

MARINE TIMES

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IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER



Olan (C416) off Cobh - Photo: Carroll O'Donoghue (KinsaleAngling.com)



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High Value Mackerel from Irish Waters Should Be for Human Consumption in Ireland Not Animal Feed in Other Countries

Nordic States and Iceland Overfish Irish Waters in Rush to Present Bogus Track Record in Negotiations with EU

IIMRO Highlights Security of Tenure in Offshore Development

Timely reminder that balance is needed

Budget '24 Reactions - Horrific and Grotesque, Shocking and Insulting

All of this plus so much more inside

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the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

Those Who Know Better? - A Special Breed!

In the past few weeks, we have had the Budget Speech which is as usual the subject of criticism from our opposition TDs who lead the cohort of "those who know better" This is a talent bestowed on opposition members of Governments everywhere.

I have previously suggested that after an election the simplest thing to do is to **PUT THE OPPOSITION IN CHARGE!!!!** Opposition TDs are the ultimate **HURLERS ON THE DITCH.**

They have no real power themselves apart from picking holes in other peoples' ideas - without actually presenting alternative arguments or suggestions themselves.

Anyone elected to a Parliament is there to help govern the country in the most efficient way - **Nobody is elected a Member of the Opposition.**

In Ireland they carry the title of TD - they draw decent salaries and allowances so why can they not lay out in public their alternative proposals so we can all see them and compare them.

The reality here lads is that irrespective of who is actually in power the "Sums" will be done by the Senior Civil Servants. The same Civil Servants who I am not challenging because they have all the facts. They don't want to be wrong in their assumptions.

I remember many years ago as a young Bank Clerk in Bundoran when we used to calculate the interest manually, an irate borrower came into the Bank and told the Manager that the interest charged on his account was incorrect. The manager admitted that as it was calculated by us mere humans

an error could certainly have been made but asked the customer what the interest charge should have been. He replied that he didn't know but then we wonder how he could know that the calculation was incorrect if he did not have the correct figure to hand.

There is a lot of that lads - and watching the newscasts from the UK the very same attitude prevails.

First reaction to any suggestion is to object or contradict without having an alternative to offer. We are back again to the question of who exactly is doing the sums - not that it matters because **Someone will always know better.....**

Everything has become so slow it is almost impossible to get things done within an acceptable timeframe,

The Licensing and Registration systems badly need to be examined to see how those operating them can be helped.

Transactions which used to take a week can now take 4/5 maybe even 6 weeks. Impossible to operate a business with those kinds of delays particularly when fishing vessels are involved.

With monthly quota allocations it is possible that delay beyond the end of a month can cost a new owner a monthly allocation which represents nothing less than a Kick in the Gut at a time when encouragement is what is required.

A wee look in a mirror and examination of conscience required here lads!

In recent weeks I have encountered the most appalling delays on the banking side created by their own credit departments (**BOTH OF THEM - we only have 2 left**) both in approving loan applications and going to extraordinary lengths to create fantasy conditions.

These conditions are then sent to the bank legals who toy with them to a point where deals are brought to the point of falling apart. The Bank now insists on farming out everything and the difference between **EXPERTS** and those who actually **KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING** needs to be visited.

Legals are being engaged for their Professional Indemnity Insurance rather than for their knowledge of how the Licensing and Registration systems work.

Can we compare it to a situation where a serious surgical procedure is required on a damaged leg. Do we engage with the surgeon who we know is really good or do we go to the surgeon with the highest PI Cover on the basis that if they cut off the wrong leg - we can sue them?

I hope that in the immediate future someone can do a report on where exactly the industry is in the eyes of the Government because I fear that previously strong and confident operators are becoming negative and nervous.

Crewing is a very serious issue, and we need some initiative from Government on the recruitment and training of crews and some financial incentive possibly tax based to entice young Irish people into the Catching Sector.

We need to streamline the Licensing and Registration processes because in the past couple of years, because of irregular hours caused by Covid and possibly other reasons the process has become burdensome and quite unsatisfactory.

This is a special Industry led by special people which in my opinion is not getting the support it deserves.

We need to do something about that before we wreck it!

SFPA Note Decision of Swedish Authorities Following Transfer of Under-Recording of Herring Case

Master of the vessel was fined for under-recording Herring catches by 372.12%

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), the State's competent authority for the enforcement of the Common Fisheries Policy rules in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone, has noted the decision of Swedish Authorities to impose a fine on a Swedish registered fishing vessel, the 'Caromona GG-330', following an infringement detected by the SFPA at Killybegs port in October 2022.

The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management confirmed the imposition of a fine of 2,000 SEK on the master of the Sweden registered vessel FV 'Caromona GG-330', following a transfer of the proceedings from the SFPA to the Swedish Authorities in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy enforcement regulatory framework.

The master of the vessel was fined for under-recording Herring catches by 372.12%, in the operational logbook estimates, of outside the margin of tolerance, which was detected following a supervised weighing on landing at Killybegs in October 2022.

Commenting on the decision an SFPA Spokesperson said: "The SFPA acknowledges the decision of the Swedish Authorities following the transfer of this case to them under the Control regulation. The under recording of fish catches poses a threat to the sustainability of valuable fish stocks and the livelihoods of fishers who operate within the law. The successful conclusion of this case poses as a useful example of EU co-operation in the protection against unreported fishing."



Dave O'Neill and Tony Stack at Dunmore East - Photo courtesy William Power

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Boy Paul after landing crabs at Kilkeel. Photo courtesy Leslie Campbell



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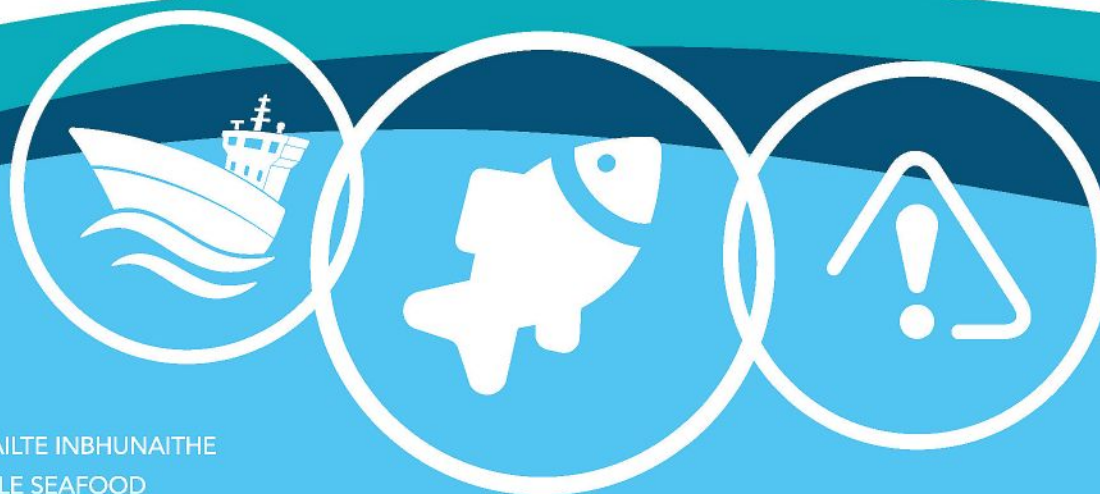
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Norway and Coastal States Accused of Damaging Stocks Sustainability

Radical Reset of EU Attitude to Norway and Other Coastal States Needed

Report by Tom MacSweeney

Norway is engaged in a “rogue initiative of fixing inflated unilateral quotas” to justify its abuse and disregard of a responsible approach to fishing. Its behaviour and that of other Coastal States – Iceland and the Faroes – is “disgraceful” and amounts to an attempted “colonisation of valuable Irish maritime space,” according to Chief Executives of the main Irish fishing industry representative organisations.

The Irish view is that the EU is pandering to them and should be taking a much stronger line.

“The EU could have used the Trade Agreement to put pressure on Norway,” John Lynch, Chief Executive of the Irish South and East Fish Producers’ Organisation, told the MARINE TIMES. “What Norway is doing is very damaging.”

The signs for mackerel are not good, indicating a downward trajectory, so the sustainability of the stock is being damaged by Norway, Iceland and the Faroes, who unilaterally decide what they will catch.

“A radical reset of the EU approach to Norway and other Coastal States is called for ahead of the EU’s annual quota sharing and access negotiations for 2024,” according to Aodh O’Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers’ Organisation. “These States undermine Ireland’s commitment to long-term sustainability of key pelagic stocks. Giving free access is akin to a colonisation of our valuable maritime space. We need to proactively defend the rights of our fishermen and the coastal communities that depend on them.”

EU – Norway negotiations on 2024 quota-sharing and access start this month. These include mackerel and blue whiting, two species economically important to Ireland which pioneered mackerel and blue whiting fisheries on global food markets.

“Norway has unilaterally secured an enormous share of the total allowable catch (TAC) of blue whiting,” says O’Donnell, pointing out that this stock is found mainly in Irish waters in the Spring of each year, meaning Norway requires access to Irish waters to catch its large quota. The catch opportunities available to Norway in Irish waters amounted to 224,000 metric tonnes last year.

“This amounts to chronic overfishing in excess of the scientific recommendations. It is driven by the objective of establishing entitlements based on a bogus track record, at the expense of the responsible approach of EU Member States. Furthermore, this rogue initiative of fixing inflated unilateral quotas, as again for mackerel, is a contributory factor to Ireland facing a second consecutive year of mackerel quota cuts of minimum 5%. It is an additional blow when compounded by the 2024 Brexit transfer instalment of approximately 4%.”

The Irish industry is united in opposing any unfettered access for blue whiting in EU waters.

At the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation in Killybegs, Chief Executive Sean O’Donoghue has also sounded a warning about Norway and the Coastal States: “We have made our position really clear to the Commission, the other Member States and to our own Minister and Department. We are going to have the same battle as we had

last year about blue whiting, the transfers, the access and the Irish Box. I hope we can get an outcome that meets our concerns and that it can be done in time before the end of the year, not like last year when it was St. Patrick’s Day before the negotiations were concluded. That is not a way to do business. It gives no certainty whatever to the fishing community on either side.”

“The essentially ‘free access’ for blue whiting in EU waters must stop,” says the IFPO CEO. “If Norway wishes to continue to benefit from an EU access quota for blue whiting in 2024 and the years that follow, then Norway will have to compensate the EU and Ireland particularly, in species of interest to it,” says Aodh O’Donnell.

There is a general belief that the EU must take a much stronger stand against demands from Norway, Iceland and the Faroes and that the Minister Charlie McConalogue must stand fast in support of Irish fishermen in negotiations.

Iceland Trying to Get Its Own Access to Irish Waters

Late last month news broke that Iceland had begun what were described as “making informal approaches” to the EU to get specific access rights for its fleet into Irish waters.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was described as having held discussions with Member States about this approach.

Iceland is understood to be basing this on trying to re-open a 1992 agreement in regard to a European Economic Area which stemmed from a time when it had applied to join the EU, an application which was not continued.

It appears that Iceland wants to get its largest trawlers into Irish waters, particularly off Donegal where they are known to fish for mackerel right up to the permitted zone edge.

There was shock within the industry that the Department had, apparently, concealed information about the Icelandic approach to the EU which could date back to the early months of this year and that it had been discussed with EU contacts without informing industry organisations.

This could create unease in relationships with the Department and the Marine Minister where there is strong opposition already to, as the IFPO has described it, as “colonisation of Irish waters.”

See also the views of the CEOs on pages 8 & 9

High Value Mackerel from Irish Waters Should Be for Human Consumption in Ireland Not Animal Feed in Other Countries

See page 13

BIM Annual Aquaculture Report For 2022

Bord Iascaigh Mhara’s Annual Aquaculture Report for 2022 says the sector, generated value, sustained employment opportunities and has significant growth in sales volume.

“Despite a reduced number of Production Units (PUs) due to consolidation within the shellfish segments, employment increased in both the finfish and shellfish sectors. In 2022, the sector contributed €208 million to the economy, supporting 2,008 jobs, with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 1,177 across the 292 PUs. The average individual salary for the year was €34,372 per worker.

“A total of 44,623 tonnes of aquaculture products were sold directly at the farmgate, generating sales of €186 million. This represents a 4% increase in both volume and value compared to the previous year. The production involved 554,000 culture structures, covering over 12,250 hectares of licensed ground throughout the country.

“The culture of Atlantic salmon remained the largest contributor to national sales value, amounting to €104 million in 2022. With significant economic impacts locally and nationally, this diverse segment demonstrated multiplier effects evident in turnover, employment, and gross value added.

“The mussel and oyster producing segments led the sector in terms of employment, with 1,693 people working across 260 PUs. These segments generated €76 million in 2022, with shellfish operations dispersed across all maritime regions of the country.

“A survey conducted on the sector’s technical challenges highlighted the struggle of shellfish segments in sourcing or retaining suitably trained staff. To address this issue, businesses are exploring technologies that have the potential to reduce or eliminate labour-intensive tasks in production.

“While the aquaculture sector in Ireland experienced overall positive growth, it is important to note that achievements were not uniform across all segments. The shellfish sector displayed robust output volume and maintained a healthy average unit sales value.

“Conversely, the finfish sector faced challenges, witnessing a decline in output volume, despite a rise in average unit sales values.”

The full report is available at bim.ie



Built at Mooney Boats is the new MFV Wave Crest on sea trials out of Killybegs with Rotten Island Lighthouse in the background. Photo courtesy Alan Hennigan / Mooney Boats.

Budget '24: Nothing for Fishing - Nor for Marine Sector Either!

Reactions - Horrific and Grotesque, Shocking and Insulting

While both Ministers presenting the high-powered, but pre-delivery well-leaked Budget to achieve maximum voter support, neither Minister for Finance, Michael McGrath, or Minister for Public Expenditure, Paschal Donohoe, gave any concessions to the Irish fishing industry.

The general marine sector did not get much either and, though both Ministers gave praise to the productive sections of the Irish economy, there was nothing major to encourage maritime matters.

Somewhat strange, perhaps, in an island nation but is it "reflective of a land bound-national administration.?"

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine swiftly issued a press release which stated that the Budget "provides continued funding for the promotion of the environmentally sustainable development of fisheries, aquaculture and wider seafood industry."

However, the priority given in the press release was to agriculture and the benefits provided for the protection of farming incomes. What was contained in the press release was a re-statement of what had been already done. There was nothing new.

"Over the lifetime of this Government €500 million has been spent on the Seafood Sector. Over the past two years I have announced a range of schemes, worth €271 million, designed to support the seafood sector and coastal communities in overcoming the impact of Brexit," Minister Charlie McConalogue was quoted as saying. "In December 2022 the Commission adopted the Seafood Development Programme 2021-2027. The funding provision made by the Government in Budget 2024 will enable this Programme to provide for further support to the sector over the coming years up to 2027 to ensure that it will not only survive but transform to generate economic growth and sustain jobs. The Programme will also provide funding to state bodies which carry out important work in the marine environment to protect our coastal natural resources."

"A lot of twaddle and flannel," was one of the comments from industry sources to the MARINE TIMES. "The Minister and Government has again ignored the fishing industry" was another. "Not a word about the crisis created for the industry by Government failures and lack of real, strategic, positive support," was another.

Referring to the 2024 budget allocation as "horrific and grotesque," Deputy Michael Collins expressed his frustration: "It is utterly baffling that Minister Charlie McConalogue, responsible for fisheries, would drastically reduce the budget allocation for the fisheries and seafood sector, slashing it from €337.45 million this year to a mere €176.9 million in 2024. At a time when the sector requires more, not less, state assistance, this decision is incomprehensible."

"In his comprehensive post-Budget

statement, Minister Charlie McConalogue lavished himself with self-praise while conveniently omitting any reference to the fishing sector and the fishermen he is entrusted to support. Instead, he broadly referred to the seafood sector. Surprisingly, neither the Finance Minister, the Public Expenditure Minister, the Taoiseach, nor the Tánaiste mentioned fishing once in their respective budget speeches. Indeed, I was the sole Dáil Deputy to raise the needs of our fishermen on Budget Day."

"In fact, during this Minister's tenure, it's essential to recognize that a significant portion of the funds allocated to the sector has originated from EU contributions rather than state resources. These funds were granted over the last two years, with a substantial amount coming from the EU Brexit Adjustment Reserve Fund (BAR). Essentially, this fund acted as compensation, a form of redundancy payment, resulting from the Minister's own failings in the Brexit deal. These failings led to the decommissioning of a segment of the Irish fishing fleet, driving many fishermen out of business."

"The Minister's lack of support for the fishing industry has become painfully evident. However, he continues to attempt to mislead the public while failing to deceive fishermen. This Minister's incompetence and passiveness have brought Ireland's standing as a fishing nation to the brink of extinction."

"For the past 18 months, the Minister has neglected to provide Irish fishermen with a fuel subsidy accessible through EU funds, a benefit that numerous other EU Fisheries Ministers have secured for their respective fishermen."

"The consequences of the government's inaction are devastating, affecting rural coastal jobs and livelihoods in the country's most peripheral regions. The situation is nothing short of a disgrace. This Minister has practically single-handedly devastated the livelihoods of fishermen, neglecting lost quota opportunities, failing to regain lost quotas, and ignoring opportunities for critical, long-overdue aid from EU or government funds."

"In just the last year, production within the fishing industry has plummeted by 15%, the fleet has shrunk by 30%, Ireland's fishing quota in its own waters has been reduced to less than 20%, and approximately 1,000 individuals, both at sea and ashore, are losing their jobs."

"Minister McConalogue spent the last year touring the country, inaugurating pier and harbour projects as if these were funded by the Irish Government instead of the EU BAR Fund. Simultaneously, he was tactfully orchestrating the Irish fishermen's endgame and that of the sector."



North Star heading up Greatmans Bay - Photo courtesy Aodan Mc Donagh

"Budget 2024 has exposed the Minister's charade, with his negligence reflected in an almost 50% reduction in this year's funding allocation. This cut is deceptive and disheartening."

"It is evident that Minister McConalogue is not a trustworthy advocate for the fishing sector or the hardworking fishermen and factory workers who rely on it. The stark lack of transparency and spin from the Minister is nothing short of deceitful. This government has failed our fisheries and seafood industry."

"It is now clear that the longer Minister McConalogue remains in office as Fisheries Minister, the greater the damage to the sector. Jobs will be lost, coastal communities and local families will suffer, and we will be left worse off. We require a Fisheries Minister who will champion the interests of one of our oldest and most cherished sectors, offering a brighter vision, hope, and a genuine commitment to a better future," concluded Deputy Collins.

Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Fisheries and the Marine, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn TD has described the cuts to the fisheries budget for next year as "shocking". The budget allocation to fisheries and seafood for 2024 is almost half of the allocation for 2023, down from €337.45 million to €176.9 million.

Deputy Mac Lochlainn said: "Last year, the Minister for the Marine, Charlie McConalogue boasted of a "record" budget of €337.45 million in 2023, pointing out that the budget had increased 62% from the previous year's budget.

"Those of us who were listening to the fishing and seafood industry in Ireland knew that he was adding the EU Brexit Adjustment Reserve Fund (BAR) money and taking credit for what was essentially a redundancy payment to Ireland's fishing industry to compensate for the injustice of the Brexit deal and the decommissioning of another layer of the Irish fishing fleet.

"Minister McConalogue toured the country, announcing funding for piers and harbours, and cutting tapes as if the Irish Government were funding these projects rather than the EU BAR Fund.

"But now this farce has all been exposed.

This year's fisheries/ seafood budget is almost half of last years, down from €337.45 million to €176.9 million. This is a shocking cut in funding.

"Sinn Féin had proposed a range of measures for Budget 2024 including increased funding to fish producer organisations, support for small scale fish shops and processors, a continuity grant for the Irish inshore fishing fleet, increased safety equipment for inshore vessels, an improved budget for the Marine Institute, a guarantee fund under the Brexit Aquaculture Growth Scheme and a fuel support scheme for the fishing and seafood sectors. Total Sinn Féin additional funding to the Department of Marine budget would have been €24.1 million.

"It's time for honesty from the government rather than dishonesty and spin. Our fisheries and seafood industry has been failed by this government. The last 12 months alone has seen production in the fishing industry down by 15%, the fleet reduced by 30%, Ireland's fishing quota in our own waters down to less than 20%, and approximately 1,000 people at sea and ashore are losing their jobs.

"Like so much in Ireland today, it's clear that a change of government is urgently needed to give our fishing and seafood industry hope of a brighter future".

The Chairman of the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance, Cormac Burke, was vociferous in his response to the budget: "In claiming that €271 million has been spent by this Government over the past two years in this sector, he omits to tell the public that this was EU Brexit money and not from the coffers of the Irish Government. This smokescreen may fool the general public but to those of us in the fishing industry it is more than an insult.

"There is a strategic eradication of Ireland as a fishing nation. How can growth be generated, jobs sustained and new entrants to the industry encouraged when development is being stifled, real aid to the industry denied and nothing done to regain lost quotas, the raw material this industry relies on for survival?"

IIMRO Highlights Security of Tenure in Offshore Development

Timely reminder that balance is needed

Tom MacSweeney, Deputy Editor

As Government pressure intensifies to force the pace of offshore energy development to meet its declared targets and developers demand speedy approval from the State to proceed with their proposed plans, the rights of small scale fishermen to security of tenure has been highlighted as a major issue by the Irish Islands Marine Resource Producer Organisation.

In the midst of this intense pressure, with environmental organisations becoming increasingly vociferous in support of development, the rights of fishermen to continued access to traditional fishing grounds has received little attention, recognition or support.

IIMRO has highlighted significant concerns on behalf of small-scale fisheries operators and outlined a number of issues with the current process to develop offshore renewable energy and, what it describes as “potential significant impacts on island and coastal communities.”

These have been identified in a submission to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).

The lack of information on the scale of proposed new energy installations, the potential to displace fisheries, as well as unknown impacts on the marine environment, are amongst the concerns raised.

IIMRO has pointed to the recognition “of customary rights”.

“Security of tenure and recognition of

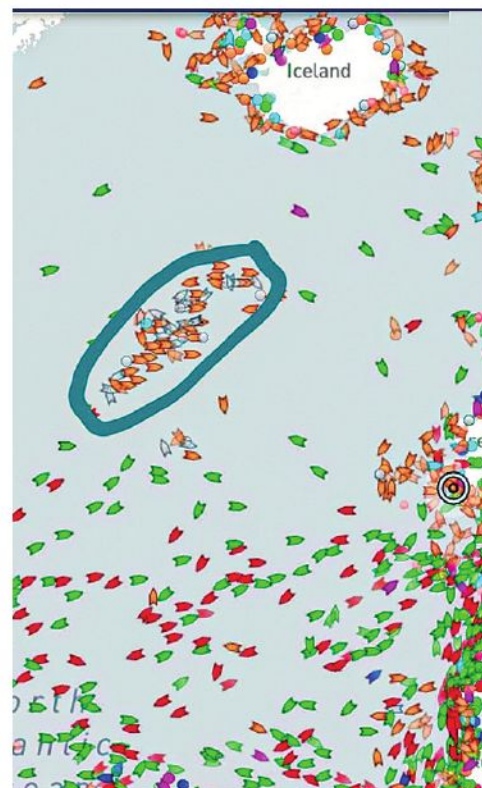
these rights is crucial for fisheries governance and resource management,” it said in its submission, pointing also to the importance of noting and appreciating “the diversity of the fishing community; from small traditional vessels with a single crew, fishing seasonally close to shore, to large industrial ocean-going vessels fishing across international boundaries” and the need for governance structures to recognise and accommodate this diversity.

The points made by IIMRO have, so far, not been given high priority in public statements about offshore renewable energy by Government Ministers, development companies and environmental organisations.

IIMRO’s comments are a timely reminder that they must also be given equality of treatment in the evolution of offshore renewable energy proposals. So far the balance has been tipping in favour of developers and against fishing interests which are a source of national food supplies and a vital economic sustenance for coastal and island communities.

Read more from IIMRO on page 27

Minister Calls to Re-Open Discussions Within the EU On Internal Allocation of the EU Bluefin Tuna Quota



Big fleet of Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese long liner boats fishing for Bluefin tuna in international waters about 400nm west of Ireland. They have thousands of miles of long lines and between them all they will catch thousands of tons of Bluefin tuna. Each summer BFT spend up to 6 months in Irish waters but yet Irish fishermen are not allowed to catch as much as 1 bluefin for sale. Photo courtesy Shines Irish Tuna

Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD, attended the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Luxembourg where there were a number of important fisheries items on the agenda.

Amongst those were an exchange of views on the EU priorities for the upcoming ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna) meeting in Cairo.

Minister McConalogue welcomed the positive stock assessment for Northern Albacore tuna and the significant increase on the current total allowable catch.

Speaking at Council Minister McConalogue said: “Ireland calls to reopen a discussion within the EU on internal reallocation of the EU’s Bluefin Tuna quota in light of the new management plan and the recent adjustment to the ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna) sharing arrangements.”

The call by the Minister comes shortly after angry responses to an image of the large scale Asian fleet of long liners west of Ireland was posted on social media platforms and reached critical mass. Will anything be done to help the Irish fishermen receive a quota of their own? We will see ...

MARINE TIMES

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

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The Numbers Just Don’t Add Up

None of it makes any sense – at a time of falling landing figures, vessels in the fleet and profitability within the industry itself how can an enforcement agency be increasing its number of staff?

Recent BIM statistics featured in this issue of the Marine Times highlight a decrease in live weight of landings from 2021 to 2022 (-17%) and a decrease in value of -20%. Data projections for 2022 indicate a deteriorating outcome with decreasing revenue (-19%) to €257.7 million and decreasing GVA (-38%) ... meanwhile in the same time period of 2020 to 2022 staff figures at the SPPA have increased by 15% and another 8% on top of that for this year when the fleet is being decimated by rising costs and decommissioning!

Established in 2007 the SPPA started off with a staff of 88 ... moving on to this year we see the staff numbers reach 180, the highest figure in any of the EU fishing nations!

Maybe these staffing levels are necessary seeing as the SPPA Annual statistics show that last year there were 45,031 Fish Landings and 1,903 Fishing Vessel Inspections around our coast. Needless to say there is no breakdown on the vessel inspections as to how many were Irish or other EU / Non EU vessels but the 45,031 fish landings has taken many by surprise ... especially upon closer inspection on information supplied to the Marine Times – “Does anybody believe that there was 1,575 landings into Wicklow and only 346 into Ros a Mhil; they must have been counting the people coming off the ferries in Rosslare as they have 1,346 landings there. Hard to credit that Wicklow has a greater number of landings than Killybegs and Ros a Mhil combined. Something gone wrong here? No, they, yes they, the SPPA have lumped all sales notes, logs, landings together - These are not true figures ... they are fish and shellfish sales to cafes, restaurants, shops, etc. Fellows taking a few crab and lobster to here and there, or even of a bucket of winkles. The only sales missing are from Aldi and Lidl.”

Indeed, the numbers just don’t add up ...

The Sound of Silence

“Hello darkness my old friend ...” You would struggle to comprehend that we live on an Island – especially when you consider during the recent budget speeches where the existence of a coastline or fishing families didn’t get a single mention. Indeed you would be hard pressed to find anything in the press release from the Minister for the Marine either. In a release featuring 18 main bullet points the fact that spreading sh#te on a field gets precedence over fishing matters says it all really.

To highlight the lack of regard within Government thinking towards our coastal communities look at the sound of silence emanating from the Green Party Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage who has not replied, since February, to an objection lodged by the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation, against his announcement of Irish Special Areas of Conservation!

So, hello darkness my old friend indeed

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Brexit Support Measure for Irish Fish Processing Sector Welcomed by IFPEA

Confirmation that the Irish fish processing sector is to be directly supported from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund for the loss of turnover experienced in 2021 due to the negative impacts of Brexit is welcomed by the IFPEA.

The newly announced scheme covers the losses resulting from the following;

(i) reduced supply of fish directly impacted by quota reductions following Brexit and

(ii) increased operational costs for logistics and administration associated with Brexit.

The aid will take the form of direct grants and be set at a maximum of 35% of the first €500,000 of turnover losses and 20 % of the remaining balance of losses. The maximum aid amount per beneficiary will be equal to €300,000. The scheme will run until 31 December 2023.

The scheme was proposed by the IFPEA at the Seafood Taskforce and they were assisted in drafting the scheme by the staff of BIM, and with the support of Minister Charlie Mc Conalogue the scheme is now successfully approved by the EU Commission. The scheme is expected to become operational as soon as logistically possible.

Brendan Byrne CEO of IFPEA stated that the announcement is “only going to meet a fraction of the losses incurred by the Irish processing industry but it a significant support measure and will have a massive positive impact across the sector. Subsequent years need to be examined closely especially before the BAR deadline lapses.

“The accumulative effect of the TCA/Brexit deal is now really negatively impacting the sector and as we enter year 4 of the aftermath of the TCA many businesses are really suffering.

“A fundamental root and branch assessment of the Irish fishing industry needs to be undertaken, as all the key indices are showing constant decline in landings, and processing activity across the board and this contrasted with other EU Member States shows us to be constant in negative growth.”

The IFPEA wish to acknowledge the support of Caroline Bocquel CEO of BIM and all the BIM team, the present Department Officials and Minister Mc Conalogue that made this announcement possible.

Environmental Special Areas: Waiting Eight Months for Ministerial Reply Attitude to Fishing Industry Criticised

By Tom MacSweeney, Deputy Editor

The Green Party Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has not replied, since February, to an objection lodged by Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation, against his announcement of Irish Special Areas of Conservation when he attended the COP15 UN Biodiversity Conference in Montréal, Canada, last year.

Minister Malcolm Noonan made the announcement which would triple marine protected areas, saying that the Cabinet had approved legislation: “When the Green Party entered Government, the size of our marine protected areas was shamefully low at just 2.3%. We’ve already increased it almost four-fold and by the time of the next election in 2025 we’ll be well on our way to reaching 30%. This is the sort of difference that comes from having a party in government that truly cares about nature and biodiversity.”

The general scheme of the Marine Protected Areas Bill was backed by government Ministers against the backdrop of the COP15 UN Biodiversity Conference which was taking place in Canada at the time.

“The Minister made that announcement without telling anybody and we lodged a very scientific and technical report in relation to it in February,” Sean O’Donoghue, Chief Executive of the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation told me.

“Even though we have written eight to ten times in relation to this, looking to see what is the response to our objection, the only response we have got eight months later is that it is still being looked into. This is just not good enough.”

This attitude has to stop

Mr. O’Donoghue says that “there is no co-ordination between all of the Departments involved.”

“We have taken this up with all of the Ministers and specifically with our Minister for the Marine that he needs to be at the

forefront of ensuring that we, the fishing industry, are fully consulted about special and protected marine areas and all aspects to do with them. Things should not be happening without us in the industry being at least consulted and our views taken aboard. It is just not acceptable. This attitude has to stop.”

The announcement, in response to which the KFO submitted its detailed scientific objection involved two new Special Areas of Conservation created under the EU Habitats Directive, one off the North/West coast and another off the South. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country that are considered of importance at both European and Irish level. The two deep-water sites chosen, as announced by the Minister, encompass almost 3 million hectares and include extensive cold-water corals that support an array of marine species, his Department said in a press statement.

The selection of these two sites would more than double the area of protected reef habitat in Irish waters from 10% to 24%.

“It is astonishing that we should be treated like this,” Mr. O’Donoghue told the MARINE TIMES. “The fishing industry should be treated with more respect, understanding and response. We are a crucial, food-supply industry and should at least be consulted.”

More turbines than the length of Ireland

There is concern generally within the industry that commitments given, that fishing would be a priority consideration in

declaring conservation areas and locations for offshore wind energy, are not being honoured as promised.

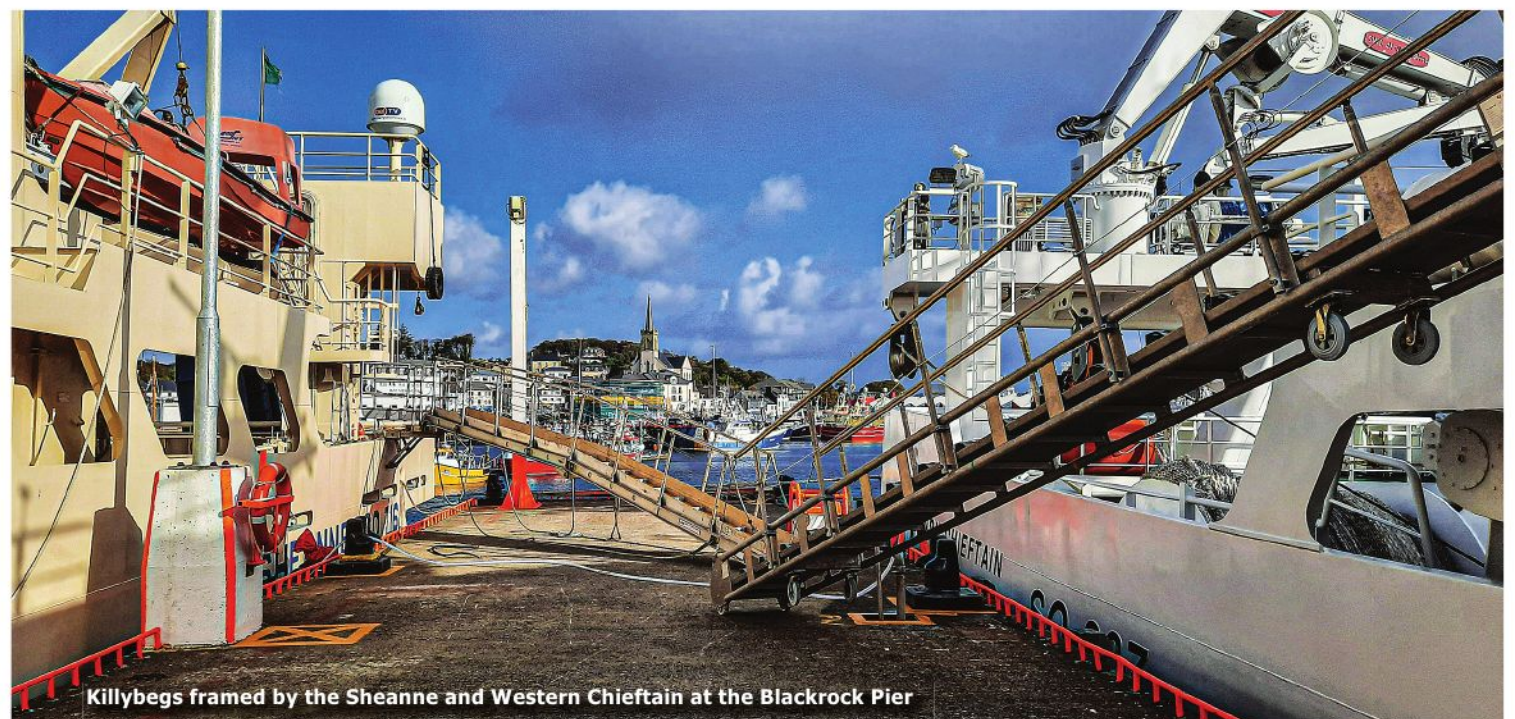
Despite these reservations the industry has shown a willingness to recognise and support environmental and offshore energy development.

Eight seafood and fishing industry organisations, including the KFO, made a joint submission to the Department of Environment about the Draft Maritime Area Plan for the South Coast. These included - IFA Aquaculture, Irish Fish Processors and Exporters’ Association, Irish South and East Fish Producers’ Organisation, Irish South and West Fish Producers’ Organisation, Irish Fish Producers’ Organisation, the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation, National Inshore Fishermen’s Association and South East Regional Inshore Fisherman’s Forum.

They said they would welcome a ‘planned’ approach, but also recorded “deepening unease” about lack of consultation and “spatial squeeze.” If Government targets on offshore wind are met by 2050, Ireland’s seas will have turbines stretching for at least twice the length of Ireland, their submission suggested.

“We recognise that wind energy is on the way, it is part of Government policy, but the fishing industry has to be consulted in picking locations for this development,” John Lynch, Chief Executive of the Irish South and East Fish Producers’ Organisation told me. “Fishing must be protected. It is an essential food supplier. We recognise that wind energy is coming into the marine space, but we want to see it done in a logical way with a system where we have an agreed input into it and agreed locations for wind energy.”

The Department was asked for a reply from Minister Noonan to this story. It had not been received at the time this edition went to print.



Killybegs framed by the Sheanne and Western Chieftain at the Blackrock Pier

INDUSTRY OPINION: Chief Executives of the FPO's discuss the latest industry news.



**Killybegs Fishermen's
ORGANISATION LTD.**

Sean O'Donoghue, CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation discusses the EU-UK and EU-Norway negotiations, lack of Government response to complaints about environmental decisions and the positive sustainability credentials of seafood.

We're now at the key part of where the TACs and quotas are going to be decided for 2024. The first major one of those, which is way more important than the Fisheries Council in December is the EU-UK negotiations which have started and are due to be completed under the Trade and Co-operation Agreement by December 10 but as we all know well what happened last year and the year before and the year before that, this will go beyond the Fisheries Council which is on December 11 and 12, so the Fisheries Council won't be deciding very much in my view. About 53 of our 55 slots are dealt with during the EU-UK negotiations so they are really important to us in terms of whitefish, shellfish or indeed some of our pelagics as well.

The other big thing that always happens now is the first round of EU-Norway negotiations and here again we are going to have the same battle as we had last year about blue whiting, the transfers, the access and the Irish Box. We have made our position really clear to the commission, the other Member States and to our own Minister and Department in relation to this and I hope we can get an outcome that meets our concern and that it can be done in time before the end of the year, not like last year when it was St.Patrick's Day before the negotiations were concluded. That is not a way to do business. It gives no certainty whatever to the fishing community on either side.

Ignoring Industry Has to Stop

There is a whole raft of environmental stuff going on and it is incredible that we lodged an objection in February of this year to the special area designations announced by Minister Noonan at Montreal in November last without telling anybody and we lodged a very scientific and technical report in relation to that. (Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD announced the creation of two new Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) while on his way to the COP15 UN Biodiversity Conference in Montréal, Can-

ada, covering an additional three million hectares of Ireland's seas). Even though we have written eight to ten times in relation to this, looking to see what is the response to our objection, the only response we have got eight months later is that it is still being looked into.

This is just not good enough. There is no co-ordination between all of the Departments involved. We have taken this up with all of the Ministers and specifically with our Minister (for the Marine) that he needs to be at the forefront of ensuring that we, the fishing industry, are fully consulted about special and protected marine areas and all aspects to do with them. Things should not be happening without us in the industry being at least consulted and our views taken aboard. It is just not acceptable. This attitude has to stop.

Industry Should Get Recognition It Deserves

The report by our organisation's Chief Scientific and Sustainability Officer, Dr Edward Farrell has shown that the on-going efforts by fishermen to reduce their environmental impact, increase their efficiency and contribute to scientific data collection are enhancing the sustainability credentials of seafood. The industry does not get a good enough press/media coverage at times. While the fishing industry sometimes struggles to get the recognition it deserves for its importance to the Irish economy or as producers of highly nutritious low impact food, this is proof positive of the sustained work which KFO members are investing into long-term sustainability.

A report commissioned by BIM earlier this year, in which the KFO had significant input, found that carbon emissions for the sector are less than 2% of those produced in other key food sectors. It also stated that the carbon footprint of small pelagic species, such as mackerel and herring, is a mere fraction of land-based animal protein production.



Aodh O'Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers' Organisation describes the 'rogue initiative of fixing inflated unilateral quotas' by Norway and other Coastal States which are undermining sustainability of key pelagic stocks and attempting to colonise Irish maritime space.

A radical reset of the EU approach to Norway and other Coastal States is called for ahead of the EU's annual quota sharing and access negotiations for 2024. These States undermine Ireland's commitment to long-term sustainability of key pelagic stocks.

Giving free access to coastal players is akin to a colonisation of our valuable maritime space. We need to proactively defend the rights of our fishermen and the coastal communities that depend on them. The EU - Norway negotiations on 2024 quota sharing and access commence in earnest next week. Among those quotas up for discussion again are mackerel and blue whiting, two species that are economically important to Ireland. Ireland was a pioneer in establishing mackerel and blue whiting fisheries, and successful in opening up global food markets. The Irish seafood sector is heavily reliant on these mackerel and blue whiting fisheries. However, Norway and the Faroe Islands consistently in recent years have pursued unilateral quota grabs, systematically overfishing these species by up to 44% yearly. Such practices impact negatively on the stocks, threatening Ireland's supply.

Norway has unilaterally secured an enormous share of the total allowable catch (TAC) of blue whiting. This stock is found mainly in Irish waters in the spring of each year, meaning Norway requires access to Irish waters to catch its large quota. The catch opportunities available to Norway in Irish waters amounted to 224,000 metric tonnes (MT) last year.

This amounts to chronic overfishing in excess of the scientific recommendations. It is driven by the objective of establishing entitlements based on a bogus track record, at the expense of the responsible approach of EU Member States. Furthermore, this rogue initiative of fixing inflated unilateral quotas, as again for mackerel, is a contributory factor to Ireland facing a second consecutive year of mackerel quota cuts

of minimum 5%. It is an additional blow when compounded by the 2024 Brexit transfer instalment of approximately 4%."

The Irish industry is united in opposing any unfettered access for blue whiting in EU waters.

The essentially "free access" for blue whiting in EU waters must stop. Access is hugely beneficial from a cost perspective to Norwegian vessels. If Norway wishes to continue to benefit from an EU access quota for blue whiting in 2024 and the years that follow, then Norway will have to compensate the EU, and Ireland particularly, in species of interest to it.

EU Aid Welcome

The announcement of over €25m in EU aid to the Irish pelagic sector is welcome, as an important first step, in addressing the massive losses the sector sustained due to Brexit.

Quota transfers from Ireland to the UK post-Brexit created an estimated loss of €28m a year to the Irish fishing industry. Most of this loss was sustained by the pelagic sector, so this aid scheme is a welcome first measure in compensating the fleet for this massive loss.

The scheme has been in the pipeline for some time and Marine Minister Charlie McConalogue had made a commitment to introduce it. The State aid scheme will be fully funded by the European Commission and will take the form of direct grants to fishing vessels.

The next step is just as important however. The Irish Government needs to collaborate with the fishing industry, coastal communities and the EU to reverse the decline in the seafood sector. Other EU and non-EU members in Europe are achieving growth and it's time the Irish Government supported growth too. We need to build the capacity for sustainable growth with a modern fleet, a skilled workforce and efficient regulatory processes.

- Wanted -

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ISEFPO - Working For The Fishermen

John Lynch, CEO of the Irish South and East Fish Producers' Organisation says the new scheme for non-EU crew is a positive, but outlines concern about haddock quotas in the Celtic Sea, describes Norwegian behaviour about mackerel as "disgraceful" and stresses the need for consultation with the fishing industry about offshore renewable energy developments.

One thing that is good is that we have the new scheme for non-EU crew. We had a meeting with the Department of Enterprise and BIM to finalise the technicalities of the scheme for introduction early in the New Year, which will allow for more crew to be brought in if they are required. That is a positive.

We are still working on the TACs and Quotas for next year and there is a lot of concern about the haddock in the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea which is our biggest concern. The scientific advice is very poor. This is particularly in the Celtic Sea where the advice is for a minus 31 per cent. That situation about the stock is not being seen by fishermen. There are a lot of fish on the grounds and the scientific advice is going to cause a lot of problems with the landing obligation in relation to vessels. I've made this point also last month and it is causing a lot of concern if 31 per cent is applied to that TAC. That is a big problem.

Disgraceful Norwegian Behaviour

Norway's behaviour in regard to mackerel is disgraceful. The EU is pandering to them.

It should be taking a much stronger line. The EU could have used the Trade Agreement to put pressure on Norway. What Norway is doing is very damaging. The signs for mackerel are not good, which are indicating a downward trajectory. The problem in this regard will increase with cuts last year and this year as the stock goes down. Norway, Iceland and Faroes are over-fishing the quota. They are causing damage to sustainability of the stock.

The Fishing Industry Has to be Consulted

All the fishing organisations got together to make a submission about offshore renewable energy proposals for the South Coast. We do recognise that wind energy is on the way, it is part of Government policy, but the fishing industry has to be consulted in picking locations for this development. A lot of the ground is critical to the fishing industry and fishing must be protected. It is an essential food supplier. We recognise that wind energy is coming into the marine space, but we want to see it done in a logical way with a system where we have an agreed input into it and agreed locations for wind energy.

SFPA Issues Information Notice to Industry on Export Health Certification of Crab Consignments to China

Cadmium levels in crab amended from the 1st November 2023

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) recently issued an Information Notice to industry in relation to technical requirements for Irish companies trading with China in an evolving third country regulatory environment. In June 2023, the Chinese competent authority, the General Administration of Customs China (GACC), updated their regulatory standard for cadmium levels in crab.

The previous Chinese maximal limit of 0.5 mg/kg of cadmium concentration in crab was amended to 3.0 mg/kg. From the 1st of November 2023, the SFPA intend to introduce compliance assurance with these standards for the purposes of export health certification of crab to China. The previous per-consignment cadmium testing regime will be replaced from the 1st of November 2023 by a routine export certification model supported by a cadmium-specific background monitoring programme under which Irish Food Business Operators (FBOs) will export crab to China. This will align with current routine controls and will be supported by sampling results provided by the

Marine Institute. The compliance standard will be the new Chinese limit of 3.0 mg/kg.

Irish exporters who wish to export crab to China, whether live or processed crab products, need to be registered with GACC. FBOs already on the approved exporters of live aquatic animals list who wish to resume exports to China based on these changes, should contact the SFPA Trade Compliance and Internal Audit Unit in order to ensure compliance with the above cadmium requirements. Similarly, if you wish to register with GACC for the first time or have any other queries on this notice please contact SFPATradeandAudit@sfpa.ie.



IFPEA

Irish Fish Processors & Exporters Association

Brendan Byrne, CEO of the Irish Processors and Exporters Association says that there needs to be a fundamental root-and-branch assessment of the Irish fishing industry and criticises the overfishing by Coastal States.

The Irish pelagic sector is a key economic driver for our coastal communities. This sector is challenged by Brexit and the external factors of overfishing by certain Coastal States. We must take a united approach at National and EU Level to defend our interests and to face down this irresponsible activity."

We welcome the confirmation that the Irish fish processing sector is to be directly supported from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve fund for the loss of turn-over experienced in 2021 due to the negative impacts of Brexit.

The announcement is only going to meet a fraction of the losses incurred by the Irish processing industry, but it is a significant

support measure and will have a massive positive impact across the sector. Subsequent years need to be examined closely, especially before the BAR deadline lapses.

The cumulative effect of the TCA/Brexit deal is now really negatively impacting the sector and as we enter year 4 of the aftermath of the TCA many businesses are really suffering.

A fundamental root-and-branch assessment of the Irish fishing industry needs to be undertaken, as all the key indices are showing constant decline in landings and processing activity across the board. This, contrasted with other EU Member States, shows us to be constantly in negative growth.



Congratulations to the Deckhand Foundation class of 2023! It was a jam packed six weeks. The students completed four certificated safety courses (STCW), Short range radio course and learned essential skills including basic net mending, rope work, stability, chartwork, care of the catch, sustainability, food safety and marine engineering operations. Three of the students have progressed to the Fishing Vessel Engineering Skills programme, running at the College for the next 14 weeks. We wish all the students the very best in their future endeavours. For further information on the Deckhand Foundation programme, Fishing Engineering Skills programme, or other training, visit BIM's website bim.ie/fisheries/training/



There is a valuable opportunity to convene a multi-agency stakeholder platform to facilitate implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture, notes IFA Aquaculture Executive Teresa Morrissey.



There Must Be an Immediate Effort Made to Reform, Modernise, and Improve the Aquaculture Licensing System

IFA Aquaculture

Welcoming the publication of the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030, IFA Aquaculture Chair Michael Mulloy said: “This is a very important Government policy document for the Irish Aquaculture sector as it sets out the government policy objectives and key actions until 2030.”

However, he also noted that considerable investment and appropriate legislative changes will be required to achieve the objectives of the plan: “If this National Strategic Plan is to be most effective for the development of the Irish aquaculture industry, there must be an immediate effort made to reform, modernise, and improve the aquaculture licensing system.

“Appropriate legislative changes will be required to facilitate implementation of the strategic objectives and specific actions for the future sustainable development of the Irish Aquaculture sector can only be achieved if the proposed investment is underpinned by appropriate legislation and

policy.”

There is also a valuable opportunity to convene a multi-agency stakeholder platform to facilitate implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Strategic Plan.

The ‘Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030’ was published by Minister Charlie McConalogue, following Cabinet approval. There are 4 high-level objectives and 58 key actions which include: an improved online aquaculture licensing system, increasing knowledge and innovation for the sector, human capacity building and a skills gap analysis to enable career path development among the targets of the plan over the next 7 years.

While welcoming it the IFA Chairman has made clear the caveats and requirements that are needed to achieve its successful implementation.

The Chair of IFA Aquaculture Michael Mulloy has emphasised the considerable investment and appropriate legislative changes that will be required and the immediate effort needed to reform, modernise and improve the aquaculture licensing system.

New National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D, has published the new National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development (NSPSA) 2030.

Welcoming the new NSPSA, the Minister said, “The last number of years have seen a considerable shift in the economic and environmental conditions under which Irish aquaculture operates. Issues such as the drive towards carbon net zero, the impact of the UK’s exit from the European Union or the global effects of the war in Ukraine have all impacted on the way in which industry operates and indeed the direction in which it must develop.”

The NSPSA’s vision for aquaculture to 2030 foresees a sector that maintains its competitive edge through low impact-production, while building commercial resilience through technical innovation and diversification. This in turn supports a more diverse consumer and market base aligned to increased recognition of Irish aquaculture’s growing status as a key provider of sustainable, low carbon and healthy food.

Aquaculture in Ireland has grown significantly since the 1980’s and today the sector produces around 40,000 tonnes of high value finfish and shellfish, while directly employing around 1,800 people mainly in rural locations. Worth around € 175 million in 2021, aquaculture is a major contributor to national seafood production and food security.

The Minister continued: “With the publication of the NSPSA I am putting in place the necessary building blocks for the continued development of a sustainable, profitable, competitive and market-focused

aquaculture sector in Ireland, positioning it to make the maximum long-term economic and social contribution to our coastal communities and Ireland as a whole, while optimising environmental performance and supporting the natural capital upon which it depends.”

The NSPSA, the successor to the 2014-2020 Plan, will be rolled out over a ten-year period to 2030. It has four high-level objectives – i) building resilience and competitiveness, ii) participation in the green transition, iii) ensuring social acceptance and consumer information and iv) increasing knowledge and innovation - and some 58 actions such as the rollout of a user-friendly online aquaculture licencing and information system, increased focus on fish welfare, support for innovation in aquaculture and the development of a human capacity plan to promote the sector as an attractive career option and to provide the necessary skills required over the lifetime of the Plan.

The Minister concluded, “This Plan sets the path for the Irish Aquaculture sector so that it is resilient, competitive and is a global standard in sustainability and quality. With the implementation of this Plan, I believe the aquaculture sector has the ability to build and maintain its competitive edge into the future.”

The National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture (NSPSA) is available at gov.ie/en/publication



The Kimar Helen on her way home into Castletownbere. Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography

BIM provides **essential training** and **skills development** for the **Irish seafood industry** at its two **National Fisheries Colleges of Ireland**, **mobile coastal training units**, **in-person workshops** and **online programmes**.

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Course
Contacts:

CASTLETOWNBERE COLLEGE

Della O'Sullivan
T: +353(0) 2771230
E: della.osullivan@bim.ie

GREENCASTLE COLLEGE

Maria McCarron
T: +353(0) 749381068
E: maria.mccarron@bim.ie

COASTAL TRAINING UNIT 1

Bryan Holmes
T: +353 87 761 7637
E: bryan.holmes@bim.ie

COASTAL TRAINING UNIT 2

Huan Tan
T: +353(0) 873940763
E: huan.tan@bim.ie



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SFPA's Heavy Handed Approach Towards Visiting Fishing Vessels Labelled an "Embarrassment" to Killybegs

Cormac Burke, Chairman of the IFSA states that the Swedish Authorities have handed out a correct minor administrative fine to Swedish vessel for what the SFPA tried to blow up into a 'major incident'



The fishing industry in Killybegs, Co. Donegal, and other Irish ports, will more than likely suffer as a result of the SFPA's (Sea Fisheries Protection 'Authority') over indulgence in fisheries inspections and controls which will discourage pelagic vessels coming from other countries to land fish to Irish processors and to avail of services of Irish ancillary service companies.

The latest in a series of undiplomatic incidents over the past two years involving the SFPA and visiting fishing vessels comes as a statement released (see page 2) by the SFPA that they "note the decision of Swedish Authorities to impose a fine on a Swedish registered fishing vessel, Carmona GG-330, following an infringement detected by the SFPA at Killybegs in October 2022".

In trying to blow up this case to make it sound like some kind of huge attempt of illegal fishing or mis-reporting of catches by the master of the Carmona GG-330, the SFPA state that the Swedish Authorities have, based on a case sent to them by the SFPA, fined the master of the vessel for under-recording Herring catches by 372.12%, in the operational logbook estimates, of outside the margin of tolerance, which was detected following a supervised weighing on landing at Killybegs in October 2022.

That's the headline to the public from the SFPA - but now for the reality...

On arriving in Killybegs to land a large catch of mackerel to a local processing factory last October, the master of the vessel informed the SFPA that he estimated there was a minor herring by-catch of approximately 10 tonnes but that he could not give an exact figure - which later transpired to be 28 tonnes, but this amount made up just a fraction of the 600+ tonnes of mackerel being landed by the vessel.

And in making much of the fact that the Swedish Authorities have now fined the vessel for this incident, the SFPA has omitted to tell people that the level of that fine handed down in Sweden was just €170.00 - in other words a minor administrative fine for a minor administrative miscalculation by the vessel master.

Yes the amount of bycatch may have exceeded the EU/CFP 10% tolerance margin but there also needs to be some common sense approach when taking into account the small percent of the total volume of the catch actually was and the fact that the master of the vessel openly stated at the outset that he was unsure of the definite amount of herring bycatch through the catch of mainly mackerel.

Contrast this with the vast amounts of blue whiting being caught by Norwegian vessels in Irish waters (224,000 tonnes this year in EU waters / 106,000 tonnes of that in Irish waters) but which the SFPA / Irish Navy do not inspect for weights and species bycatch before these vessels return back to Norway to land their catches.

Also contrast this with the Dutch factory ships working off the west coast of Ireland

for many years without any monitoring or inspection by these same Irish 'authorities'.

In which case the turning of a blind eye to huge and obvious non monitoring of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of Irish fish from Irish waters by the SFPA makes all the more farcical the jackboot approach towards the Swedish vessel's minor error.

No Irish State control over the SFPA

Less than three weeks ago we heard Minister Charlie McConalogue on RTÉ News saying that the BIM announcement of a €50 million investment from BAR funds for the fish processing industry in Killybegs would, as well as increasing efficiency, "encourage vessels from other countries who might have landed elsewhere to now instead land in Killybegs".

And, in his recent Budget speech McConalogue claimed that his aim was "to ensure that this industry not only survives, but is transformed to generate economic growth and sustain jobs".

But neither the Minister, nor the Taoiseach it would seem, have any control over this anti industry body and given the unnecessary harassment by the SFPA in this case it's clear that any Swedish vessel master will think twice about ever landing fish again in Killybegs and, with the much publicised controversy of the treatment of

visiting blue whiting vessels last year, the damage to the Irish processing, and local ancillary service companies, local employment and the entire local economy is massive.

So once again we have the situation where the Minister is making all the right sound bites about economic growth and encouraging foreign vessels to come to Ireland but meanwhile the SFPA are working in a direct opposite strategy in their efforts to discourage such landings.

As a resident of Killybegs, and an active member of the Irish fishing industry, I am personally embarrassed with the situation regarding this Swedish vessel (which had been invited and encouraged by the Irish processing industry to bring its catch to Ireland) and of the international image that the SFPA continues to portray of Killybegs as a fishing community.

We are constantly being told by the EU that its "a level playing field" with regards to EU regulations and fisheries control & infringements in ALL EU MEMBER STATES - therefore I look forward to the next Irish vessel master who makes a similar minor administrative error regarding by-catch and that the SFPA will be, according to "the level playing field" rule, only able to impose a fine of €170.00.

YOUR INDUSTRY NEEDS YOU!

The Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance (IFSA) continues to lead the fight for justice for Ireland's fishing industry and the coastal communities who rely on it.

The IFSA is a non-profit organisation that receives no funding from any source other than the generous support from fishing vessels, processors, ancillary service companies and individuals.

YOUR support would be greatly appreciated and annual subscription rates are only €20 for an individual, €100 for an inshore vessel or sole trader and a modest rising scale for larger vessels and companies (email ifsacormac@gmail.com for further details on this).

If you want the IFSA motto of '**Your Voice in Our Industry**' to continue to put pressure on this Government and the marine minister to stop neglecting our marine resources then please play your part by making your subscription.

Bank details below and when you make a payment, please email IFSA ifsacormac@gmail.com and a formal receipt will be issued for your files.

Account name: Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance
Acc No: 65603742 Bank: Bank of Ireland, Killybegs, Co. Donegal
Sort Code (NSC): 904907 IBAN: IE29 BOFI 9049 0765 6037 42 BIC: BOFIE2D

Thank you for your support and for becoming a part in this industry's rapidly growing fight for justice.



Cormac Burke,
Chairman,
Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance (IFSA)
087 3913117
Email: ifsacormac@gmail.com
www.irishfishingseafoodalliance.org



A moment of calm pictured on the Beara peninsula by Anne Marie Cronin Photography

Bord Iascaigh Mhara Records Decreases for Fishing Industry for Past Two Years, But Suggests Better This Year

Marine Times Reporter

Bord Iascaigh Mhara published its Annual Report for 2021 at the end of last month, with the most significant finding being that the profitability of the Irish fleet experienced a decrease from 2020 of minus 3% to €313 million, “driven primarily by the war in Ukraine, rising energy costs, inflation and quota reductions linked to Brexit” the State board says.

The fleet spent 52,763 days at sea of which 80% were fishing days. This represents a decrease in effort of 22% and 25% respectively from the previous year (2020). The reduction in fishing days signals a change in the fleet’s operations, influenced by a variety of factors such as quota reductions as a result of the EU/UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and voluntary tie-up schemes. In terms of landed volume and value, the fleet landed over 207,400 tonnes of seafood in 2021, valued at €294 million.

While there was a decrease of 5% in live weight compared to 2020, the landed value experienced an increase of 11%. These figures highlight the importance of managing resources sustainably while also maximising economic returns for the sector.

The report is part of BIM’s National Seafood Survey giving insights into the status of Ire-

land’s catching sector on an annual basis. It examines the economic performance of the fleet and the social demographics of people employed in the sector.

“This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the financial and operational performance of the Irish fishing fleet, shedding light on key insights and identifying notable trends,” BIM says.

“By examining the economic data for the year 2021, we delve into the factors that potentially drive these trends, providing valuable insights into the industry’s dynamics. In terms of structure, presenting economic estimates at a macro national level and at a micro fleet segment level influencing economic performance of the Irish fleet from 2021-2023 based on industry feedback including quotas changes arising from Brexit, inflation, rising costs, and recent developments in Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAS).”

The statistics contained in the report are, therefore, nearly two years out-of-date and the industry has suffered more from Brexit and decommissioning since 2021.

According to BIM, in 2021 “the fishing industry continued to play a crucial role in

generating direct employment, contributing an estimated 2,776 jobs, equivalent to 1,911 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs). This indicates the industry’s significant impact on job creation and its contribution to the overall economy.”

The industry has been impacted quite a bit by changes and challenges since.

Preliminary data for 2022 are referred to in this report. This suggests an overall significant decrease in revenue and profitability.

BIM says:

“There is a decrease in live weight of landings from 2021 to 2022 (-17%) and a decrease in value of -20%. Data projections for 2022 indicate a deteriorating outcome with decreasing revenue (-19%) to €257.7 million and decreasing GVA (-38%) to €120 million. In addition, gross profit in 2022 is predicted to decrease significantly (-42%) to

€45 million combined with a decreasing net profit (-42%) to €40.7 million.”

Projecting forward for 2023, BIM says: “Preliminary forecasts suggest a more positive economic performance compared to 2022. These forecasts anticipate a slight increase in landings weight combined with a higher value of landings, which could contribute to an overall improved economic outlook for the industry.”

In terms of economic indicators, revenue is predicted to decrease (-6%) with increases in gross profit (23%), net profit (11%) and GVA (6%), driven primarily by fish prices and a reduction in energy costs compared to 2022.

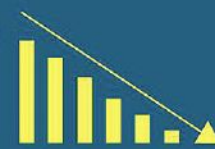
How these predictions work out will not be known fully until the publication of the 2023 report.

The full report is available at: bim.ie

Fishing Fleet 2021

Profitability for 2021:

Decrease
from 2020



Fishing Days:

42,425

(-25%)



Active vessels:

1,351

(+7%)



Days at Sea:

52,763

(-22%)



Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs):

1,911

(+0.4%)



Total Employment:

2,776

(+3%)



Revenue:

€313

million (-3%)



Gross Profit:

€87

million (-36%)



Landings by Weight:

207,400

tonnes (-5%)



Landings by Value:

€294

million (+11%)



Gross Value Added (GVA):

€177

million (-15%)



Net Profit:

€63

million (-39%)



Total Vessel Power:

184,473

kW (+0.2%)



Total Vessel Tonnage:

63,652

GT (+5%)



Return on Fixed Tangible Assets:

9%

(-42%)



Energy Consumption:

75.6

million litres of fuel (-29%)



High Value Mackerel from Irish Waters Should Be for Human Consumption in Ireland Not Animal Feed in Other Countries Nordic States and Iceland Overfish Irish Waters in Rush to Present Bogus Track Record in Negotiations with EU

High value mackerel from Irish waters should be used for human consumption in Ireland, not as an animal feed in other countries. That is a message from the Irish Fishing Industry ahead of the EU’s fishing quota negotiations with Norway.

In a race to carve out a track record, Iceland is reported in just the last two months to have caught 75% of its enormous self-allocated quota for fishmeal. Iceland has pursued for more than a decade a consistent policy of overfishing and it fixes a unilateral mackerel quota almost three times greater than Ireland. Iceland is plundering the mackerel stock, but because it is of poor quality when it migrates into Icelandic and international waters, Icelandic vessels are fishing it for fishmeal.

This mirrors Norway’s irresponsible overfishing to establish a track record for years.

“This irresponsible overfishing in a short period is driven by the objective of establishing entitlements based on a bogus track record. This is at the expense of the responsible approach of EU Member States,” says Aodh O Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO).

“The reckless behaviour of Norway and Iceland is heightened further given that mackerel catches, which would be highly valuable to Ireland for human consumption purposes, are landed or processed in their countries as a source of salmon and animal feed.

“Mackerel is a single shared migratory stock and which spawns predominantly in Irish waters. We rely on a thriving sustainable stock, and we are guided by the best available science in our management of this resource. We condemn the wasteful and unsustainable practice of fishing a valuable commercial species for fish meal and to support an aquaculture industry.”

O Donnell says this utilisation of mackerel is scandalous and amounts to chronic overfishing in excess of the scientific recommendations.

“The Irish seafood sector is heavily reliant on mackerel and blue whiting fisheries. However, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands in recent years have consistently pursued inflated unilateral quota, systematically overfishing these species by over 40% yearly. Such practices impact negatively on the stocks, threatening Ireland’s supply.

“We are at a crossroads and a radical state led change in approach is required. Irish Waters are a rich and valuable resource that must be protected in the long-term national interest, we have too much to lose.”



Tom MacSweeney's Maritime Diary

Trevor Simpson The Cornish Dunmore East Fisherman

I can't remember for how many years I've known Trevor Simpson, but I can remember the occasion on which I first met him.

He was holding forth with powerful evocation on the importance of V-notching lobsters, a development which he helped to introduce. He was part of the East Waterford Lobster Co-op Society



Trevor has been vocal about the fishing industry for all the years I've known him – and particularly about “those politicians and civil servants up in Dublin” who, in his view, haven't done a heck of a lot to support and promote the industry.

He has been a big part of the Dunmore East fishing community since the late 60s, but he isn't even a Waterford man – he's Cornish – and he only arrived in Dunmore because of getting lost in fog!

Cornwall is described by the English authorities as “a county on England's rugged South/Western tip, forming a peninsula culminating at the promontory of Land's End. Dubbed the ‘Cornish Riviera,’ it is home to picturesque harbour villages such as Fowey and Falmouth.”

Why would anyone want to leave such a place?

Here's Trevor's explanation: “It was mainly due to the massive oil spill from the wreck of the tanker Torrey Canyon. (It ran aground on Pollard's Rock on the extreme western end of the Seven Stones between the Cornish mainland and the Isles of Scilly on 18 March 1967 and spilled over 30 million gallons of crude oil. It was eventually sunk by the RAF bombing the wreck to try to control the pollution.) It severely affected our lobster fishing. I had a clear choice – either pack up fishing or go fishing elsewhere. The Republic of Ireland Government had passed a law prohibiting the taking of shellfish by divers, a sensible law, having witnessed the damage done to Cornwall's crawfish stock by those whom we called ‘the rubber-suited van-

dals.’ So, on a fine, clear August morning I left home port of Newquay in my 35ft. lobster boat, *Reaper* and set a course for Ireland. The fog closed in and, after a long, gruelling voyage lost in dense fog, I had the good fortune to arrive accidentally in the harbour of Dunmore East in Co. Waterford.”

Trevor had arranged with BIM to settle on the West Coast, but his navigational ‘error’ brought him to the eastern side of Ireland instead!

There he and his family settled and have remained.

The support they got from the coastal community around Dunmore has been considerable, as Trevor became a stalwart part of the inshore fishing fleet: “We had a few ups-and-downs. I had engine trouble and other problems with my boat that almost destroyed us. However, just when it seemed that I must surely fail, someone always came along and helped me out.”

Amongst his neighbours were “fishermen, river pilots, trawler owners and lifeboat men and we always felt we were among friends. For most of the year I fished

ful writer of the voice of Derrick Cranpole who graced my RTE programme, *Seascapes*, on many occasions as he often excoriated State neglect of the fishing industry.



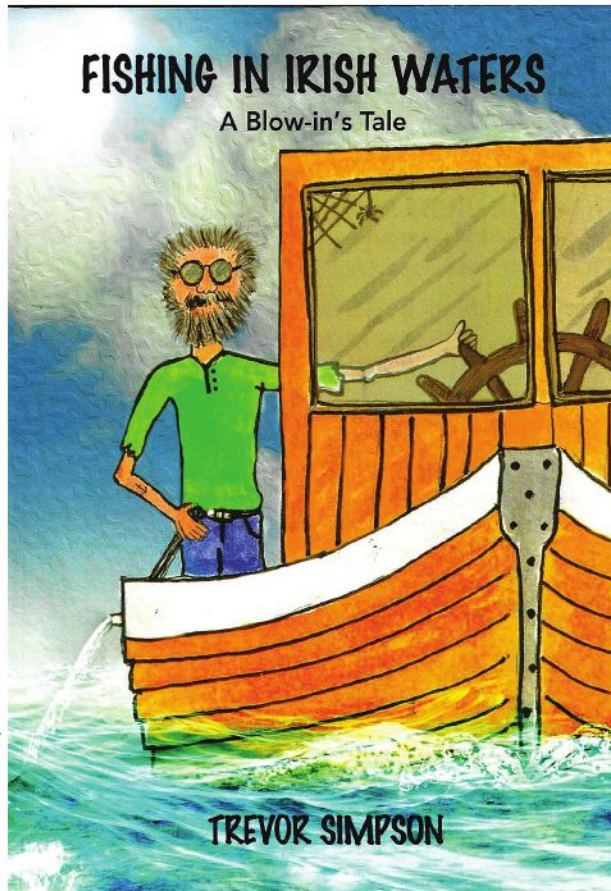
To his credit, he hasn't changed his opinions. In his latest book, just published – ‘FISHING IN IRISH WATERS – A Blow-in's Tale’ – he concludes: “A series of punishing restrictions have been imposed on Irish fishermen by successive Governments. There are so many regulations it is now practically impossible for a young person to become a small boat owner/fisherman.”

His book recalls his experiences of cod fishing, dredging for oysters in Kerry, trawling and much else, accompanied by photographs and drawings/cartoons. It's a good read, with quite a bit of humour and shows determination to overcome the difficulties of the fishing life.

If you'd like to get a copy email mydadsdiaries@gmail.com where Trevor's son, Brendan, is dealing with supply.

Trevor's last book was: “A Cornish Fisherman's Irish Diary” and before that there was “Diary of a Cornish Fisherman: Newquay, 1962-1967” and there was also Derrick Cranpole's writing to enjoy.

*** If you're wondering about the cartoon image at the top of the column, instead of my photograph, it's the figurine I was presented with by former Courtmacsherry RNLI Mechanic Micheál Hurley when I launched his recent history of the village lifeboat station. It was made by Gillian Orsati of Abbey Crafts in the village. I rather like it!**



my own boat for lobsters or salmon and, when Winter approached, I would get a berth on a local trawler and that took care of the hungriest part of the year.”

Trevor has published several books and, though kept quiet for many years, it can be revealed now that he was also the wonder-

Traditional Willow Pots

Traditional willow pots have been used by crab and lobster fishermen for generations, but the craft of making them has almost disappeared due to the emergence of newer technologies.



But the craft of making them will be shown at the All Living Things Environmental Film Festival on Sunday, December 10, at Dunmore East Sailing Club in County Waterford by Brendan Simpson. The festival is on all weekend, organised by Tasneem Khan of S.E.A. (Science, Ecology, Art) School, Dunmore East

Groundfish Survey Underway

The annual Irish Groundfish Survey (IGFS) for 2023 is being carried out by the Marine Institute off the North West, West and South Coasts until Saturday, December 16.

The demersal trawl survey consists of approximately 170 fishing hauls of 30-minute duration each in ICES areas VIa, VIIb, VIIg and VIIj. The survey is being conducted by RV Celtic Explorer (callsign EIGB) which displays appropriate lights and signals. It tows a high headline GOV 36/47 demersal trawl during fishing operations.

The Marine Institute requests that commercial fishing and other marine operators keep a two-nautical-mile area around the tow mid-points clear of any gear or apparatus during the survey period outlined above. More details on Marine Notice No 68 of 2023.

Trinity College Looking for Coastal Assistance

Researchers from Trinity College Dublin would like coastal communities to work with them on an 18-month climate crisis study project.

“LEVERS” is a Trinity-led Horizon Europe education project for which it wants to form “cross-sectoral alliances” around the country to collaborate on a climate justice project in their area. Schools, community groups and other organisations within a region, spanning a range of ages and demographics are being sought.



BIM Courses Available to Meet Safe Manning Requirements and Changes to Fishing Certificates of Competency.

If you need a fishing Certificate of Competency (CoC) or have one and need to have it endorsed or re-validated BIM can help you with the training.

We offer **Second Hand Limited/Second Hand Full Certificate of Competency training** in both BIM colleges several times a year.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY ENDORSEMENTS

Fishers who hold a Second Hand Limited or Second Hand Full CoC and who wish to skipper a vessel greater than 15 metres in length can apply to have their CoC endorsed by the Marine Survey Office.

Recent changes in regulations (see Marine Notice 41 of 2023) state that the Department of Transport will no longer issue CoCs for the deck officer qualification of Second Hand Special, except for those who have already commenced a period of training for that qualification. All training, including sea service, must be completed before **1 July 2026**.

RE-VALIDATION OF CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY

Under the new regulations, an expiration date has been placed on all CoCs for fishing vessels, for both deck and engineer officers. The new regulations provide that all CoCs can be revalidated for a further period of five years, and every five years thereafter, subject to the requirement to complete updated training in Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention and Firefighting (FPFF), and Advanced Firefighting (AFF). BIM will be scheduling extra PST courses along with courses in Updated Fire Prevention & Firefighting and Updated Advanced Firefighting (one day each) from 2024 onwards.

You are encouraged to give yourself ample time to complete the re-validation and enquire about available training dates.

Please contact BIM to discuss and book any further training you may need in relation to the above.

Castletownbere College

National Fisheries College of Ireland,
Castletownbere, Co. Cork

Della O'Sullivan, College Administrator

T: + 353 27 7 1230 E: 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



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Killybegs to Benefit from Significant €50 Million Seafood Sector Investment

Two Killybegs fish processors have landed €12.1 million in funding under the Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme, implemented by BIM. One of the country's busiest seafood hubs, the Donegal fishing town is to benefit from a total €50 million investment aimed at futureproofing the region's fish processing sector and maintaining and increasing jobs.

Several companies are currently undergoing substantial developments which will modernise seafood processing facilities and add cutting-edge energy efficiency initiatives, according to Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM).

Two of the businesses making substantial investments, with the support of the Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme, are Gallagher Bros. (Fish Merchants) Ltd and Killybegs Seafoods. Between them they have been allocated the top two highest grants under the scheme, totalling €12.1 million, and are spending a total of €31 million. The scheme, implemented by BIM, was recommended by the Seafood Taskforce established by Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D.

The €50 million being invested in various Killybegs based companies will make it a more attractive location for fishing vessels to land and discharge catch that might otherwise go to the UK, mainland Europe, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Managing Director of Killybegs Seafoods, John McGuinness, said the company's total investment is part of a long-term strategy to ensure sustainability of the business, and to maintain employment in the Killybegs region.

"The primary objective of this investment is to bring transformational change to the business, enabling us to process larger volumes of fish more efficiently, and to create capacity for the development of

increased value-added produce, primarily mackerel fillets," said Mr McGuinness.

Mr McGuinness said the development addresses key risks the company is currently facing including reduced mackerel quotas, increased energy costs and difficulty in hiring seasonal staff. "All of these factors have the potential for a significant impact on the company's performance," he said. "We would not have embarked on this project without the support of BIM and the Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme. That was the trigger for us to take the plunge."

Killybegs Seafoods was founded in 1968 by John McGuinness's father, Sean, grandfather, Josie and two other partners, Seamus Tully and Paddy Gallagher. John and his brothers Eamon and Donal joined the business in the early 1990's and 2,000's. During the busy season the business employs 90 local people.

Meanwhile like Killybegs Seafoods Gallagher Bros. (Fish Merchants) is very much a family business. Established more than 100 years ago in 1919 by brothers Jack and Phil Gallagher, it employs 100 staff in the busy season.

Director, Davd Gallagher, a third generation family member, said the multi million euro investment will see a new plant and automation process transform the energy efficiencies within production.

The development is part of Gallagher Bros Project Green Factory Upgrade which will increase the emphasis on further pro-

cessing of Mackerel and Blue Whiting products.

"We had plans to upgrade before Brexit happened, and everything stalled," David Gallagher continued. "The Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme grant through BIM was the shot in the arm we needed to be more audacious. We are very excited now about the future."

"We will be able to target more premium customers and the automated system will enable a flexibility in production to offer high-quality mackerel fillets."

Funded by the European Union under the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR), the Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme will deliver up to €45M in funding to the Irish seafood sector.

BIM CEO, Caroline Bocquel, welcomed the investment in Killybegs, which she said is a very important centre for the fish processing sector in Ireland. "It is vital that our seafood processing companies are innovating and keep up to date with automation technologies and energy efficiencies in order to remain competitive."

"The Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme is helping fish processors with transformational change, and building more environmentally friendly, sustainable and competitive enterprises. In the wake of reduced supply of raw material, the scheme is vital in supporting capital investments that put an emphasis on "creating more from less", encouraging processors to produce higher value product and focus on secondary processing and beyond."

Other seafood processors in Killybegs who make up the total €50 million investment include Norfish Ltd, Premier Fish Products, Donegal Fish, Sean Ward Fish Exports, Island Seafoods and Albatross Seafoods.

Killybegs - Achill Island Connection 'Rescues' RNLI Crew!

A recent trip for the Achill Island lifeboat to Killybegs for a 'bottom scrub' at Mooney Boats brought their crew into contact with 'one of their own' and experienced his longstanding generosity to the Achill lifeboat and the RNLI.

On arrival at the boatyard, a serious engine problem was detected which involved the lifeboat coming off service for a number of days. This resulted in the crew of seven having to return home by road to Achill.

With local taxi cabs only licensed to carry five passengers, the dilemma soon came to the attention of Eamon McHugh. Eamon is the owner of the 63m fishing vessel 'Antarctic' and managing director of the Antarctic Fishing Company based at Killybegs for over 40 years, he is also a native son of Achill, a member of the well known and highly respected McHugh family from Bullmouth.

When the crew's situation reached Eamon, he quickly dispatched his company mini bus to collect them from the boatyard and transport them directly to their homes in Achill and at absolutely no charge to the RNLI.

Eamon and his family have been longstanding supporters of the RNLI and the Achill Island Lifeboat since their station opened in 1995. A spokesperson for the Achill Island RNLI said; "We are delighted to publicly thank Eamon for coming to our rescue on this occasion and to him and his family for their continued support of our Lifeboat all down the years in Saving Lives at Sea. Truly, one of our own!"

Killybegs Looking for Alternatives to Diesel

On-going efforts by fishermen to reduce their environmental impact, increase their efficiency and contribute to scientific data collection is continuing to enhance the sustainability credentials of seafood, Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation has claimed. The major Donegal-based fishing group is also looking for "ways and means of weaning the vessels off diesel."

"While the fishing industry sometimes struggles to get the recognition it deserves for its importance to the Irish economy or as producers of highly nutritious low impact food, this is proof positive of the sustained work which KFO members are investing into long-term sustainability," the Organisation's Chief Scientific and Sustainability Officer, Dr Edward Farrell, has said.

A report commissioned by the State's seafood development agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) earlier this year to which the KFO had significant input, found that carbon emissions for the sector are less than 2% of those produced in other key food sectors. It also stated that the carbon footprint of small pelagic species, such as mackerel and herring, is a mere fraction of that of land-based animal protein production.

"The KFO participated in a ground breaking project called NEPTUNUS, the primary objective of which was to develop a life-cycle inventory database of seafood for the Atlantic Area. In addition to analysing fuel use and catch, the project has provided a carbon footprint for pelagic species which reflects very positively on the industry here," according to Dr. Farrell. "Killybegs' close proximity to the main fishing grounds and the seasonal, targeted and selective fishing approach used by our vessels distinguishes them from foreign fleets landing the same species.

"While fuel accounts for the majority of the industry's emissions, it is important to put this into context and look at the return on that energy investment, which in the case of small pelagic species was considerably higher than for land-based animal protein production.

Dr. Farrell also revealed that the KFO is looking for alternatives to diesel as the fuel for its fleet: "We are probing ways and means of weaning the vessels off diesel. The KFO is working with a number of interested parties and research groups to explore the options, potential and realities of decarbonisation and the energy transition for our members' vessels. As an industry which is wholly reliant on natural ecosystems for sustainable food production, the KFO is fully committed to sustainable fishing and ongoing reduction of its carbon footprint."

Fishermen Welcome Funding to Mitigate Impact of Brexit

The Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation has welcomed the announcement of a fund established to compensate fishermen from the grim consequences which Brexit has had on their businesses.

Commenting following Minister Charlie McConalogue's announcement, KFO CEO, Seán O'Donoghue said: "We welcome the announcement - the €25.6million support package will help alleviate some, but certainly not all, of the financial hit inflicted on Refrigerated Sea Water (RSW) Tier 1 and Tier 2 vessels since Brexit.

"That said, we're far from through with Brexit. This is but another step on a long, arduous road and we in the KFO, will be continuing to fight for equity in levelling out the impact of the financial ramifications of the fish lost to Britain through 'burden sharing' with our European colleagues. In the words of the Department, this allows vessels 'sufficient time to put in place longer-term restructuring measures'. It's going to be a long battle but one to which we are fully committed. We won't be found wanting when it comes to our members' interests and livelihoods. This a fundamental question of fairness," said Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation CEO, Seán O'Donoghue.

In October 2021, a Government established Seafood Taskforce rightly recognised that the end of the Brexit withdrawal period brought about the biggest change and disruption in EU-UK relations in 50 years,



Colm Markey MEP, Aodh O'Donnell, CEO, IFPO, Martin Meehan, CEO Premier Fish Products

across all aspects of trade and society but most notably on the Irish seafood sector.

Ireland's mackerel sector will shed more than 1,200 jobs by 2030 because of Brexit. From 2021 to the end of 2023, pelagic fishermen will have had more than 37,000 tonnes of their mackerel quota stripped away as a direct result of Brexit, resulting in a commercial loss of more than €52million.

Colm Markey MEP Tells Fishing Industry Meeting in Killybegs "The Time Has Come to Stand Up and Demand Our Fair Share"

Ahead of the EU's fishing quota sharing and access negotiations, Colm Markey MEP is calling for a united stance, saying the time has come to stand up and demand our fair share. Speaking in Killybegs to seafood industry representatives and stakeholders involved in catching and processing, he said, "it is of utmost importance that our voice resonates loudly and clearly in Brussels."

"I am well aware of the challenges being faced and it is crucial that we present a united robust stance in the EU. As negotiations on quotas for the coming year get underway, we must ensure that Ireland is well represented. We are a significant contributor in terms of the EU's access to fishing waters, yet we do not receive a reciprocal allocation in return. The time has come to stand up and demand our fair share."

Markey outlined and updated the meeting of his ongoing work with the Parliament Fisheries Committee (PECH), sharing insights of the European perspective. He emphasised that he is in constant communication with Commissioner Sinkevičius to articulate Irish views. The meeting was hosted by the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO), the Irish Fish Processors & Exporters Association (IFPEA), and Killybegs Stevedoring Ltd. Markey also visited local business Premier Fish Products where CEO Martin Meehan showed him their op-

eration and the processing of mackerel.

"The fishing industry plays a vital role in this region and its imperative that we do everything we can to strengthen the sector. It is important for me to come to Killybegs once again to listen to those concerns," said Markey.

Acknowledging Markey's continuous engagement with the industry and his fourth visit to Killybegs, Aodh O'Donnell, CEO of the IFPO says "Colm works tirelessly at European level to advocate and represent the fishing sector. He is a strong voice and has facilitated engagement directly with senior executives in DG Mare. He is highly regarded for his frank no nonsense approach and has represented us effectively with European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius. We are fortunate to have him work with us to push for a reversal of the relative decline of the sector.

The Chief Executive of IFPEA, Brendan Byrne, says, "Colm is always available to meet and represent our interests at National and EU Level. He is keenly aware of the significance of the industry to coastal communities and has spoken out on our behalf at various fora. In the last year, he was resolute in supporting our campaign to keep the Norwegian fleet outside the Irish box and to secure a precedent in relation to this. He showed great resilience and was quick to call out the Norwegians and others for their abuse and unilateral quota setting. He is a friend in Government and is sincere in defending our interests".

Manus Boyle of Fine Gael and Chair of Donegal District and Secretary for Killybegs, Bruckless & Dunkineely Branch, thanked Colm and his team for the ongoing support for the seafood industry.

"Killybegs is the engine of growth in the South Donegal hinterland and accounts for a high level of employment. Fishing, processing, and the ancillary service providers underpin the socio-economic development of this area. We appreciate Colm's commitment and his deep understanding of the challenges faces by the sector. Today, we outlined the ongoing impacts of Brexit on this region and the need for a level playing field with Europe. We discussed our priorities and heard some ideas for the upcoming EU Council fishery negotiations."

BIM New Fishermen Scheme

Need help with your Grant and Bank Applications?

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Art Kavanagh QFA
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Glenlee
Killybegs
Co. Donegal
Ireland

353-74-9732915

353-87-6774455

artokavanagh@gmail.com

nanobOx Develops Groundbreaking Water Treatment Technology That Will Cut Aquaculture Costs

A groundbreaking new energy-efficient technology that adds oxygen to water using nanobubbles is set to be a game changer for fish farmers and those working in the aquaculture sector.



nanobOx, Founder and CEO, Dr John Favier with Co-Founder Dr Mohammad Ghaani.

nanobOx, founded by Dr John Favier and Dr Mohammad Ghaani, has patented pioneering water treatment technology that will increase productivity and reduce energy when aerating water by generating nano-sized bubbles from ambient air. This maintains oxygen levels in water for much longer and at much less energy cost than conventional methods of aeration.

As John explains: “In land-based aquaculture, the energy cost of oxygenation is often the second highest operating expense after feed. Water aeration consumes about 2% of global electricity production, and equipment for aerating and oxygenating water is a multi-billion-dollar market.”

“What we have developed is a low energy water aeration technology with the potential to significantly cut energy bills. The nanobubble generators we have developed can be solar or battery-powered and have no moving parts, so they are easy to clean and maintain. In addition, the technology is highly scalable and can oxygenate water at high flowrates.”

“Maintaining the level of dissolved oxygen in water is a costly and critical component, not just for aquaculture, but also for agriculture, wastewater treatment, and environmental remediation, so there is a potential huge market for this new technology,” said John.

nanobOx was part of the 2022 BIM Aquatech Innovations Studio Programme, run by Hatch Blue. Even though John is experienced in starting companies, he said the Innovation Studio Lab was a huge help in developing the business and gave him a great education in aquaculture.

“We learned a lot about the challenges and market drivers for aquaculture producers in different market segments. The Aquatech Innovations Studio also operates like an accelerator: they helped us identify

and qualify our value proposition; they showed us how our technology can increase profitability and sustainability; and they gave us the opportunity to pitch our ideas and develop our business strategy for aquaculture.”

The networking and connections we made at the Innovations Studio are still benefiting nanobOx. “I am still in touch with many of the companies we connected with, and with the experts from BIM and Hatch Blue, who put us through our paces during the two-week programme.”

“It really helped us to think about our business beyond Ireland. The Irish market has good potential for growth but is still quite small, and our aquaculture business will be export driven. We are looking at big markets in Europe, North America and Asia.”

nanobOx, which is a spin out from UCD, is currently in the process of closing its first investment round, having attracted interest from leading agritech and deep-tech venture capital investors. “The investment will fund field trials of our technology”, says John. “Following completion of the trials, we will be seeking further investment to fund our go-to-market and further product development.”

“We will begin our trials with Goatsbridge Trout Farm in Co. Kilkenny and Connemara Abalone in Galway in the coming months. There are also plans for further trials in Ireland, Scotland, Denmark and Norway.”

While nanobOx technology will be developed and manufactured in Ireland, it expects to generate most of its revenue through exports, so its business development, marketing and sales operation will be international. John says that they will be going to market by next spring/summer.

Global Experts Gather in Galway For Major Oceanographic Conference

The 10th EuroGOOS International Conference in Galway provided a critical opportunity to mobilize partnerships and efforts to enhance global ocean observations to provide the vital data needed for improved forecasts and early warning systems to protect people and planet.

The European Global Ocean Observing System (EuroGOOS) 10th International Conference titled ‘European operational oceanography for the ocean we want – addressing the UN Ocean Decade Challenges’ took place in Galway in early October.

The triennial conference unites ocean science observers, forecasters, technology developers, policy makers, data services and users, and other international experts. The event has been endorsed by the UN Decade of Ocean Science as an official Ocean Decade Activity. The three-day programme addressed a wide range of oceanographic topics with a focus on further developing services for society at large. Conference themes included marine knowledge value chain, ocean data and forecasting services, EU priorities including the Digital Ocean Twin, and the science behind Europe’s oceanographic capacity.

In his welcoming address to delegates, Michael Gillooly, Interim CEO of the Marine Institute said, “The 10th International EuroGOOS conference is a great milestone for EuroGOOS. There is an overwhelming

sense of a community that are active and enthusiastic about the future of operational oceanography in Europe and its critical importance in informing key decisions on marine issues such as ocean warming, sea level rise and ocean acidification. This global gathering of experts here in Galway comes at a critical time as we work to protect the health of our shared ocean by coordinating programmes in areas such as ocean observations.

Dr. Colm Lordan, Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services, Marine Institute also delivered a keynote address at the event discussing the data, science and evidence needs to inform the development of offshore renewable energy. Dr. Lordan highlighted, “that it is essential that this transition to secure offshore renewable energy also delivers net gains for sustainable seafood production, while protecting and restoring marine ecosystems”.

Ireland, through the Marine Institute has been a member of EuroGOOS since 2005 and supported EuroGOOS in its transition to becoming a legal entity in 2012.

marine.ie

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Ár n-aigéan an acmhainn náisiúnta is mó atá againn



The Hiding Behind Europe on Fuel Assistance for the Irish Fishing Industry Needs to Stop

Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Fisheries and the Marine Pádraig Mac Lochlainn is calling on Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie Mc Conalogue to stop hiding behind Europe and finally introduce a fuel assistance scheme for the Irish fishing industry.

Teachta Mac Lochlainn said: “Over the last 18 months, the fishing industry have repeatedly appealed for a fuel assistance scheme to help them cope with the huge increase in cost for them to go to sea.

“Minister Mc Conalogue has hidden behind EU regulations and suggested he is prevented from doing so”.

“Meanwhile, Irish fishermen have struggled to make a living with hugely inflated fuel costs whilst French, Spanish, and other EU Member State’s fishermen have all received fuel supports from their respective Governments.

“Recent correspondence received from senior EU Commission officials has confirmed that the Commission amended the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Regulation 2014-2020 to introduce specific measures to provide financial compensation to operators in the fishing and aquaculture sectors for the income foregone, and for additional costs incurred.

“This correspondence further confirmed that as the Ukraine crisis support falls under the shared management of both the EMFF and the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and that it is the prerogative of each Member State to mobilise the EU funds for such types of support but that the Irish authorities decided not to implement these support measures under the EMFF and EMFAF programmes.

“Minister Mc Conalogue has passed the buck and delayed supports for far too long. The time for action is now. I have made provision in Sinn Féin’s alternative budget for such a scheme as I did in last year’s alternative budget.

“The Government must now do the same and stand up for Irish fishermen” concluded Deputy Mac Lochlainn”.

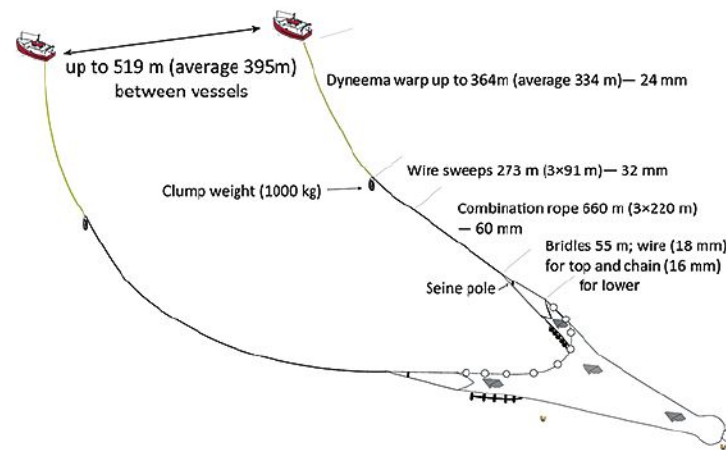
* Note that in comparison the French government have recently decided to extend the diesel subsidy by a minimum of €0.20/l until at least the 4th of December with the French Minister being quoted saying “No fishermen will be left stranded”

“Many Hands Make Light Work” - Pair Seining Boosts Energy Efficiency During Fishing Operations

BIM and the Irish Fishing Industry’s latest gear trial demonstrates 25% reduction in fuel during pair seine fishing operations

Martin Oliver, Fisheries Conservation Technologist BIM

BIM is continuing work on energy efficiency in collaboration with the Irish fishing industry. Our most recent trial is timely given fuel prices are currently around 90 cent per litre.



With high fuel prices it is essential to catch fish at the lowest fuel consumption (litres of fuel used per kilogram of fish caught) rate possible. Improving and upgrading vessels will enable the Irish fleet to reduce fuel consumption and maximise return on investment as seen with two new multipurpose vessels to the Irish fleet - MFV Ocean Crest and MFV Dillon Owen II. Adjustments in fishing gear and fishing operations also play vital roles in improving fuel economy.

The Irish demersal fleet mainly consists of trawlers and fly-shoot seiners. The Irish fly-shoot seine fleet typically operate as “solo” fishing vessels targeting mixed demersal species such as haddock, hake and whiting. Commonly used in Scotland, pair seining (two vessels fishing one net between them) was identified as a potential fishing method to increase the Irish seine fleets energy efficiency.

Conducted in the Celtic Sea in September 2023, the trial was led by Martin Oliver and Matthew McHugh from BIM in close collaboration with the skippers and crews of two Irish seiners the MFV Ocean Crest and MFV Dillon Owen II. The vessels took turns fishing one net between them. The net was fished using 660 meters combination rope, 273 meters wire and around 364 m of dyneema warp per vessel.

Fishing operations performed as a pair demonstrated reductions in fuel use (litre/hour) and greenhouse gas emissions (kg CO₂

equivalent/hour) of 25 % compared with solo operations. This was thanks to the ease at which the two vessels could fish one net between them. Catches were excellent most likely due to the increases in swept area and fish herding during pair seine operations.

Haddock, hake, and whiting were the main commercial species caught during the trial. Very few unwanted catches occurred during the pair-fishing operations which used 100 mm T90 codends. Some 99 % of haddock and 100 % of hake and whiting were above minimum conservation reference sizes. Plaice was the main flat fish species caught. 11 % of plaice were undersize but overall plaice catches were relatively low and well within the monthly quotas.



Pair seine operations were conducted during day and night-time hours and catches generally remained consistent regardless of time of day. This enables seiners to operate at night when they typically would not fish at night “solo” seining.

Gear configuration and fishing practicalities worked well throughout the trial. Remarks from the skippers and crews were positive with less time spent on deck sorting fish due to them taking turns to haul the net aboard.

BIM would like to thank the skippers and crews of the trial vessels for a successful collaboration. Thanks also to the quota management team from the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) who were supportive of the initiative. This work was funded by the Irish Government and part-financed by the European Union through the EMFAF Operational Programme 2021 – 2027. A full report is available at: www.bim.ie/publications/fisheries



Skippers and crew of the Ocean Crest and Dillon Owen II - Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography

THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

Minimising The Risks of Fish Farming

Richard Donnelly, Development and Innovation Director, Bord Iascaigh Mhara

There are 62 aquatech companies in Ireland, using technology to enable sustainable seafood farming at a time when the sector is facing many challenges. The country's growing expertise in this, still developing, sector shows that it has the potential to become a global leader in the field, with Irish aquatech companies turning over €200m last year. That was how Bord Iascaigh Mhara promoted the BIM Aquatech Business in Killarney titled "Aquatech – Ireland's Global Opportunity". Marine Times Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney, talked to Richard Donnelly of Bord Iascaigh Mhara, for this month's interview.

"Ireland has the potential to be a world leader in aquatech and BIM is driving the sector's development. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Food Vision 2030 strategy is to promote Ireland as a knowledge base for aquaculture technology and research and attract external investment into the sector." So promised the conference organisers.

There were aspects of it which caught immediate attention – a big attendance and a notable number of young people present. There was what seemed some hyperbole when the organisers suggested that Ireland could become the 'silicon valley of aquatech.'

Aquatech is promoted as having a major role in supporting aquaculture companies in monitoring and providing early warnings on and threats to the health of aquaculture fish stocks, by using technology to help take the risks out of aquaculture which will be a vital food source in the future,

I first asked Richard Donnelly if BIM was really serious about Ireland becoming the 'silicon valley' of aquatech, as had been suggested at the conference:

"Absolutely because we have the unique ingredients - we have investment, we have a population that is, between third level education, seventy per cent between twenty-three years of age and thirty-four, very unique, the highest level in Europe and then what we have is a tradition in aquaculture, so we have the innovation there and now we have the companies, we have nine/ten companies from the USA based here, so there is a huge amount of combination of factors there that is unique to anywhere else in the world and that's what makes us the



opportunity to be the silicon valley of aquaculture."

Can Ireland grow native companies as well?

"Well that's the object of the innovation studios that BIM run. Every year (now in its 6th year) we do a two-week intensive innovation studios with the largest venture capital company, Hatch Blue, in the aquatech space, so they are nurturing our companies along and actually making significant investments in it. They're also getting private equity investments

so the money is there to help grow these and, like all companies, they have to start somewhere and like, if you look at silicon valley, all these companies started very, very small and that's what we have the opportunity to grow here."

It's still a business that takes a bit of risk to get into, isn't it. I suggested to him?

"All farming takes risk, it is unpredictable. The weather is a huge risk to agriculture and farming in the sea is no different. The environmental challenges that we face are changing every year, temperature, climate etc., and what we want to do is future-proof and minimise the risk and that's what we're using the technology that we see in other businesses to give us a better way of alleviating that."

One thing that struck me at the conference was the large number of young people there, more than I would have expected to see at such a conference. So there must be more young people interested in getting involved in aquaculture?

"There certainly are and that's what we are really trying to drive. This is the future of Ireland and these are the people that we hope are going to drive new businesses with global opportunities.

"With the youth we have, the education, the ambition and the resilience that they have to start and drive their own businesses, this is what we are trying to nurture here and it's in the aquatech business and it's a huge opportunity for them.

"Food supply is going to be critical and I'm just delighted that there are so many young entrepreneurs, so many young people interested in this.

"It's a huge future for them and a real opportunity for them to capitalise on it."

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Meath Native Pioneering Global Plant-Based Food Production Using Irish Seaweed

When Co. Meath native Jennifer O'Brien told her family she was leaving the corporate world to start a business in seafood and seaweed, they found it hard to understand! But four years on the gamble to follow her passion for the ocean is paying off.

Today Jennifer runs food tech company, Sea & Believe, which is using seaweed to develop a range of nutritious plant-based seafood that doesn't compromise on taste, or the health of the ocean.

Sea & Believe already has several products developed, including the Irish Seaweed Burger and Seaweed Goujons which proved a big hit when they were trialled in SuperValu supermarkets last year.

"We started in ten stores and that increased to 50. I was working from a kitchen, so I realised I needed to develop a more sophisticated production process, and to look towards the international market," she said.

But the Sea & Believe product that Jennifer is proudest of is the world's first plant-based fillet of 'cod' that flakes like real fish. "It tastes delicious and contains all the rich flavours of the sea," she says.

The company achieved its goal of developing this flakey, nutritious, sustainable product using plant-based proteins and technology. "By reverse engineering the muscle structure and texture of a real fish, we created a substitute using a combination of chemical and physical processes to produce a nutrient dense flakey fish texture combined with native Irish seaweed."

The wild seaweed used by Sea & Believe is sourced from Connemara where Jennifer spent a lot of time when she was growing up, and where she got her love of the sea.

When Jennifer joined the BIM Innovation Studio Lab during the pandemic in 2020 she was only starting her business. The lab is delivered by aquaculture accelerator, Hatch Blue, and the 5th year of the programme – which is open to both Irish and EU projects involved in the aquaculture technology arena – takes place again this October in the RDI Hub in Killorglin, Co. Kerry.

"When I was put through my paces in the Innovation Studio Lab my business was just an idea. I had developed a seaweed burger and was playing around with other products. But the Innovation Studio Lab really got me off the ground. It was challenging but brilliant, and turned my dream into a real business".

One of the positives about the Innovation Studio Lab was the introduction it gave start-ups to investors. "As a result, I applied for an accelerator fund in the US and was successful. If I hadn't been part of the Innovation Studio Lab I don't think I would be up and running today."

"It also gave me huge confidence to follow my dreams and confirmed my belief in the business. I learned about the processes you have to go through to advance. I had a vision to grow my own seaweed in Ireland and I was taught the steps to

go through to plan this."

In addition, the Innovation Studio Lab impressed on companies taking part the importance of identifying markets and who you are targeting with your products. "There is no point if you don't have a customer!" said Jennifer.

Jennifer depends on high quality native Irish seaweed for her products, but there is a shortage in Ireland partly due to rising sea temperatures. She says seaweed is an incredible resource, and she couldn't understand why Ireland wasn't using it more.

The next step in the business journey for Sea & Believe is to create one of Ireland's first seaweed farms in Cleggan Bay, in Connemara. The Seaweed site will be used to grow *Palmaria Palmata* (Dillisk), with cultivation expecting to start before the end of the year.

"Scaling up native Irish seaweed in an aquaculture setting will ensure long term supply of seaweed to meet future demand, and less reliance on wild stock. We can incorporate seaweed into plant-based product and at the same time restore ecosystems and increase biodiversity. Seaweed farms can draw down three times as much carbon as the same size forests."

Palmaria Palmata is one of the highest value native Irish seaweeds which is now under threat. It is a red seaweed, with high protein levels and its colour, flavouring and binding capabilities is good for making fish and meat alternatives.

"Seaweed protein is underutilized as an alternative protein source. The benefits of using nutrient-rich seaweed as a fish or meat alternative are endless, and can replace some highly processed ingredients. Since seaweed grows in the ocean, it doesn't use up valuable farmland or require fertiliser that can pollute freshwater sources," says Jennifer.

Palmaria Palmata also has health benefits including anti-inflammatory qualities. Jennifer was diagnosed with Asthma as a child, and has always found that taking seaweeds baths have helped.

As well as developing a seaweed farm Sea & Believe is also planning to establish a food lab in Connemara.

"Our mission is to boost the knowledge, science and technology of native seaweed species around the coast of Ireland and the world, and unlock the power of seaweed to its highest value by developing amazing products such as plant based seafood."

Jennifer would encourage any aquatech start-up to apply for the Innovation Studio Lab. "It is a wonderful programme and it is free. It is the most valuable thing I did in Covid, and I have it to thank for where I am at today."



Irish Marine Institute Scientist Appointed as New Chair of ICES Advisory Committee

Dr. Colm Lordan has been officially announced as the incoming Chair of the Advisory Committee (ACOM) at the 111th ICES Council meeting (International Council for Exploration of the Sea).



The ICES advisory committee ACOM is made up of the foremost marine science advisors from the ICES 20 member countries. ACOM provides independent scientific advice on the sustainable management of marine resources and ecosystems in the North Atlantic Ocean to a range of requestors including the European Union, the UK, Iceland and Norway. Dr. Lordan was first involved with ICES in 1993, and since then has participated in over 70 different ICES expert groups and has chaired 20 working groups. He previously served as Vice-Chair of ACOM from 2018–2020.

Dr. Lordan is a staff member at the Marine Institute for over 25 years. He joined the Marine Institute in 1998 researching deep sea fisheries and assessing demersal fish species including monkfish, megrim, whiting and haddock. In 2001, his focus moved to *Nephrops* stocks and developing innovative underwater television surveys and assessment methods. His research specialities included mixed fisheries, stakeholder engagement, impact of fisheries on the ecosystem and impact of the environment on fish stocks. Dr. Lordan is currently Integrated Advice Services (FEAS) section, which provides stock assessment and scientific advice mainly to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

On his appointment, Dr. Lordan said, "I am honoured and delighted to be taking up the role of chair of the Advisory Committee at ICES. My appointment comes at a time of accelerating pace of change and increasing anthropogenic pressures on marine ecosystems. I believe ICES is well placed and will respond effectively to address the existing and emerging advisory needs of policymakers and managers. I very much look forward to working with, and leading, ACOM as we generate state-of-the-art evidence-based advice to meet conservation, management, and sustainability goals".

Dr. Ciaran Kelly, Director of Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services at the Marine Institute said, "I congratulate Colm on this great honour. Dr. Lordan is the third secondment of a Marine Institute scientist to a position of international scientific importance, which clearly demonstrates the Marine Institute's leadership and standing in the international marine science field".

Dr. Lordan will begin his 3-year term on 1 December 2023.

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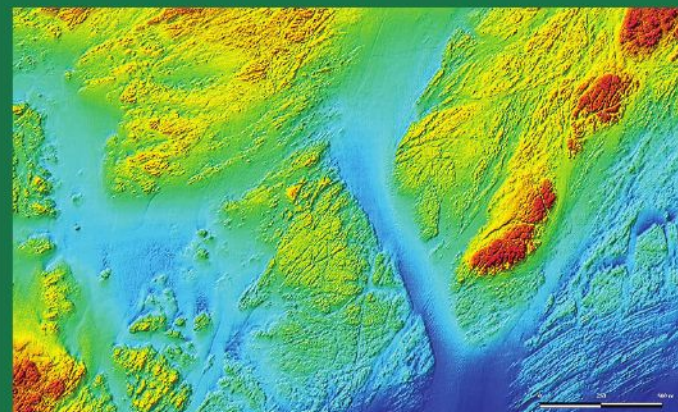
INFOMAR Releases New High-Resolution Data for the Irish Shelf and Offshore

INFOMAR, Ireland's national seabed mapping programme, are pleased to announce the release of its latest data update. This release encompasses essential enhancements including updated bathymetric & backscatter surfaces reflecting new specification, higher resolution, increased spatial availability and improved stability.

A key feature of data updates include the availability of 2m resolution survey leg data, as well as 5m, 10m, and 25m resolution merged surfaces for bathymetry along with 40m resolution data for backscatter, covering the Irish offshore and shelf areas. All bathymetric & backscatter datasets are now available in 3-star open standard format which improves user access across all GIS environments.

Thomas Furey, joint programme manager at the Marine Institute, highlighted the importance of the new data release – “This valuable update marks a significant stride in providing comprehensive and up-to-date information on Ireland's seabed, crucial for various marine-related activities, including navigation, resource management, offshore renewable energy and environmental conservation.”

Key Highlights of the INFOMAR Data Release:



2m Survey Leg Data: The inclusion of newly derived 2m survey leg data offers increased availability for the Irish inshore, with planned regular updates during the coming months.

Merged Surfaces (Bathymetry): INFOMAR now provides merged bathymetric surfaces at 5m, 10m and 25m resolutions for the Irish Shelf (0-200m water depth). 25m and 100m Resolution data are also available for the Irish Offshore (>200m water depth).

Merged Surfaces (Backscatter): A single, homogenized backscatter surface at 40m resolution is available for the offshore, with 10m resolution available for inshore areas.

All data are available for download or via a data request through through INFOMAR's data download portal.

All INFOMAR Web Map Services, REST Services and bespoke viewers have been updated to reflect new data availability. INFOMAR have also updated various facets of its website to include new vector data, imagery, standard operating procedures and value added products. For a detailed, comprehensive overview of INFOMAR's new data updates visit infomar.ie

Sean Cullen, joint programme manager at Geological Survey Ireland added that - “INFOMAR are committed to providing accurate, accessible, and up-to-date marine data to support Ireland's maritime stakeholders. INFOMAR encourages users to explore and utilize this data for scientific research, maritime planning, and decision-making processes.”

The newly updated data is readily available - free for download - at infomar.ie, ensuring that researchers, industry professionals, and the public have easy access to this invaluable resource.

Explorers Team Launch New 'Turtle Talk' Educational Resources

The Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme team recently took part in the launch of a series of new primary school education resources *Explorers: Turtle Talk with Sea Turtles* at their recent team training held in Laois.



Patricia Orme, Corporate Services Director, Marine Institute, congratulated the Explorers team involved in creating the resources: “The books, presentations, and short videos all provide teachers with practical content to help develop children's competencies. It is also great to see that themes that explore how to help reduce plastics in the ocean and how to mitigate climate change are keenly promoted throughout the sea turtle books”.

The resource pack is freely available to download from www.explorers.ie and supports cross-curricular teaching, STEM, and learning about SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). It includes creating turtle words and mind-maps, writing poems and songs, describing a turtle's life cycle, as well as making tote bags and turtle toys from recycled fabrics.

It is also wonderful to see the Explorers outreach team's enthusiasm for creating five life-size sea-turtles 'far from open water'.

“The five turtles (Leatherback, Loggerhead, Kemp's Ridley, Hawksbill, Green Turtle) are now being spotted around the country, inspiring sea turtle madness and mayhem. I am sure we will see many more of these magnificent animals being created in the classrooms, inspiring new stories and adventures,” Ms Orme added.

Explorers: Turtle Talk with Sea Turtles is packed with information and facts, and takes the teachers and children on a journey of species identification, habitats, location and lifecycle. It also follows the journey of the five species that have been recorded in Irish waters – some caught in ocean currents and others that purposefully come to Ireland to track their favourite food: jellyfish.

Cushla Dromgool Regan, of the Explorers programme and lead author of the information books, workbooks and presentations, said that she is delighted with the uptake of the books and eagerness of the outreach team, teachers and children who are planning to use these resources to learn more about the ocean over the next term.

The books are full of descriptive fun-facts and information about sea-turtles from around the world that will fascinate children and teachers alike.

“Scientists now understand that leatherbacks are long-distance seasonal visitors to Irish waters, migrating to temperate waters to feed and returning to their native waters to mate and to nest. The largest leatherback ever recorded was a male, washed ashore in Wales in 1988, weighing in at 916 kg. It measured almost 3 m overall and 2.5 m across the span of its front flippers,” explained Ms Dromgool-Regan.



All turtles found in EU waters are strictly protected under the Habitats Directive which aims to conserve rare and threatened species. Six of the seven species around the world are under threat and now face extinction, and are listed as either 'vulnerable', 'endangered'

or 'critically endangered' on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red list.

“Many individuals and organisations are helping to promote the conservation of these animals and the habitats in which they live. Engagement at all levels is required to support these efforts. We all have an important role to play in changing our behaviour and caring for our environment, and it is wonderful to see children keen to take up this challenge,” remarked Ms Dromgool-Regan.

International Fishing and Maritime News

Over 2,000 Fishermen Gone from UK Industry

The UK Sea Fisheries Statistics for last year, published by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) shows that there are 10,000 fishermen working on UK-registered vessels which is a reduction of 2,100 over the past ten years.

Fishing effort, judged by kW days at sea by the over 10-metre fleet has decreased by around 40 per cent according to the report. "Most of this reduction has been driven by a decline in the demersal trawl and seine segment." Last year UK vessels landed 640,000 tonnes of fish for a value of stg£1.04 billion, which was a decrease of 2 per cent in volume, but a 4 per cent value increase.

There were 19,000 tonnes of fish landed into the UK by foreign vessels, which was a decrease of 4 per cent from 2021. Landings abroad by UK vessels decreased to 245,000 tonnes, a fall of 5 per cent. These may be effects of Brexit under which the United Kingdom left the European Union on January 31, 2020. The Withdrawal Agreement provided for a transition period that ended on 31 December 2020.

In 2022 there were 5,542 UK-registered vessels, a reduction of 14 per cent in the last ten years, according to the Statistics. However, the total Gross Tonnage registered remains similar, at 203,000 GT, they indicate.

Twenty-one percent of the fleet is of vessels over 10 metres. Forty-four per cent of these are in Scotland where the number of active vessels has remained stable at 2,038. That is an increase of 1% compared to 2013. The published statistics say that Scottish figures for value have not returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels. While there has been a 9 per cent increase in landed tonnage, value has fallen 5 per cent.

European Parliament China Must Explain Its Fleet

By 573 votes to 11, with 30 abstentions, the European Parliament passed a motion that China must be asked to share more information about the size of its fleet, catches, subsidies and agreements with third countries, to better fight illegal fishing.



The vote of MEPs was on a resolution urging China to be more transparent on its distant-waters fleets as well as its third country agreements, during a debate on combating illegal fishing. MEPs wanted the Commission to launch a catch identification system in cooperation with Chinese authorities.

New Control Measures Approved

In mid-October, by 438 votes to 146, with 40 abstentions, the Parliament approved new fisheries control regulation measures under which all boats will have to carry on-board a tracking device enabling national authorities to locate and identify them at regular intervals. Certain small-scale vessels may be exempted from this obligation until 2030. All small-scale fishing fleets will get up to four years to adapt to the new requirements.



Onward landing prawns at Kilkeel - Photo courtesy Leslie Campbell

FRANCE Defending Food Supplies

The French Government has emphasised its defence of the country's food sovereignty, with the fishing industry at the top of its concern. Secretary of State for the Sea, Hervé Berville, has told fishing communities during visits to them to discuss issues for the industry that the Government will continue to assess its Individual Support Plan and the fuel crisis and "work with fishermen to find sustainable solutions for the future of the industry."

He acknowledged that it faces "a microcosm of challenges, including the modernisation of port infrastructure, auction operations, decarbonisation of the fleet, energy costs, particularly for deep-sea vessels and the impact of environmental standards on the industry, as well as difficulties in recruiting crew members, the impact of Brexit and EU quotas. The Government's goal is defending the country's food sovereignty."

ISLE OF MAN Invasive Species Found

An invasive non-native (INNS) worm species has been discovered on two boats in Ramsey, Isle of Man after they were removed from the water for cleaning and maintenance. The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture were alerted by a crane operator who saw "an unusual growth on the hulls and propellers."

Samples showed the species to be Australian trumpet tubeworm which attached themselves to surfaces by developing thick layers of calcareous tube, posing a risk to the environment and biodiversity which is difficult to eradicate. DEFA ordered a co-ordinated response because of the potential impact on ports and marinas, working with the Department of Infrastructure's Harbours Team to monitor vessel movements and maintenance works in their areas. Information packs were being made available shortly to vessel owners and harbour users.

ICELAND High Lice Levels

Following reports of high numbers of sea lice, Iceland ordered additional measures to be taken in its main salmon farming area, the Westfjords region. The situation last month was described as "unusually bad." The Icelandic Food Agency authorised chemical treatment in at least eight farming areas, using special medicines and medicated feed.

North Western Waters Advisory Council Challenges Persist in Dealing With EU

The North Western Waters Advisory Council says it has made "significant strides in its role" with significant progress in terms of representation, transparency, and trust-building among stakeholders. However, "challenges persist in ensuring the impact of its advice at the EU level," according to its annual Performance Review.

Working with other similar bodies is seen as a way of making progress: "Collaboration with other ACs is a promising avenue for increasing influence as well as building a sound working relationship with

policymakers. The organisation should further refine its communication strategies and continue striving for consensus. NWWAC has a strong foundation, and with strategic adjustments, it will continue to play a valuable role in the policy landscape."

The review included discussions representatives from the European Commission and the NWW Member States Group. The review has made specific recommendations regarding potential improvements in the organisation, processes, quality of advice and internal and external collaboration in order for the continued effectiveness of influence post-Brexit.

Coastal States Mackerel Agreement

The United Kingdom, Norway, the EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland announced an agreement in mid-October on how much mackerel they would catch next year. They announced that it would be 739,386 tonnes and that they had agreed "to continue and attempt to strengthen scientific co-operation."

NORWAY Fishing Industry Is Key to Employment and Value

The Norwegian food research institute, Nofima, provides research-based knowledge and innovations for all parts of the country's food industry. A new report which it has produced says that "the fishing industry is key for employment and value creation along the Norwegian coast."



It says that in 20 of Norway's municipalities, the fishing industry accounts for more than 10 percent of employees in the private sector. Total employment rates for the seafood and fishing industry and related sectors is over 14,000 and increasing. "The report shows that the fishing industry plays an incredibly important role for many municipalities, especially in Northern Norway. It makes a significant contribution to local communities in terms of employment, value creation and tax revenues." It was commissioned by Seafood Norway. There are a number of challenges to overcome identified in the report. There has been a slight reduction in catches in recent years and many companies are dealing with profit margin difficulties. There are also positive signs, amongst them that the pelagic consumer sector is doing better than previously.

Fisheries Minister Sacked

Norwegian Fisheries Minister Bjørnar Skjæran was unexpectedly sacked in the middle of last month. The country's seafood industry expressed displeasure. He was replaced by 39-year old Cecilie Myrseth, a professional psychologist who had been a Labour fishery spokesperson in the Storting Parliament. There was no detailed explanation. The Minister had said he did not want to leave the post.

news from **Castletownbere**

Helen Riddell

Castletownbere Coast Guard

Castletownbere Coast Guard were tasked by MRSC Valentia in mid-October to assist the National Ambulance Service with a medical evacuation from a trawler in Castletownbere Harbour. The patient was removed by stretcher in a complicated extraction from a confined space by the Coast Guard crew onboard the trawler and transferred into the waiting ambulance.

Separately Castletownbere Coast Guard Crew members Cathy and Kieran have successfully completed their training courses, Cathy completed her trainee boat crew skills course under the supervision of Claire Toohy at base in Dinish and Kieran completed his PST at NMCI in Cork.

Castletownbere Coast Guard team also extended their best wishes to crew member Effie O'Neill as her music career takes off.

Tidy Towns

The 2023 Supervalu Tidy Towns competition results were announced recently which saw Castletownbere up 11 points from last year to 340. The adjudicator commented, "the many commercial premises along the main street and side streets were looking really nice and it is clear that much effort goes into their presentation on an ongoing basis. Your work to list the derelict properties and try to contact their owners in an attempt to upgrade them is a good one and makes all the difference to the overall streetscape of a town.

"The mural on the side wall of Supevalu is most impressive. Your main project this year was the landscaping and planting of the area between Dinish Bridge and the Community Hospital. This was enabled by a grant from the Cork County Council Community Fund Scheme. The results of this project are stunning and all involved are to be commended. The choice of plants, design and hard work that the planting entails have produced excellent results and as the area matures it will be delight to see as well as a haven for biodiversity." The adjudicator concluded their report by saying, "Castletownbere is a vibrant and busy town in a great location and with a community that works hard together to improve their town."

Beara Historical Society

The next meeting of the Beara Historical Society will take place on Thursday November 2nd at 8.00pm in Scoil an Chroí Ro Naofa, North Road, Castletownbere. Maximilian Le Cain will speak about the history, real and imagined, of Irish cinema that takes his personal relationship with the

Beara peninsula as a starting point. All are welcome to attend and there is a charge of €5 for non-members. Annual membership is €15 per person or €20 for a family.

St Vincent de Paul

Winter is coming and Castletownbere St Vincent de Paul is available to help anyone in need. Calls can be made in strictest confidence to 083 356 1132.

Beara West Family Resource Centre

The Beara West Family Resource Centre provides information, advice and support to families, individuals and groups. The centre can provide access to low-cost counselling through its links with local counsellors and therapists. To talk to any of the team, call into the centre which is open Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 5.00pm (closed 1.00pm to 2.00pm for lunch) or call 027 70998.

The centre now has a social walking group on Tuesdays, starting at 7.00pm from The Courtyard (opposite The Skipper's Bar) with an option of a 2km or 5km route. On Wednesdays the centre hosts Tai Chi from 11.00am to 12.00pm for the over 55s and carers. There is a fee of €5 per class. Singing for the Brain has resumed at the centre and takes place on place on Wednesdays from 2.00pm. The centre offers a number of services for older people in the community. They deliver meals to people's homes on Thursdays, can set people up with a monitored personal alarm system and make regular social phone calls to keep people in touch with the community, for details contact 027 70998.

Adrigole GAA

Adrigole GAA will hold its AGM on Saturday November 11th at 7pm in the gym.

Beara AC

The fourth and final race of the Beara 5 Mile Road series will be held in Eyeries on November 11th at 2.30pm. Adult training is held on Monday and Wednesday evenings at 6.30pm. Session details are put up on WhatsApp on the day or the evening before. These sessions are open to all abilities, and nobody is left behind. Underage training will be held at Castletownbere Community School on Fridays from 5.00pm to 6.30pm.

Safe Pass Course

A Safe Pass course will be held in the Caha Centre Adrigole on Saturday November 4th. The minimum age to attend is 16 years. To book please contact 029 52969 or message 087 9526874.

Seafood Industry Unite Around Sustainable Development of Offshore Renewable Energy

Representatives of Ireland's seafood industry have come together to propose a comprehensive road map for the selection and management of sites for offshore wind in Ireland's maritime zone. In a joint submission to the Minister for the Environment, Eamon Ryan, the Seafood Industry Group warn that alternative forms of sustainable energy, including Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) must be developed in a way that "creates consensus and avoids any repeat of past – especially planning – mistakes".

In a unique show of unity, representatives of the catching, fish-farming, processing, and inshore sectors have made a series of recommendations that stress the importance of engagement, communication, cooperation, and co-existence in the development of offshore wind. Seafood, the submission points out, is a low carbon, healthy, and sustainable part of our food supply. Increasing our adaptability to climate change and encouraging low greenhouse gas emissions in a way that doesn't threaten our food supply is at the heart of new approach proposed by the group.

Speaking at the launch of the joint submission, John Lynch, CEO of the Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation said that "Ireland's seafood industry recognises that an orderly development of offshore wind is critical to the future relationship between the seafood and offshore renewable industries. And that relationship is essential if the state is going to meet its targets for ORE development".

The Seafood Industry Group submission is in response to the launch, in July, of a proposal to facilitate a 900-megawatt (MW) wind farm off the south coast of Wexford or Waterford. This plan, a designated marine area plan or DMAP, sees the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan, as the first Competent Authority appointed under the Marine Area Planning Act 2021. The South Coast DMAP is the first in a series of Government led plans that will shape the future of offshore development. Similar plans for the west and north-west coasts are expected in the coming months.

Sean O'Donoghue, CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, also welcomed the move to a state managed and plan-led approach but added that the true test would be whether the Minister and Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) accepted the recommendations made in the Seafood Industry Submission. "While the initial signs from DECC are encouraging, if these recommendations are not taken onboard, we are doomed to repeat the failings of the past and this would be unacceptable".

With a sea area seven times that of our land, the opportunities this presents for offshore wind power are significant and it is not surprising that Ireland is a key emerging market. If this market is to be realised, DECC must ensure that the investment environment remains attractive; simply put Ireland cannot afford a repeat of previous planning debacles.

This point was reiterated by Seamus Breathnach, a director of the National Inshore Fishermen's Association, who spoke of the "poorly structured, often opaque, developer led approach" used for a series of wind farms recently sanctioned in the Irish Sea and Sceirde Rocks in Connemara. It remains to be seen whether these projects will deliver in the long run, or will they instead become embroiled in bitter planning hearings and mounting local resistance? It is certainly not too late to apply the principles, agreed over the last decade and set out in detail in the Seafood Industry submission, to these projects.

A copy of the submission can be downloaded from kfo.ie



Ocean Crest and Carmona at Dunmore East - Photo courtesy William Power

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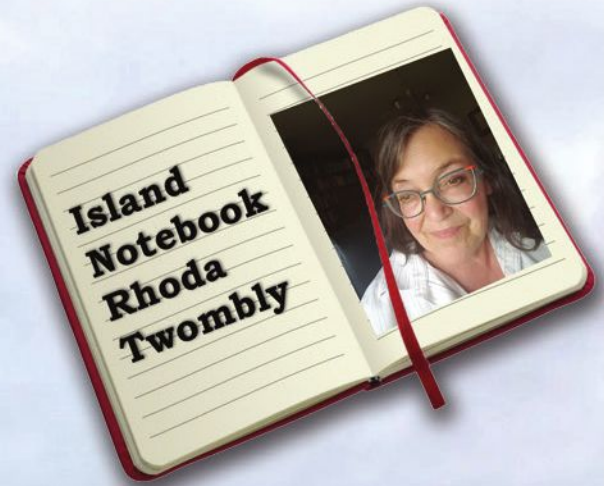
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From Vital Housing Needs to Unsustainable Tourism

Report on the European Small Islands AGM and Conference

By Camille Dressler and Rhoda Twombly, Secretary Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann



The iconic Bere Island light

Ireland hosted this year's European Small Islands AGM and Conference which was held on Bere Island in West Cork, as it was battered by high winds and tides.

Even Storm Agnes could not stop islanders from traveling from across Europe from Croatia to the Faroes as well as the Irish islands to attend the gathering on the south coast island.

The event was hosted by John Walsh of Bere Island, aided by Aisling Moran, the chair Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann/ Irish Islands Federation), Ivan Matić (Island Movement, Croatia) and Mairtin O Méalóid from Cape Clear Island.

Islanders spent a few days catching up and reflecting on the issues particular to all the smaller islands, whilst also discovering Bere's rich cultural heritage. Local historians Ted O' Sullivan and Barry Hanley provided interesting guided tours while the Bere Bakehouse and the Bere Island Hotel served the delegates tasty local cuisine.

Central to the conference were presentations on challenges across the islands as well as within ESIN itself. Discussions

and a workshop on strategic planning were held, creating a shared vision and identifying the 5 top issues for the organisation's members. Energy self-reliance and greener ferries were high on the agenda, as were the benefits for the islands in taking part in the '30 islands for 2030' Clean Energy 4 EU islands programme. How to retain a stable population and ensure young people have a chance to stay or return to island homes was equally high.



Which way do we go? Storm Agnes packs a wallop and confuses directions on the island!

"We have too many 'dark islands' in the winter", said Anette Larm Johansson from the Swedish delegation, "where there are hardly any year-round residents, due to the growing number of holiday-homes. Housing has now become our number one issue."

This was why it was so important to hear about the Irish Island Policy by Bríd Ní Chonghaile and Aodán Mac An Mhíle, senior officials at the Department of Rural & Community Development who part-funded the event.

The "Our Living Islands Action Plan 2023-33" places a high importance on "Smart, Sustainable, Island Futures," with a suite of actions to enable people to live and thrive on their islands.

The session on the Blue Economy was spot-on in addressing the requirement of education tailored to the islanders' needs. The Cork Education and Training Board presented their innovative island training programme where training is taken to the islands rather than the other way around, including a new modular micro credentials accreditation scheme, allowing apprenticeship to capture the older generations' knowledge.

The "Strategic Plan for a Maritime Training Centre" presented by Consultant Laura

Foley was equally inspiring, showing how a fair and just transition can be planned through re-skilling and upskilling existing maritime competency, and adapted for the renewable industry through cluster collaboration rather than competition.



Comhdháil Chair Aisling Moran addressing the ESIN Conference at the Bere Island Heritage Centre.



Local enterprises, Bere Island Boatyard and Atlantic Towage & Marine provided compelling illustrations of the way islands can be at the heart of the Blue Economy.

“Island Entrepreneurship is in our DNA” remarked Gerard Sullivan of Bere Island Boatyards. “But we have lost a lot of our young people to the city and US tech. We need to turn this round: training needs to be spread to all in the community: it has to be worth something to all members of the community! Unlike tourism where the benefits only go to a few”.

Post-Covid, the islands are certainly more attractive than ever, but unsustainable tourism is increasingly detrimental to their future. To identify and measure all the actions that can support people to live full-time on islands, the delegates discussed how the Habitability planning methodology developed on the island of Kökar on Åland could be used more widely.

The session on this topic identified the Interreg Europe 4-year programme as the best way to introduce Habitability planning to a number of ESIN federations as the most effective way to describe the small islands’ challenges and opportunities across Europe. The delegates concluded this productive and stimulating conference and AGM with a great social

evening at the island’s pub, where local musicians gave them the opportunity to try a bit of Irish ceili dancing with a demonstration of the Siege of Ennis in which everyone joined in.

Sincere thanks were extended to John Walsh for his Chairmanship of ESIN over the years. John has moved on to a new job on Bere Island and is now being replaced at the head of ESIN by Sten-Åke Persson from Sweden.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with ESIN,” said John. “We have such a strong board, really cohesive, with every-



Representatives of the Estonian Islands with John Walsh, out-going Chair of ESIN

one one working hard on a voluntary basis to make things happen. I wish ESIN the very best and I was especially happy that for this event, we were able to welcome Olga and Normu all the way from Faroes! Together we can certainly be stronger!”

John will continue to be involved with ESIN’s Energy Working Group as well as island energy transition issues. He is currently working on an application for Bere and other Cork islands to be part of the ‘30 Islands for 2030.’

The AGM and Conference were supported by Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann/Irish Islands Federation and the Department of Rural and Community Development as well as Údarás na Gaeltachta.



Security of tenure and recognition of customary rights for small scale fisheries is crucial for fisheries governance and resource management

Significant Concerns Over Renewable Energy

By Seamus Bonner, Secretary, Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation Producer Organisation



Rannagh, Arranmore Island. © IIMRO

The Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO) has raised significant concerns over the South Coast Renewable Energy DMAP in a public consultation held this month. In a submission to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), IIMRO has outlined a number of issues with the current process to develop offshore renewable energy and its potential significant impacts on island and coastal communities.

The lack of information on the scale of proposed new energy installations, the very real potential to displace fisheries as well as the unknown impacts on the marine environment, are chief amongst the concerns raised. The lack of specifics on their scale, design and locations of affiliated infrastructure remain a significant cause of unease.

Security of tenure and recognition of customary rights for small scale fisheries is crucial for fisheries governance and resource management and is underscored by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries. Including; “States, in accordance with their legislation, should ensure that small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities have secure, equitable, and socially and culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources (marine and inland) and small-scale fishing areas and adjacent land,

with a special attention paid to women with respect to tenure rights.” This recognition of tenure is currently missing from current discussions and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

IIMRO reiterated the diversity of the fishing community; from small traditional vessels with a single crew, fishing seasonally close to shore, to large industrial ocean-going vessels fishing across international boundaries and the need for governance structures to recognise and accommodate this diversity.

86% of vessels in Ireland are small-scale; the under 12 metre boats which support families around the coast. This hugely important fleet segment is also the least visible, with small boats not having VMS or AIS transmitters. This has led to significant gaps in the data on which models of fishing activity are developed and on which decisions on installation locations are based. Ireland needs to move beyond awareness of the lack of this essential information, to providing solutions that are practical and useful for fishers.

IIMRO’s concerns reflect a broader sentiment among marine stakeholders about the rapid development of offshore renewable energy without having appropriate governance and ownership models in place. We are hopeful that these constructive recommendations will be at the forefront of energy policy and implementation.

IIMRO’s submission will be available on the DECC website in due course.

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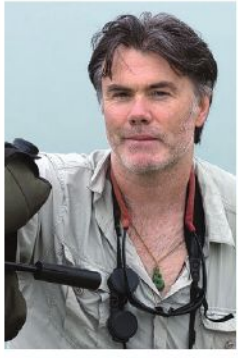
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IRISH WHALE AND DOLPHIN GROUP

IWDG NEWS

A preliminary glance at this year's combined large whale sightings and Photo ID data suggests that it's not only humans that are living in a time of great change; and while we call it "climate migration", whales too it seems are on the move.

By Pádraig Whooley, IWDG Sightings Officer



Three Humpback whales seen off Slieve League, Donegal, photographed by Brendan Quinn, IWDG

During the period April 1st to September 30th 2023 IWDG validated C.1,900 sighting records, included in these data are the results of 120 land-based "effort" watches. These sightings comprised an impressive 11 species of cetacea and basking sharks.

The most frequently recorded species are ranked as follows: bottlenose dolphin (21%), common dolphin (19%), minke whale (16%), harbour porpoise (14%), basking shark (8%), humpback whale (6%), fin whale (2%). Included among the also-rans were Risso's dolphin, pilot and killer whale, northern bottlenose whale and blue whale. 224 sightings (12.6%) could not be validated to species level and were allocated to appropriate non-species categories.

The stand-out sighting events were a two-week period between August 19th and September 3rd when a group of three northern bottlenose whales *Hyperoodon ampullatus* entered the inner Bantry Bay where they could be seen almost daily. On occasion they were within a few hundred metres of the shore between the Eagle Point campsite, Whiddy and Garnish Islands, providing exceptional views of their

regular "breaching" behaviour. Their last confirmed sighting was of a single animal on October 7th. This event provided whale enthusiasts a rare opportunity to watch this deep diving beaked whale at close quarters, without having to venture offshore to deep shelf-edge waters.

At time of writing there have been no stranding reports of this species from the general area, which gives us hope that all three whales made their way back out of Bantry Bay, into deeper, safer waters. This episode however was unlikely to be an isolated occurrence, given a sighting off a pair of bottlenose whales off the Blaskets, Co. Kerry just three days prior to their arrival in Bantry Bay and a subsequent stranding of a juvenile at Ballymacormick Point, Co. Down on August 24th, while around the same time there were several incidents of this species reported between West Sussex and Scotland, the Faroes and Northern France. Reminding us that what we record in Irish waters as sightings or strandings can often reflect on anthropogenic activity well outside of the Irish EEZ. Highlighting the importance of data sharing and collaboration with partners in other countries.

Blue Whales Seen West of Rockall

Another stand-out report was of blue

whales seen and photographed from a yacht on a north bound passage sailing through the Edoras Bank, west of the Rockall plateau on August 15th. Although some 750 km northwest of Erris, Co. Mayo, the location is within the Irish continental shelf area, and as sightings of the planet's largest creature are so rare, we were quite happy to claim these as Irish records. Big thanks to Bas van der Linde for reporting this sighting and sharing an image of one of the three blue whales he encountered on this memorable day. It's always nice to see birders getting excited about whales!

A preliminary glance at this year's combined large whale sightings and Photo ID data suggests that it's not only humans that are living in a time of great change; and while we call it "climate migration", whales too it seems are on the move.

Over the past 20 years, the IWDG data shows that the likes of our humpback and fin whales are continually evaluating their

options in terms of where and what they feed on. There is no doubting other than places like West Cork from the late 1990's for the next decade were the hotspot for both species.

There was a subtle shift as we entered the second decade when humpbacks started showing a preference for West Kerry. At one stage almost 60% of our additions to the Irish humpback Catalogue were coming from the waters off the Blasket Islands and Dingle Bay. In more recent times, this northwards shift has if anything accelerated, with the numbers jumping off the pages at you!

In 2019 the % of humpback whale sightings reported to IWDG between Counties Galway and Donegal was a mere 2.3%. This rose modestly to 4.1% in 2020, 10.7% in 2021, and then almost doubled to 19% in 2022 and so far this year this has trebled to just over 60%. This represents a seismic shift in the distribution of Irish humpback whales in a relatively short space of time, and the data so far suggests that fin whales may not be far behind them.

Pushing North For Cooler Water

Whether predator or prey, everything it seems is pushing north in search of cooler water. We hear this same comment weekly from so many overseas colleagues be they working in the Pacific or the Western Atlantic. Humpback whales that should have turned up this summer off places like the Gulf of Maine, are now appearing much further north off the Canadian Maritimes. Those species that already live as far north as you can go, may in some cases be venturing south... what alternatives have they?

But we can only monitor these changes, if we receive your sighting records and so it has never been as important that mariners support the IWDG sighting scheme by letting us know what you are seeing, especially if you work in areas such as the northwest where these large whales till recently have been largely absent.

Although we are still receiving plenty of sightings from around the country, it's hard to avoid the sense that sighting reports are on the wane. This however has a lot more to do with the deteriorating weather situation, as it looks like the Atlantic low pressure regime which spawned events like Storm Babette are our lot for the foreseeable future. Let's hope for a cold, crisp winter with a lot more high pressure, as this at least gives us the chance to get up onto the headlands to scan the horizon for distant blows.

www.iwdg.ie

**Irish Whale
and Dolphin Group**



news from the **Ports**
editor@marinetimes.ie

Plan Unveiled for Ireland's First New Major Deep-Water Port Development Since Foundation of State

Globally Renowned Architecture Firm Henning Larsen Developed the Vision for Bremore Ireland Port

Bremore Ireland Port has unveiled its vision for what will become the first new deep-water port development since the foundation of the Irish state. The 'Vision for Bremore Ireland Port' developed by Henning Larsen, a leading global architecture firm, showcases a world-class deep-water multi-modal energy port that will transform Ireland's energy landscape and aims to create a new Innovation District in Co. Meath.

Bremore Ireland Port's strategic location on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor, deep-water and existing intermodal connections on the M1 and Dublin-Belfast rail line play a pivotal role in establishing it as a centre of growth both nationally and locally. The Innovation District will be a space where urban development and cutting-edge technology converge and is designed to foster economic growth, facilitate research and development, develop a new university hub, and provide new residential areas with essential community services.

Bremore Ireland Port has an initial strategic focus on the offshore wind sector, and the port will be equipped with purpose-built infrastructure, including specialised quays for wind turbine assembly and facilities for bulk, break-bulk and ferries. Bremore Ireland Port will also support Ireland's National Hydrogen Strategy objectives as it will be equipped to convert offshore wind energy to green hydrogen energy.

The Bremore Ireland Port project, reinitiated in 2019, has marked significant milestones, such as finalising the project plan, demand design, funding and planning assessments. The project is set to present a detailed planning application by 2026/2027, following a robust public consultation. The consultation process will capture the views of the local community and stakeholders over time to provide input and help shape the project's development.

Initial berths are projected to be func-

tional between 2028-2030, following planning decisions. The project's phasing is comprehensive, spanning a number of years, and the foremost phase emphasises offshore wind and bulk/break-bulk cargo. Economic and commercial forecasts by Black Quay Maritime Consulting and EY suggest market potential exists for Bremore Ireland Port to become one of Ireland's largest ports. The forecasts also have shown that Bremore Ireland Port has the potential to generate significant commercial revenues and economic benefits for the local region and nationally.

The regions of Meath, Louth and Dublin will benefit from the initial investment through job creation and apprenticeships. The development of new homes, community services, heritage and archaeological trails form part of the plan, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents and providing a focal point for community activities. The port's development includes plans for improved transportation infrastructure, which will enhance overall connectivity.

Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, said, "I welcome today's announcement of the Bremore Ireland Port vision. Ireland's ambition in the climate action, transport and renewable energy sectors are interdependent and critical to our path to a zero-carbon economy. Ports play a pivotal role in achieving de-carbonisation targets and are a key enabler regarding Ireland's ambitions for the maritime sector. The Government recognised the significance of Bremore Ireland Port in the port policy statement issued in December 2021 as one of several ports that are needed to deliver Ireland's renewable energy objectives. I'm optimistic about Bremore Ireland Port's potential impact on decarbonisation, energy security, job and housing creation, and industrial opportunities, particularly along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor of Louth, Meath and Fingal."

Paul Fleming, CEO of Drogheda Port Company, added, "We are pleased to announce the 'Vision for Bremore Ireland Port' today. Bremore Ireland Port is set to



Artists rendition of the future Bremore Ireland Port along the Meath coastline.

become Ireland's leading deep-water energy port with world-class facilities capable of assembling offshore wind turbines, producing green hydrogen, and distributing eco-friendly fuels in the first development phase, including bulk, break-bulk and ferry facilities. We also aim to develop an Innovation District, which will bring together light manufacturing, urban production, R&D offices, community services, residential areas, and a dynamic university hub. As we progress, we have placed paramount emphasis on respecting the rich heritage, archaeological significance, and environmental integrity of the Bremore region. Today's announcement marks the start of the consultation process in advance of our planning applications, and we continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including the newly established Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), the

Government, local communities, local councils and interested groups."

Rory Williams, CEO of Ronan Group Real Estate, added, "Strategic investment in a new purpose-built port is imperative to benefit from the vast potential of offshore wind and for Ireland to achieve its renewable energy targets of 30GW generated by offshore wind by 2050. Henning Larsen, a leading global architecture company, has created Bremore Ireland Port's pioneering vision to bring together innovation, green energy production and economic development. The initial €1 billion capital investment into the project will act as a catalyst for significant job creation in the Meath, Louth, and Dublin regions, and many local businesses will benefit from the capital investment. As the port's commercial activities increase, it will create many new local industries and businesses of the future."

Dublin Port Company Commits to Sustainable Port City Development with Signing of the Agenda 2030 by AIVP



Barry O'Connell, CEO of Dublin Port Company, signs the AIVP Agenda 2030 alongside José Sanchez, Director of Agenda 2030 by AIVP (International Association of Ports and Cities). AIVP's 2030 Agenda is the world's first initiative to adapt the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the specific context of port-city relations. The document, produced jointly with AIVP members at the Quebec Conference in 2018, sets down 10 goals to be achieved by 2030 namely: Climate change adaptation; Energy transition and circular economy; Sustainable mobility; Renewed governance; Investing in the human capital; Port culture and identity; Quality food for all; Port City Interface; Health and life quality; Protecting biodiversity. Barry O'Connell, Chief Executive, Dublin Port Company, said: "We are proud to sign the AIVP Agenda 2030 and join the global effort to create sustainable port cities. Dublin Port Company is committed to pushing forward on the ten key goals of the agenda and is currently making strides in the realms of port culture and port-city integration with our newly refurbished Substation venue and comprehensive Liffey-Tolka project, which lets the public in to 6.3 kilometres of pedestrian and cycle ways around the Port. Any Port should be a good neighbour to its city, and it is heartening to see this agreement mark an international consensus in this regard."

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Consumers Can Be a Bit Intimidated by Fish

Convenience Products Are the Answer According to Louth Firm

Marine Times Reporter



Developing convenient pre-packed product is the route to success, according to Gillian Morgan, Sales Manager of Morgan's Fine Fish of Omeath, Co. Louth.

Morgan's was founded 163 years ago and may be the oldest fish business in Ireland. It has 80 staff and is located in a scenic rural location overlooking Carlingford Lough and the Cooley mountains. The business was begun by Gillian's great-great grandfather in 1860 with a small fishing boat from the local harbour. He also bought fish from other vessels and sold from a horse-and-cart as far from Omeath as Monaghan and Baileborough. Gillian's father, Pat, and Uncles Arthur and Joe are still working with Morgan's Fine Fish today. Joe Morgan is the main fish buyer.

The company has completed a €270,000 investment aimed at making it more energy efficient and competitive in an increasingly tough market. The investment is supported by funding of almost €100,000 from the Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme, implemented by BIM.

Gillian Morgan said the efficiencies the company has

achieved with support from the Brexit Processing Capital Support Scheme will help "compete on a level playing field with international competition. We are using premium technology to offer fresh or frozen fish products to the market. The investment will future-proof the company to remain competitive and deliver new products."

One of the Brexit Process Capital Support Scheme supported Morgan's introducing solar panels and replacing a 20-year-old refrigeration system. There has also been investment in state-of-the-art technology to maximise the use of white fish landings and develop value-added products for European markets.

"Consumers can be a little bit intimidated by fish. What they want is high quality, ready to cook fish meals that they can put into the oven for a delicious meal. Developing convenient pre-packed product is the route to success.

Morgan's won BIM's Innovation Award at, Blas na hÉireann for its salmon darnes topped with garlic and herb butter, wrapped with Irish chorizo ribbon. The award recognises excellence in seafood innovation through the supply chain from product creation to using process technology developing new markets.

OPW to Deal with Coastal Change

Marine Times Reporter

The Government has established an Inter-departmental Steering Group on Coastal Change. This follows the delivery of the Report of the Inter Departmental Group on National Coastal Change Management Strategy which said that "increases in sea levels and storm surge arising from climate change will result in increased coastal erosion and displacement of the inter-tidal zone over the coming years and decades.

The strategy says that; "The impacts of coastal change will affect many sectors of our economy, including households, transport, agriculture, our environment, tourism and our cultural assets."

The Office of Public Works will take the lead on the technical aspects of assessing coastal change impacts, including co-ordinating the monitoring of physical coastal change, assessing and mapping areas at risk from coastal erosion, the development of a coastal change research programme and assessing potential coastal protection works for communities at risk, including the use of nature-based solutions.

"This will inform the identification of risks across impacted sectoral interests and will provide a solid basis for the development of appropriate sectoral responses," according to Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan, who has responsibility for the OPW.

Minister O'Brien Announces Ireland's Formal Pledge to Protect 30% of Marine Areas by 2030

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, has reaffirmed in a pledge the commitment made by Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform Malcolm Noonan, to protect 30% of Ireland's marine areas by 2030. In a new 'Message from Malahide' the Minister addressed an audience of delegates from nine Member States attending a European Commission Seminar in Dublin. He highlighted Ireland's significant progress in meeting the targets to protect marine areas as outlined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

The three-day seminar in Malahide is one of a series and brings Member States together to assess progress on the EU Biodiversity Strategy, an ambitious, long term plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. The strategy contains specific actions and commitments including targets for a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and sea. This includes legal protection of at least 30% of EU terrestrial and marine areas by 2030. The European Commission has requested Member States to supply voluntary pledges indicating their contribution to the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 protected area targets.

In his address, Minister O'Brien said; "I would like to thank the European Commission for inviting Ireland to host this timely seminar which focuses on one of our most precious resources – our seas. Ireland has an extensive marine area that is rich in biodiversity and provides huge benefits for health and well-being, supports a myriad of coastal communities and is an important component of climate adaptation.

"We have signaled our intention to meet these targets by increasing the marine area in our Natura Network from just over 2% of our waters two years ago, to almost 10% today. New legislation, the Marine Protected Areas Bill is also in progress which will legally underpin the designation of Marine Protected Areas. These actions, along with my Department's pledge here today demonstrate real commitment to protecting our marine biodiversity."

"A number of national and European NGOs are attending the seminar. Speakers include Andrea Vettori, Head of the Nature Conservation Unit at the EU's DG Environment, EU Commission, scientific experts, and government officials from across Europe who outlined their own country pledges and approaches to meeting targets.

Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, said; "Ireland is proud and determined not just to play its part, but to lead in protecting our irreplaceable marine biodiversity. Natura sites play a key role in protecting biodiversity, including large numbers of seabirds. Recently we notified new Natura sites - two large offshore reef Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites and a large Special Protection Area (SPA) on the east coast. In doing this, we are protecting vulnerable birds and species, and increasing our network of marine protected areas.

"Reversing the decline of our biodiversity requires practical action from all of us – governments, civil society, the scientific community and members of the public. Ireland can and will lead by example."

Developing A Traditional Boat Gallery in Mayo Tom MacSweeney Reports



Noel Campbell in the boat gallery at NMI - Country Life

Turlough Park about eight miles from Castlebar in County Mayo is where the National Museum, through its Irish Folk-life Division, operates the Country Life Museum. This collects and preserves material culture from Ireland’s traditional way of life, of which the maritime sphere is, of course, a major part.

It is a fascinating place, where Assistant Keeper Noel Campbell is developing a Boat Gallery, for which he has been obtaining support, information and contributions from around the coast.

It will house boats of different sizes and, where they are too big to be accommodated, artefacts and examples of equipment, illustrations, videos and details of their history will be displayed.

“My intention is to show the great tradition of Irish boats, through the stories of those who built them, those who used them and the communities they served,” he says.

“They are a vital part of not alone our maritime history, but the country’s general history also.

“In planning the gallery, I have been visiting boatyards, coastal and fishing communities, boat builders, experts, harbours, museums, heritage centres, clubs and strands from the Northern Headlands in Donegal to the Haven Coast in Cork.”

You could say that this work is preserving the tangible remnants of the relationship between island and coastal communities

and the sea, being safeguarded and displayed at Turlough Park.

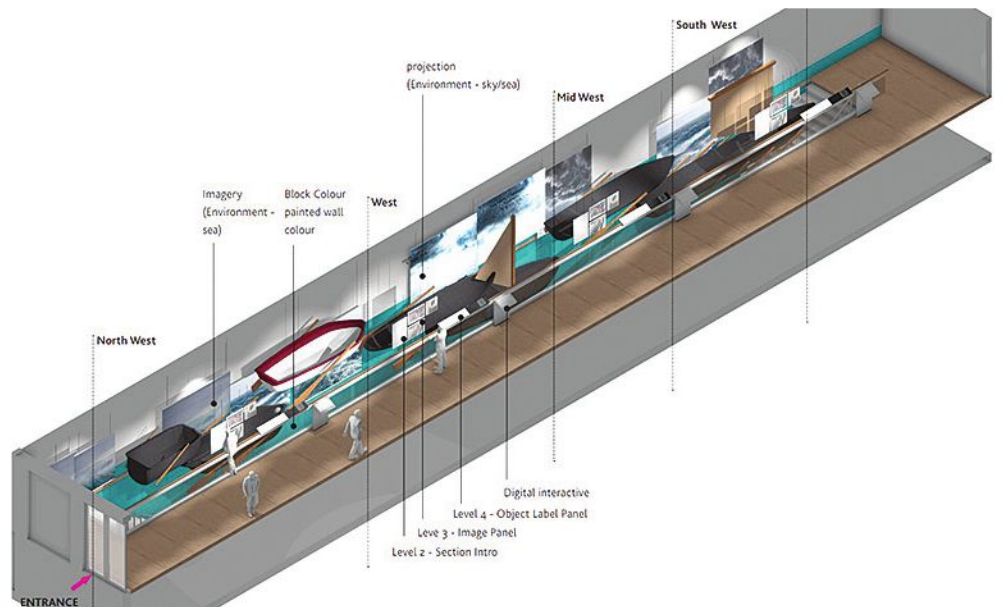
“Over the centuries, the physical form of traditional Irish maritime vessels were shaped by local necessity and foreign influences,” Noel explains. “The waters off Ireland’s Atlantic coast were utilised for fishing and to transport people and cargo such as turf and seaweed in a time when coastal areas were not easily accessed by land. Working boats evolved to suit their purpose and in doing so, they reflected the story of the lives of the populations they served.

“The role and importance of the Atlantic Ocean in the lives of those living by its waters were recorded in a strong oral tradition that was later collected in the printed works of Irish language speakers.

“The National Museum is recording this way of life. It is on our inhabited islands and among those coastal communities today that these aspects still exist as a living way of life – as a living link to our past. That is how I see the Boat Gallery developing to preserve all of this part of Irish life and the maritime tradition.”



Curragh at sea off Inisheer, Aran Islands 1968 © National Museum of Ireland. The boat gallery plan for the Country Life Museum at Turlough Park.



Cork National School Are Ocean Explorers Champions



Brooklodge National School, Glanmire, Co. Cork, has won the MARINE STEAM category in the Marine Institute's Explorers Ocean Champions Award 2023. Congratulating the children and teachers, Cushla Dromgool-Regan, Strategic Manager for the Marine Institute's Explorers Education Programme, said: "The whole school showed an exceptional interest in learning about the ocean and coming up with solutions to deal with the effects of climate change, exemplified by recent extreme storms. We're delighted that the children and teachers have fully embraced the concept of becoming an 'ocean literate school' and being ocean champions," she said. The 'Explorers Healthy Ocean School Projects' aim to inspire children with a range of interests by employing a cross-curricular approach to learning about the ocean, including science, technology, engineering, maths and the arts. Twenty-eight coastal county schools took part in this year's healthy ocean school projects, covering Marine STEAM, Ocean Literacy, SDGs and the Ocean, Marine Outdoor. The school projects reached over 15,000 children in 2022-2023.

Letters to the Editor

It's All About the Numbers

Editor
Marine Times Newspaper

Irish fishermen are all too aware of what does, and would happen to them, if they were to manipulate any landing or catch figures in their log book - there would be raids on their homes, houses, factories, banks, post office and credit union accounts, and a team of crack SFPA personnel would march them into every court in the land.

But what happens when a State agency does such a thing, and why: The agency I am talking about is the SFPA itself. Why is it done? Is it done to justify its existence? To pull the wool over the Department of Finance and all its political and civil servants that are supposed to be monitoring it?

The 2022 figures and statistics released by the SFPA as landings into Irish ports is a credit to those within the organisation that have come up with these "landing figures" of 45,943 landings into Irish ports - Donald Trump would be proud of them, if it wasn't so serious.

Does anybody believe that there was 1,575 landings into Wicklow and only 346 into Ros a Mhil; they must have been counting the people coming off the ferries in Rosslare as they have 1,346 landings there. Hard to credit that Wicklow has a greater number of landings than Killybegs and Ros a Mhil combined. Something gone wrong here?

No, they, yes they, the SFPA have lumped all sales notes, logs, landings together - These are not true figures they are fish and shellfish sales to cafes, restaurants, shops, etc. Fellows taking a few crab and lobster to here and there, or even of a bucket of winkles. The only sales missing are from Aldi and Lidl.

This is manipulation in a grand scale. There are ports in this landing list that haven't seen a boat, or could not land a boat, since Noah had the Ark ... So why?

The reason is quite simple, if they were to publish the top

ten Irish ports of landing of fish by species, and weight, by Irish vessels, into Irish ports, as was and should be custom and practice, it would show the true facts. The major, and I mean MAJOR DECLINE of Irish landings into Irish ports over the past ten years would show the REAL true picture. Then would this true picture justify the 20 million a year plus tax payers money, would it justify 180 staff, would it justify a full time board?

As any loss of earnings is a big worry, it now seems to be an issue for our friends in the SFPA, but it seems that manipulation of figures is ok for them and not for us

(Name supplied - requested to be Anon)

Info Requests to the Editor and Readers of the Marine Times Newspaper

From Kevin Flannery, Dingle:

Wondering if you could include a request from me, it's in relation to information that I am trying to find out about three fishing vessels that were purchased in Germany just at or before the Second World War.

The vessels were crewed and skippered to Ireland via Scotland. I am wondering if anyone out there would have any knowledge of these. Were they for the government or a private company, and what happened to them.

Any information would be welcome by email to: info@oceanworld.ie

From Bere Island
Via Twitter X: Bere Island (@BereIslandGroup)

An internment camp was in operation on Bere Island in 1921. Bere Island Projects Group are hoping to list all who were interned here.

If you have a family member who was interned and would like to share their story, please contact us on **Twitter X: @BereIslandGroup**

IFI Assists In International Salmon Research Project In Greenland

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has participated in a tagging project for salmon that tracks their epic sea swim from Greenland to Europe. IFI researcher Glen Wightman represented the agency in an EU-funded programme in the east Greenland settlement of Kuummiut - tagging salmon as they returned to their European rivers of origin.



He collaborated with scientists from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) to investigate the feeding and return migratory behaviour of young Atlantic salmon as they left the Arctic sea.

Senior Research Officer at IFI Dr. William Roche commented: "This study comprises novel research into a fish species that's in worrying decline. It's being conducted because the marine phase of a salmon's life is where knowledge of its survival is limited.

"We are making use of the strong homing trait of salmon. The aim is to fill a data gap because detailed information about salmon behaviour and migration routes in the ocean is scarce.

"It is hoped that the scientific information gleaned will provide further clues into the complex question of poor survival of salmon at sea.

"We are seeking more data on the return journeys these salmon undertake, and the numbers that actually make it back to the rivers where they are from."



Large iceberg on the sea, Greenland and Panoramic view of Kuummiut settlement in south eastern Greenland. Base location for project - Photos by Glen Wightman, IFI



Sample salmon were implanted with a tracking device during this pilot phase of the study and monitored rivers in Europe will be checked for returns of these particular fish.

The new programme is focused on capturing live pre-adult salmon in their feeding areas on the east coast of Greenland.

Led by DTU's Professor Kim Aarestrup, Dr Niels Jepsen, and IFI's Glen Wightman, it is being carried out under the Smoltrack project, coordinated by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation.

€7m Liquidity Aid Scheme for Irish Fish Processors and €1m Liquidity Aid Scheme for Irish Fisheries Cooperatives

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue, T.D. has announced two new Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) funded schemes, representing a combined support package of an additional €8 million for the Irish seafood sector.

The new schemes are as follows:

- **Brexit Fish Processor Transition Scheme** which has a budget of €7 million.
- **Brexit Fisheries Cooperative Transition Scheme** which has a budget of €1 million.

Announcing the schemes, the Minister said: "I am pleased to announce today the implementation of further recommendations of the Seafood Task Force, designed to assist fisheries cooperatives and fish processors to overcome the impacts of the reduction in quotas arising from the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). These schemes will make an additional €8 million in support available to the Irish seafood sector and as of the end of October increases the BAR funding I have announced to €304.9 million."

These schemes are based on the recommendations of the Seafood Taskforce which was established by Minister McConalogue in 2021 to assess the impacts of Brexit and the TCA on the fishing sector and coastal communities.

The Minister continued: "This announcement of a combined €8 million in support recognises the significant impact of the EU-Brexit TCA across the Irish Seafood Sector, and in particular in Ireland's more peripheral rural and coastal communities. In taking the form of direct grant aid, these schemes will support processors and fish cooperatives in dealing with challenges arising from a reduction in raw material. I am confident that this funding will further support the Irish seafood sector to adjust to the changed environment that we find ourselves in, and help ensure a profitable and sustainable seafood sector into the future. Now that I have secured State Aid approval from the EU Commission, I will be instructing BIM to administer these schemes without delay."

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's seafood development agency, will administer these schemes on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and further information will be available once the schemes are launched, from the BIM website.

news from the **RNLI**
editor@marinetimes.ie

Maritime Memories and Family Connections for Former President Mary McAleese in RNLI 200 Voices Podcast

Describing herself as someone who was born in the maritime city of Belfast, grew up on the shores of Carlingford Lough and now lives by a lake in the west of Ireland, Mary McAleese speaks of her close affinity with the RNLI in her contribution to RNLI's 200 Voices podcast.

In *Storms and Teacups*, the former President calls to mind family traditions in the charity including her own extended family. Jeremiah O'Connell, her son in law's grandfather, was coxswain of the Valentia Island lifeboat nearly 150 years ago. Mary McAleese recalls the eerie atmosphere of a visit to the old boathouse on the island where the ancient, cobwebbed craft is still stored.



Admitting to 'not being the strongest of swimmers' she says volunteering would certainly be on her 'retrospective bucket list.' Recalling many of the charity's events she attended as President of Ireland lauds the volunteering spirit of the RNLI.

The unique podcast series will hear from people connected to the RNLI in Ireland and those whose lives have been touched by the lifesaving charity. Hear from locals with a special kinship to their lifeboat station, a crew member who's been on service for a generation, or the family of someone rescued by an RNLI frontline lifesaver – each episode is sure to take the listener on a journey through a touching story.

Launched in August the series already features several contributions of Irish interest including:

- Niamh Fitzpatrick *Remembers One of Our Own*, a personal reflection on how after losing her sister Dara at sea, Niamh talks about how much the RNLI means to her.
- Fr. Tom Dalton, a Courtown RNLI crew member where the Co. Wexford priest describes what is like when rescue turns into recovery in *Pulling Together*.
- In *The Calm Before Force 10*, Baltimore RNLI's Kieran Cotter remembers an event that was to change yacht racing forever, the 1979 Fastnet tragedy, the fateful call out and the response to the disaster.
- The challenge of saving lives in a remote place is the theme of *Outer Limits* by Aran Islands doctor Marion Broderick.

Later in the series you will also hear from celebrity ambassadors including musi-

cian Phil Coulter on his writing of the RNLI anthem 'Home from the Sea'.

Available across all podcast platforms and the RNLI's website, listeners can hear from survivors, supporters, volunteers, lifeguards, celebrity ambassadors, historians and many more from across Wales, England, Scotland Ireland and beyond.

RNLI Strategic Content Manager, Rory Stamp said: 'We knew we had to do something really special to mark the RNLI's 200th anniversary, which is such a monumental milestone.

'200 Voices is an incredible collection of stories that are emotive, powerful, inspiring and heart-warming. The series gives us a chance to hear from a whole variety of amazing people who have played a part in or been touched by our lifesaving charity.

'200 Voices is the first in a programme of activity planned to mark the RNLI's bicentenary as we celebrate the world-class lifesaving service we provide today, remember our remarkable history and aim to inspire the future generations of lifesavers and supporters as we move through into the next 200 years.'

Launch into a podcast like no other: Listen to the RNLI's 200 Voices daily, wherever you get your podcasts or at RNLI.org/200Voices.

To find out more about the RNLI's bicentenary, visit www.RNLI.org/200

Sligo Bay RNLI Catch a Big One as Popular Annual Seafood Night Raises €6,587

The volunteer crew of RNLI Sligo Bay served up another fish supper to 200 guests at The Strand Bar in Strandhill. The seafood night raised an amazing €6,587, all of which will go towards training and equipping the station's volunteers to help save lives at sea.

This year, Starcrest Seafoods was the main sponsor for the night with some of their team accompanying the crew on the night.

Sligo Bay is celebrating 25 years of service in Rosses Point this year. Since 1998 till the end of 2022, volunteers have launches 420 times on service, with 368 people rescued, 28 of whom were lives saved. Over the years, the lifeboat crew have also brought deceased loved ones home to their families. The crew have spent 1,592 hours at sea on call outs, this excludes the twice weekly training that takes place throughout the year.

But, all of this would not be possible without the support and donations for which the team is extremely grateful.

Speaking after the seafood night organiser Mark Ballantine from Sligo Bay RNLI said: 'The support that Sligo Bay RNLI received is just tremendous. I would like to thank Starcrest Seafood for their sponsorship this year and all our other sponsors - the Strand Bar for hosting and cooking for us, those who donated raffle prizes and all who turned out and supported our night. Tickets sold out incredible fast this year. I am looking forward to next year already.'



The volunteer crew of RNLI Sligo Bay served up another fish supper to 200 guests at The Strand Bar in Strandhill. The seafood night raised an amazing €6,587, all of which will go towards training and equipping the station's volunteers to help save lives at sea. This year, Starcrest Seafoods was the main sponsor for the night with some of their team accompanying the crew on the night.

MMG Ocean Collaboration and Investment Partnership with Ocean Kinetics – Will Drive Growth in the Blue Economy

Killybegs Marine Engineering company MMG Ocean has announced a significant strategic investment & strategic partnership with major Shetland marine engineering specialist Ocean Kinetics.



Martin McGuinness, MMG Ocean and John Henderson, Ocean Kinetics

This collaboration will lead to an expansion of facilities and jobs at MMG Ocean, and it creates a partnership that will drive innovation and growth in the marine engineering sector in Ireland, Scotland, and Internationally.

Shetland-based Ocean Kinetics' investment in the Killybegs-based company follows the two businesses' past collaboration on a number of successful projects, including an innovative clean energy storage system for the aquaculture sector and the construction of marine grade metal frames for deployment in offshore wind developments.

The new partnership is also proving to be mutually beneficial with work being referred across the two businesses. For example, a contract with US company LDX for specialised high quality cooling filters which were fitted at the Intel Leixlip semiconductor facility in Ireland relied on Ocean Kinetics' expertise and facilities for the manufacture of these high spec components, while MMG Ocean's gangways have been installed on the Shetland pelagic fishing fleet vessels Antares, Charisma, and Zephyr, and another will be installed on Antarctic II which is currently being built in Astilleros Zamacona, Bilbao, Spain.

Managing director of Ocean Kinetics, John Henderson, said: "We are really excited about our partnership with MMG Ocean, which brings together Ocean Kinetics' extensive industry experience, market reach, and resources with MMG Oceans' innovative product development, expertise, and access to European markets. It undoubtedly underscores the synergy between the two companies and positions us as industry leaders across a range of sectors.

"Building from an established relationship, we now have a solid base from which to expand our reach and create transformative engineering solutions that bring genuine innovation to the marketplace."

Managing director of MMG Ocean, Martin McGuinness, said: "Our collaboration with Ocean Kinetics opens up immense opportunities, and we believe that our partnership will give us the capacity to expand and deliver a much wider offering than each of us currently has.

"Fusing the design expertise and production capacity of both companies gives us the ability to fulfil major contracts in renewables, energy, marine, aquaculture and fisheries, decommissioning, power, and utilities sectors across the UK, Ireland, Europe, and beyond.

Ocean Kinetics, which has been operating since 1992, are experts in engineering, with specialisms including fabrication in steel, stainless and aluminium, machining and fabrication, inspection and testing, as well as other services, including rope access, specialist diving, and underwater works such as jetty refurbishment and cathodic protection. The company has workshops and design offices in Shetland, Aberdeen, and Orkney, and a sales office in Oban.

MMG Ocean are experts in coded welding and marine fabrication - also working in steel, stainless steel and aluminium. MMG has a dedicated focus on quality and innovation, providing innovative, sustainable, engineering solutions, products, and services to the marine, aquaculture, fishing, and energy sectors – to ISO and DNV standards.

In 2018 MMG secured a European and US patent on its leading product, MMG Ocean Gangway Systems®, which features a unique folding mechanism designed to provide customised, automated safe gangway access to vessels (at all tidal ranges) in fishing, ferries, workboats in all offshore and inshore sectors.

Visit mmgocean.com for more information.

Pioneering Joint Action on Microplastics

How science is helping us to deal with the problem of plastic pollution in our oceans

The final meeting of JPI Oceans Joint Action on "Ecological Aspects of Microplastics" was held in Galway hosted by the Marine Institute, JPI Oceans successfully concluded its ground-breaking Joint Action on the "Ecological Aspects of Microplastics".

Over 102 participants from countries spanning from Brazil to Estonia converged both physically and virtually, signalling the global importance of this pressing issue.

During the two-day event, the research teams from the six funded JPI Oceans projects (ANDROMEDA, HOTMIC, FACTS, MicroplastiX, i-plastic and RESPONSE projects) detailed their findings and summarised the impacts and outputs of the projects, including scientific publications, education materials, policy briefings for stakeholders, monitoring tools including the ANDROMEDA app.

The combination of warming sea temperatures, ocean acidification and the accumulation of microplastics represents a substantial threat to marine life and ecosystems and, potentially, to human health. Microfibers and microplastics are everywhere in the marine environment, with particles from car tyres and cigarette butts as being of particular concern, owing to their toxicity. Over time microplastic particles degrade and particles become smaller and are much more difficult to measure.

Studies show that biofilms that form on these microplastic particles - termed the "plastisphere" - harbour viruses and microorganisms with unknown impacts on organisms that consume them. Another study described how jellyfish species may serve as a good indicator of the level of microplastics pollution based on the accumulation of ingested plastic found in jellyfish samples, although further research is also needed to determine the long-term effects on jellyfish in terms of their growth and reproductive functioning.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to connect the research outputs with key EU initiatives addressing plastic pollution. In the first session of the meeting John Hanus, DG Research & Innovation, European Commission and Luis Francisco Ruiz-Oregon, Joint Research Centre, European Commission detailed the data gathered on marine litter and microplastics to date and the importance of the joint effort from research and monitoring teams across Europe continuing to ensure *Good Environmental Status* of our oceans. Furthermore, potential cooperation opportunities between JPI Oceans funded research partners and the European Commission were presented by highlighting the activities of the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters", and a range of existing and forthcoming EU legislation to tackle the problem of marine litter.

Dr Niall McDonough, Chair of JPI Oceans and Director of Policy, Innovation & Research Services at the Marine Institute, said that "This meeting was a great success. The researchers presented the results of almost a decade of work on the sources, spread and impacts of microplastic pollution in the marine environment. This issue has only come to the fore in the past fifteen years and we are playing catch-up in terms of the science and the measures we can take to address the problem. The meeting also demonstrated the key role that JPI Oceans plays in bringing the best international experts together to conduct cutting edge research that has a direct benefit to society. I congratulate the research teams on their outstanding work. But they also gave us a clear message that there is a lot more to do."

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Ireland's €200m Aquatech Industry Can Capitalise on Global Opportunity and Investors

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Aquatech conference in Killarney told Ireland has potential to become "Silicon Valley of Aquatech" industry and Aquamonitrix announced as BIM Aquatech Business of the Year

Ireland's growing expertise in the developing aquatech sector means it has the potential to become a global leader in the field, with Irish aquatech companies turning over €200m last year, a conference in Killarney heard.

Over €15m has been invested in aquatech businesses in the last six years, and more than 200 hi-tech jobs created in the sector, according to BIM.

Aquatech is any technology or innovation driving sustainable seafood farming, and it can be applied progressively to the breeding, raising, and harvesting of fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants.

The conference, entitled "Aquatech – Ireland's Global Opportunity", held in the Brehon Hotel in Kerry, and participants included the Senior Vice President of the world's first aquatech unicorn company, E-fishery; a US sustainable seafood expert; a global off-shore aquaculture pioneer, along with a host of Irish aquatech entrepreneurs, and representatives from the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF).

BIM Chief Executive Caroline Bocquel said: "We have over 60 companies working in aquatech here, and the sector is worth about €200m. Hatch Blue, who we work closely with, is major aquatech-focused venture capital firm based in Cork, which has already made Irish-based aquaculture investments. We're starting to see some very significant investments and some brilliant ideas – for example, the use of AI to monitor and provide early warnings on the health of aquaculture fish stocks."

Innovation Studio

The conference is also a highlight of the Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Innovation Studio, an intensive two week no-fee programme that aims to develop the technological readiness, industry fitness and commercial scalability of emerging aquatech startups. Funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and now in its sixth year, the initiative seeks out projects in Ireland and other European countries that aim to upscale the region's aquaculture or alt-seafood industries.

To date, the total investment attracted is close to 50 projects and companies that have completed the Innovation Studio over the past 6 years – including 2023 - is €15.1M, with over 200 hi-tech jobs created. Several companies involved in this year's Innovation Studio attended a delegation to Southeast Asia earlier this year with Hatch to grow their network and learn more about their potential market. The delegation has secured potential business opportunities on foot of this.

The Innovation Studio supports the ambitious goals set out in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Food Vision 2030 Strategy, namely to 'promote Ireland as a knowledge base for aquaculture technology and research and attract external investment into the sector'.

Huge potential for Ireland

BIM's Development and Innovation Director Richard Donnelly chaired the panel discussion on the global opportunity for aquatech. He said that Ireland has the potential to become the "Silicon Valley" of aquatech, due to a number of factors. "BIM is in the unique position of having extensive knowledge of the global aquaculture sector because of our links with so many projects in other countries, and we are ideally positioned to evaluate and look at growth opportunities in aquaculture innovation.

"The creativity, skills and scalable businesses that have emerged from the Innovation Studio in recent years – aligned to the investment these start-ups [mainly] have been able to attract - shows huge potential, and a nucleus of Irish companies are already growing and expanding their market. Their businesses are based on innovative sustainable solutions for the aquaculture sector."

Wayne Murphy, co-founder and Partner at Hatch Blue, said the company's initial objective six years ago with BIM was to build a pipeline of Irish based investable aquatech companies that could develop scalable, smart technologies for the growing global aquaculture market: "Since then, almost 50 companies have participated in the initiative, with many successfully going on to raise capital and build sustainable technology solutions for what is now the fastest growing food sector in the world. This conference represents a key milestone as to the progress the sector has made in Ireland, also reflecting the ambition it has to go out there and compete on the global aquaculture stage now worth more than \$300bn - according to market forecasts."

"I am excited about Ireland's future prospects as more and more investment capital pours into the sector seeking carbon neutral smart technology solutions to enable the increased production of more sustainably sourced Blue Food [farmed seafood]."

Aquamonitrix Wins Inaugural BIM Aquatech Business of the Year

An Irish aquatech company which has developed cutting edge technology to provide a groundbreaking solution to measuring nitrate in water has been announced as winner of the inaugural BIM Aquatech Business of the Year.

Aquamonitrix, which is based in Carlow, is delivering a dataset to the water industry on nitrates and nitrites that are toxic to fish, but which were previously impossible to measure in real time.



Making waves! Mark Bowkett, Director of Aquamonitrix which has been named as the inaugural BIM Aquatech Business of the Year.

The company was announced as the BIM Aquatech Business of the Year at a conference in Killarney titled "Aquatech – Ireland's Global Opportunity". The conference followed a two-week BIM Innovation Studio delivered by aquaculture accelerator Hatch Blue and supported by the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Eight aquatech companies took part.

Aquamonitrix is an aquatech spin-out from the oil and environmental analysis company TE Laboratories which started in 1991 carrying out fuel analysis. The company moved into environmental analysis, and then developed a solution to monitoring water quality two years ago. Since then, the Aquamonitrix analyser has been bought by fish farms around the world.

Aquamonitrix Director, Mark Bowkett, said the company is delighted to be named the first BIM Aquatech Business of the

Year. "This means a lot of us, especially as we are new to the aquaculture sector. Our participation in the BIM Innovation Studio Programme was a gamechanger, and helped us to develop this opportunity. It has been a steep learning curve. But the Innovation Studio helped us to determine that we had a value proposition for the aquaculture industry."

Today the company employs more than 50 people and has customers from as far afield as Norway, the Netherlands and Canada.

The other two Aquatech Business of the Year finalists were **Aqualicence**, a marine and offshore windfarm consultancy firm supporting on all aspects of licensing applications and **Konree Innovation**, which uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to outsmart infestation by sea lice, a parasite that affects salmon and other fish.



BIM staff operating a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) near a mussel farm. Leenane, Co Galway.

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Lighthouse Breaks Soar by 60%

Overnight stays in lighthouses across the island have risen by 60% since 2019, according to the Great Lighthouses of Ireland tourism initiative. In total, over 622,000 people visited lighthouses and lighthouse tourism experiences last year.

Around 60 lighthouse, marine and tourism leaders recently met for a 3-day Great Lighthouses of Ireland conference in Belfast, to plan future growth for lighthouse tourism. "Lighthouses have such a special and universal appeal and are located in some of our island's most breathtaking coastal landscapes," says Bobby Kerr, chairperson of the Great Lighthouses of Ireland partnership.

"Growing lighthouse tourism has multiple benefits. It's a positive and sustainable way to preserve our maritime heritage. It can provide income and jobs for coastal communities and increase visitor numbers to the island of Ireland."

The partnership is led by Irish Lights, who founded it in 2015, and is made up of public, private and community sector partners, says Mr Kerr. "Pre-Covid, the Great Lighthouses of Ireland delivered an estimated €16.8m economic benefit in under 4 years and supported over 400 jobs."

"Recovery is underway and Great Lighthouses of Ireland is well positioned for the future," says Irish Lights CEO, Yvonne Shields O'Connor. "We share a vision and collaborate as partners to create truly inspiring and transformative visitor experiences. It's time now to be more ambitious about what we can achieve together."

Ms Shields O'Connor says Great Lighthouses of Ireland has developed a network of lighthouses, and marine tourism activities with their partners who all pull together to share expertise and boost growth. She quotes Rathlin Island as a good example of how this works at a local level. "The RSPB operate the West Lighthouse and Bird Sanctuary on Rathlin. The Rathlin Development and Community Association are working on plans to repurpose the East Lighthouse for visitors and the community."

"The third partner here is Kintra Tours, who bring visitors on boat tours to view all three Rathlin lighthouses and spot puffins and dolphins en route. They also run the ferry which brings visitors to the island and to the lighthouses. They share stories of the island's maritime past and present. This kind of local collaboration offers sustainable lighthouse tourism development with great visitor experiences."

Eimear Callaghan, Head of Programmes at Tourism Northern Ireland, said the conference provided a welcome opportunity "to explore a number of lighthouse related

projects in Northern Ireland. This includes visits to Maritime Belfast, Rathlin Island and Blackhead Lighthouse in Co Antrim."

"We want to harness the appeal of lighthouses for the benefit of the wider destination and community. In collaboration with public, private and community partners, our goal is to develop sustainable visitor experiences based around our rich maritime heritage and culture."

The conference opened at the Titanic Hotel in Belfast, with an introduction by broadcaster Bobby Kerr, Chairperson, Great Lighthouses of Ireland. The opening session was addressed by Yvonne Shields O'Connor of Irish Lights, a maritime organisation deliv-

ering essential 24/7 safety and navigation services around the coast of Ireland, North and South. She focussed on the need to create a vision for developing lighthouse tourism.

Maria McAlister, Tourism NI Manager for Landscapes and Activities, addressed the opportunities for Northern Ireland. Kerrie Sweeney, CEO of Maritime Belfast, talked about the unique and successful maritime heritage destination it represents.

The gathering then moved to Rathlin Island, to look at ways to collaborate and develop better visitor experiences for the future. This session was opened by Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary, at the NI Department for Infrastructure. Specific projects they will focus on include the community partnership around Fanad Lighthouse – voted one of the most beautiful lighthouses in the world. They also discussed the lighthouses of Rathlin and how they provide a sustainable island and visitor experiences.

The Great Lighthouses of Ireland conference then moved to Blackhead Lighthouse (inset photo) in Whitehead, Co Antrim. Jason Powell of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council talked about what's involved in building a community cluster and experiences. Niamh Lunny, CEO, Irish Landmark Trust – who operate several lighthouse properties – talked about the unique value of offering lighthouse accommodation and visitor experiences.

To find out more about the Great Lighthouses of Ireland initiative and what it offers, go to greatlighthouses.com



ESB to Join Simply Blue Group as Partner on Pioneering Saoirse Wave Energy Project off the Co Clare Coast

The Saoirse Wave Energy project will initially see a 5MW wave farm array deployed off the Co Clare coast

Simply Blue Group, a leading blue economy developer, and ESB, Ireland's premier energy company, have announced that they are pooling expertise and resources to deliver a pioneering 5MW wave farm array, located adjacent to the Co Clare coast. The project will be a 50:50 joint venture between the two companies.

Known as Saoirse and developed by Simply Blue Group, the wave energy demonstration project aims to prove the viability of wave energy in Irish seas. Subject to the necessary consents and a grid connection, the project is on target to be completed by the mid to late 2020s.

Wave energy projects complement wind energy and will help to deliver a more predictable and stable portfolio of renewables. It is estimated that Ireland has up to 18GW of wave resource off its west coast.

The chosen technology for deployment is CorPower Ocean's Wave Energy Converter (WEC). CorPower Ocean are developers of high-efficiency WECs, enabling reliable and cost-effective harvesting of electricity from ocean waves. The first full-scale demonstration of the CorPower Ocean technology is currently taking place in Portugal.

Sam Roch Perks, Group CEO, Simply Blue Group, said: "We have been developing Saoirse as a concept for several years and to enter this joint venture with ESB means we can take this project forward at the pace it requires. We have worked very closely with the wave energy sector to find the correct technology and believe the CorPower device represents the best-suited technology to build this exciting project – which will be a world first in wave energy and help Ireland recognise its potential in wave power."

Welcoming the announcement, Jim

Dollard, ESB Executive Director, Generation & Trading, said: "ESB is delighted to be a part of this exciting announcement on innovative wave energy conversion technology. ESB amassed significant expertise in wave energy through our West-Wave project up to 2016 and we welcome the opportunity to pool these learnings with Simply Blue Group. While the technologies in wave energy conversion are still at an early stage, projects such as the Saoirse initiative are a major step towards providing utility-scale generation from our oceans."

Patrik Möller, CEO of CorPower Ocean, said: "We are thrilled to see ESB join Simply Blue Group in the Saoirse project, bringing their vast experience and resources to develop utility-scale wave farms. This is an important step for Ireland towards net-zero targets, where the ocean can play a key role in bringing stability to the clean energy mix, allowing us to leave fossil fuels behind."

The project has been pre-selected for funding by the European Commission's Innovation Fund programme in its third call for projects. The joint venture will now move to negotiations around the preparation of a Grant Agreement for this project, which will conclude in the coming months.

Saoirse is a pre-commercial project that will demonstrate wave energy and will stay in the water off the Co Clare coast for up to 15 years.



Pictured (l-r) with CorPower Ocean's Wave Energy Converter scaled-down prototype outside ESB's Head Office at Fitzwilliam Street Lower, Dublin 2, is Jim Dollard, ESB Executive Director, Generation & Trading, Patrik Möller, CEO of CorPower Ocean, and Sam Roch Perks, Group CEO, Simply Blue Group.

Greater Pipefishes (*Syngnathus acus*) Captured & Released in the Irish Sea Off Co. Dublin

Report by Declan Quigley

On 10th August 2022, the MFV 'Mary James' (D724) [Skipper: Brian Leonard, Rush, Co Dublin] captured and released a Greater Pipefish (*Syngnathus acus*) [SGQ] while potting for lobster in the Irish Sea off Lambay Island, Co Dublin (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Greater Pipefish (*Syngnathus acus*) captured off Lambay Island, Co Dublin (10.08.2022)

On 18th September, the MFV 'Lily Tom III' (D720) [Skipper: Alan Fanning, Rush, Co Dublin] captured and released an exceptionally long Greater Pipefish measuring c.50 cm total length (TL) while potting for lobster at a depth of 36 m in the Irish Sea, 4 km NE of Rockabill Light House (53.6333°N, 5.9667°W), Co Dublin (Fig. 2). The specimen was found attached to the foot rope of the lobster pot train.



Figure 2. Greater Pipefish (*Syngnathus acus*) captured & released by the MFV Lily Tom III 4 km NE of Rockabill Lighthouse

Pipefishes (*Syngnathinae*) belong to a relatively large sub family of fishes represented by 56 genera and about 244 species worldwide. Although most Pipefishes are confined to shallow inshore marine waters, a few species are found in offshore oceanic waters while others occur in brackish water and some are confined to freshwater. Most Pipefishes occur in warm temperate and tropical seas but some range into relatively cool waters. Only 3 genera and 8 species of Pipefish have been recorded from the European Atlantic, including 6 species from Irish waters.

Although there are no records from Irish waters, there are a few recent records of the Black-striped Pipefish

(*Syngnathus abaster*) [SHQ] from northern Biscay, and one unusual record from the German Baltic coast. The Pelagic Pipefish (*Syngnathus phlegon*) [SGP] has not been reported northwards of the Iberian Peninsula.

The reproductive biology of Pipefishes (and the closely related Seahorses) is characterized by one of the most specialized forms of parental care – 'male pregnancy'. After fertilization, females deposit the developing eggs in a specialized pouch located on the abdomen or tail of the male who cares for the embryos prior to 'giving birth' to the fully formed juveniles.

Due to their long narrow eel-like shape, Pipefishes are probably rarely captured in commercial fishing gear. However, since Pipefish have no commercial value in NW Europe, it is likely that most specimens are probably discarded and go unrecorded.

Pipefishes generally feed on small crustaceans. Due to

their small pipette-shaped mouths, Pipefishes are probably rarely captured by anglers. However, the *British Record Fish Committee* (BRFC) lists two rod-caught records from UK waters, including a Greater Pipefish weighing 113 g captured in Fareham Creek, Portsmouth Harbour, Devon during 1981, and a Snake Pipefish (*Entelurus aequoreus*) weighing 28 g captured in the Menai Straits, Anglesea, North Wales during 1987.

Greater Pipefish *Syngnathus acus* [SGQ]

The Greater Pipefish is the largest (max. 50 cm TL) species found in NW European waters and is relatively common and widely distributed in Irish waters. The species is generally found in coastal waters (depth range usually 3-15 m, occasionally to 110 m) and is wide-ranging: from the Faroe Islands and southern Norway southwards to Gambia, including the Azores, Canaries, Mediterranean and Black Seas. It is also found in the South Atlantic from Namibia to SE South Africa (Fig. 3).

Nilsson's Pipefish *Syngnathus rostellatus* [SFR]



Figure 4. Nilsson's Pipefish (*Syngnathus rostellatus*) [Photo Baardman, GBIF]

Nilsson's Pipefish (Fig. 4) is found in coastal waters (depth range 1-2 m, occasionally to 18 m), particularly in sandy estuarine areas. The species attains a maximum TL of 18.5 cm, and ranges from Norway (Bergen) southwards to the Bay of Biscay, but has recently been discovered in the western Mediterranean Sea. Prior to the late 1950s, the species was regarded as rare in both Irish and UK waters where it was frequently misidentified as *S. acus*. However, since then, Nilsson's Pipefish has been found to be relatively common and widely distributed.

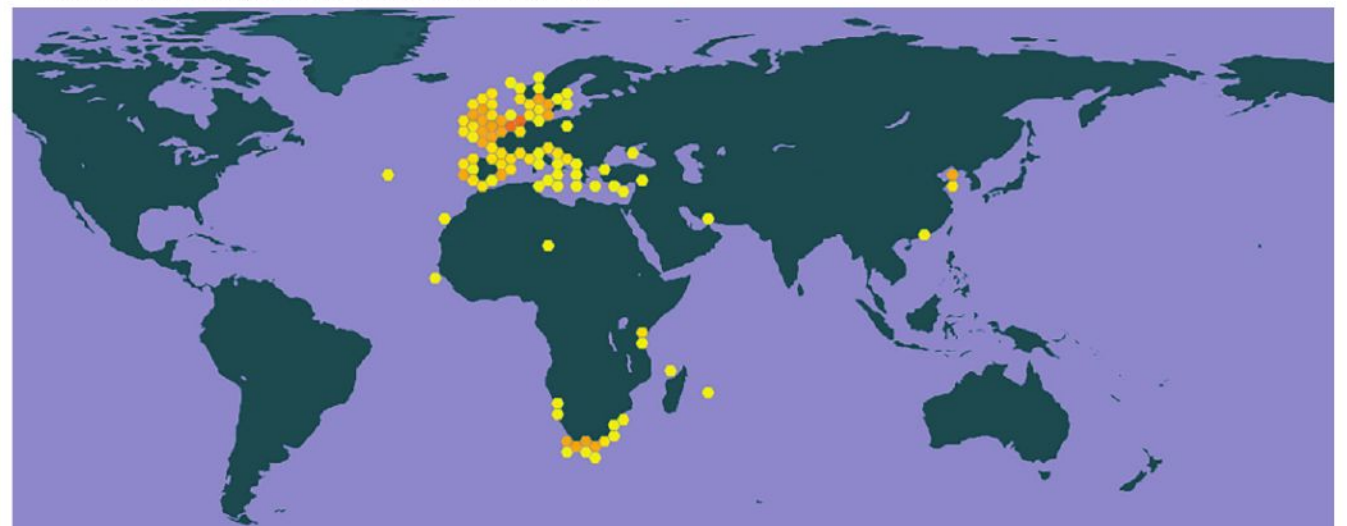


Figure 3. Global distribution of the Greater Pipefish (*Syngnathus acus*) [GBIF]

Broad-nosed Pipefish *Syngnathus typhle* [STQ]



Figure 5. Broad-nosed Pipefish (*Syngnathus typhle*) [Photo Steve Trehwella]

The Broad-nosed Pipefish (Fig. 5) is found in both coastal and estuarine waters (depth range 1-20 m), particularly amongst seaweed and eel-grass (*Zostera*). The species attains a maximum TL of 35 cm, and ranges from Norway (Vardo) southwards to Morocco, including the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The Broad-nosed Pipefish appears to be relatively scarce and only locally abundant in Irish waters. It has only been recorded from Co Cork (Cork Harbour, Glandore, Roaringwater Bay & Bere Island), Dingle Bay, Galway Bay (Ballyvaughan, Mweenish & Bertrabouy Bays), Ballinakill & Blacksod Bays, and Larne Lough, Co Antrim.

Worm Pipefish *Nerophis lumbriciformis* [NRL]



Figure 6. Worm Pipefish (*Nerophis lumbriciformis*) [Photo Adrián Pina]

The Worm Pipefish (Fig. 6) is found in inshore waters (depths <30 m), usually among rocks and algal holdfasts and ranges from Norway (Bergen) southwards to Morocco.

It is one of the smallest (maximum TL 17 cm) species of Pipefish found in NW European waters and probably the most abundant and widely distributed species found in Irish waters.

Straight-nosed Pipefish *Nerophis ophidion* [NRO]

The Straight-nosed Pipefish (Fig. 7) is found in inshore waters (depth range 2-15 m), including estuaries and occasionally freshwater, usually in association with long-stranded algae and/or eel-grass (*Zostera*) beds. The species attains a maximum TL of 30 cm, and ranges from Norway (Trondheim) southwards via the Baltic to northern Morocco, including the Mediterranean and Black Seas, but has rarely been recorded from the North Sea.



Figure 7. Straight-nosed Pipefish (*Nerophis ophidion*) [Photo Rune Bjerre, GBIF]

The Straight-nosed Pipefish appears to be scarce in Irish waters. Indeed, there are only a few confirmed records: Youghal & Glandore, Co Cork; Dingle Bay, Co Kerry; Galway Bay (Caherloughlin Sands, Ballyvaughan, Co Clare; Mweenish Bay and Kilkerrin Bay, Connemara, Co Galway); Ballynakill, Elly & Blacksod Bays, Co Mayo;

Killinchy, Co Antrim; and Strangford Lough, Co Down. However, its perceived scarcity may be due to either misidentification or lack of recording effort in suitable habitats.

Snake (Ocean) Pipefish *Entelurus aequoreus* [ENQ]



Figure 8. Snake Pipefish (*Entelurus aequoreus*), Saltburn, North Yorkshire, UK (Photo Marion Moore)

Up until the beginning of this century, the Snake Pipefish (Fig. 8), attaining a maximum TL of 60 cm, was considered to be primarily an offshore oceanic epipelagic species (depth range 5-100 m) extending from the Azores to Iceland, but rarely recorded from inshore waters. However, since 2002 unprecedented numbers of Snake Pipefish have been recorded from the NE Atlantic, not only from offshore waters as far west as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge but also from inshore waters.

There have been numerous reports of Snake Pipefish blocking vessel cooling water intakes, pelagic and demersal fishing nets, and tangling around fishing creels, ropes and salmon cages. Huge numbers have also been observed by SCUBA-divers carpeting the seabed in inshore waters while ornithologists have increasingly noted seabirds attempting rather unsuccessfully to feed them to their chicks as well as using them as nesting material. Some scientists suggest that increasing sea surface temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere, linked to global warming, may be the likely cause for the recent population explosion.

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

Letters to the Editor

Pulling the Wool Over Our Eyes

Editor
Marine Times Newspaper

I write to you from Slievemore, in Achill. Each month in your fishing paper I read how the CEOs of each of the fishing producer organisations voice their opinions and views for their members, and rightly so, as they are their paymasters.

Their overriding issue over the past year or more has been the failure of the European Union to take any action against Norway and the other countries that have ignored international agreements of agreed sustainable quotas for mackerel, blue whiting, blue fin tuna, Atlanto-Scandian herring etc.

The TACs for these species have been derived from painstaking hours of work at sea and land by taxpayers money in coastal states in Ireland and Europe, submitted to ICES and the EU commission, and then agreed and quoted out to each country. But alas and alack what we have seen since

the economic banking crash in 2008, that started with the Icelandic grab from zero mackerel quota to now 200,000 ton, and they got away with it!

As for international agreements with the EU, zero reaction. And so, once they got away with it next came Norway and then the Danish principality of the Faroes, so they decided to take what they wanted, and much more (even swapping with Russia). So, the Scots got fed up with all this and are now wheeling and swapping with Norway, so that only left the Dutch and Irish pelagic fishers left in the EU (Danes and Faroes one and same).

As we all know the Dutch own all the French, German, English, Polish, Lithuanian, and their own pelagic quotas plus the same owners are in Norway and Faroes also. So, they are a-ok! Anyway, they just

freeze and land and tranship wherever, so that leaves us "the good old boys of the EU".

As we now see every day, international agreements aren't worth the paper they are written on, with wars and slaughter, migrants, deaths, and a waste of time UN. There once was the belief of a clean living well-behaved Scandinavian countries, well Norway now have showed its true colours that "greed is good". Its grab at resources such as mackerel, blue whiting, krill, whale killing and starvation, swaps with Ukrainian killing Russians. Its failure to agree or comply with international TACs or quotas, must point, if not putting this country as a War profiteer, as they attempt to justify its grab at saying these fish eat in Norwegian waters! (Dear God!) Because the EU will take no action against Norway as it is now the only energy provider for the same EU, it even heats the home of our EU fisheries commissioner in Lithuania, (did you ever wonder why Lithuania is the big repacked of European destined Norwegian salmon).

So, the 52 plus Irish paddies and the 1,200 inshore boats that cannot steam away, now bear the blunt of the EMFF and BAR funded enforcement regime in Ireland.

Talking with politicians they will nod their heads and say "I'll see what I can do" or agree with you politely and move on.

So getting back to our POs CEOs, would they not agree for once and for the sake of the fishing industry, please ask each politician in for a meeting to explain the vagrancies and complexities of the EU and agree to simplify it and show our politicians what and how the EU are not only pulling the wool over their eyes, but robbing fishermen, their families, fishing communities and Ireland, not to mention the environmental damage being done to the fish, krill and whale populations.

Is Mise

Deatach o Scathan
Slievemore
Achill Island



Getting ready for the scallop season at Ardglass - Silent Valley, Three Sisters, Katie Grace, Golden Bells and Strathyre . Photo by Christopher Feenan

KFO Chief Executive to Leave Position at Year End Seán O'Donoghue to step down after 23 years at the helm

The chairman of the board of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation has announced that long-serving CEO, Seán O'Donoghue is to retire at the end of the year after more than two decades of tireless and unparalleled service to the industry.

Ciarán Doherty said that Seán O'Donoghue has left a remarkable legacy and navigated a series of challenges and hurdles that few could have anticipated when he took over in 2000.

"Seán has spent a total of 43 years working in fisheries and there are few if any, who have the level of knowledge, experience and competency around an industry which plays such a key role in our economy and indeed for those of us in coastal communities, our daily lives.

"We are fortunate to have had him steer the KFO through countless and often-tense negotiations and of course the defining moment of a generation, Brexit and the ramifications which it has had for Irish fisheries," stated the chairman.

Commenting, Seán O'Donoghue said: "I've been privileged to work with many excellent people who have been fiercely

committed to the betterment of Irish fisheries. That involves leaving the industry in a better place than where we found it and I believe that through our work on more sustainable fisheries, reducing our carbon footprint while simultaneously fighting the corner of our phenomenal fishermen, we've achieved that.

"I think there's an appreciation of the changing dynamic of fisheries. We have had to adapt, pivot and modernise and we are currently on that journey with typical zeal and determination. Brexit caused untold angst and strife but if there's one thing about all those associated with Irish fisheries, there's a pride and a resilience which always shines through."

Seán O'Donoghue leaves his position on December 31st 2023 with an announcement to be made on his successor next month.

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