amazing,” Marie said.

It is - and so is the lady who campaigned to get them back and who is a powerful, strong advocate for her home place – Inishbofin Island.

is “lit up” by emigrants from the island who left and how hard and tough life used to be, but how proud islanders are of their heritage, which she values enormously.

“It is such a beautiful island,” she says and points towards a tower outside her home, which is glistening white in the sunshine. It wasn’t until she took action! She had been trying to get it painted by the County Council or by Irish Lights, but those authorities “played tennis between themselves as to who owned it,” Marie says. So, gathering together paint, brushes and ladders, she painted it herself. “I got three ladders, climbed up and painted it.” Those who had ignored her didn’t particularly like what she had done. That didn’t bother her. She points to another tower at the harbour entrance, which hasn’t been painted for some years and says that is a mark for boats coming into the harbour, which should be painted.

“Whoever is responsible for it should pull up their boots and go and do what is needed. It is important for boats entering the harbour. It has a light, but in difficult conditions it is also a mark and should be painted to make it easy to see. I get into trouble for pointing out these things, I believe in the importance of the island.. Our island is our heritage, our ancestors left it to us and we should look after it.”

There are times when other islanders have disagreed with her views, she says, but is confident in her belief about the importance of preserving its heritage.

“Be proud, look after the island, take care of the island, that’s what I say. If you can do something to enhance the place, do it, for the generations, for the young people, for all the age groups. That’s what I believe and that’s what I would like to see. We can disagree, everyone can have their own views, but work and live together and look after the island.”



The tower on Inishbofin that Marie painted.





# Inaugural World Ocean Conference

## Environmental organisations call for protection of marine species to be Government policy

Analysis by Deputy Editor Tom MacSweeney

**The inaugural World Ocean Conference was held on World Oceans Day 2023 – June 8 – at Cork City Hall. There were international speakers, as well as domestic speakers. The purpose was to highlight protection of the oceans.**



It was organised by Fair Seas, a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and environmental networks. It was impressively organised. The attendance was dominated by environmental groups.

Fair Seas describes its aim as "to see Ireland, with a renewed appreciation of the ocean, become a world leader in marine protection, giving our species, habitats and coastal communities the opportunity to thrive."

It wants 30% of Ireland's ocean territory to be fully protected by 2030.

"This is our greatest chance at restoring ocean health and we must act now," says its slogan.

It is funded by:

- Oceans 5 (Tallahassee, Florida, USA) - an international funders' collaborative sharing "a desire to secure tangible improvements in global ocean health, while also strengthening ocean conservation philanthropy."

- The Blue Nature Alliance, (Arlington, Virginia, USA) - a global partnership that "collaborates with governments, NGOs, Indigenous peoples and scientists to advance effective large-scale ocean conservation."

- The Becht Foundation (London) - which seeks to protect and restore "our planet's biodiversity through marine conservation and climate communications."

- The WYSS Campaign for Nature (Washington D.C.) - which wants "to confront the global conservation crisis with a \$1.5 billion campaign."

Partner members of Fair Seas are; Irish Wildlife Trust, Birdwatch Ireland, Swan Sustainable Water Network, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Coomhola Salmon

Trust, Irish Environmental Network, Coastwatch.

### Survey of Public Attitude

At the outset of the conference Fair Seas presented the result of a survey which had been carried out for it by the Red C polling company. This, it summarised, "showed that three-quarters of the Irish public believe that marine ecosystems and the protection and restoration of marine species should be Government policy."

The survey was carried out online of "over 1,000 adults surveyed between May 19 and 24. Data was weighted across gender, age, region and social class to ensure a nationally representative sample," the pollsters said.

It is not a huge sample and not face-to-face, but did reflect much the same public attitudinal response as an earlier Fair Seas survey done in October of last year that found "two-thirds of people believe Irish seas are unhealthy and four-out-of-five wanted additional protection for coastal waters and oceans."

The new survey, done this May, has these findings:

- Just over a third (39%) of people surveyed believe Irish seas are healthy.
- Almost two-thirds (62%) believe Irish seas have worsened in the past decade.
- A majority (77%) agree that restoring the seas and ocean will protect marine biodiversity and help to tackle climate change.
- Three-quarters (74%) agreed that protection and restoration of marine wildlife populations and their habitats must be a priority for the government.
- Three-quarters (74%) believed that up to 10% of Ireland's Marine Protected Areas

should be fully protected where no damaging activities occur.

- 72% said all fishing activities in Ireland should be low impact and within scientific advice limits.

- More than half (56%) would be more likely to vote for a party or candidate that takes an interest in the health of our seas and ocean.

Campaign Manager of Fair Seas, Aoife O'Mahony said: "It's amazing that most people care for, value and respect our seas."

### "Don't Fish Orphans of the Ocean"

The conference was told by keynote speaker Professor Rashid Sumaila from the University of British Columbia, Canada, a well-known and respected ocean economist, that loss of biodiversity in the oceans would have human consequences. On the 'economics of future of fishing' he said: "We should abandon the notion that we have to take everything all at once. Don't fish orphans of the ocean." He also said that deep sea mining should be avoided.

"Now is the time for action. Our fisheries are vanishing, and the ocean is in trouble for all sorts of reasons." He suggested a "coming together" of environmental NGOs, civil society, scientists and businesses "to make sure we implement agreements that have been reached. We have the capacity; we have the brains, the resources and empathy to turn things around and make the ocean sustainable."

Karen Ciesielski, CEO of Irish Environment Network, said: "Ireland has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get this right and show leadership by adopting legislation that will protect marine habitats and species for generations to come."

### The Next Steps

The conference was attended by delegates mainly from Ireland, with overseas representatives also present. It discussed the next steps in developing Marine Protected Areas, on which Government legislation is expected.

There was a lot of focus on fishing and controlling it, with strong criticism of over-fishing. The same level of concern was not focused on other maritime issues, such as the marine spatial squeeze where offshore wind energy development is being accused of pressurising traditional coastal and fishing communities. Nor was there examination of the impact of proposed Marine Protected Areas on coastal communities or how wind power turbines could, or would, affect marine species through undersea noise, new seabed obstructions and the impact of visual pollution on marine tourism. No one could indicate clearly how many turbines might be placed around Irish waters. Figures up to "hundreds" were suggested.

The organisers were forthright about their declared purpose of fully protecting 30% of Ireland's ocean territory by 2030. Outside the formal sessions, informal chats with various delegates over tea/coffee, reflected more of environmental attitudes. It was a mixed response to the impact on other traditional users. The priority was to establish MPAs, their effects were of lesser immediate concern. Stopping overfishing, establishing marine protected areas and constraining offshore oil production were general topics upon which various attendees I talked to coalesced in agreement. Some environmental organisations indicated more concern for the impact of marine regulations on coastal communities and fishing than others whose motivation appeared to be an - "it must be done, despite opposition" - attitude.

The organisers, Fair Seas, told me that they had invited fishing industry organisations to attend, but had not received positive response. NIFA (National Inshore Fishermen's Association) was listed on one panel discussion group.

### Conclusion

It was a well-attended conference where a lot could be learned and which confirmed my opinion that it is essential for all sides to respect each other's needs, for coastal communities to be particularly involved, their future given major consideration and the fishing industry to have a strong voice. Drawing attention, in the course of conversation with NGO attendees, to whether they accepted that fishermen were concerned for the protection of fish stocks (i.e., no fish, no fishing, no jobs, no industry, no seafood) because their livelihoods depended upon them, did indicate to me that a minority, had concern for coastal communities. However, the main attitude seemed to be for more rigorous restrictive regulations.

NGOs are "non-governmental organisations," but it appears that some organisations believe they have the power to influence Government marine policy.

According to the Red C May poll, more than half of people surveyed said they would be more likely to vote for a political party or candidate that "takes an interest in the health of our seas and ocean." Doubtless, politicians will take note of this finding at election time.

**From the composition of the attendance, the content of some presentations and comment, lack of involvement from fishing industry representative organisations may be understandable, perhaps seeing it as anti-fishing. It was dominated by environmentalists and NGOs, though there were also commercial, State, leisure and tourism interests present.**



# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Version of the 'Message In A Bottle'

Tom MacSweeney reports on a project which builds five-foot long miniboats to cross the Atlantic unmanned, linking coastal communities.

**E**ncouraging the younger generation into an understanding of the sea, of the oceans, in the widest sense will contribute hugely to appreciation of the importance of the marine sphere in the life of the nation.

In other words, getting children involved is an investment in the future and the interest of youth can filter upwards to the older generation.

Watching Capt. Jacek Bebenek of the container ship, *Independent Horizon*, on its regular monthly call to the Port of Cork's Deepwater Berth at Ringaskiddy, explain to the pupils of Barryroe National School from the West Cork coastal area where he would launch their mini-boat into the Atlantic Ocean, underlined this. They have named the boat 'Realt na Mara' reflecting the name of their school, Star of the Sea. It had arrived in Ireland from pupils of a school in New Jersey USA, under the name 'Crimson Current'. It was the 10th miniboat launched by the Morristown Beard School in the USA and it had been launched for them in mid-Atlantic by the *M/V Independent Horizon* that was taking it aboard to re-launch, all part of a fascinating project to link communities across the Atlantic Ocean.

That a man in command of such a large ship would spend so much time with the pupils indicated his interest in conveying understanding of the oceans to young people.

"It is useful for the school to learn more about the sea. You are Irish, living close to the sea, you should celebrate that you are living in such a place," he told them. "We will launch your boat as we get close to the coast of America on our voyage. This is a good project for young people to learn about the tides, the currents, about the sea."

He explained the Latitude and Longitude on a chart and showed them where he would intend to launch their five-foot long plastic boat and how currents and wave heights there could affect its drift.

Accompanied by his Chief Officer, Naumowicz Jaroslaw, he discussed with the boys and girls from Barryroe how winds and tides would carry their boat, back towards the American coastline where it had been made by the sixth grade students of Morristown Beard School in New Jersey.

It was a Saturday afternoon in June at Ringaskiddy where *Independent Horizon* was loading containers. She calls every four weeks on a run that connects Cork and the South of Ireland with Wilmington on the Delaware River and Chester City in

Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

She is a supporter of Educational Passages, a non-profit organisation based in Maine, USA, which connects schools around the world to the oceans and each other. Its approach is a "21st Century version" of the old-style 'Message in a Bottle' across the oceans, using modern technology. The miniboats are five-foot long, under two metres, uncrewed, GPS-tracked, student-built little vessels. They have a satellite transmitter, solar-powered, enabling the boats to be tracked as they sail the oceans.

"Our Miniboat Programme empowers students to become citizen scientists and global ocean stewards," Cassie Stymiest, Executive Director of the Educational Passages project says. "They enable connection with the local school and community where a boat lands and advance learning about cultures around the world, tracking their miniboats while learning about ocean currents, weather, technology and much more about the oceans."

They are open to hearing from interested communities and schools – adults are also welcome to take part as well as the young pupils.

The 'Crimson Current' was the name of the miniboat from Morristown Beard School launched by ship in the North Atlantic in April of last year. As it approached the Irish coast tracking showed its whereabouts, but where it came ashore was unclear and it had not been spotted. Rory Jackson from Tragumna, who runs West Cork Ocean Tours and the Oceans Plastics Project for schools, was contacted. Helped by local fisherman Billy McCarthy, gauging currents and tides, they figured Barry's Cove on the Seven Heads Peninsula, south east of Clonakilty would be a likely arrival point.

On July 5 last year, they were proved correct. Using a kayak to enter a cave, Billy McCarthy found the boat. "It was at the back of the cave, small, not that easy to see, but it was still afloat and I recovered it."

He gave it to Rory Jackson who took it to Barryroe National School. When opened 'Crimson Current' contained various items including a baseball, an Abraham Lincoln coffee mug, a Morristown Beard baseball cap and a USA jersey. Contact was made from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class with the sixth formers in New Jersey from the boardroom of Barryroe Co-op. That developed into the West



Barryroe National School students with Rory Jackson, on right edge of photo alongside Capt. Jacek Bebenek and Chief Officer, Naumowicz Jaroslaw.

Cork students refurbishing and, under their return of it to the sea, re-naming the little vessel - 'Realt na Mara'.

"It has been a fascinating project with the children sanding and repainting it and designing a new sail. 'Star of the Sea' is the name of our local church so the name 'Realt na Mara' was chosen," Sinead Walsh, teacher at Barryroe said.

One of the pupils, Scarlet O'Mahony, told me that the pupils made a new sail, designing it, symbolising County Cork, the coastal and countryside of Ireland. "We have wildlife on it, showing that Ireland is full of Nature. We have included history of Ireland and that we are an island, shown our national sport and even put in a tin whistle, the instrument we play in our school."

"We learned a lot about the sea around us," another pupil, Michael O'Connor said. "We learned about the history and the culture of the sea. We have had a lot of contact with the school in America, It has been very interesting."

"We have a strong, nautical heritage in the area, so this project has involved parents and organisations in the locality," said teacher Sinead Walsh. "The boat is signed by both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes and we put into the hull horseshoes, tea bags, a hurley and a signed Barryroe Jersey amongst lots of other items We will be following the miniboat's GPS tracker with great interest over

the weeks ahead,"

"Whether you're on the coast or landlocked anyone can take part as the programme creates an ocean classroom," the Educational Passages organisers say. "Our Miniboat Program offers an extraordinary way for people of all ages to learn crucial skills, discover maritime careers and build connections that will last a lifetime. It engages participants in collaborative learning through international cultural experiences and increases the understanding of the value of water on our planet as a shared resource through ocean literacy."

"Over the last decade, new boat designs, partnerships and ambitions have expanded its scope. People of all ages and across dozens of countries track the little boats. Clubs, schools, libraries, individuals and foundations have joined what is now an international educational community connecting and educating students by building, launching, and recovering the boats, spanning the globe, It's an ocean of educational opportunities."

It is a fascinating project, recalling the old tradition of putting a message in a bottle into the sea, using modern technology to provide education about the oceans. It will be interesting to hear where "Realt na Mara / Crimson Current" ends up.

**Educational Passages website:**  
[www.educationalpassages.org](http://www.educationalpassages.org)



Capt. Bebenek showing the chart position for the launch of their mini-boat to Barryroe pupils.

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# Irish Sea Analysed for Location of Marine Protected Areas

## Locations Identified Are Also Major Fishing Areas

### MPAs must take into account “fishing for food security”

Report by Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney

**T**he ecological sensitivity analysis of the Irish Sea has identified areas for a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Irish Sea.

It was drawn up by a Marine Protected Areas Advisory Group appointed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Its concentration was on the western area of the Irish Sea. In identifying suitable areas, the extent of overlap is limited with areas proposed for Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) development and areas that are of importance for existing fishing effort. In addition to the suitable areas identified, there are areas of ecological priority that may need to be considered in the future as part of Ireland's wider MPA designation process, it says.

Forty biological and environmental features were identified and recommended for spatial protection in the western Irish Sea under the forthcoming MPA legislation, “based on criteria aligned with international approaches and the provisions of the General Scheme of the MPA Bill.

Selected features included species and habitats classified as threatened or declining on national and/or international lists, species and habitats of recognised ecological importance, areas of high biodiversity and a feature with high potential for restoration.

Species or habitats already listed in the EU Birds and Habitats Directives or individually managed under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) were not included in the project, since legal provisions for their conservation and sustainability are already in place.

“The report shows that the strongest areas for Marine Protected Areas are also strong areas for fishing,” says John Lynch, Chief Executive of the Irish South and East Fish Producers' Organisation, which is particularly concerned, being the industry's closest representative group to the analysed area. “The Irish Sea is a very busy place with a lot of marine activity in it. That has to be properly analysed, accepted and applied in the establishing of Marine Protected Areas. They cannot go forward without dealing with major issues for fishing.

“The sensitivity analysis is good in that it shows how busy a place the Irish Sea is and how much marine activity there is in it, so that establishing Marine Protected Areas must take into account all those activities that must continue to take place, including in particular fishing for food security.

“That has to be, accepted and applied in the establishing of Marine Protected Areas. What is being protected and what is it being protected for. Will it affect fishing? Is it for species, or a structure that is being protected? These are questions that must be answered and issues dealt with before we can go forward with Marine Protected Areas.”

#### Extract From The Report

*Box 4.2.1 Critical considerations in relation to the fishing sector*

The fishing industry is an important stakeholder in the Irish Sea and parts of the region are home to high-value commercial fisheries, particularly for bottom-dwelling species. Generally, but with exceptions, commercial species were not included in the features list for conservation in the current project as they are managed through the procedures and provisions of the CFP. Nevertheless, the single and layered MPA network solutions proposed here had various activity trade-off costs for the fishing industry

and its sub-sectors.

The sensitivity profile for fishing and ORE to the ecological features considered for protection here was similar, meaning that both industries could be similarly affected and therefore left to areas outside of the layered solutions. However, the activities that may or may not be compatible with potential MPA solutions are more nuanced than that and require further consideration, including engagement with fishers to clarify how individual fishing approaches within sub-sectors operate, and to establish the actual level of risk they pose to MPA features.

The features list considered here includes forage fish (including juveniles of commercial gadoids; cod, whiting, haddock), herring spawning grounds and several skates and rays which are currently not managed through individual TACs. Protecting these features can only have positive outcomes for fishing in the future. Reducing the mortality of juvenile fish is a conservation measure that is wellaccepted in the fishing industry.

Various seabed sedimentary habitats were included in the MPA solutions and similarly, various proportions of such habitats also occur in the potential ORE areas considered in this project. These spatial protection solutions may have knock-on benefits to fishing outside of these areas and have additional ecological and climate benefits; spillover of mobile species or larvae of benthic sedentary species from MPAs or from ORE areas acting, effectively as OECMs, may occur.

If significant ORE projects are developed in the Irish Sea and if both fishing and ORE are restricted to areas outside of MPAs, the level of ‘spatial squeeze’ may be significant. We haven't considered ORE and fishing activity trade-offs outside of the layered MPA solutions presented in this report. Government policy is that ORE and fishing co-exist in such areas, although operationally it is yet unclear how this might work.

Fishing activity for all fleets was included in the analysis but with different levels of data quality, depending on the vessel size and type of gear used, for example. There is a clear need for highresolution spatial data from the fishing sector if the effects of potential MPA solutions on fishing are to be accurately captured.

There are already good examples of the co-existence of fishing and protected areas (i.e., SACs, SPAs) in the Irish Sea. In Dundalk Bay, the cockle fishery adopts 5-year fishery management plans that explicitly consider the conservation objectives for these sites and adapt to what fishery and environmental monitoring data shows. Fishing activity and income have become more stable since the first plan was adopted in 2009.

#### Ministerial Support For Wind Farms But What About Fishing?

Mr. Lynch also said there must be a careful examination of where wind farms are placed and how will they be associated or co-ordinated with MPAs. “There must be an examination, a very careful look at wind farms co-located with marine protected areas.”

**The publication of the Irish Sea analysis report comes as the MARINE TIMES has identified particular concern throughout the fishing industry at what is perceived as a lack of concern shown by Government towards the industry as a food supplier.**

This is being contrasted with the high level of support being given to wind farm development sector. This was not-

ed when Minister Eamon Ryan called for an acceleration of delivery of offshore wind energy at the first Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Facilitation Forum in Dublin late last month.

He spoke of the importance of the ports and the launch of MARA, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, which is intended to play a central role in the consenting system for the maritime area. That body and the Marine Protected Areas Advisory Group are under the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and have nothing to do with the Department of the Marine.

**“There is no comparable forum set up by Government for the welfare of the fishing industry and coastal communities. Minister Ryan made no reference to the fishing industry, didn't even note its presence nor show any consideration or thought for the effects of wind farms on the fishing industry,” a fishing industry source told the MARINE TIMES. “The Green Party attitude is anti-fishing, with no great interest in the welfare of fishing and coastal communities.”**

#### Extract From The Report - Recommendations

- In the MPA process under the new legislation, expand the scope and representation of activities to allow a more nuanced consideration of economic, social, strategic, and cultural aspects of different sectors in decision-making processes.

- Continued and more widespread stakeholder participation at multiple levels, in advance and during the decision-making process, is recommended to enhance the overall process of MPA design and implementation and improve the success of the MPA network.

**“Establishing marine protected areas must take into account, in particular, the importance of fishing for food security,” according to John Lynch, CEO of the Irish South and East FPO.**

Ecological sensitivity analysis of the western Irish Sea to inform future designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

A report by the Marine Protected Area Advisory Group for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

May 2023





# International Fishing and Maritime News

## Scottish Government Control Powers Limited

**The Scottish Government has been bluntly told by the UK Government that it does not have the power to control waters out to 200 nautical miles. That resides within the Westminster Government and will not be conceded to Scotland according to the UK DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) Minister Mark Spencer.**

“Not on my watch,” he told the Shellfish Association of Great Britain conference. This represented a drawing of battle lines with the Scottish Government which had announced in response to demands mainly pushed by the Green Party, a designation of 10 per cent of all Scottish waters for HPMA – Highly Protected Marine Areas. That has become controversial.

The Scottish Government had stated that the designation of HPMA would be with local community support, but in Parliamentary debates had been accused of turning its back on fishermen and coastal communities and the Green Party was described as “extremists opposed to the fishing industry.”

The Scottish Cabinet Secretary for net zero and just transition, Mairi McAllan, said that the government of Scotland would want to control Scottish waters out to 200 nautical miles.

“The Scottish Government has the powers to designate MPAs and HPMA in Scottish inshore waters up to 12 nautical miles from the coast,” responded UK Minister Spencer. “The designation of MPAs and HPMA in offshore waters, more than 12 nautical miles from the coast, is reserved to the UK government.

The Scottish Cabinet Secretary said that she would be discussing further with Westminster who would control waters out to 200 miles.

The designation of HPMA and MPAs has become an issue on which the Scottish government appears to be provoking a political battle with Westminster, with demands from fishing communities that the 10 per cent designation be re-examined.

“The hastily put together agreement on HPMA, with a 10% figure for designation likely plucked from the air during discussions between the Greens and the SNP (Scottish National Party) has very much come back to bite the Scottish government,” according to an editorial in *Fishing News*, the weekly UK industry newspaper. “Scottish fishing communities are being used as a pawn, in a backroom deal based entirely on power sharing and votes.

“The fishing industry has, largely, maintained a sensible, reason-based defence of its views – not against HPMA in principle, but arguing the need for designation to be based on science and the need for coastal communities to continue to live in harmony with the environment that supports them.”

Representatives of Scotland’s farmed

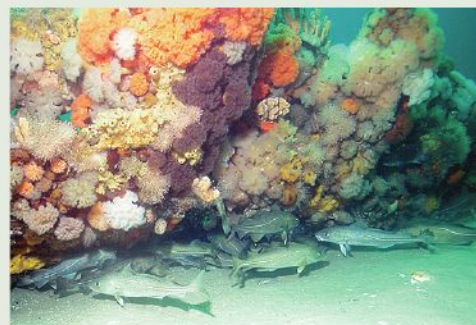
and catch fishing communities have united in the Seafood Coalition to oppose the measures that would ban all commercial activity from 10% of Scottish waters. Industry body Salmon Scotland, the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation, Seafood Scotland, Scottish Association of Fish Producers’ Organisations, Community Fisheries Inshore Alliance and Scottish Seafood Association are calling for a rethink on proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA), which the Scottish Government has pledged to bring in.

The proposed regulations would bar all industry from designated HPMA, including fish farming, all forms of catch fishing and offshore wind farms. The commitment to the measure is part of the SNP government’s Bute House Agreement with its minority coalition partner, the Scottish Greens. It has, however, run into opposition from coastal communities and MSPs, including some SNP elected members.

The Seafood Coalition is launching a petition calling for a rethink of the proposals. It is also asking for a review of the results from the current marine protected areas (MPA) that already cover 37% of Scottish waters, and it suggests learning from the pilot programs of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA) in other UK waters.

## New Findings On Cod

**Rutgers University, the State university of New Jersey, is one of America’s leading public research universities, where researchers have carried out a detailed genetic analysis of Atlantic cod in association with the University of Oslo.**



Overfishing likely did not cause the Atlantic cod, an iconic species, to evolve genetically and mature earlier, according to the study led by Rutgers, “the first of its kind, with major implications for ocean conservation,” the university said.

“Evolution has been used in part as an excuse for why cod and other species have not recovered from overfishing,” said first author Malin L. Pinsky, an Associate Professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at one Rutgers New Brunswick, one of its uni-

versity bases. “Our findings suggest instead that more attention to reducing fishing and addressing other environmental changes, including climate change, will be important for allowing recovery. We can’t use evolution as a scapegoat for avoiding the hard work that would allow cod to recover.”

The study focused on Atlantic cod off Newfoundland in Canada and off Norway. The findings were published in the journal ‘Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.’

“In the Northwest Atlantic Ocean, cod range from Greenland to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. In U.S. waters, cod is most common on Georges Bank and in the western Gulf of Maine, but both fish stocks are overfished,” the study said. “Cod can reach 51 inches long, weigh up to 77 pounds and live more than 20 years.”

Early explorers named Cape Cod in Massachusetts for the species because it was so abundant off New England, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“Cod have a genetic resilience based on the interaction of multiple genes that will also have a relatively fast return to its original DNA after overfishing ceases. We have been able to demonstrate that many genes throughout the genome did shift in the same way in cod from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean over the past 100 years. It will be easier for cod to evolve back towards their previous pattern of slower growth at large sizes.”

## Norway and Vietnam Co-Operation

**Vietnam has outlined a seven-year strategy plan to develop aquaculture and export to foreign markets as well as increased domestic consumption. Norway has several aquaculture companies operating in Vietnam and has agreed a joint co-operation and development programme.**

The Head of the Vietnam Fisheries Department, Tran Dinh Luan, said that with both countries having a long coastline, “we have many similarities and common interests.

Studying Norway’s experience and lessons of success will provide ideas to help Vietnam solve current difficulties as well as implement appropriate policies to develop stronger and more sustainable mariculture.”

Vietnam is becoming a leading exporter of aquaculture products, notably whitefish, to the UK and Europe.

## Land-Based Farmed Salmon Marketed in UK

**Land-based farmed salmon are being sold in the UK. London-based Secret Smokehouse has become the first smokehouse to make land-produced salmon available to customers. They are raised using a hybrid flow-through system technology, according to a company press release, “that aims to provide a more sustainable solution to fish farming and puts fish welfare at the forefront.”**

Max Bergius, Founder and Managing Director of Secret Smokehouse, said: “We are offering this innovative solution to

the market as part of our commitment to sustainability. We strongly believe that innovation is needed to evolve more sustainable products which provides continual improvements in fish welfare whilst minimising the impact on our planet “Since 2019, we have been looking for sustainable, land-based salmon options that provide the highest level of flavour and quality. With the hybrid FTS technology, we have seen this level and are happy to be the first in the UK to offer this as an alternative solution to our customers.”



Bergius said there is no single salmon production solution that ticks all the environmental, social and governance boxes. “Open-net sea farming, offshore and onshore farming will all be important to support the growth of a sustainable aquaculture industry.”

## Scottish Judge Decides Scallop Dredging Licences Unlawful

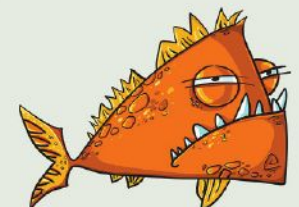
**The Scottish Government has been adjudged to have acted unlawfully when it granted licences for scallop dredging. After a Court of Session hearing, Lord Braid concluded that ministers did not consider the National Marine Plan when deciding on fishing licence policies.**

Environmental campaigners opposed to dredging took the Government to Court. The ‘Open Seas’ environmental campaign group claimed granting of licences was “regulatory negligence, allowing a practice that degraded the sea bed.” The Scottish Government said Ministers were considering the Court decision: “It would be inappropriate to comment further at this time.”



‘Open Seas’ used underwater cameras to record habitats on Scotland’s coast. Its lawyers argued that licensing scallop dredging and bottom-trawling - fishing methods which involve either metal rakes or weighted nets being dragged across the seabed - was unlawful where it causes damage to marine habitats. Until 1984, bottom-trawling was banned in all waters within three miles of the shoreline, but had been legalised by the Government approval.

‘Open Seas’ said it would now campaign for a new inshore limit to be introduced.





## Happy Birthday to Our Inshore Lifeboats



*Niamh Stephenson pays tribute to the inshore lifeboats of the RNLI*



**Sixty years young and they still look like teenagers. We've written a lot of press releases for naming ceremonies of inshore lifeboats and some of the stories behind them are incredible. I remember a D-class lifeboat for Fenit in Kerry where the lifeboat crew in Bangor helped fund it, in memory of two of their colleagues who had died. It was profoundly moving and made all the more special because it was lifeboat crew helping lifeboat crew. Fenit's latest D-class was funded by a British actor, Liz Frazer, who starred in roles on stage and screen over a career spanning decades. Two very different stories but both lifeboats doing the same job.**



Introduced in 1963, the charity's Inshore lifeboats have saved 30,778 lives across 60 years. Before I came to work for the RNLI I would have thought that Inshore meant that these lifeboats were on inland lakes and yes they are there too, at our four inland stations, but they are all around our coastline too. They enable volunteer crews to carry out their work closer to shore, in areas inaccessible to other lifeboats in the fleet. Designed to be quick and manoeuvrable, inshore lifeboats can operate in shallower water, near cliffs and rocks meaning crews can get as close as possible to those in trouble.

The current generation of B class lifeboat is called the Atlantic 85 – named after the Atlantic College in Wales where these rigid inflatable lifeboats (RIBs) were first developed. 85 represents the length – nearly 8.5m and the lifeboat is both day and night capable and can operate in weather up to a Beaufort Force 7. The introduction of the first rigid inflatable lifeboat (RIB) – the Atlantic 21 – into the RNLI fleet back in 1972 revolutionised lifesaving at sea. When it comes to responding to a lifesaving task,

the Atlantic 85 lifeboat is one of the fastest in the fleet; with a top speed of 35 knots.

I want to give a lot of love to the D class lifeboat. Our smallest lifeboat, the D class saves more lives than any other class of lifeboat. With a top speed of 25 knots, the lifeboat can operate in both day and night with an endurance of 3 hours at sea. You will often see a D-class lifeboat at stations alongside an All-Weather lifeboat and I often think Summer is their chance to shine, as call-outs increase and a lot of activity is carried out close to shore.

In all the times I have visited lifeboats throughout the years, I've only been there once when a pager went off. It was an inshore station and I'll never forget the eerie calm that preceded the perfect storm of organised chaos that followed. I can't remember what I was down in Kinsale for that day but I do remember the crew saved the life of a person in the water. I stood back, not wanting to get run-over in the rush for the lifeboat, launched by a small crane that lowers the lifeboat into the water. They returned shortly with a casualty barely conscious and were met by paramedics. It was over so quickly but I'll never forget it.

I'm going to mention an award ceremony at a lifeboat station and for a call-out that I might have mentioned before. But when it's an incredible rescue and three lifeboat crews were involved, then I think I can mention again. This recent occasion was the turn of Rosslare Harbour RNLI to hold their local ceremony to give out the RNLI bronze medal and medal certificates to the crews who were involved in the Lily B rescue. On 20 October 2020, the Lily B, a 100-metre general cargo vessel carrying 4,000 tonnes of coal and a crew of nine, lost all power just two nautical miles from Hook Head off the Wexford coast. The crew faced either running aground on rocks or capsizing in severe force nine gusts and wave heights of between eight and ten metres. The actions of the three crews that day saved the lives of the Lily B crew and their vessel and cargo was safe.

However, what made the occasion very special for me was that the wonderful Lifeboat Operations Manager, Jamie Ryan, called to ask if I would give out the awards to the crew for the 'Storm Ophelia' call-out that saved the lives of three people. So, there was not just one call-out being recognised but two. I won't go into too much detail here because I honestly couldn't do it justice, but on a night where roofs were ripped off houses and businesses shut, the Rosslare Harbour lifeboat crew, again under



Rosslare lifeboat crew pictured after the First Love rescue during Storm Ophelia

the command of Coxswain Eamonn O'Rourke went to the aid of a ten-metre yacht called 'Second Love' whose crew had tried to out-run the storm and were, at their reckoning, fifteen minutes from being battered to bits and lost to the sea. Hunkered down in the cabin, they thought they wouldn't see their families again, only to have the crew from Rosslare arrive on scene and bring them home. From that rescue, the skipper went on to become a lifeboat volunteer in Poole and he sent over his best wishes to the crew for their recognition.

You may think Storm Ophelia was a few years ago now and you'd be right but there were those who knew what the crew battled that day, who felt that the rescue should be recognised by the charity and the crew honoured and they asked that it be looked at for recognition. A little late but nonetheless welcome for that. The former Lifeboat Operations Manager David Maloney stood quietly and proudly at the Rosslare Railway Social Club to watch the crew receive their awards, he had been a strong advocate for the RNLI honouring the crew for that rescue and he was thrilled to be there to see it.

Once again it was a night of friendship and lifeboat stories. In a particularly well-received touch, the fantastic MC for the event, Area Lifesaving Manager Owen Medland, called Claire O'Rourke up to join her husband Eamonn, as he received his

medal for the Lily B. The couple were celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and it was acknowledgment for all the loved ones who remain behind when a lifeboat volunteer leaves on a shout. Judging by the roar of the assembled crowd, this was felt throughout the room.

Everywhere I looked there were familiar lifeboat faces, including members of the Wickham family, who must hold some sort of record for the amount of Coxswains and lifeboat mechanics in a family. The very charming Eddie Stewart Liberty made the trip over from Dunmore East and recently retired Lifeboat Operations Manager Sam Kennedy came from Courtown. With a watchful eye over proceedings was former Rosslare Station Mechanic Tony Kehoe, now a launching authority.

### Helvick Head

**Helvick Head and Dungarvan RNLI honoured Austin Flynn for 45 years volunteer service at an event in Dungarvan Harbour Sailing Club.**

Hugh Tully, RNLI Council and Crosshaven RNLI Launch Authority, retired Irish Navy Commodore, presented Austin with his certificate and medal.

Liam Harty, on behalf of the Lifeboat crew, presented Austin Flynn with an engraved mirror.



Liam Harty, on behalf of the Lifeboat crew, presenting Austin Flynn with an engraved mirror and Mary Flynn with flowers in recognition of Austin's 45 years of volunteer service with Helvick Head & Dungarvan RNLI.



## New Book “Dublin Port Chief Engineers” by Dr Ronald Cox Explores Life & Works of Bindon Blood Stoney & John Purser Griffith

Previously unseen images from Dublin Port Archive feature in book published by Dublin Port Company

**E**ngineers, historians, retired dockers and port workers recently gathered at Dublin Port for the launch of a new book called “Dublin Port Chief Engineers”, published by Dublin Port Company and written by Dr Ronald Cox, Engineering Historian and Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Civil, Structural & Environmental Engineering at Trinity College Dublin.



“Dublin Port Engineers” navigates the story of two of Dublin Port’s most pioneering port engineers in recent decades, Bindon Blood Stoney (1828-1909) and John Purser Griffith (1848-1938). This beautifully presented publication is the culmination of detailed research undertaken by Dr Cox over many years into the lives and illustrious work of both engineers, and draws on a trove of maps, images, and information held in Dublin Port’s 300-year-old archive to tell their story.

Bindon Blood Stoney was Dublin Port Engineer from 1862 to 1899 and the modern city of Dublin along the River Liffey reflects his engineering prowess in the bridges and quay walls he built using his wonderful Diving Bell, better known today as Dublin’s smallest museum on Sir John Rogerson’s Quay.

When John Purser Griffith, who served as Bindon Blood Stoney’s assistant for 27 years before becoming his successor as Chief Port Engineer, took over he would go on to champion the city and the port, still a key strategic objective of the modern Dublin Port Company today.

From 1899 to 1909 John Purser Griffith helped to modernise Dublin Port, reconstructing the North and South quays, electrifying the cranes with the port’s own power station and reorganising dredging operations with a new modern suction dredger, The Sandpiper.

Lar Joye, Port Heritage Director, Dublin Port Company, said: “Our thanks and credit to Dr Ronald Cox whose meticulous research has resulted in such a wonderful addition to public understanding of Dublin Port and the City of Dublin. It’s amazing to think that in 1990, Dr Cox was commissioned by the then Dublin Port & Docks

Board to compile a biographical sketch of Bindon Blood Stoney as one of the most illustrious engineers ever associated with Dublin Port’s history. Today, some 30 years later, we are continuing to learn about their transformative work and we are privileged to have helped bring Dr Cox’s work to life with the addition of previously unseen photographs from the Dublin Port Archive. That in itself feels like history in the making.

“I wish to pay tribute to the late Gerald Daly (1928-1998), then Honorary Archivist to the Dublin Port & Docks Board. At that time, access to the letters and other archival material in the Board’s possession was undoubtedly made all the easier due to Gerry’s tireless efforts to secure such information, and I think it’s fair to say that no query went unanswered for long.

“I also want to mention the late Niall Dardis. When Gerry was retiring, he couldn’t think of anyone better suited to the stewardship of the Dublin Port archive than Niall, who was a former draughtsman before retiring in 1992. When Gerry approached Niall, he couldn’t say no and took on the role of Honorary Archivist with great enthusiasm and skill.”

Dr Cox is a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland, a Fellow of the Irish Academy of Engineering, and a Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Recent books include Ireland’s Bridges (2003), Engineering Ireland (2006), Ireland’s Civil Engineering Heritage (2013), Called to Serve (2013) and Called to Serve Two (2019).

“Dublin Port Chief Engineers” is available to purchase from [wordswellbooks.com](http://wordswellbooks.com)



## IRISH WHALE AND DOLPHIN GROUP IWDG NEWS

*The newly-appointed Marine Policy Officer at the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group Dr. Stephen Comerford writes about the suspension of whaling in Iceland.*

### Whaling Suspended in Iceland Because of Excessive Cruelty

**A**uthorities in Iceland recently decided not to grant a license to hunt fin whales this summer. Svandis Svavarsdottir, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, made the decision following an inspection by welfare officers from the Food and Veterinary Authority which found that the methods used to kill the animals resulted in excessive cruelty and were not compatible with Iceland’s Animal Welfare Act. Inspectors recorded the killing of a fin whale taking upward of five hours. The Minister said in a statement: “I have decided to suspend all whaling operations.”

While the Animal Welfare Act has been in force since 2014, it has never before been used as an instrument to manage the whale hunt. The Act states: Hunting must always be conducted in a manner that minimises the pain inflicted on the animals and the time needed to kill them. Hunters must do everything within their means to kill any animal which they have injured. In August of last year Minister Svavarsdottir issued a regulation requiring the Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST) to carry out regular inspections of whaling hunts. The purpose of the inspection was to promote improved animal welfare during whaling.

The agency’s finding in their report was that an unacceptably high percentage of hunted whales suffered during killing. MAST concluded “that the hunting of large whales does not comply with the objectives of the law on animal welfare and raises questions about the future of the activity.” In response, Minister Svavarsdottir stated “This alarming report underscores the need for a discussion in Iceland about the values we want to be known for. I believe that industries incapable of guaranteeing animal welfare should be considered part of our past rather than our future. This report, along with the expert council on animal welfare’s findings, will serve as essential background material for making decisions about the future of whaling post 2023.”

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group welcomes this decision and hopes that Iceland will ultimately decide not to issue further licenses to hunt whales in their waters. Ireland has a long-established and important maritime connection with Iceland, not least through the Atlantic population of humpback whales, with individual whales shown using both Irish and Icelandic waters.

In 2018 the IWDG undertook an expedition to Iceland aboard their research vessel Celtic Mist to raise awareness about the humpback population, to increase knowledge, to gather data, and to strengthen the maritime and scientific relationship between the two countries. The crew of scientists achieved 94 sightings of at least 13 species over the course of a successful trip, with 25 humpback whales sighted.

IWDG Sightings Officer Pádraig Whooley says “To date we have matched four of the “Irish” humpback whales to Iceland. Two from the Husavik area on the North coast which skirts the Arctic Circle, with another (#HBIRL23) match to the Flaxafloí area near Reykavik to the south. Among the many humpback sightings made by IWDG during their expedition to Iceland in 2018, we found #HBIRL25, who had been recorded five years earlier off the Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry in September 2013. This was a nice reminder to

all the expedition members of our two nations shared humpback whale population. “

At the same time Celtic Mist was sailing the waters of Iceland, the Hvalur 9, a whaling vessel owned by the last active whaling company in Iceland, Hvalur Hf, killed a whale in controversial circumstances. Animal rights campaigners Hard to Port reported the possible killing of a protected blue whale, publishing photographs from the port of Hvalfjörðu where the animal was butchered. The Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI) conducted a DNA analysis of the dead animal and concluded that it was a hybrid of a fin whale and a blue whale, not a blue whale. These rare hybrid whales are not offered any legal protection from hunting in Iceland and the matter was dropped.

The decision to pause the take of endangered fin whales does not affect the licensing of minke whale hunting which can legally continue. Dr Guðjón Már Sigurðsson of the MFRI told the IWDG “At the moment it is only a temporary suspension on fin whale hunting until 31 August. Minke whale hunting is still allowed, although there has been very little activity there in recent years.” Most fin whale meat from Iceland has been exported to Japan but demand there has been falling. There is a dwindling local market in Iceland for minke whale meat, which is largely based on serving the meat to tourists. The International Fund for Animal Welfare has campaigned to raise awareness among tourists and restaurants with their “Meet Us Don’t Eat Us” campaign and claim to have reduced tourist consumption of whale meat by three quarters since the campaign’s inception in 2011.

Whaling in Iceland has a long history and has continued intermittently in territorial waters despite a world-wide moratorium under the International Whaling Commission that came into effect in 1985. Between the date of the moratorium and 2018, Iceland’s total recorded catch of both minke and fin whales was 1,796 animals. Whaling exists in tension with a well-developed whale watching tourism industry in Iceland, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that whale watching generates an estimated US\$ 26 million in revenue from 350,000 whale watchers annually. In contrast the whaling industry is no longer considered to be profitable due to falling demand. This decision seems likely to lead to a permanent effective ban on whaling in Iceland, a development which the IWDG would welcome.

• *The CEO of Hvalur Hf, Kristján Lofsson, was invited to contribute to this article but to date has not responded.*



## Sligo Primary School Lands Top Prize in Inland Fisheries Ireland's Something Fishy Competition

A primary school in Sligo has reeled in the winning prize in Inland Fisheries Ireland's 2023 'Something Fishy' competition.

Something Fishy is an educational programme aimed at primary school pupils aged between 10-13 years old. It informs and educates students on fish, water, angling, and the Irish environment.



Elisha Hickey (class teacher), Markus Müller (IFI), Emily Mannion (class representative), Paul Colreavy (principal).

Sixth class learners in Scoil Mhuire agus Iosaf, Collooney, Co. Sligo created the winning project in this year's competition, and received, a €500 prize voucher to be used for educational purposes at the school.

On completion of the programme, primary school students were challenged by IFI to create a project to demonstrate their learnings based on the theme of 'life along the river'.

Something Fishy is organised by IFI, in conjunction with Blackrock Education Centre.

Announcing the winners, Suzanne Campion, Head of Finance and Corporate Services at IFI said: "This winning project showcased a great level of awareness from these young Sligo students of biodiversity, in, and around, our rivers. A big thanks to Sligo Education Centre for their assistance with schools in the Sligo area.

"It is reassuring to see the knowledge that these children have on issues around the conservation and protection of our fisheries resource. Such interest and engagement on the sustainability of our fish and habitats bodes well for future generations - who will, after all, be the custodians of our inland fisheries in the years to come."

**This year 45 schools participated in the Something Fishy [www.somethingfishy.ie](http://www.somethingfishy.ie) initiative nationwide.**

## Official Opening of Enniskillen RNLI's New Station and Naming of Inshore Lifeboat Delayed as Volunteers Respond to Call Out

The official opening of Enniskillen RNLI's new station was delayed on the afternoon of Saturday 1st July, as the volunteer crew responded to a call out an hour before the naming ceremony for the new lifeboat was due to get underway.

Just as crew and invited guests were beginning to gather for the event, the volunteers' pagers sounded at 1.05pm. Belfast Coastguard requested the launch of the lifeboat to go to the aid of two people on a 23ft cruiser which had broken down and was drifting towards rocks north of Castle Archdale. A jet ski with one onboard which was in the area at the time went to the aid of the boat's crew but in rendering assistance had got tangled in the lines of the cruiser.

The *John and Jean Lewis* helmed by Wayne Robinson and with crew members Stephen Ingram, Alan Shaw and Andrew Wilson onboard, launched immediately and made its way to the scene. Weather conditions at the time were blowing a strong westerly force 6-7 breeze and the crew encountered waves up to 10ft on route through the Broad Lough. Arriving on scene, the crew observed that all were safe and well. The boat's crew had been travelling to Enniskillen from Kesh when they encountered mechanical difficulties. The jet skier had managed to untangle the jet ski from the cruiser and was holding the boat head to wind out of danger of the rocks.

A lifeboat crew member went onboard the cruiser to assess the situation and a decision was made to establish a towline and bring the cruiser to the nearest safe port at Muckcross jetty while the jet skier helping continued on their way.

Arriving back to loud applause, the lifeboat crew were greeted by all assembled and the naming ceremony and service of dedication got underway.

The honour of officially opening the lifeboat station went to Johnny Weir, nephew of Ann Johnston. Mrs Johnston, the daughter of the late Alfred Russell Wallace Weir from Bangor in county Down, along with her late husband John made a generous contribution towards the cost of the new building in memory of her father.

The privilege of naming the lifeboat meanwhile, went to Sam McCreery, President of Enniskillen RNLI. During the naming ceremony, Mr Weir unveiled a plaque to officially open the lifeboat station before Monsignor Peter O'Reilly and The Very Revd. Kenneth Hall, led the blessing and dedication of the new building.

After been housed in temporary accommodation for 21 years, volunteers at Enniskillen RNLI were handed the keys to their new station on the Killadeas Road at Gublusk last November. The build which took little over a year to complete was carried out by the Omagh based company, Woodvale Construction.

The modern purpose-built lifeboat station is located close to the lough to allow for an efficient launch of the inshore lifeboat. The station also houses the associated launching tractor and equipment, full crew changing facilities, a workshop, office and training room. The building is designed with a heating system which allows the heat to be drawn from the ground and produced inside keeping the temperature at an ambient 16 degree Celsius. The excess is used to heat the water for showering, washing up and cleaning the vessels. The building is also fitted with solar panels on the roof to generate electricity.

The station's inshore lifeboat which has been on service on Lower Lough Erne since 2018, was funded by a legacy from the late John and Jean Lewis from Birmingham in England.

John Arthur Lewis (1922 – 2013) was a major influence in both model yacht and full-size sailing yacht design with a career span-

ning 81 years. His interest in model boats began as a boy in Bournville when he used to race model sailing yachts with great success and later began to design and build his own. Success in the model design world eventually drew the attention of the ocean racing fraternity and several full-scale designs were produced. He went on to publish two books of designs.

John's lifelong interest in sailing was shared by his devoted wife Jean. It was therefore very much their joint decision that the RNLI receive a legacy to finance a lifeboat. While the extended family were unable to attend the ceremony, they are delighted that this wish has come to fruition in the purchase and active service of a lifeboat on Lough Erne.

Despite being on service for the last four and a half years, the naming ceremony was held off to coincide with the completion and official opening of the new station.

It was Sam McCreery, President of Enniskillen RNLI, who had the honour on behalf of the Lewis family to hand the lifeboat into the care of the RNLI. Trustee Paddy McLaughlin accepted the lifeboat on behalf of the charity and then handed her into the care of the station where it was accepted by Anna Classon, RNLI Head

of Region. Monsignor Peter O'Reilly and The Very Revd. Kenneth Hall led the congregation in a service of dedication before Mr McCreery officially named the lifeboat, *John and Jean Lewis*.

A crowd of well-wishers watched as the lifeboat was officially named with a bottle of champagne poured over the side by Helm Paul Keown before it launched once again into Lough Erne at the end of the ceremony to do an exercise demonstration for those gathered.

Speaking following the event, Gary Jones, Enniskillen RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager said: "It has been a special day and I am delighted for the whole volunteer team that we have now officially opened this wonderful station, home to our equally wonderful lifeboat. The new station is a testament of the RNLI's commitment and dedication to the community here locally and a credit to our crew's efforts in continuing to bring people to safety on Lower Lough Erne.

"We are now well settled in our new station but can still be overwhelmed with the structure and facilities we now have when we come together for call outs and training, it really has made such a difference. We would like to thank everyone who has helped us to get to this stage, including the Weir family from Bangor in County Down and the Lewis family from Birmingham."

In 2001, Lough Erne became home to the RNLI's inland lifeboat station. However, due to the overall size and complexity of the lough and its high leisure usage, the decision was taken by the RNLI in 2002 to base a second lifeboat on the upper lough at Carrybridge that would work in conjunction with the original lifeboat station on the lower lough at Killadeas. Today, Lough Erne is home to two separate lifeboat stations, Enniskillen and Carrybridge RNLI.

The Atlantic 85 class lifeboat was introduced into the RNLI fleet in 2005. The lifeboat is 8.4m in length and weighs 1.8 tonnes. Improvements on its predecessor include a faster top speed of 35 knots, radar, provision for a fourth crew member and more space for survivors.

**Inset photo: Enniskillen RNLI lifeboat does an exercise demonstration following the end of the naming ceremony.**





# news from Castletownbere

## Helen Riddell



Abandoned boat - How many more boats will we see like this around our coasts. Photo courtesy Anne Marie Cronin Photography

### Castletownbere Coast Guard

In the early hours of June 13<sup>th</sup> Castletownbere Coast Guard were alerted by Valentia that a person had fallen from a 30 metre cliff in the Allihies area. The team quickly mobilised and on reaching the area set up rigs and a climbing team reached the casualty.

Liaising with the National Ambulance Service on scene first aid was provided until an advanced paramedic from the Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue 115 was lowered from the helicopter to the bottom of the cliff. The helicopter crew instructed the Castletownbere team to set a quad pod and lower a stretcher to retrieve the casualty. The casualty was subsequently recovered from a very difficult location and removed by Ambulance to the helicopter. The Coast Guard team extended their thanks to the local Fire Brigade crew, Gardaí and the National Ambulance Service who all attended the scene and provided assistance.

Members of the Castletownbere Coast Guard team have been visiting local primary schools over recent weeks as part of the #BeSummerReady campaign to talk about water safety and how to use the emergency services.

### Festivals

A number of festivals are set to take place in Beara over the coming weeks. The Eyerics Family Festival will run from July 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, for details see [www.eyerics.ie](http://www.eyerics.ie)

The Castletownbere Festival of the Sea runs from August 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, see the

Castletownbere Development Association's Facebook page for the full schedule. The Adrigole GAA Club's annual Festival takes place over the August Bank Holiday Weekend, August 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, see [www.adrigolegaa.com](http://www.adrigolegaa.com) for details. The Bere Island Festival runs from August 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, details available on [www.bereisland.net](http://www.bereisland.net) and the Allihies Festival will complete the season from August 11th to 15th, with details on the Allihies Hall Facebook page.

### Dursey Cable Car

The Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Danny Collins and Chief Executive of Cork County Council Tim Lucey have officially opened Dursey Cable Car following a €1.6m upgrade. The service which is the only cable car in Europe, that crosses open seawater was originally opened on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1969 by then Taoiseach Jack Lynch. The service was established to support islanders who often faced isolation during inclement weather conditions due to the hazardous tidal race in the Dursey Sound.

Reopening the Cable Car, Mayor Collins, said, "The Dursey Island Cable Car is truly unique and holds immense historical and cultural significance for the people of Cork County. I am delighted to reopen the cable car which ensures the safety and accessibility of this iconic landmark. This service is not only an important transport link but also a cherished attraction that adds to the natural beauty and tourism potential of our region. Thanks to this investment, Cork County Council has now safeguarded it for future generations."

Operated and managed by Cork County Council, a structural assessment of the Dursey Island Cable Car in 2016 revealed that the support towers would reach the end of their operational life in the early 2020s. However, severe strain experienced during Storm Barra in December 2021, combined with the metal towers reaching end of life, necessitated the full replacement of the 24m tower structures and the island anchor frame along with track and haul ropes.

### New Green Space Area for Castletownbere

The first phase of a major redevelopment of the former St Peter's Church in Castletownbere as a community space was opened on June 23<sup>rd</sup> by Mayor of Cork County Cllr Danny Collins. Mayor Collins opened the gardens surrounding the church which have been landscaped and developed as a green space area.

In 2018 the Castletownbere Development Association (CDA) acquired St Peter's Church in Castletownbere, a disused

Church of Ireland built in 1841, with a view to developing it as a community centre and green space area for the town. The CDA received LEADER funding of €15,000 to undertake a feasibility study on the church. Further funding of €103,000 was obtained from Cork County Council towards clearing and landscaping the site. The National Transport Authority also provided €45,000 to increase and improve accessibility and drainage throughout the grounds. The space contains a number of murals which were created by students of Beara Community School with the support of Beara West Family Resource Centre and local artist Brian O'Sullivan. The CDA is currently working on the next stage of the redevelopment which will see the building re-roofed and fully restored as a community area.

### Water Safety Week

Water Safety Week will run in Castletownbere from Monday July 24<sup>th</sup>. To book a place contact WSIC at [castletownbere@gmail.com](mailto:castletownbere@gmail.com)

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## Greencastle Harbour Breakwater Project Finally Breaks Ground

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D. and Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Cllr Liam Blaney, officially 'broke ground' on the long overdue Greencastle Harbour Breakwater project on Monday, 19th June.



A ceremony was held in Greencastle to mark the official commencement of the Greencastle Harbour Breakwater together with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion. The project represents an investment of approximately €18M in the harbour with 95% funding from the state. Donegal County Council proposes to construct a curving rock armour breakwater to the south-west of the harbour entrance to create safer entry for all vessels including the Greencastle to Magilligan ferry. This will reduce vulnerability of vessels within the harbour to wave climate, improve the safety and effectiveness of the harbour for all users including for tourism and leisure users availing of pontoon facilities. It will also minimize impact of the natural tidal flow through the mouth of Lough Foyle.

The community of Greencastle is dependent on the fishing industry and the marine industry in general with almost 200 people directly or indirectly employed. Greencastle is the 2nd largest white fish port in Ireland and is also home to a large inshore fleet mainly engaged in shellfish and crab, making it a key town in Ireland's seafood sector. Greencastle has significant fishing support services including fish processing, marine engineering, boat building and net making.

The investment made in Greencastle is one of a number of investments being made by the Minister and the Department in piers and harbours right around Donegal's 1,100km of coastline. In total funding of over €27M has been awarded to marine infrastructure in the county through the Brexit Adjustment Local Authority Marine Infrastructure Programme. This coupled with co-funding of €3M from the council will support coastal and fishing communities and enable them to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

Foyle and Marine Dredging has been appointed as the Main Contractor for the project and is collaborating with the project consultants Doran Consulting, Donegal County Council's Piers and Harbours team as well as colleagues in the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and other stakeholders.

Commenting on the event, Minister McConalogue said that this is "An important day for the community of Greencastle and for Inishowen. The Greencastle Harbour Breakwater project has been the top of my agenda and I was delighted to unveil a commemorative plaque to mark the beginning of works on the project. It will be a game changer for Greencastle and the marine community here. I thank all those involved in the project including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Donegal County

Council, Foyle and Marine Dredging and Doran Consulting and all the local harbour users and community who has worked to make this happen for many years."

Councillor Liam Blaney commented "I thank Minister McConalogue and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for the investment made in marine infrastructure in Greencastle and the wider county. This investment will improve the sustainability of resilience of our coastal communities going forward. I thank all involved in making this project a reality."

## Celebrating Irish Seafood Businesses on Europe Day

As the country marked Europe Day and 50 years of Ireland's membership of the European Union, BIM celebrated seafood businesses that have used EU funding to innovate and thrive.

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027 (a successor to the European Maritime, Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2014-2020) is helping Ireland's seafood industry make changes needed to ensure its future. It aims to strengthen the resilience of the seafood sector, supporting seafood businesses to take environmentally sustainable and climate-smart actions.



Conor Reid of Donegal based Ocean Deep Oysters said EU funding helped his family-run company get off the ground in the mid-80s and establish itself as a leading provider of top-quality Irish oysters.

The business received EMFF funding, including a €290,000 investment for a purification and packaging facility. The investment also includes grading facilities so the company can export directly to overseas markets and enable them to supply to the value-added retail sector.

"The EU funding has been critical because it takes nearly four years to fully grow an oyster before harvesting and another few years before you see a return," said Conor. "Traditional sources of investment like banks, or other investors, will rarely wait around for that length of time to see a return on investment. Without the capital grant supports from the Irish Government and the European Union, it would have been impossible to get this business going the way it has been."

Ireland is to receive €142 million of EU funds from the new EMFAF which will be combined with co-funding from the Government of Ireland. These funds will be allocated for the management of fisheries, aquaculture and fishing fleets, and also cover measures such as scientific advice, controls and checks, market intelligence, maritime surveillance and security.

For more information, visit <https://bim.ie/about/european-maritime-fisheries-and-aquaculture-fund/>



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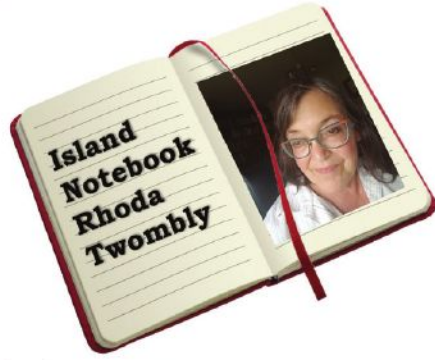
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The latest developments on the offshore islands reported by Rhoda Twombly, Secretary Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann, the Islands' Federation.

## Islands Policy Has Potential to Pave Way for Future Growth and Sustainability

**The weather on Arranmore matched the upbeat, optimistic message delivered by Minister Heather Humphreys as she launched the long-anticipated document "Our Living Islands: National Islands Policy 2023-2033." Speaking from the island's foreshore amphitheatre development framed by calm sparkling sea, blue skies and bright sunshine, Minister Humphreys outlined the backbone of the policy document and action plan that are designed to increase sustainably and improve quality of life across our offshore islands into the next ten years.**

Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann (COE), the national representative organisation for the offshore islands, broadly welcomes the first dedicated government policy for the islands for 27 years, the last being

launched by Minister Carey in 1996. During the intervening years the population of the offshore islands has fallen by nearly 13%: a key aim of this policy and action plan is to ensure the sustainability of the islands, stating: "This new 10-year policy, with associated shorter-term Action Plans, provides a pathway for building sustainable futures for island communities. It is forward-looking and ambitious and will be underpinned by a close working partnership with island communities and other stakeholders in its delivery. The measures to be delivered will, inter alia, assist in stabilising the population of the islands, diversify island economies and empower island communities."

This new Islands Policy is structured around the five strategic objectives of revitalising population levels on the islands, diversifying island economies, enhancing health and wellbeing services, empowering island communities, and building smart sustainable futures.

This signals the government's commitment to increasing island sustainability and quality of life. COE supports these

objectives as they provide a comprehensive framework aimed at securing the long-term sustainability and growth of our islands.

Comhdháil is very pleased that there will be on-going consultation with island communities through the establishment of an implementation reviewing system, which includes representation from the minister, government officials, and island representatives. This will ensure continued dialogue and progress of the policy. This collaborative approach enables that the voices and perspectives of those directly impacted by the policy are heard and considered.

The specific focus on housing as a key area of island sustainability within the Islands Policy is fundamental to the growth of islands. Recognised as one of the chief challenges to the future of offshore islands, accessible and affordable housing is vital to attracting and retaining residents, enabling the islands to thrive.

The Minister's announcement that islanders wishing to renovate a derelict or vacant property would receive a 20% increase on the existing Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grant attracted click-bait headlines from around the world: "Ireland will pay you \$92,000 to settle in serene island homes" from the The Indian Express, only one of dozens of headlines.

In their eagerness to attract readers, most of these articles shy away from the terms of these grants. Some of the conditions are that the property must have been vacant for 2 years or more, must have been built before 2008, that the applicant must be the owner of the property or in the process of buying it. Additionally, the applicant must live in the property once the work is completed as

a principal private residence or offer it for rental which must be RTB board registered. There are other qualifiers: for example, the applicant must not be a registered company or developer.

With the Island increase in funding the grant for bringing a vacant home up to liveable standard is up to €60,000 and €84,000 for a derelict property. While the 20 percent increase in grant amount for islanders is very welcome, the fact that costs of island works are about 35% higher than on the mainland means that the funding may well fall short of needs.

The increased cost of living overall on the offshore islands is another barrier to sustainability. Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann welcomes the ring-fenced funding allocated to government schemes, as well as the announcement of funding for a capital works program. Financial commitments will play a pivotal role in realising the action plan outlined in the policy. €1.9 million has been ring-fenced for small capital grant projects through the local improvement scheme.

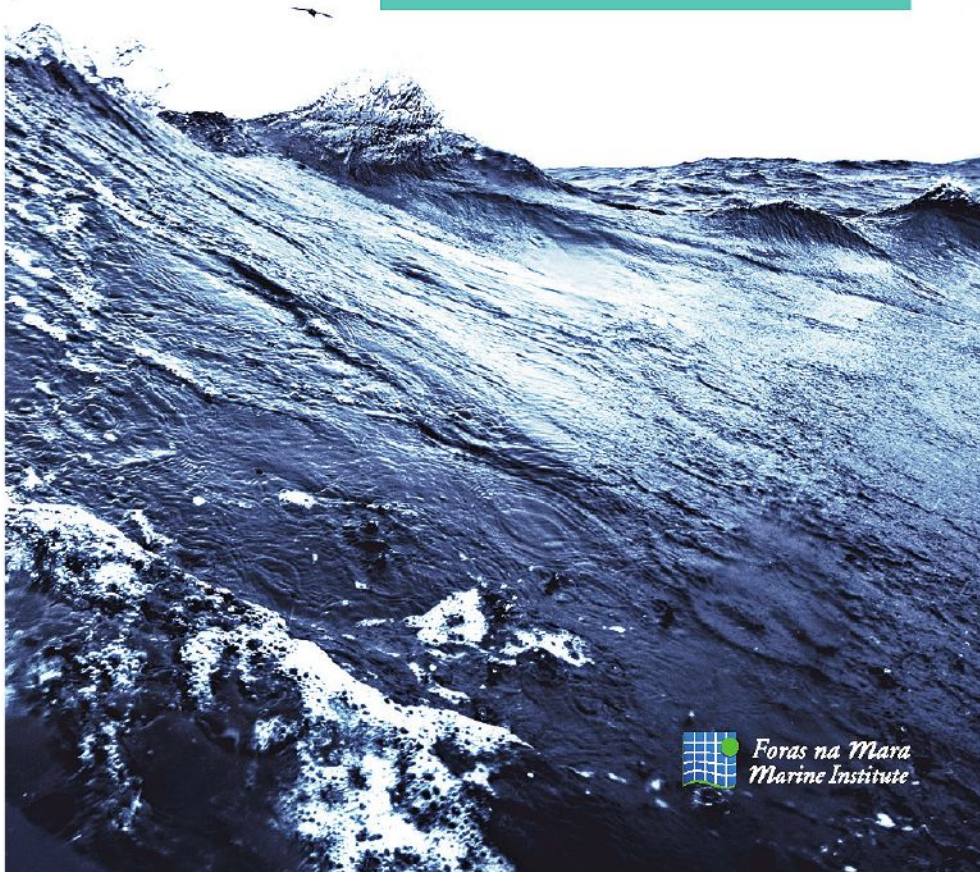
The Minister recognises the importance of high-speed broadband delivery on the offshore islands calling the delivery of highspeed a gamechanger. The availability of this technology on the offshore islands will positively impact the provision of e-health, improved education possibilities, remote working capability, and creation of digital hubs on all the islands, some of which are working already. It is imperative that the National Broadband Plan be completely rolled out across the islands and Comhdháil urges all partners to get this vital job done.

While we acknowledge that this is just the beginning of a long journey, COE firmly believes that the Islands Policy has the potential to pave the way for the future growth and sustainability of our islands. By addressing key areas such as housing, connectivity, infrastructure, health and creating diversified economies, the government has demonstrated its commitment to building an environment that supports vibrant island communities.

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Minister Heather Humphreys at Arranmore during the launch of the 'Our Living Islands: National Islands Policy 2023-2033'



# Shark Attacks in Co. Kerry

Declan Quigley reports



**O**n Saturday afternoon 17th September 2022, Emma Tobin and her husband Frank were enjoying a relaxing day by the seashore at Sandy Bay (52.2796°N, 10.0271°W), on the eastern shore of the Maharees Peninsula, near Castlegregory, Tralee Bay (Fig. 1 above).

Emma remarked: 'I was paddling in shallow water no deeper than c.75 cm when something suddenly banged into the side of my knee from behind. It was quite a solid collision immediately followed by the feeling of something rough and grating tangling itself around my leg. I shouted and moved, and whatever it was rolled in the water and swirled off. As it all happened in the space of a few seconds, and was so unexpected, I only got a brief glimpse of whatever it was as it rolled just before it swam away. It was light-coloured and gave an impression of being broad, or chunky, with a length of about 45-60 cm. My immediate impression was that it was a flatfish of some kind'. On exiting the water it was clear that Emma's right knee was grazed, bruised and slightly bleeding in two separate areas (Fig. 2).



Fig 2. Emma Tobin's wounded knee (Sandy Bay, 17.09.22)

Emma recalled: 'About 10 minutes before another woman had yelled while leaving the water at the same part of the beach, saying that something had flipped up against her

leg. Then about an hour later a man was walking out of the water about 50 m further up the beach when he was startled by something that hit off his leg.'

Earlier in the afternoon, Emma's husband observed 'big circles of ripples in the shallow water, much bigger than the normal ripples you might see from a feeding fish'. Emma remarked that at the time of the incident, the water was very calm and soon after low tide and that there was quite a lot of seaweed near the water's edge.

Based on Emma's account, it would appear that the culprit may have been part of a large shoal of fish partaking in a feeding frenzy in the shallow near-shore waters of Sandy Bay. The fish were probably oblivious to the presence of paddling humans whom they accidentally bumped into rather than deliberately attacked. Indeed, the fish were probably just as startled as the humans.

At least 16 species of elasmobranchs, including 7 sharks and 9 rays, are known to occur in Tralee Bay, all of which could account for the observed abrasive skin pathology. However, the lack of bite marks, estimated fish size (45-60 cm TL) and behaviour, suggests that the species involved may have been a Starry Smooth Hounds (*Mustelus asterias*).



Figure 3. Starry Smooth-hound (*Mustelus asterias*) [Photo Edward Farrell]

The Starry Smooth Hound (Fig. 3) is a relatively small species of schooling shark (maximum total length 140 cm and weight 13 kg) which is known to forage in relatively shallow inshore waters. Indeed, there are a number of reports of this shark stranding itself in sandy intertidal pools in both Irish and UK waters. For example, on 15 July 2013, a shoal of about 30 Smooth Hounds were rescued from a receding tide pool near Rush, Co Dublin (<http://www.thejournal.ie/video-family-rescues-30-sharks-from-death-on-beach-993438-Jul2013/>). More recently (07.08.2022), a single specimen was observed by Eoin O'Flynn trapped in a tide pool on Seapoint Beach, near Termonfeckin, Co Louth (Fig. 4). On 15 July 2015, about 50 Smooth Hounds were trapped in a shallow sandy pool near Selsey, West Sussex, UK.

Despite their common name, Smooth Hounds have very rough dermal denticles (Fig. 5) which can cause skin abrasions similar to those experienced by Emma at Sandy Bay. However, unlike many sharks, Smooth Hounds don't

have sharp biting teeth. The species predominantly feeds on crustaceans and molluscs using their well-adapted flattened teeth arranged in rows to form a crushing mill (Fig. 6).



Figure 4. Starry Smooth Hound stranded in tide pool at Seapoint Beach, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth (Eoin O'Flynn, 17.08.2022)

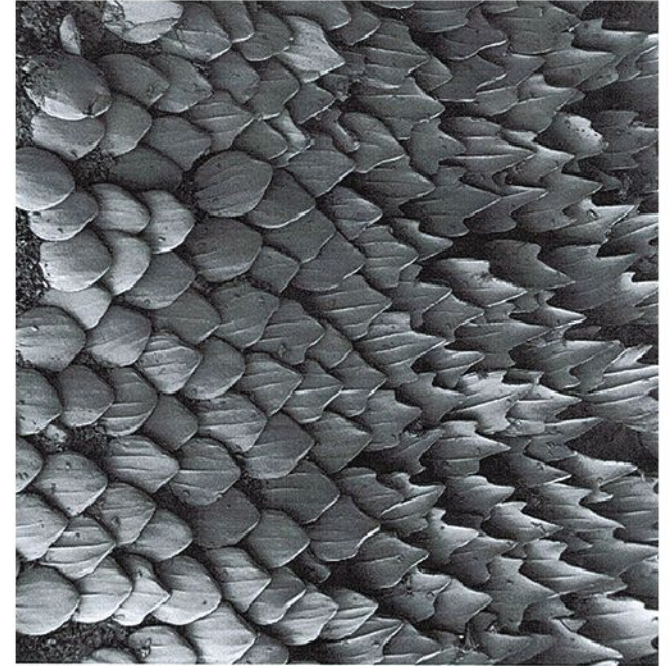


Figure 5. Shark skin with rasp-like dermal denticles



Figure 6. Smooth Hound dentition

Although Porbeagle Shark (*Lamna nasus*) can occur in relatively shallow inshore waters and live strandings have occasionally been reported there are no recorded attacks on humans in Irish waters. However, unlike Smooth Hounds, Porbeagles have large sharp smooth-edged triangular

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lar-shaped cutting teeth. On 22 June 2011, Dr James Carney (UCC) discovered a live juvenile Porbeagle measuring 110-135 cm TL stranded in Crookhaven Harbour, Co Cork (Fig. 7). On 7 May 2020, Val Burke (Curraheen, Derrymore, Tralee, Co Kerry) discovered an exceptionally large freshly dead female Porbeagle measuring c.305 cm TL, stranded in the upper reaches of a narrow tidal mud creek on the eastern side of Derrymore Island (52.2560°N, 9.8280°W), Tralee Bay (Figs. 8-9), not far from Sandy Bay.



**Figure 7. Juvenile Porbeagle Shark (*Lamna nasus*) live stranded in Crookhaven Harbour on 22.06.2011 (Photo Dr James Carney)**



**Figure 8. Porbeagle Shark (*Lamna nasus*) stranded on Derrymore Island, Tralee Bay, Co Kerry 07.05.2020 (Photo Bernard Fitzgerald)**



**Figure 9. Porbeagle Shark teeth (Derrymore Island, Tralee Bay)**

### Portmagee Channel, near Valentia Island, Co. Kerry

At around 6 pm on 26 September 2022, Seamus Lynch was swimming about 30 m from the shore over a depth of about 4 m in the Portmagee Channel (51.8854°N, 10.3619°W), near Valentia Island, when he was suddenly attacked by what appears to have been a shark. The tide was ebbing, the water was turbid and the temperature was around 13°C.

Seamus felt two successive bites on the front and back of his lower right leg, the second bite lasting longer. On

exiting the water Seamus's lacerated leg was bleeding profusely around a circular wound measuring c.17.5 cm in diameter, the circumference delineated by needle-shaped puncture marks (Figs. 10-11). Following medical treatment, Seamus's wound took two weeks to heal.



**Figure 10 & 11. Seamus Lynch's wounded leg (Portmagee, Co Kerry, 26.09.2022)**



Although Seamus did not see the unprovoked attacker, it is thought that the species may have been an exceptionally large Greater Spotted Dogfish (*Scyliorhinus stellaris*) which have numerous needle-shaped teeth in both jaws (Figs. 12-13).



**Figure 12. Greater Spotted Dogfish (*Scyliorhinus stellaris*) 103 cm male**

**Figure 13. Greater Spotted Dogfish (*Scyliorhinus stellaris*) 103 cm TL, male, gape width & length 7.5 & 8 cm**



Greater Spotted Dogfish (also known as Bull Huss or Nurse Hound) are particularly common in Irish inshore waters. Between 1958 and 2021, a total of 573 specimen size GSD (weighing  $\geq 7.257$  kg) were recorded by the Irish Specimen Fish Committee (ISFC). Significantly, Co Kerry and Valentia accounted for 57% and 25% of the ISFC specimens, including the current Irish record weighing 10.801 kg (127 cm TL) captured in Kenmare Bay during September 2003.

**Declan is always interested in receiving reports about rarely recorded and unusual species from Irish waters (WhatsApp: 087-6458485; declanquigley2021@gmail.com).**

## Goatsbridge Trout Farm to Increase Production with Grant Aid from Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme

**G**oatsbridge Trout Farm in Co Kilkenny will increase its production of value-added products with help from the Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme.

The Thomastown business is one of 44 projects to share in a €26.8 million investment from the Seafood Processing Capital Support Scheme administered through BIM. The scheme, which will deliver up to €45 million in funding to the seafood processing sector, is funded by the European Union under the Brexit Adjustment Reserve.



Directors Mag and Ger Kirwan are using the €280,000 investment to improve production efficiencies of their key ranges including smoked trout, trout caviar and fish chowder.

"In recent years, we have focused on adding value to our highly sought after trout products," said Mag Kirwan. "With costs increasing, we're always looking at ways to be more efficient and increase capacity so we can increase sales.

"The support we're receiving from the Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme, and other schemes over the years, has really helped us to innovate and grow."

The company, which employs 27 people, supplies their product to the Irish retail and hospitality markets. Wholesale also forms a large part of the business, with online sales also being developed as an outlet.

Goatsbridge Trout Farm is using the grant aid to purchase key processing equipment including an inline chiller, bowl choppers, cooking vessel and a manufacturing production system. These upgrades will ensure greater production efficiencies and increase its capacity to develop further value-added products.

It will improve its energy efficiency by upgrading existing doors that will improve temperature control in the production area. It also plans to build a blast chiller which will improve the processing of products including caviar.

"We make these upgrades because it's the right thing to do but the grant aid certainly helps take the pressure off as it halves the payback time," said Mag.

"It is particularly helpful to have this support in the current climate with costs rising. It's when we're feeling fearful that it's time to be brave and make changes."

Innovators in the Irish seafood industry, Mag and Ger Kirwan have run the Goatsbridge Trout Farm for almost 30 years.

In 2012, they developed Ireland's first ever caviar – trout caviar. Caviar is salted fish roe or eggs and regarded as a delicacy. BIM food technologist John Fagan helped the husband and wife team at Goatsbridge develop this new processing method.





Cheque presentation by the Row Hard or Go Home teams to the RNLi, where representatives of the two teams visited Howth Lifeboat Station recently to inform them that they had raised a total €35,096 for the lifeboat charity. Row Hard or Team members Jim Bailey, Derek McMullen (with his son Fionn), Frankie Mohan and Eugene Mohan are pictured with Howth RNLi crew member Killian O'Reilly Coxswain/Mechanic Ian Sherian (with daughter Amelia) and Howth RNLi crew member Aidan Murphy.

## Row Hard or Go Home Teams Raise €35,096 for the RNLi in Ireland to Fund Lifesaving Rescue Work

**F**our members of the Irish Row Hard or Go Home team visited Howth RNLi recently to present a cheque for €35,096 to the lifeboat crew, which was raised through them taking part in the World's Toughest Race, a 4,800km row across the Atlantic Ocean from the Canary Islands to Antigua. The RNLi and Laura Lynn were the charities chosen by the two teams to benefit from their fundraising task.

The funds raised for the RNLi will be spent in Ireland and will go towards the search and rescue charity's work of saving lives at sea. The group were shown around the north Dublin lifeboat station by some of the crew. The RNLi operates two lifeboats at Howth, an All-Weather vessel and a smaller D-class craft, which are on call 24/7.

The Row Hard or Go Home teams spent over a month at sea in some incredibly challenging conditions, away from their family and dry land. They took turns to sleep and eat and carried out repairs on the small boats, miles out to sea.

Commenting on the generous donation, RNLi Community Manager Pauline McGann said, 'We are so delighted with the donation from the Row Hard or Go Home

teams. Their race across the ocean, which was followed online by so many people, showed what an incredible journey and feat of endurance they undertook. As the RNLi is a charity that saves lives on the water, we know the challenges that being out at sea for so long can raise. They were so strong and so committed to their goal and they raised much needed funds for our lifesaving work in Ireland. We are so grateful they choose the RNLi as one of their charities.'

Derek McMullen a member of the Row Hard or Go Home team added 'It can not be understated how important and how invaluable the RNLi are. The dedication and commitment of the volunteers have saved countless lives down through the years and indeed have been there to support us through our own sea going adventures.'



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