

MARINE TIMES

IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER - MARCH 2021 - PRICE €3.00



New vessel for the Wilde family MFV Mary Paul on its way to Howth - Photo courtesy Richard Guildea



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Why Is The Government Not Defending The Fishing Industry?

"Government Must Show Backbone"

"Irish Fishermen Are Being Thrown To The Wolves"

Seafood Sector Taskforce: Is the Government Solution to Rid Our Waters of Irish Fishermen and Their Boats?

INSIDE – The full story as industry leaders implore government to stop destruction of fishing and coastal communities in worst Brexit deal for Ireland.

Newspaper for Ireland's Fishing, Marine and Coastal Communities

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the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

By Jove I've Got It!!!!

How can we not be amazed by the level of absolute expertise being displayed on matters Fishing, Educational and Medical in the past number of weeks.

This further enhanced with the announcement by Ulster Bank that they are exiting the Irish Market which has introduced us to additional expertise in Financial and Banking matters.

I watched in disbelief while a well known expert from the opposition benches suggested that as a matter of urgency the Government should be organising a Bank to replace the Ulster Bank to ensure that completion forces be maintained.

In normal commercial business one of the core ambitions is to make the best possi-

ble returns for the investors.

Lest we forget lads the Country is the Major Shareholder in one of the Pillar Banks so by definition any profit made will accrue to the Country. Some of that will be in repayment of the investment made at the time required and going forward it will represent a "nice little earner" for the Country if it is allowed to manage its own affairs towards that end.

There are those for whom the concept of making profit is absolutely repugnant but they forget that it is profit which pays the



(Above): Hannah J S483, in Casla Bay with the Battery (Martello) Tower in the background. Photo courtesy Padraic McDonagh

(Below): Aine unloading mackerel in Norway. Photo courtesy John Cunningham



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bills and keeps the Wheels of Commerce turning.

I personally am sad to see Ulster Bank leaving as a number of you in the industry should also be sad.

There are a number of successful projects around the coast which were funded by Ulster Bank at a time when others were "faffing around" with the applications.

The Leaving Certificate examinations have brought more experts to the front and I have pity for the Minister who is trying to please all sides, while only having limited control over any of the decisions.

As with most of the Departments the big decisions will be made by the Senior Civil Servants or as our colleague Tom MacSweeney describes them the "Permanent Government".

I don't have a particular issue with that because most of these people are hardened Public Servants and in most cases well qualified in their Briefs - but it is they who should be attending the press conferences to explain why various things have been decided on.

In the health crisis we are getting advice from all corners on how many jobs we should be giving, where we should be administering them and by whom.

Too much discussion lads!!!!

Just announce what is going to happen and again let the Secretary General of the Dept of Health explain to the press the what and why.

In the Post Brexit fishing climate there are so many things which fishermen have assumed will happen which I don't believe have been realistically discussed yet.

The Deal was terrible - of that there is no doubt- but our fishermen are at sea today - doing what they do best.

We have been lucky so far in that the markets for Irish fish are holding up well and the UK lads are experiencing more difficulty than they ever dreamt of.

Lets take advantage of any opportunities presented in the European Markets which the UK are still trying to figure things out.

We are told that an Advisory Group will be set up to suggest how the Industry might be supported and to compensate for loss of

Income or opportunity caused by the Quota Reductions.

Let's be realistic in our expectations of what can be done to redress the effects of the Quota Cuts.

Maybe the renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy may result in an improvement but we are at the mercy of the other members of the EU in that.

The recent Interview by Lorna Siggins with Dr Peter Tyndall on Countrywide on 20 February was a joy to listen to for its balanced and realistic assessment of the current state of the Industry.

Peter is coming from a position of knowledge, experience and intelligence and I for one listened with attention and admiration.

I have been banging the PR Drum for ages and am delighted to see that Cormac Burke has gathered the Ball and is running with it.

We have been losing the PR Battle hands down lads and we need this boost from someone with a proven record in the Industry and in the Media .

Can I suggest that maybe the occasional reference to the Achievements (Despite everything) of the Industry might be included in Cormac's Articles.

Well done Cormac.

I am finding that the concept of confrontation, objection and "nit picking" is wearing down even the most enthusiastic of us to a point where we must consider how much longer we are prepared to fight on.

Why must every suggestion be met with a barrage of objections and suggested improvements.

I say to all those with ideas- Get them in now Lads!!!

Don't wait until someone else has made a suggestion and immediately don your Hurler on the Ditch Jersey.

In fact - I have the ultimate solution We ignore the results of any future election.

We simply put the Opposition in Charge!!!

They will always have a better idea!!!!

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Carmarose heading for Killybegs passing Malinbeg and Sliabh Liag- Photo by Ryan McNern

A photograph of a fisherman in a dark cap and shirt, focused on handling a large salmon. The fish is held vertically, showing its pinkish-red flesh and dark skin. In the background, other salmon are hanging from metal hooks in a processing facility. The lighting is warm and focused on the fisherman and his work.

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Letters to the Editor

The Irish Government Negotiated with EU Partners for a Fisheries Deal But Came Home with a Tin of Sardines

Editor
Marine Times Newspaper

As the true fallout of what history will call the "greatest sell-out" by any Irish Government of a sector and a natural resource, it is clear that the mackerel scales were well and truly pulled over the eyes of Irish politicians, as they gladly left Michel Barnier alone in the wheelhouse of the EU UK Brexit negotiations - the cunning Franco German axis fed the Irish Fishermen to the sharks.

Were the Irish Government aware of the scale of the savage cuts for the Irish fishing fleet relative to the other coastal countries of the EU? Did they realise Ireland was suffering in the negotiations or going to have to carry 25% of the cost of the entire deal to the EU, with the remaining 10 coastal states taking the remaining cuts.

Did the Ministers for Marine and Foreign Affairs and their officials comprehend in making the agreement that they were going to drastically decrease, savagely cut the Irish fishing fleet capacity by 25% to 30% with immediate effect, with more to follow in 2026?

If the Government and the Department officials were aware of this 25% cut hitting Ireland with worse to come in 2026, did the Government consider the lodging of an official objection on the fisheries component of the Brexit deal based on the principal that fisheries and trade access were to be intrinsically linked as set out in the EU preamble to the talks?

Since no official objection was lodged, was it that the Minister for Marine was not allowed to lodge an official objection? If he was not allowed to lodge an official objection, who was responsible for that? Who was advising the Minister for Marine?

Did the Irish Government and their officials raise the issue on the disastrous fisheries deal for Ireland before the Agreement was consented to by the Irish State the principal of burden sharing between the EU Coastal states similar to the Hague principals of the sharing mechanism that is part of the annual share out of fish quotas between member states of the EU. Was there any attempt to put into play a mechanism based on the Hague Principals?

Did the Irish Government not identify within the detail of the agreement that the Dutch and French had a special arrangement for the North Sea, with a fraction of the severity of the cuts the Irish were being subjected to....

The Taoiseach and the Ministers for Marine and Foreign affairs heralded this as a good deal for fisheries and the Irish fishing fleet. After 20 days of silence and a mighty storm brewing for the fishing and coastal communities the Minister for Marine now seem to have found their paddles and are furiously attempting to row against a heavy current back to the Port of the EU Brexit negotiation table that has the harbour gates locked and which the mighty ships of the EU have left and have steamed right through and over our inept Irish negotiators.

Now, we hear over the last week that the much heralded €34 million cut is now €43 million and the true cost to coastal communities will likely be between closer to €85 million p.a. in real terms. We heard of a good deal from the Government, now it is a bad deal they say, what an oxymoron.

The Irish ship was in deep waters at the British negotiations and had no one in the Wheelhouse other than Michel Barnier as the Dutch, the Spanish and the French several other countries of the EU were plotting the course and fuelling the engines and kept our team

of negotiators the sight-seeing observers on board in the cabins and far away from the wheelhouse, while the Irish fish was being thrown overboard to the British fleet.

And no matter how much they now try to row their little row boat back against an ebbing tide they will not get back to the port of the Brexit negotiations because that mighty ship sailed right out of Port and has taken whatever they wanted of the Irish fleet and of Ireland's quota within UK waters now given away to appease Germany, Denmark, France, Spain and the Dutch. Our rights to harvest her natural fish resources that have spawned off the West Coast of Ireland thrown overboard by our inexperienced and inept crew who failed to shout stop the Irish skipper and Crew who even thought they had done well until 20 days later when the raging waters waked them from their slumber of their sleep.

The long-term impact will only be fully known post 2026. The only safeguard that protected us from larger than the 25 to 30% of cuts and the total annihilation of the capacity of the Irish fleet in the medium term was the reality that the British fleet is underdeveloped and has not the capacity and therefore hadn't the capability of catching any more fish than the drastic amount acceded to them at our great cost in this round of negotiations. Is there anyone who can now say that they will not have more capacity, a lot more capacity to take more Irish fish and further destroy the capacity of the Irish fishing fleet and Total allowable Irish Catch by 2026, when the very real and even more dire consequences of this disastrous deal will have for Irish fishing and her coastal communities.

The fact of the matter was that Scottish and British fishermen were not lobbying for increases to the Mackerel quotas to the extent they were given. The UK fishermen were negotiating more for a greater allocation of North Sea herring over mackerel. Despite the UK expectations of a huge pay back of North Sea herring, somewhere in the region of 100,000 tons, a species which is almost exclusively fished in UK waters, they were given a mere payback of 17,000 tons of North Sea herring. Instead, the UK were given Mackerel which was not their preferred option in the total quantities from the following countries as follows

Belgium 309 tons @ a value of €142k Spain 850 tons @ €750k France 7545 tons @ €6.9m Denmark 10,753 tons €5.29m Netherlands 17,651 tons €15.52m Ireland 23,496 tons €27.781m.

The total losses of the Brexit negotiations fisheries deal for the coastal EU states is as follows up to 2026, Belgium -7%, Germany -15%, Denmark -7%, Spain -4%, France -8%, Ireland -15%. Netherlands -10%, Others -3%.

The value of the German Loss in real terms is €21 million and the Irish loss is now standing €43 million and may yet be as high as €85 million to the fishing industry and coastal communities as a whole.

It is very clear that the French, Spanish Dutch, Danish and German politicians very much protected their own national interests in the Brexit negotiations. The Dutch mega Factory ships catching large amounts of mackerel and Herrings were protected in the negotiations as were their super rich owners have massive influence in the heart of the EU bureaucratic policy machine. The French and Spanish were protected. The Danish and Germans had their herring in the North Sea protected at the expense of both Ireland and the Scottish and British fleet. These other countries that have much greater quotas pro rata to Ireland for blue whiting, herring, horse mackerel and mackerel and have these quotas protected year on year for these countries as we have seen in the Brexit negotiations.

I am amused to see that it took 20 days after the so called "good deal" for Irish fisheries for the Irish Government to find it's VOICE but sadly very late and far too late, when the ball has been taken off the field and the savage out-maneuvring of the French guillotine, the Spanish and Dutch knives have cut it to shreds in the Brexit negotiations when our Irish Government were in their cabins as the Irish ship was skippered by others to now realise now it was the worst possible deal of all time for this country, Ireland's fishing fleet and an outright disaster of our coastal communities.

Our Ministers and Government on Christmas Eve were much like Neville Chamberlain in 1938 who came back from Hitler waving his piece of paper declaring peace in our time, an empty formula, the disastrous Brexit deal is now becoming clearer the claims of a good deal on Christmas Eve are as unreal as were Chamberlains. The horse has now bolted and Ireland came last by several lengths in the Brexit negotiations race and the Christmas Star which shone for the first time in 400 years on Christmas Eve and gave great light, now the light has been snuffed out for Irish Fishermen and there no stars to be given for the disastrous negotiations for Irish fishing.

In conclusion this deal, as the Government claims was a good deal for Irish Fishermen, a deal which they made not realising perhaps the true value of the Marine sector to the Irish state, but if this deal was as good as the Taoiseach claims - then why are they now hoping to renegotiate it.... and the fact that they are dispatching Minister Mc Conalogue all across EU coastal states looking for our fish back says it all about this Government - weak, inept and hopeless and not fit for purpose.

Fr John Joe Duffy, C.C.
Creeslough,
Co Donegal.

WANTED! Octopus

Editor
Marine Times Newspaper

Just in relation to the Octopus article last month by Declan Quigley, we would be interested in obtaining a few of these guys (inset photo) for display and to record their feeding habits, Vincent O Regan's one is still on display, so please contact me at info@Oceanworld.ie

Kevin Flannery
Oceanworld
Dingle



Marine Protected Areas Consultation Open Until July

Though Most-Impacted, Fishing Industry Excluded from Advisory Group

Why Not Conservation Payments to Fishermen as Paid to Farmers?

Marine Times Reporter

“The success of Marine Protected Areas will depend on involving fishermen.”

That comment about the government’s drive to create MPAs around the Irish coast was made by Kevin Flannery, the well-known Dingle marine biologist, former Fisheries Officer and a Founder of Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium. He has been involved in the maritime sphere for over 50 years and is one of the most authoritative, influential and respected voices on marine affairs.

In the development of the concept of MPAs he has urged that fishermen “should be accorded the same supports as farmers get for conservation.”

According to government statistics, big numbers of farmers are given conservation payments every year.

Why should such a system not be introduced for fishermen, those most affected by

proposed MPAs?

This is a potentially major issue in encouraging the participation of the fishing industry, which the government-appointed MPA Advisory Group report identified as a sector that will be significantly impacted.

And why have fishermen not been invited to be more directly involved in the MPA development when they are likely to be the most-impacted sector? The industry catching and aquaculture was not included in the Advisory Group which drew up the report on which the government’s approach is based.

The report says: “MPA designations are likely to have the greatest influence on the capture fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Research suggests that the net impacts on fisheries could ultimately be either positive

or negative and will depend on the type of fishery involved and a wide array of other factors.”

The government did not appoint any person directly involved in the fishing sector, capture or aquaculture, to the 20-member Advisory Group which drew up the report:

“EXPANDING IRELAND’S MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK” that was submitted to Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dara O’Brien, last October, His Department is responsible for implementing the MPA development.

This appears to be yet another indicator of government disrespect and disregard for the fishing industry.

The Advisory Group said that a “key part” of its responsibility and work was “wide and effective consultation and information gathering with a diverse range of marine stakeholders.”

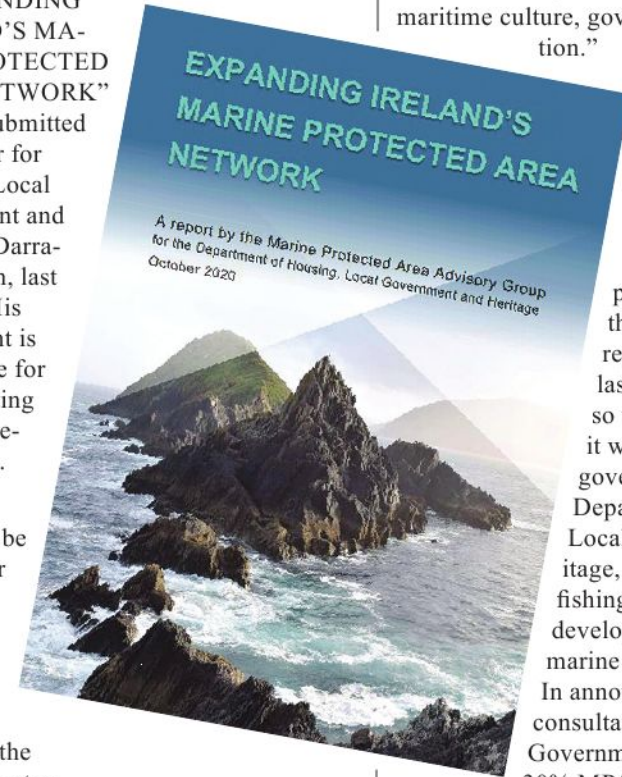
But, as the acknowledged primary sector involved why was there no representation on the Advisory Group from the fishing industry? It was treated as just another ‘stakeholder’.

The Department said: “The advisory group comprised 20 experts in life and ocean sciences, marine socio-economics, maritime culture, governance and legislation.”

Significantly, no reference there directly to the likely most-impacted sector, fishing.

With a further public consultation on the Advisory Group report having opened last month and to remain so until Friday, July 30, it would surely behove government and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to directly involve the fishing industry in further development of Ireland’s marine protect area network. In announcing the current consultation it said: “The Government is aiming to have 30% MPA coverage of Ireland’s maritime area by 2030.”

It would do well to bear in mind the message which Kevin Flannery put forward in the MARINE TIMES last July: “Bring the fishermen with you.”



For the latest information and guidance on sea-fisheries regulations and seafood safety, visit: sfpa.ie

The following information can be found in the Brexit section on the homepage of the website:

- EU-UK Trade Compliance as of 1 January 2021: *Guidance for Industry*
- Third Country Transhipment & Landings Notifications

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Ireland's New World Class Marine Research Vessel to Honour World Renowned Irish Explorer Tom Crean

Ireland's new marine research vessel will be named the RV *Tom Crean*. Due to be completed in summer 2022, the new state-of-the-art multi-purpose marine research vessel will carry out a wide range of marine research activities, including vital fisheries, climate change related research, seabed mapping and oceanography.



The new 52.8 metre modern research vessel, which will replace the 31 metre RV *Celtic Voyager*, has been commissioned with funding provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine approved by the Government of Ireland.

Ireland's new marine research vessel will be named the RV *Tom Crean*, after the renowned seaman and explorer who undertook three major ground breaking expeditions to the Antarctic in the early years of the 20th Century which sought to increase scientific knowledge and to explore unreached areas of the world, at that time.

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D. said, "I am delighted to announce the name of Ireland's new marine research vessel is the 'RV Tom Crean', acknowledging the contribution of a legendary Irish Explorer. The new vessel will enable Ireland to undertake critical research work which will support many of the projects outlined in the Programme for Government including fisheries assessment, offshore renewable energy, marine spatial planning, marine protected areas and addressing the challenges of climate change."

The new marine research vessel will provide a year round service for expanded fisheries surveys, seabed mapping, deep water surveys and support increased research in the Atlantic Ocean. The new vessel will enable 300 operational days at sea each year, and up to 3000 scientist days per year. The new vessel will also enable the Marine Institute to continue to lead and support scientific, high quality surveys that contribute to Ireland's position as a leader in marine science.

A native of Annascaul in Co Kerry,

Crean volunteered for Robert Falcon Scott's Discovery expedition in 1901 and for his Terra Nova expedition in 1910. During the Terra Nova expedition, Crean made an 18 hour solo journey in desperate conditions to save the life of a fellow crew member and was awarded the Albert Medal for his acts of heroism. In 1914, he joined Ernest Shackleton on the Endurance expedition and, again, he proved himself to be a much trusted crew member and someone capable of great endurance and heroism.

Dr Paul Connolly, CEO of the Marine Institute said, "The decision to name Ireland's new research vessel after Tom Crean honours his achievements and gives due recognition to an Irish explorer of international renown. The Institute greatly appreciates the support of the descendants of Tom Crean in this decision. This naming decision also reflects the values of the Marine Institute, the collaborative efforts and achievements of its staff, particularly the service provided by all staff who go to sea."

Speaking on the announcement, granddaughter of Tom Crean, Aileen Crean O'Brien, on behalf of the family, said: "We welcome the decision by the Irish government and the Marine Institute to name their new marine research vessel after Tom Crean, of whom we as a family are very proud."

Dr Connolly continued, "This new multi-purpose research vessel, the RV *Tom Crean* will greatly enhance Ireland's capacity to undertake collaborative research and acquire the data and knowledge essential to managing our marine resources."

The two Marine Institute research vessels currently in operation, the RV *Celtic*

Explorer and RV *Celtic Voyager*, are among the most intensively used research vessels in the world.

The new vessel will replace the RV *Celtic Voyager*, which was Ireland's first purpose built research vessel and was commissioned in 1997. It has been vital in providing marine scientists, researchers and its crew members with many years of valued experience at sea, expanding and strengthening marine science in Ireland to help inform decisions affecting our oceans. It was joined by its 65 metre sister RV *Celtic Explorer* in 2003.

The construction of the new national research vessel continues on schedule in 2021 at a total build cost of €25 million, with the build process expected to be completed by summer 2022. Spanish shipyard Astilleros Armon Vigo S.A. were awarded the contract to build Ireland's new state-of-the-art marine research vessel in 2019, following the completion of the design by Norwegian ship design

consultants Skipsteknisk AS.

The new research vessel will be a modern, multipurpose, silent vessel, capable of operating in the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The new vessel will be able to go to sea for at least 21 days at a time and will be designed to operate in harsh sea conditions. Based in Galway, the vessel will be used by the Marine Institute, other state agencies and universities to

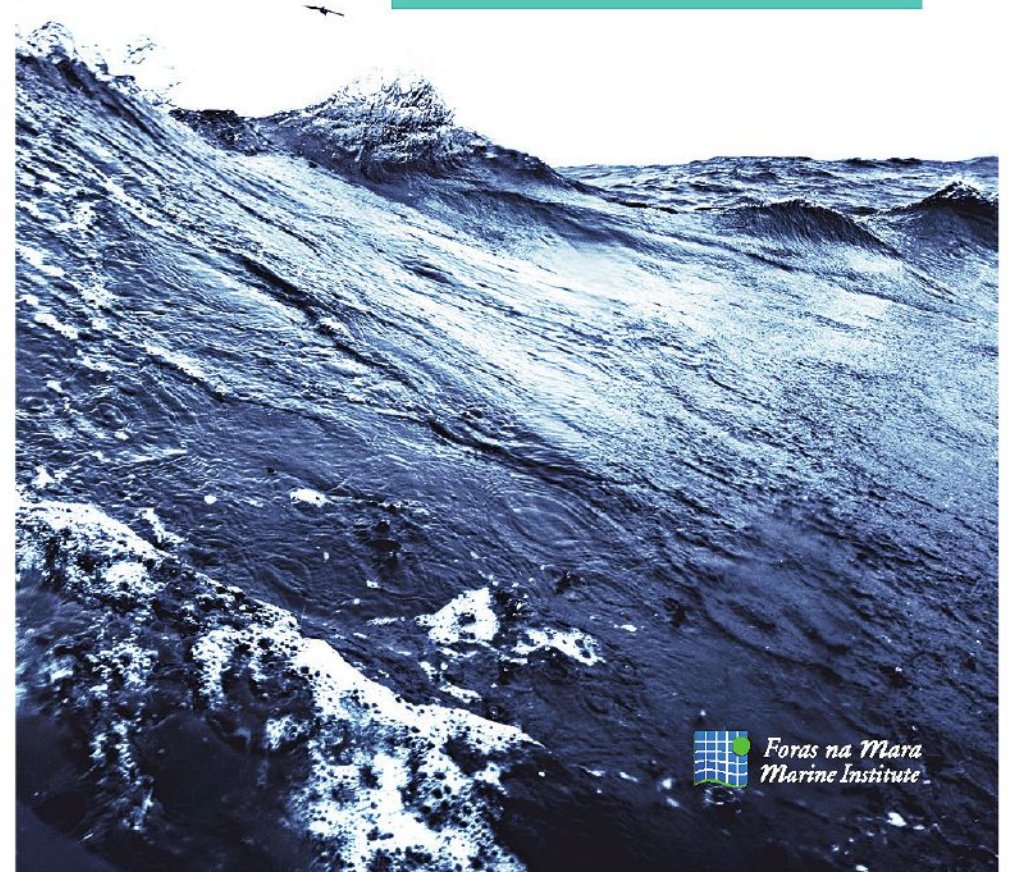
undertake fisheries research, oceanographic and environmental research, seabed mapping and other multidisciplinary surveys. It will also maintain and deploy weather buoys, observational infrastructure and our Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) *Holland I*.

It will be designed to incorporate the latest proven technologies to ensure that it operates as efficiently as possible, ensuring minimal fuel consumption and minimising the vessel's environmental impact and carbon footprint.

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Our ocean is our greatest national resource

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SFPA Urges Industry to Know the Regulations and Requirements Post-Brexit for Non-EU Vessels

Following the UK's departure from the EU, the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is urging the fishing community, and particularly those with UK (including Northern Ireland) registered vessels or food business operators who customarily deal with these vessels, to familiarise themselves with the EU fisheries and food safety controls that apply to them from 1st January 2021. These controls arise from UK's new status as a Third Country and include using specifically designated ports and submitting additional documentation. Food business operators meanwhile must ensure that the product they are purchasing has entered the EU legally.

While the movement of fish and fishery products is largely unrestricted within the EU, imports of fish and fishery products from outside the EU are strictly regulated. Under current illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fisheries legislation, a landing by UK (including NI registered) vessels to Irish ports are regarded as direct landings by Third Country vessels, and as a consequence, can only take place in ports designated specifically for this purpose.

Under NEAFC Port State Control (PSC) and IUU regimes, Ireland has seven designated ports – Killybegs and Castletownbere plus Burtonport, Greencastle, Rathmullan, Howth and Ros a Mhil, which have been recently



designated for landings of NI registered vessels in certain limited scenarios. Full details are available at www.SFPA.ie

Physical inspections of landings to verify the quantities and species declared by the vessels are also possible. EU IUU regulations specify several cases where fishing vessels registered to a Third Country must always be inspected. Furthermore, the SFPA reminds vessel owners that prior to the importation of landed fish into an EU port from such a vessel, a catch certificate validated by the fisheries authorities of their flag state (for example, the UK) must be submitted for the catch.

Dr Susan Steele, Chair of the SFPA, stated: "As an EU Member State, UK vessels including many registered in Northern Ireland, have landed into up to 22 Irish ports in recent years so the regulations that apply to them now as a Third Country represent a significant change. However, by leaving the EU, the entry of UK goods to the EU is subject to international agreements and new requirements apply for all trade – including fisheries – between the EU and the UK

from 1st January. We encourage all vessels owners and food business operators to familiarise themselves with the regulations and Northern Ireland registered fishing vessels, in particular, should clarify their obligations with their Flag State Fishery Authority to minimise any potential disruption arising from the changes. There are certain exemptions for Northern Ireland registered vessels in relation to food safety requirements when landing to Irish ports,

but otherwise they are treated as UK vessels and everyone involved should be aware of this," said Dr Steele. "Briefly, those vessels need to consider four broad additions to their obligations when landing to

Irish ports: firstly, they must go to designated ports; secondly, they must provide advance notification together with various completed mandatory documents; thirdly, they must await authorisation from Irish authorities before entering port or discharging fish, and finally they should expect inspection from time to time."

Unlike vessels registered in other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland registered vessels can land frozen product into the four designated Irish ports once they comply with NEAFC and IUU requirements – Howth, Ros a Mhil, Killybegs and Castletownbere. Prior notification of 72 hours is required for such landings. As these are not Border Control Posts, food regulations would generally preclude landings of frozen fish by Third Country vessels.

Full details of fisheries controls are available on the SFPA website. The SFPA also encourage any Irish registered vessel owner and business operator with a query regarding sea-fisheries regulations to contact their local SFPA port office.

MARINE TIMES

NEWSPAPER FOR IRELAND'S FISHING, MARINE AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES



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No Partners In Europe

There is no doubt about the anger within the fishing industry towards the Government's failure to achieve a reallocation of the burden imposed by the unfair Brexit quota cuts.

There are equal levels of anger towards the European Commission and its discriminatory attitude towards Ireland.

In our pages this month the anger is powerfully expressed.

John Nolan, Managing Director of Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-op says: "The government doesn't seem to think that fishing rights are worth defending. I would be quite angry about how our industry is being treated."

The Chief Executive of Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, Sean O'Donoghue, has called on Government to "urgently redouble its efforts to get a better deal for the Irish industry." And he has, quite rightly, taken strong issue with Charlina Vitcheva, EU Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries who defended the grossly inequitable cuts to Ireland as "inevitable."

That attitude is unacceptable from an EU official whose responsibility includes fairness towards all EU Member States. But it may be indicative of what the Chairman of the newly-formed Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance, Cormac Burke, has identified as the decision impacting Ireland having been made long before the actual conclusion of the Brexit talks about fishing. He questions who actually signed-off on the fisheries aspect of the deal for Ireland, about which he says the Minister for the Marine and his Department has been silent.

Minister McConalogue says he has "raised the issue of the disproportionate burden on Ireland in terms of our contribution to the quota transfers to the UK" under the Brexit deal with Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers. "This is an important issue that cannot be ignored, and I will continue to seek to make use of every possibility to address this unfair outcome."

So far, he and Government are getting nowhere with the European Commission and the concept of "our partners in Europe" is shown to be non-existent where burden-sharing within the EU is considered.

The Killybegs CEO has "implored" the Irish Government, as well as Irish MEPs, to redouble their efforts on burden-sharing with the other Member States and take the Commission to task in order to "ease the crippling angst and sustained uncertainty being visited upon fishermen here."

Expressions of intent to seek changes and acknowledgement that Ireland was badly treated have poured forth from Government. But 'intent' has not yielded any positive response from the EU or the fishing nations which have fared best in the Brexit deal.

The damage done to Ireland has not so far been mitigated and there has been no indication of any other EU Member State, or the Commission, being prepared to help Ireland or to acknowledge that Ireland has been treated badly.

They have shown themselves interested only in self-protection.

In that regard, they cannot be considered "our partners in Europe."

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The South - West View



Patrick Murphy
CEO Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation

Patrick Murphy, Chief Executive of the Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation in Castletownbere has harsh words for the European Commission..... "They couldn't care less about the crisis our Coastal Communities are facing and care even less about the goals clearly set out in the EU Common Fisheries Policy of 2013 requiring the interests of remote, far-distant Coastal Communities to be protected." He asks readers to consider joining him in writing to the Taoiseach.

"Dear Taoiseach ... Stop the disintegration of our coastal communities ..."

The new reality is what I can only refer to bluntly as the theft of 20% of our Maritime Natural Resources, taken without our consent on last Christmas Eve and given to our nearest neighbour who decided to leave the European Union.

It is clear now that the EU Commission couldn't care less about the crisis our coastal communities are facing and that they care even less about the goals clearly set out in the EU Common Fisheries Policy of 2013 which require the interests of remote, far-distant coastal communities to be protected.

It is my opinion that the clear ignorance of the Aims and Objectives of the CFP exhibited by Commission Official Charlina Vitcheva (Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) should require her to be sacked from her position with immediate effect.

I believe there is no legal text written to date that would allow the taking of up to 20% in monetary value of one of Ireland's most precious natural resources represented by the "Migratory Fish" that breed, spawn, feed and grow in our waters, that have been gifted to our nearest neighbour the United Kingdom when this represents €43 million of the €182 million in annual value the Commission and EU Council gave to the United Kingdom on the 24th December 2020.

I set out below the text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (known as UNCLOS) that I believe is required to be applied when dividing out the shared resource on Ireland's coastline. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international agreement that resulted from the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III), which took place between 1973 and 1982 with further negotiations between 1991 and December 1995 producing the specific wording of how the requirements of the Convention should be applied insofar as they relate to both Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks, the latter representing fish that swim, breed and spawn while straddling the line between adjoining Coastal States.

UNCLOS as the prevailing International Law of the Sea is completely **binding** on all UN Member States and it also binds the European Union which is a Signatory to the Convention.

Articles 63 and 64 of UNCLOS are designed to regulate the exploitation and protection of particular Fish Stocks

which straddle the borderline between the adjoining Exclusive Economic Zones of Coastal States (Article 63) such as is the case between the United Kingdom and Ireland while Article 64 is designed to regulate the exploitation of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks which move between and within the Exclusive Economic Zones of a number of Coastal States while breeding spawning and nursing in the Waters of one or a number of Coastal States and then migrating beyond those Exclusive Economic Zones into International Waters or into the EEZ of adjacent or even far-distant Coastal States where they feed as is the case when Bluefin Tuna and Albacore Tuna swim and feed in Irish Waters from mid-Summer to early Winter when they begin to return south to spawn and lay their eggs again and repeat the cycle.

Article 63
Stocks occurring within the exclusive economic zones of two or more coastal States or both within the exclusive economic zone and in an area beyond and adjacent to it

1. Where the same stock or stocks of associated species occur within the exclusive economic zones of two or more coastal States, these States shall seek, either directly or through appropriate subregional or regional organizations, to agree upon the measures necessary to coordinate and ensure the conservation and development of such stocks without prejudice to the other provisions of this Part.

2. Where the same stock or stocks of associated species occur both within the exclusive economic zone and in an area beyond and adjacent to the zone, the coastal State and the States fishing for such stocks in the adjacent area shall seek, either directly or through appropriate subregional or regional organizations, to agree upon the measures necessary for the conservation of these stocks in the adjacent area.

Article 64
Highly migratory species

1. The coastal State and other States whose Nationals fish in the region for the highly migratory species listed in Annex I **shall cooperate directly** or through appropriate international organizations with a view to ensuring conservation and promoting the objective of optimum utilization of such species throughout the region, both within and beyond the exclusive economic zone. In regions for which no appropriate international organization exists, the coastal State and other States whose nationals harvest these species in the region shall cooperate to establish such an organization and

participate in its work.

Article 77
Rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf

1. The Coastal State exercises over the Continental Shelf Sovereign Rights for the purpose of Exploring it and Exploiting its Natural Resources.

Note: all underlining and highlighting above is mine

Having regard to the requirements of the Convention regarding Highly Migratory Species such as Mackerel and Blue Whiting which breed, spawn, lay their eggs and nurse their young in Irish Waters before they depart to the north to visit Scottish, Faeroese, Icelandic and Norwegian waters over a period of 6 months before they return to the west and south west coast of Ireland to repeat the cycle for 6 months, the Agreement reached between the EU and UK on Christmas Eve which grants 25% of our Mackerel to the UK together with 20% of our Blue Whiting represents as outrageous a daylight robbery of the native Resources of Ireland's Coastal Communities as is possible to imagine.

Ireland ratified the Convention on 21 June 1996 and ratified the Agreement on Migratory/Straddling Stocks on 19 Dec 2003 as did UK & N Ireland on that date.

We have lost enough and deserve far better from our political Leaders and from those employed within the EU to protect the Public Interest in accordance with the Laws of the European Union and United Nations.

Do you agree reader?

If you agree, will you help protect what is all of ours and please sign and send the email below to:
micheal.martin@oireachtas.ie
simon.coveney@oireachtas.ie and
charlie.mcconologue@oireachtas.ie

Dear Taoiseach & Ministers,

I believe the treatment of our fishermen & fisherwomen is already negatively impacting our coastal communities, costing jobs that will result in the further depopulation of Rural and Coastal Ireland.

I am asking you to act to stop the disintegration of our Coastal Communities and to inform the European Union Commission that we want our proper and equitable share of Ireland's Maritime Natural Resource and most particularly our proper and equitable share of the "Migratory & Straddling Fish Stocks" that breed, spawn, feed and grow in our waters as defined under and in accordance with International Law, specifically UNCLOS and we demand that the principle of Zonal Attachment be applied to the share-out of these Fish Stocks in our Waters.

Yours



The Ocean Navigator from Atlantic Towage & Marine pictured off Dursey towing the Hanna Mary - Photo courtesy Anne Marie Cronin Photography

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Kilmore Quay's 'Atlantis' Now Available Nationwide at the Click of a Button

Atlantis of Kilmore Quay, leading seafood specialists for over 26 years, have launched their e-commerce website - www.atlantisofkilmorequay.ie

The advent of the site means that people all over Ireland now have access to the unrivalled range of fresh, sustainably sourced fish and seafood that Atlantis of Kilmore Quay can offer.

Having supplied top restaurants, hotels and food shops across the country successfully for many years, Atlantis of Kilmore Quay set up a home delivery service overnight to help people during the first Covid 19 lockdown to get seafood delivered to their homes so that they could avoid the risk of shopping in store. Text messages, phonecalls and Facebook messages were used to let people know what was available and to take orders. News of the service spread through word of mouth.

Not only did the new service prove to be a huge success in terms of customers, it also provided an outlet for seafood that could not be sold to restaurants, as they were closed. Feedback from customers was extremely positive and encouraging.

The team at Atlantis of Kilmore Quay decided to set up a dedicated website where everyone could browse their full range - which is extensive - and order whenever they liked.

Bord Bia, the national food agency, worked closely with Atlantis of Kilmore Quay to develop their Ecommerce offering, ensuring that it will be the best in class.

The website - www.atlantisofkilmorequay.ie is now live and offers an impressive range of exceptional quality, sustainably sourced seafood for home delivery.

Mark O'Connor, director of Atlantis of Kilmore Quay commented "Our mission is to bring exceptional quality

seafood to good food lovers all over Ireland. Although we have been in business for 26 years, now it feels like we are just starting over! We are very grateful to our customers for taking us this far and we hope to keep exceeding their

expectations with this new adventure."

Atlantis of Kilmore Quay is one of the leading providers of fresh seafood and producers of seafood products in Ireland. Since 1995 the family business, based in Co. Wexford, has been supplying fine restaurants and food retail outlets throughout Ireland with exceptional seafood. Kilmore Quay is the prepared seafood retail brand of the company and is found in good food stores nationwide. Atlantis of Kilmore Quay is a member of Bord Bia Origin Green and a participant in the Fisheries Improvement Projects for white fish, working towards improved sustainability.



Anna O'Connor 11yrs helping Atlantis of Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford launch their new online seafood shop in Kilmore Quay where most of their fish is landed and can now be ordered nationwide on www.atlantisofkilmorequay.ie.

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Government Must Redouble Its Efforts



The Chief Executive of Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation is angry over the European Commission's refusal to reallocate fish stocks between EU countries to ease the burden of the Brexit deal on the Irish fishing industry. Sean O'Donoghue says the Irish Government must urgently redouble its efforts to get a better deal for the Irish fishing industry.

Charlina Vitcheva, Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries defended the fact that Ireland is contributing €40 million of the €184 million of fish being transferred by the EU to the UK stating, "we've been trying to level out the burden between the member states concerned, but inevitably Ireland is so much closer and so much interlinked in terms of fisheries activities with the UK, so it is inevitable."

This is an ill-informed comment that does not stand up to a factual analysis of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and there is no way that Ireland is going to tolerate a situation whereby its fishermen are thrown to the wolves on the double, as a result of Brexit.

We have formally requested our Government to go back to Brussels and initiate an immediate process whereby the eight other EU coastal countries step up to the plate to take a proportionate hit on fisheries as part of the Brexit deal. We believe that the pain must be shared equally, as was stated by the European Fisheries Alliance (EUFA) when it set out in its Mission Statement that no single sector should bear a disproportionate burden once Brexit was done.

The Government must redouble its efforts in light of the Director-General's poorly-judged remark.

Before Brexit, about 30% of fish caught by the Irish fleet was from UK waters. This was cut by an average of 13% in the deal, but our two main fisheries mackerel and prawns were cut by 26% and 14% respectively.

In comparison, the Belgian fleet caught over 50% of its fish in UK waters and is facing an average reduction of only 6%.

The Danish fleet, which caught under 50% in UK waters, is facing an average reduction of 8%.

The French fleet which caught about 36% in UK waters is facing an average reduction of just 6%.

Brexit has resulted in a UK fishing windfall of €184million from the EU which consists of a staggering €40million - with mackerel at €26 million and prawns at €7 million making up almost 83% of this figure of Irish fish 'gift-wrapped' for the UK. Based on a simple burden sharing equation with the nine Member States involved, Ireland should be shouldering a loss of €20 million - not €40 million as was foisted upon us.

There is a precedent for achieving this and it harks back

to the mid-1970s when, ironically, the UK benefitted from a process of reducing the percentage quota share of other Member States in order to protect its fishing sector. It also benefited from the Hague Preferences which gave both the UK and Ireland additional tonnage of certain species. Burden sharing or 'equalisation,' as it was known, saw Britain compensated for forfeiting certain stocks and grounds to the tune of 90,000 tonnes valued at €80 million which came from the other Member States.

Our ask now is that the EU revisits this policy, traditionally referred to as jurisdictional and third-country losses/gains and Hague Preferences and applies the same rationale and fairness in order to render our key fisheries viable after the crippling and unsustainable cuts divvied out by Brexit.

In the waters off Donegal alone for instance, an eye-watering 82% of stocks in tonnage terms - both pelagic (mackerel, herring and blue whiting) and demersal species (monkfish, megrim, haddock, cod and saithe) - have been forfeited to Britain in the crudest and most brutal example of how Brexit has shafted fishermen in the North West.

What's perhaps most galling about the loss of mackerel is that the fish are spawned in Irish waters.

While we cannot nor do not claim ownership of them, we're now being discriminated against catching the fish off the coast of Scotland when they are in their prime and at their most valuable as a result of the 26% reduction in our quota.

In essence, we're providing the fish for Britain to net, we're a 'mackerel maternity ward' for others to profit from. We now have a miserly share of 16% whereas the UK - mainly Scotland - has 70%.

I implore the Irish Government as well as Irish MEPs to urgently redouble their efforts on burden-sharing with the other Member States and take the Commission to task in order to ease the crippling angst and sustained uncertainty being visited upon fishermen here.

MacManus Calls for EU Clarification on Reported Loss to Irish Fishing Quota

Sinn Féin MEP has written to Commission for urgent clarification on reports of further fish quota loss to Ireland

Sinn Féin MEP for Midlands Northwest, Chris MacManus has written to the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius requesting urgent clarification on reports in the Irish media that Ireland faces losing thousands of tonnes of fish quota and tens of millions in European funding following an EU investigation in the State's application of the Common Fisheries Policy.

MacManus commented: "These reports are deeply worrying and refer to a very significant reduction in quota for our fishers by the European Commission. Thousands of tonnes in quota loss have been mentioned and tens of millions of euros of EU funding may also be lost to the State."

"There is great alarm in our Irish fishing sector. I understand that the fishers and the producers, especially in Killybegs, seriously dispute what is being reported. I am requesting urgent clarification from Commissioner Sinkevičius as to the veracity of these stories. If these reports are, indeed correct, then I am making it clear that what is being suggested is unacceptable and disproportionate".

"The European Commission must know that the outcome of the Brexit Trade Deal has been devastating for the Irish fishing industry and they must know that we actually need to see is a fair burden sharing of the losses, arising from that deal, amongst all of the fishing fleets of the EU Member States to assist the Irish fleet. So, any suggestion that there would be even more fish quota loss for Ireland is astonishing.

The Sinn Féin MEP called for intervention from the Irish Government. "The government in Dublin must vigorously defend the interests of the Irish fishing industry and our coastal communities by ensuring full transparency from the European Commission and by defending our right to appeal any outcome to this investigation that would be along the lines that has been reported".

Neptune fishing mackerel north of Sotland - Photo by John Cunningham



Fishers and Communities Must Be Consulted on Development of Marine Protected Areas

Sinn Féin spokesperson on Fisheries and the Marine Pádraig Mac Lochlainn TD has called on the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to re-engage with the Irish fishing sector and coastal communities before he finalises any planning on Marine Protected Areas in Irish waters.

Teachta Mac Lochlainn said: “Irish fishers are custodians of the sea. They need sustainable stock to preserve their tradition and livelihoods. I have engaged extensively with their sector and they are not against Marine Protected Areas.

“Fishers need to be truly included in the conversation. They must be engaged with and they must be part of the decision-making process.

“Sinn Féin recognise that we need a robust and transparent marine planning system. Any system though, must support our fishers and coastal communities. It must protect Ireland’s marine environment and it must facilitate timely development of offshore renewable energy sources.

“All three of these objectives can be achieved with the right level of inclusive planning and policy framework.

“Sinn Féin believe we can get this policy right and that we can be a benchmark for

other countries.

“We are certain that sustainable economic fisheries, a vibrant aquaculture industry, Marine Protected Areas and offshore wind energy can all co-exist. But they can only co-exist with meticulous and inclusive planning.

“Sinn Féin will continue to engage with coastal communities, environmental NGOs, scientific experts, industry and the government to advance these key objectives.”

Though Most-Impacted, Fishing Industry Excluded from Advisory Group

Why Not Conservation Payments to Fishermen as paid to farmers?

“The success of Marine Protected Areas will depend on involving fishermen.” - See page 5

Fishing is at the Heart of Island and Coastal Communities – IIMRO Plan to Reconstruct the Sector

Seamus Bonner, Secretary, Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, writes about his Organisation being given the status of a Fish Producer Organisation – an FPO



IIMRO has been recognised as a producer organisation (PO) under the EU ‘common organisation of the markets’ regulation. This will allow us to further represent fishers across the Irish islands in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork at both EU level and nationally to help address the many issues facing them.

Jerry Early, Chairman of IIMRO, welcomed the announcement: “We would like to thank Minister Charlie McConalogue and acknowledge his efforts to get Ireland’s first inshore fishery organisation approved. We look forward to working with the Minister and his officials to make sure that the importance of small scale vessels are recognised when fishery policy is made and delivered. IIMRO welcomes the recognition of our Islands Coop as a fisheries producer organisation. It is encouraging to see that the Minister recognises the needs of island fishers and as the first inshore PO, we intend to work closely with the Department and others, to rebuild our island based small-scale fishing industry.”

Fishing is at the heart of Island and coastal communities and IIMRO plan to reconstruct the sector and ensure that the fishery resource is protected into the future.

Work on the formation of a producer organisation for IIMRO began following the publication of the 2014 cross-party Joint Oireachtas report on Promoting Sustainable Rural Coastal and Island Communities. It has taken a lot of work and commitment to

achieve this goal and credit goes to IIMRO members for their perseverance and focus.

We look forward to meeting with the Department in the near future to start the process of developing a production and marketing plan of a scale suitable for our members, market and communities. The



marketing of seafood caught on the islands will enhance island economies, greatly improve the tourism offerings available and help stabilise markets for the fishers.

Working with our members, a PO will help us rebuild small-scale seasonal fishing on the islands after the severe impacts of Brexit and Covid 19 recently as well as the many other challenges fishers have faced in the past. It will help us to deal with upcoming regulatory changes in fisheries and

other marine activities and it enables IIMRO to promote island communities through sustainable fishing for current and future generations, both men and women.

We would like to thank all those who helped us in our efforts over the years both here at home and abroad.



AN t-ÚDARÁS UM
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Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority are Hiring

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) wishes to fill two roles in the SFPA’s Trade Department specialising in Export / Import Trade Compliance.

These roles will be based in Clonakilty, Co. Cork and will be primarily involved in the SFPA’s import / export compliance and verification process.

For more details please see www.sfpajobs.com

Closing date for applications:
Monday 22nd March 2021 @ 12 noon.



news from **Howth**
Tracey Floyd

Regardless of all the current issues facing the industry and the world thanks to COVID 19, it is heartening to see that there are still industrious people out their working hard to move forward. It has been exciting to see that even in such difficult times Howth has been able to welcome two new vessels. Namely Celtic Spirit III and Mary Paul.

Celtic Spirit III

Owner and Skipper Steven Farren is delighted after an entire year of work to receive Celtic spirit III. This is Steven’s second new build in 6 years. Celtic Spirit II was recently sold on to her new home in Achill.

Celtic Spirit III is a 7-meter Catamaran who was built by Twinseas Boats in Poole in the UK. She is the first of her kind to come to Howth.

This lovely new vessel is powered by 2 outboard engines rather than inboard engines. The engines were supplied by Yacht Agencies Ireland and Steven is delighted

with their performance.

The entire electronics package was supplied by Camroc Ltd and the hydraulics were supplied by KK Hydraulic Ltd.

Steven noted that “Celtic Spirit III will give me more stability and safety while inshore potting around Howth”. In terms of safety, vessel stability is obviously one of the more important concerns for those fishing inshore and this is one of the great assets that this new vessel has.

Steven is a third generation Howth fisherman. Born and reared in Howth Steven has been fishing for the past 25 years, since

the tender age of 16. I think it would be fair to say that it is in his blood.

Steven’s Dad is Patrick Farren now 81 years of age and his Grandfather was Patrick Farren too. Steven’s Grandfather was a Longline Fisherman in Howth. “A fishing method long gone” Steven comments.

Stevens father Patrick spent his younger years trawling. In later years Patrick spent his time potting with Steven. Impressively Patrick worked on board right up to his retirement a couple of years back at the age of 78.

Steven will now fish Whelks for Errigal Bay Seafood and Lobsters for Kish Fish along with several of the local restaurants here in Howth.

Best of luck, safe and prosperous fishing to Steven from all in Howth and from the Marine Times.



Patrick and Steven Farren

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With an ever growing list of rules and regulation, fishing vessel owners and skippers are finding it more time consuming and complex to adhere to the many rules and regulations covering fishing vessels and their crews.

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Wilde to be Fishing MFV Mary Paul

Ivan and Eamon Wilde are also extremely excited and rightfully proud of their new addition to the fleet, MFV Mary Paul. The name Mary Paul is in honour of Ivan's Mum Mary who passed away in 1989 and is combined with Ivan's brother Paul's name. Paul tragically died at sea in 1971.

This has been a labour of love for the father and son team. This is Eamon's first solo vessel and in total it took four years to complete between searching for the correct boat builder, refining all the details and finishing the task.

Eamon has been passionate about fishing since he was a very young lad. The fishing tradition goes back for generations. Ivan's

grandad and his father before him were fishermen.

Ivan first worked for his Dad George Wilde and then went on to work for his brothers Noel and Alan. In 1976 Ivan bought his first boat Regina Pacis before moving on to Ardgillan, Dernaline and Sancta Maria I.

While still owning Sancta Maria I, Ivan bought Syracuse. At age 18 Eamon's love for fishing brought him to work on the family's latest vessel. Sancta Maria was then sold on to a new home and the Nausicca was acquired. Subsequently Nausicca was then sold on to Richard Brannigan to make way for Our Lass II and Sancta Maria III.

In the middle of last year the much loved Our Lass II was then sold on to Scotland to make way for Mary Paul.

No detail from door knobs and USB ports to a dressing room aboard this im-

pressive looking vessel has been neglected. I have personally stayed in nice hotels of a lesser standard.

Skippers Cahill Laverty, Rory Wilde who previously worked aboard Our Lass II and all the crew will be enjoying living in comfort in the luxurious 10 berth vessel.

All equipment on-board this Buenas Veritas and Marine Survey (MSO) approved vessel is of the highest standard.

This 223 GT vessel boasts an engine capacity of 420 kilowatts. Registered as D723 Mary Paul is 26 Metres in length overall.

Wildes have asked that Galway man Pat Maguire get a special mention for his excellent work on the Electronics. Thanks also to Ian Newell in Kilkeel for the fabrication and Gerry Smyth for his work on the fishhold. BOPP for the hydraulics, Marine Supplies Howth for the safety equipment and Geneglance for the ice machines along

with Cummins for the engines, Heimdal for the Gearbox, Art Kavanagh for finance and paperwork assistance and Dorans Skippers Mate for assistance with compliance and drills.

Unenviably, Wildes are the first vessel in the state, to come in under the new regulations Directive (EU) 2017/159, S.I. No. 673/2019, MN2020/46. Implemented as of 01.01.2021. As such they have come under much scrutiny from the powers that be.

With the incredibly high standard of the vessel and their own manning capabilities on-board MFV Mary Paul this has not proved to be a problem for Wilde family.

Dorans Skippers Mate and Marine Times would like to wish Eamon and the Wilde family along with both Skippers Rory and Cahill every success with this wonderful vessel. Safe Seas and fortune to you all.

BIM New Fishermen Scheme

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It was with great pleasure we worked on the "Mary Paul"

Safe fishing from Gerry and his team





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RTE's 'Slanted' Anti Irish Fishing Industry Program

In an open letter to the RTE broadcasting complaints department, the IFSA (Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance) has accused the tv station of a "complete misrepresentation of Ireland's fishing industry as well as attempting to mislead the general public on the current state of the industry".

RTE's series of pro environmental shows *Eco Eye* have covered a wide range of issues in its lifetime – from general nature and birdwatching to climatic concerns and impacts on Ireland's environment.

The edition aired on RTE on Tuesday February 9th which, on its online description states that this program would "meet with scientists and communities fighting to safeguard the (marine) precious habitats" (source: presspack.rte.ie).

What actually transpired was a wholly inaccurate portrayal of the fishing industry with constant references to overfishing and the need for Ireland to reduce its fleet size as well as other statements and assumptions alluding to an idea that Irish fishing communities were contributing to the environmental impact of our seas and the decimation of Irish waters.

"To say this program has been poorly researched in a 'green angled' bid to fool

the general public would be an understatement – it is an outrageously incorrect report which was lacking in any aspects of the facts and extremely damaging to economic survival of Ireland's rural coastal communities who rely on the fishing industry," said Cormac Burke, IFSA Chairman.

In one part of the program the interviewer spoke with John Nolan, manager of the Castletownbere Fishermens' Co-Op who gave a fair summary of the state of the industry, the pressure fishermen are under from constant cuts of vital quota, and how the knock-on effects of this would hit the very core of coastal communities nationwide – only for the interviewer to then follow on with her own version of a summary of his statements along the lines of "there we can see that even the fishing industry themselves agree that the impacts of fishing need to be reduced and there needs to be a decommissioning scheme to reduce the size of the fleet to match the available quotas..."

"Mr Nolan said no such thing and the program's translation of his comments was clearly a blatant attempt to convince viewers that Ireland's fishing industry needs to decrease in size immediately," commented Mr Burke adding that the program makers should have researched the facts to produce a balanced report and having done so, would have learned that Ireland has already suffered a fleet decommissioning scheme which removed over one third of the overall

fleet size.

"That edition of *Eco Eye* was basically promoting the EU Fisheries Commission's disgraceful aims of continuing to reduce Ireland's share of fish in its own waters while vessels from all other EU nations are being allocated vast amounts of quota in our waters.

"Did this researcher even know that Ireland is only allowed 3.9% by the EU of the total EU fish quotas despite the fact that we physically own 11% of EU waters?"

"I think this is a case of 'not letting the truth get in the way of a good story' and was produced with anti-industry and anti-Ireland's rural coastal communities," he said, adding that it was also worth noting that a Castletownbere vessel owner/skipper was also interviewed at length but didn't get one single minute of air time on the program – presumably because he didn't say anything they wanted to hear," he concluded.

• A copy of this article has been sent to RTE – if you wish to support our industry against such future incorrect 'green agenda' propaganda then please email your comments to complaints@rte.ie and/or feedback@rte.ie listing the name of the program and the date it was aired – *Eco Eye*, RTE on Tuesday February 9th



Bringing the MFV Mary Paul into Howth



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Intense Anger Over Government Failure to Get a Better Brexit Deal

Why has Ireland taken a bigger hit than other nations, which already have bigger quotas in Irish waters than Ireland has?

There is intense anger throughout the fishing industry that the Government has not, so far, succeeded in changing the Brexit deal agreement.

The Chief Executive of Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, Sean O'Donoghue, has called on the Government to "urgently redouble its efforts to get a better deal for the Irish industry."

"I would be quite angry about how our industry is being treated," John Nolan, Managing Director of Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-op said. "The government doesn't seem to think that fishing rights off our coast are worth defending."

He contrasted the manner in which the government had fought the European Commission over the penalties that were imposed on the Apple company, compared to how it has failed to defend fishing:

"They thought that the Apple situation was an issue worth defending. They would have got back money, but they fought that issue strongly. Surely Irish citizens in an industry that is tough, difficult, dangerous work, an industry which has had its tragedies, surely the people in this industry are

also worth fighting for?"

Sean O'Donoghue said that before Brexit, about 30% of fish caught by the Irish fleet was from UK waters.

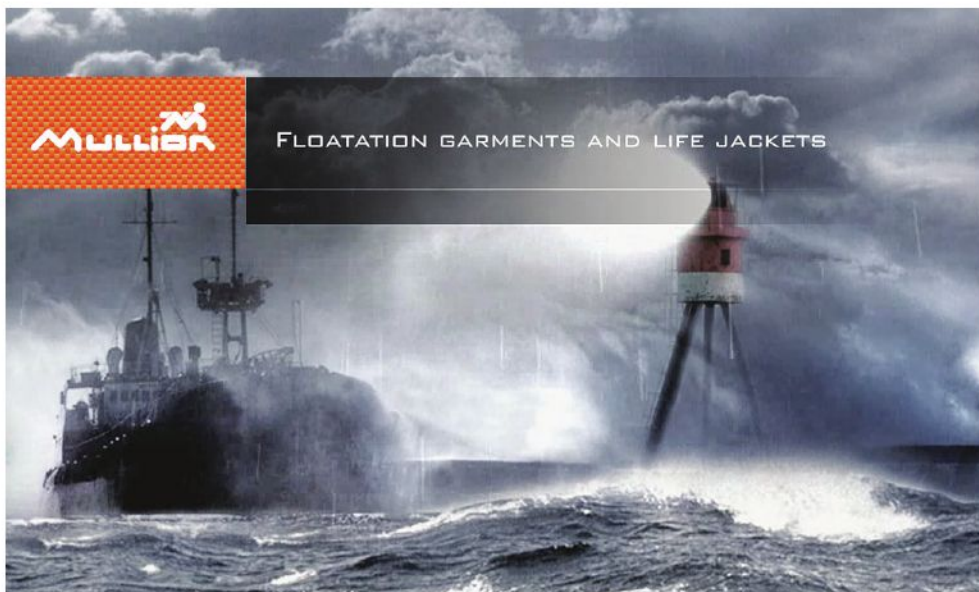
"This was cut by an average of 13% in the deal, but our two main fisheries mackerel and prawns were cut by 26% and 14% respectively. In comparison, the Belgian fleet caught over 50% of its fish in UK waters and is facing an average reduction of only 6%. The Danish fleet, which caught under 50% in UK waters, is facing an average reduction of 8%. The French fleet which caught about 36% in UK waters is facing an average reduction of just 6%."

+ Read more from Seán O'Donoghue in his article on Page 10

"If there was ever a time for an Irish Fisheries Minister, his Department and indeed the Government itself, to start to show some backbone it is now," said Cormac Burke, Chairman of the new industry repre-



Breizh Arvor II at the southern end of the Porcupine Bank - Photo courtesy Damien McCallig



Designed for and by fishermen

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sentative body which has been formed, the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance. "Many inhabitants of Ireland's coastal communities are already ashamed at how repeated governments of this country have placed so little importance on our marine resources whilst the Governments of other seafaring nations the world over stoutly and with pride, defend their waters and those that make a living from it."

Very strong criticism of the government is being expressed throughout the fishing industry, alleging that it has not defended the industry sufficiently against the impact of Brexit. The European Commission has been accused of attempting to force further contraction of the Irish fishing fleet, such as a decommissioning, removing more boats and jobs, with the likely consequence "of severe damage to Ireland's coastal communities," according to IFSA.

John Nolan maintains that the "pain from Brexit should be equally shared" between the fishing nations under the provisions of the Common Fisheries Policy and that the nations which have been given a better deal should be forced by the EU to make appropriate compensatory adjustments to Ireland. "Why should others be doing better than we are?"

"Why has Ireland taken a bigger hit than other nations, which already have bigger quotas in Irish waters than Ireland has?" asked the new ISFA.

"I implore the Irish Government as well as Irish MEPs to urgently redouble their

efforts on burden-sharing with the other Member States and take the Commission to task in order to ease the crippling angst and sustained uncertainty being visited upon fishermen here," said Mr. O'Donoghue.

The Chief Executive of the Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation, Patrick Murphy, said the EU Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries should be sacked: "The new reality is the theft of 20% of our Maritime Natural Resources, taken without our consent on Christmas Eve and given to our nearest neighbour who decided to leave the European Union. It is clear now that the EU Commission couldn't care less about the crisis our Coastal Communities are facing and care even less about the goals clearly set out in the EU Common Fisheries Policy of 2013 requiring the interests of remote, far-distant Coastal Communities to be protected. It is my opinion that the clear ignorance of the Aims and Objectives of the CFP exhibited by Commission Official Charlina Vitcheva require her to be sacked from her position with immediate effect."

Marine Minister McConalogue said he had "raised the issue of the disproportionate burden on Ireland in terms of our contribution to the quota transfers to the UK" under the Brexit deal at an informal meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers. "This is an important issue that cannot be ignored, and I will continue to seek to make use of every possibility to address this unfair outcome."

THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

CORMAC BURKE

CHAIRMAN, IRISH FISHING & SEAFOOD ALLIANCE (IFSA)

Does anyone really believe that the Brexit fisheries deal, which has damaged the Irish industry so badly, had not been decided upon long before it was agreed in the last hours of negotiation between the EU and UK and that Ireland was pushed aside by the bigger European fishing nations who had arranged the best outcome for themselves?

That is one of the points raised by the Chairman of the newly-formed Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance, Cormac Burke, in his first major interview with the Marine Times.

Interview by Marine Times Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney.

“Brexit took seven years to negotiate and fishing was the last thing, done down to the last 48 hours and proposals were made on the fishing part of the deal at ten o’clock in the morning. By four o’clock that afternoon the EU Commission had produced a thirteen hundred page document in twenty-seven languages to seal the deal.

“Now does anybody honestly believe that that was produced in one go? In my opinion this deal was set months beforehand.”

Cormac Burke is in no doubt that Ireland got a raw deal, a view widely held throughout the Irish fishing industry.

“I can’t get an answer to the question: Who signed off on the EU-Brexit document that Ireland accepted? There’s a definite silence coming from the Minister’s Department.”

These are important aspects of the deal that has caused outrage within the fishing industry and which, despite the anger expressed and the demands for changes to achieve equal sharing of the Brexit burden, have been ignored by the EU.

The Irish Government response has been to express intent to seek changes, but ‘intent’ has not yielded any positive response from the EU or the fishing nations which have done best in the Brexit deal to moderate or limit the damage done to Ireland.

“Where is the equal sharing of the quota burden that the EU had told us about and which was to be shared?” Cormac Burke asks. “There is a lot of anger over what has happened and a lot of questions which the industry would like answered. The plainest one is how come the EU has talked about sharing the burden in giving back quota to the UK, but on average Ireland’s quota has been slashed by 26 per cent?”

Comparing that figures with the better quota arrangements which other, bigger fishing nations in Europe have got, the implication appears clear from what Cormac Burke says – a deal was done on these figures without Irish involvement.

“It’s important for the public to understand that the fishing quota in Ireland is not owned by any individual fisherman



or any companies. The quota belongs to the State and the people of the State and yet there is no political will to defend this, Ireland’s marine resource, or defend those that are making a living from it, particularly those in the rural, coastal communities.”

So the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance has come into existence at a time when a strong voice for the industry is needed Cormac Burke says. He comes from a Killybegs fishing family and fished himself for sixteen years working in Ireland, the UK and Norway before suffering a major back accident, after which he entered marine journalism and edited *The Irish Skipper*, then went to London and edited *Fishing News* and *Fishing News International*.

“The organisation is only a few weeks old. It’s a wholly-independent, non-profit organisation, the overall aim of which is to attempt to unite all sectors of the fishing

and seafood industry. Traditionally this has always been a fractured industry, not intentionally so, but because you have so many different regions and so many different sectors. Already there are 700 subscribers from all parts of the country and all sectors of the industry. That speaks volumes about the anger that is going on. The IFSA is intent on giving a voice to all sectors, to everyone in the industry” Cormac Burke tells me.

“Our mission is probably two-fold. One, to get government recognition to defend this industry against the EU and the next would be to deal with the general lack of political goodwill by our government to help out those in the rural, coastal communities because we are not just talking about fishermen. We are talking about the entire economy of fishing, coastal regions.”

So, what will be the relationship between the Fish Producer Organisations and the IFSA?

“The FPOs do an important job, have an important role, representing their members in their regions and the IFSA would hope to work with them. The core aims are the same.”

The different sectors and regional interests have often meant that fishermen concentrate on their own areas and what they can achieve there, so previous attempts to bring them together in a joint focus that would make for a strong, national voice have not been successful. I ask Cormac, as he comes from Killybegs, will it be perceived that Killybegs is the focus of the IFSA?

Definitely not!

“I am heartened with the huge response from the industry. I live in Killybegs. I have to live somewhere. When this started first there were people saying, ‘ah it’s Killybegs and speaking for Donegal’. But people have now come to realise that the IFSA is absolutely independent and it’s not affiliated to any other group or body and not influenced by the State or any semi-State body.”

IFSA comments in the past few weeks have led to questions being raised about the industry in the Dáil. The Alliance website is: www.irishfishingseafoodalliance.org and Cormac Burke says that people are welcome to contact him on Email at: ifsacormac@gmail.com

The Marine Times have covered a number of the IFSA news releases on www.marinetimes.ie - please check the website out to catch up on articles such as: ‘The Crying Game’; “So much for justice Relative Stability Cast Aside by EU”; “The two faces of the EU’s Brexit ‘deal’ for Ireland”.

Also see page 14 of this issue for an open letter to the RTE broadcasting complaints department, where the IFSA has accused the tv station of a “complete misrepresentation of Ireland’s fishing industry as well as attempting to mislead the general public on the current state of the industry”.

And on page 20 reacting to the Task Force: “Minister’s ‘Solution’ to EU Taking Bigger Share of Irish Quota is to Reduce the Size of Ireland’s Fishing Fleet!”





Tom MacSweeney's Maritime Ireland Diary



“The Maharees is one of the most beautiful places on the planet.”

Brandon Bay Becoming A Hub for Coastal Science

Kerry people are not slow to make claims for the Kingdom. The Maharees in Brandon Bay are a unique place and one of the longest sandy beaches in Ireland. As a television correspondent many years ago I made a number of reports about the unique dune systems there and the efforts to protect them.

Dune systems shift naturally, but in the Maharees, where there is only one access road into and out of the community, the effects of extreme weather conditions were going beyond the traditional ebb and flow of the dune and that road was being threatened and blocked.

“A health and safety hazard which could impede access for emergency vehicles and medical assistance, threatening the economy of the area, the engine of tourism for the north side of the Dingle Peninsula, providing employment, recreation and revenue and acting as a tourist draw for Castlegregory and its environs,” I was told.

The Maharees Conservation Association was formed to address this impact of coastal erosion, raise awareness and put in place practical measures to manage the future of the coastline for all to enjoy. Rock armour was placed along one section of Brandon Bay in the 1980s and had a degree of success in protecting and regenerating part of the dune system.

The Association continued to seek a long-term solution to the problem, highlighting it locally and nationally.

Now the Maharees has been described as “a hub for coastal science” due to the work of the community group.

I hadn't heard the word “storminess” used much in scientific discussion until Dr. Eugene Farrell, whose interesting title is “Discipline of Geography” at the Ryan Institute's Centre for Ocean Research and Exploration, expressed it. He was describing the research project to measure how extreme storms and wave heights will impact the coast which is located in Brandon Bay.

NUI Galway and the Marine Institute partnered in the deployment of a new waverider buoy provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority to measure wave height, period and direction, surface currents and water temperatures as well as storm impact. It involves the deployment of a combination of smart buoys and time-lapse imaging to measure storm impacts

and support the development of coastal flood and erosion defences.

“The installation of a shoreline monitoring system at three sites along Brandon Bay will capture images of the beach every 10 minutes during daylight hours over the next twelve months to identify the time periods when wave run-up is high enough to reach the dune toe and potentially cause coastal

erosion. We went to improve existing coastal change models by developing better insights into why does change occur and how much will occur if we dial-up climate projections for rising sea levels and storminess,” says Dr. Farrell.

“To answer these questions we require process-response coastal models and these are only possible if nearshore

observations from wave buoys such as the one in Brandon Bay are deployed over long time periods to capture all the seasons. We already know that changes along the coast from elevated storm surge and wave run-up result in changes in seabed and beach elevations. The data captured by ‘waverider’ will play an integral part in dismantling the important connections between different storm types such as size, direction, clustering and coastal response that allows us to share real-time ocean observations that can be used to address coastal erosion and coastal flood protection.”

The research is being funded by the Geological Society of Ireland and the findings will be available to research throughout Europe, with the aim of identifying how future investment in coastal infrastructure can be directed towards protection from erosion.

“This approach requires a large team of experts to work together. The Maharees in Brandon Bay is becoming a hub for coastal science thanks to the active community group in the area – the Maharees Conservation Association. There is an urgent need to increase our understanding of coastal change so that we

can better protect our coastal community and design conservation plans for coastal ecosystems whose dynamic boundaries move in response to changing climate conditions,” says Dr. Farrell.

- A Coastal Change Technical Working Group was established by government last September, tasked with overseeing the development of a ‘scoping report’ for a national coastal change management strategy.

Changes in Personnel

John Lynch, Chairman of the Irish South and East Fish Producers' Organisation, the office of which is in Waterford, has taken over as CEO, following the death of Hugo Boyle.

Ciaran Doherty has been elected Chairman of Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation. He succeeds Michael Cavanagh.

Well-known international maritime lawyer, Michael Kingston, has joined Conways Solicitors, Maritime Law, led by Dermot Conway in Cork. Michael Kingston has become well-known for campaigns in connection with the victims of the Betelgeuse oil tanker tragedy in Bantry Bay and the Marine Casualty Investigation Board, of which he has been critical. He is an acknowledged international expert in maritime law and has worked for the United Nations on Polar regulations and other issues.

The Reach of Radio

Our community of listeners to the MARITIME IRELAND RADIO SHOW is expanding.

Mark Norman in Honolulu informed us and his followers on Facebook that, while on his boat in harbour on a morning which he described as “reminiscent of Ireland,” with 25 knots of ‘Kona’ wind from the South/West and “plenty of rain, making it so reminiscent of Ireland, that he listened to the Tom MacSweeney's Maritime Ireland Podcast and “baked a batch of fruit scones to warm up the cabin.”

I'm sure they tasted well Mark and glad you're enjoying the programme and we had a query from a maritime historian in Hungary about the restoration of Cork Harbour One Design yachts which we reported and who thinks he may have found a “possibly similar boat” and would like help in identifying it, which we'll do our best to give him. The reach of radio is wonderful.



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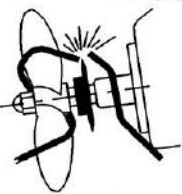
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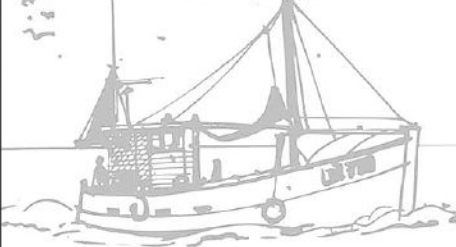


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Coast Guard Unit Issues Continue Dingle Members Warned Not to Dance Together

Irish Coast Guard management in Dublin was rocked back by public reaction against its crackdown on the Dingle Unit which posted a video of its participation in what had become known as the 'Jerusalem dance challenge'.



Many public service and voluntary organisations took part in what had become a worldwide response on social media to the Covid 19 pandemic. But national Coast Guard management reacted in a manner that no other service had. They issued the dancing ban to all volunteers within hours of pictures being posted on social media of the Kerry Unit's dance routine, even though that had resulted in a lot of public support for the Coast Guard making an effort to lift the misery felt by the public about the lengthy pandemic lockdown.

Kerry County Councillor Seamus Mac Gearailt, Chairman of Dingle/Castleisland Municipal District, said he was "flabbergasted" by the management's reaction: "These are volunteers who go out whenever they are called and they put their own lives at risk for the sake of others. Surely the national Coast Guard body can see that and lighten up a small bit. The Gardaí made a Jerusalem dance video, everybody enjoyed it and there were no problems over it. Why should it be any different for the Coast Guard? The national body must have very little to worry about."

Dingle Coast Guard Unit Officer-in-Charge Frank Heidke told *The Kerryman* newspaper that local members made a "spur of the moment" decision to make the dance video in solidarity with colleagues in the frontline services and with the aim of cheering people up in the harsh times: "We felt it was the right thing to do in solidarity with the Gardaí and frontline services. We have been overwhelmed with the response from the public and we are delighted that we could put a smile on people's faces."

The dance routine was choreographed by Megan Leahy, the filming done by Ciarán William at Sleá Head and scenic locations in West Kerry. It went viral as soon as it was released on social media, but within hours and though the public response was extremely positive towards the Coast Guard, there were no smiles on the faces of Coast Guard management. They sent a letter to volunteers around the country: "It is not permitted for Units to produce dance videos for social media, or indeed to assemble for any reason other than for reasons central to a unit's operational objectives."

Within 24 hours public reaction against

the management's decision was vociferous and it back-tracked, but not totally. Volunteers could perform the dance "individually," which was the antithesis to its purpose.

"Ridiculous nonsense," was the most common response from the public.

Coast Guard management said: "In support of the decision to ensure units prioritise their availability to respond to emergencies throughout this pandemic, the Coast Guard has, on this occasion, requested that units do not engage in these types of activities during this period of the pandemic. The Coast Guard looks forward to a time where Covid-19 restrictions are eased and when units can resume participating in these community type events."

The statement referred to the "sacrifices and contribution" which volunteers have made since the start of the pandemic in delivering maritime search and rescue services and Covid-related community support services, while also expressing gratitude for volunteer participation in community and educational events.

The Marine Times is aware of several personnel issues at Units in locations around the coast which involve disciplinary hearings. One Email, name and location withheld to protect the individual concerned says: "There is control being exercised over those who disagree with decisions on safety grounds, so that they are removed, dismissed and replaced."

From a different location, another Unit member claimed there were issues with "equipment, radios, boats," which had been identified to management but were stated not to have been dealt with.

The Marine Times learned that the Coast Guard has spent over €100,000 on consultants for advice on human resources issues. Management is understood to have justified this spending to seek external mediation support to deal with local Unit issues.

The Department of Transport, responsible for Coast Guard management, did not respond to queries sent on a number of occasions. They remain unanswered to the present time other than a short statement received from a Department of Transport spokesperson prior to publishing of this issue of the Marine Times in regard to Killala Coast Guard Unit: "The Killala Coast Guard Unit is available and fully operational for taskings in the search function. Both the units boats are on the board and fully operational with its D Class boat and Delta Rib which is available for day-time taskings."

There have previously been a number of resignations from the Unit. The statement references particularly "day-time taskings."

The Department did not respond to queries about personnel issues within the Coast Guard.

Marine Institute Planning New Research Project on Small Pelagic Stocks

The Marine Institute is planning a new research project "aimed at addressing gaps in small pelagic stocks." The Department of the Marine has told the MARINE TIMES that "sprat, anchovy and pilchard are the main species concerned."

The Department announced the new research in a reply to this paper's request for comment following our interview with marine biologist Kevin Flannery who highlighted the catches of anchovy off the South/West and also referred to other new species being found by fishermen. He spoke of the potential being ignored and raised the question of whether State agencies are in enough contact with each other to develop resources that are identified by fishermen.

"Is it a case that 'the twain shall not meet?'" he asked. "The Department, BIM, Marine Institute, are they meeting at all? It shouldn't be up to me and fishermen up and down the coast to all of a sudden find a potential resource. The Department and State agencies should know this. Look at the potential."

The Department of the Marine reply to the Marine Times said: "The Marine Institute advise that Anchovy is not new in Irish waters, it has been in our waters for decades but its abundance fluctuates. The aggrega-

tions have not been considered so far to be locally substantial even if they sometimes represent enough biomass for a small or opportunistic fishery.



"The MI advise that it is planning for a multiannual research project aimed at addressing gaps in small pelagic stocks, including southern 'lusitanian' species moving northwards.

"Sprat, anchovy and pilchard are the main species concerned. This research aims to provide a scientific understanding of the abundance, persistence and ecological role of these species in Irish water. This will inform consideration of the sustainable exploitation, management and future monitoring of these stocks."

When told of the new research Kevin Flannery replied: "It's a move in the right direction, let's hope they do surveys ASAP, but in contact with fishermen rather than doing it when species are not there and getting negative results."

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Seafood Sector Taskforce Announced

Is the Government Solution to Rid Our Waters of Irish Fishermen & Their Boats?

The Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., has announced the establishment of a Seafood Sector Taskforce. The Taskforce is established to make recommendations to the Minister on measures to mitigate the impacts of the fish quota share reductions, arising from the EU/UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement, on the Irish Fishing industry and on the coastal communities that depend on fisheries.



Announcing the Taskforce, Minister McConalogue said, "The Trade & Cooperation Agreement between the EU and UK will see significant reductions in Ireland's quotas for some key stocks, most notably mackerel and prawns, as part of the agreed transfer of quotas to the UK. These quota reductions will begin in 2021 and on a phased basis will result in a loss to Ireland of stocks worth €43 million per annum by 2026 or a 15% reduction overall in Irish fish quotas. The effects are immediate, with 60% of those reductions to take effect from April.

"The outcome of Brexit could have been much worse for the Irish Fishing industry in a no-deal scenario, with lack of access to UK waters for one third of our fish catches that occur in UK waters, or increased displacement of the Irish and other EU fleets into our waters. Nevertheless, the agreed EU/UK outcome will still have a significant impact for our fishing fleet and the coastal communities built around it. Government is committed to providing financial supports to those most affected to help our seafood sector and coastal communities adjust to this blow. Today, I am establishing a Seafood Sector Taskforce under the chair of Aidan Cotter, a distinguished and highly experienced figure in our food industry, to examine the impacts on our fishing fleet and coastal communities and report back to me with recommendations on how best to mitigate these."

Minister McConalogue added, "I will also be asking the Taskforce to produce an interim report within two months, focusing on recommended arrangements for a voluntary fleet tie up scheme to temporarily counter the impact of the reduction in quotas, which will begin to occur from April. The final report, to be delivered within 4 months, will address their recommendations for a voluntary fleet decommissioning scheme to adjust and re-balance certain segments of the fleet with the reduced fishing opportunities

available and any other recommended initiatives to support our seafood sector and coastal communities. The Taskforce will also consider and recommend constructive actions that would help to alleviate the inequitable relative contribution of quota share by Ireland in the EU/UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. In producing the Interim and Final Reports, I am asking the Taskforce to take account, to the extent possible, of all available funding streams."

The Taskforce will be chaired by Aidan Cotter, barrister and former CEO of Bord Bia. Mr Cotter will be assisted by a steering group comprised of Margaret Daly - Deputy CEO of seafood processor Errigal Bay Ltd and Mícheál Ó Cinnéide, former Deputy CEO of the EPA and former Director in the Marine Institute and presently on the board of the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board. Invitations to participate in the Taskforce have been issued to the organisations listed below.

Chairperson – Aidan Cotter; **Steering Group** - Margaret Daly and Mícheál Ó Cinnéide

Members: Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation; Irish Fish Producers Organisation; Irish South & West Fishermen's Organisation; Irish South & East Fishermen's Organisation; Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation PO; National Inshore Fisheries Forum; Fishermen's Co-operatives (2 representatives of the 4 main Coops); Irish Fish Processors & Exporters Organisation; Irish farmers Association (aquaculture branch); Fisheries Local Action Groups (1 representative of the 7 FLAGs); Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine; Bord Iascaigh Mhara (secretariat); Enterprise Ireland; Tourism Ireland; Local Government Management Agency (two coastal local authority representatives); Údarás na Gaeltachta representative.

Open Mind but Serious Concerns – IFPO React to Emphasis in Ministers Announcement

In a statement to the Marine Times, John Ward, CEO of the IFPO says that; "All attention on the fishing bodies will be focused on the recent announcement by the Minister of his taskforce. We will take part with an open mind but going by the emphasis in the Minister's press release we have serious concerns that this effort will alleviate the problems we face as an Industry after the Brexit deal.

"The emphasis of the Producer Organisation has to be principally focused on burden sharing, Financial Package, Tie-up scheme, Review of Common Fisheries policy, Decommissioning and a set-aside scheme. Our Pelagic and Demersal fisheries have taken a huge blow as a result of Brexit- a far greater blow than our European partners. Our primary emphasis has to be winning back quota for our vessels and far greater equity in our own waters.

"We feel it is important that our government and Ministers are not left off the hook and use this taskforce as a distraction to working in Europe and getting Irish fisheries a better deal. It is incumbent on them to work with our European partners and not accept the status quo. Fishing is of vital importance to our coastal communities and even though that is supposed to be part and parcel of the CFP, we don't ever see it been taking into account. **Our government must do more.**"

Minister's 'Solution' to EU Taking Bigger Share of Irish Quota is to Reduce the Size of Ireland's Fishing Fleet!

At this time of real crisis in Ireland's fishing and seafood industry - a time when industry representative organisations such as the IFSA (Irish Fishing & Seafood Alliance) have been highlighting the injustices of the so-called BREXIT 'deal' which saw Irish fishermen lose more quota (in their own waters) than any other nation in the EU - - a time when the population of Ireland's coastal communities are pleading for our Government to stand up to the EU and defend our rightful share of fish quotas in our own waters — a time when our Minister's response is to start a 'voluntary vessel decommissioning scheme' to shrink the size of our fleet to match the tiny quotas we've been left with...

Reacting to the announcement of the eagerly awaited Task Force, Cormac Burke, Chair of the IFSA states; "I'm sure the official response to my argument would be that if it's a 'voluntary' decommissioning scheme then that would indicate that there is an appetite out there for it — but that's a Catch-22 situation for our fishermen.

"Most vessel owners/skippers have made major private investments in their vessels and gears and, under normal circumstances, are willing to continue to carry on working in an industry that they're dedicated to.

"But if you approached any company and said "you can continue working but we're going to let the EU reduce your revenue by 40% OR we'll pay you a lump sum to shut shop and walk away now" - what option will people have?"

"Minister McConalogue MUST STOP trying to avoid the issue that is staring him in the face.

"Minister, the Irish fishing and seafood industry needs your support at this time - - real support in the form of facing up to the European Commission to demand justice with regards to the BREXIT deal that has clearly shafted Irish fishermen — and not to offer these people to get out of this industry (using money from an EU 'kitty' - believed to be in the region of 600 million euros).

"Not one government in the past 30 years can make claim that they were beneficial to Ireland's fishing and seafood industry but is this coalition government happy to be forever remembered for being the ones who provided the EU Commission a vehicle with which they can finally shut down our fishing industry and leave our wonderful marine resource in the hands of bigger European fishing interests?

"This situation even further highlights the need for everyone to sign & share the IFSA petition – link can be found on our website www.irishfishingseafoodalliance.org"

"We intend to invest in our coastal communities and the new task force will help advise on the best way to go about this," said Minister Charlie McConalogue in his RTÉ interview in Greencastle announcing the Task Force.

And in the full version of the interview (on RTÉ website) he added: "The final Task Force report, to be delivered within four months, will address their recommendations for a voluntary fleet decommissioning scheme to adjust and re-balance certain segments of the fleet with the reduced fishing opportunities available and any other recommended initiatives to support our seafood sector and coastal communities."

See also page 29 of this issue: "Task Force Highlights Governments Total Failure to Fishing Industry"

news from Northern Ireland

editor@marinetimes.ie



Devil's Choice returns to Ardglass - Photo by Christopher Feenan

Increased Support for Fishing and Shellfish Businesses

The Government has announced enhanced financial support for the seafood industry with cash grants for seafood and aquaculture businesses across the UK. In January, the Government made available £23 million for seafood exporters that suffered a financial loss because of delays related to the export of fresh or live fish and shellfish to the EU during January 2021.

Having listened to concerns from fishing businesses across the UK, Defra will now be expanding the eligibility criteria to target catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses which have been affected by a reduction in demand from the hospitality sector in the UK and abroad, as well as disruption of exports to the EU. These expanded criteria will mean more businesses can get the support they need.

The scheme, which is similar to last year's Fisheries Response Fund set up in response to the coronavirus pandemic, will open in early March and provide a grant payment to cover up to three months of average business fixed costs incurred between January and March 2021. It will help catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses with costs such as insurance, equipment hire and port fees.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said: "The fishing industry plays an important role in Northern Ireland for its people and communities, supporting around 2,000 jobs. This expansion of the government's £23 million response fund will ensure that the fisheries and aquaculture industry in Northern Ireland receives the financial and practical support it needs."

The main features of the scheme are:

- For the UK catching sector, the fund will be open to under 40m vessel

owners with fishing licences and who have a track record of fishing in the winter months.

- The scheme will offer support to UK shellfish aquaculture businesses, support will be provided on average ongoing costs based on Full-time equivalent (FTE) employees per business. Businesses who have received a grant under the recent Seafood Producers Resilience Fund in Scotland will not be eligible for the UK scheme.

- The Marine Management Organisation will administer the fund across the UK on behalf of Defra, contacting eligible registered owners and licence holders directly with details of how to apply, starting in early March.

- A single payment will be made to cover a proportion of fixed costs over a three-month period from January to March 2021.

The funding follows targeted support to help exporters with new processes. This includes the Seafood Exports Working Group, meeting twice a week to troubleshoot issues raised by the industry; and a newly established Scottish Seafood Exports Task Force.

The UK fishing and seafood sector is also set to benefit from significant government investment with a £100 million fund to help modernise fishing fleets, the fish processing industry, and rejuvenate an historic and proud industry in the UK, on top of the £32 million that will replace EU funding this year.

The Government also continues to seek urgent resolution to export issues, including the EU ban on the import of class B live bivalve molluscs and will explore further ways producers can continue to export this valuable seafood. UK mussels and oysters are highly sought after, at home and abroad. The sector has been highly impacted by Covid restrictions, and now barriers to trade imposed by the EU.

There is also wider support from the

Government to the sector including the ongoing Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the furlough scheme and the recently launched SME Brexit Support Fund to help businesses deal with export requirements.

Could Offshore Renewable Developments Affect Shellfish Catch?

Research on the impact of noise and vibrations on shellfish fisheries could help in future discussions about new offshore renewable energy sites.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the UK government has set out plans to "build back greener" by making the UK a world leader in offshore renewable energy. In October 2020, the Prime Minister said that "offshore wind will be powering every home in the country" by 2030. To achieve these ambitions, there will need to be a continued expansion in offshore renewables.

What do these ambitions mean for the fishing industry around the UK who share these waters and depend on healthy fisheries to making a living?

There has been growing concern amongst the fishing industry in Northern Ireland about the impacts that the growth of offshore renewable energy might have on local shellfish fisheries. The Northern Ireland fishing industry catches 8000 tonnes of crustaceans including Nephrops, crab, lobster and shrimp each year, worth an estimated £17.8m. So anything that affects the shellfish fisheries could harm the viability of the fishing industry.

Responding to concerns from the fishing industry, the Seafish Northern Ireland Advisory Committee (SNIAC) commissioned a study to look at the issue. Information was collected on the effects of renewable energy developments to try and understand if there was any evidence of negative impacts on crustaceans. The findings could help the fishing industry as part of future discussions

about the placement of renewable energy developments.

What did the research uncover?

The study highlighted a number of things:

1. There are three prominent types of marine renewable energy generation: wave, tidal, and wind. Wind is the most common.
2. Underwater noise, vibrations and electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are produced by marine renewable energy devices.
3. The impacts of underwater noise, vibrations and EMFs on marine mammals and finfish are much better understood than the impacts on crustaceans.
4. Crustaceans are able to detect particle motion in the water, seabed vibrations and electro-magnetic fields (EMFs).

Most importantly, it was found that underwater noise, vibrations and EMFs interfered with cues usually taken from the natural environment, and negatively affected the ability of crustaceans to find food, shelter and a mate. This could have a fundamental and negative impact on survival, reproduction and sustainability of important commercial species and fisheries.

The understanding of how crustaceans detect and are affected by man-made underwater noise, vibration and EMFs is still in its infancy and further work is required. Without improved knowledge and understanding it is impossible to understand the full impacts of renewable energy developments on commercial crustacean species and fisheries.

Further work is also required to develop best practice mitigation options that will reduce any negative effects on some of the most valuable and commercially important UK fisheries.

International Fishing and Maritime News

United Nations Says Pandemic Has Affected Fish Consumption

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. This is regarded as “the landmark instrument” endorsed by the United Nations FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation). It was adopted by Member States as the “guiding resource” towards sustainable fisheries and aquaculture around the world.

Marking the occasion, the FAO issued a report about the effects of Covid 19 on world fisheries markets. It said that restrictions are expected to have pushed fish supply, consumption, and trade revenues for 2020 into decline. Global aquaculture production may also have recorded its first drop in years, the report said.

“Production has been disrupted, supply chains have been interrupted and consumer spending restricted by various lockdowns”, said the report. “Containment restraints continue to affect supply and demand. Further interference may impact the sector throughout the year. Containment measures have provoked far-reaching changes, many of which are likely to persist in the long term. Every stage of the fisheries and aquaculture supply chain is susceptible to being disrupted or stopped by these restrictions.

Points from the report:

- The Fish Price Index is down for most traded species and restaurant and hotel closures in many countries have prompted falling demand for fresh fish.
- The impact has been significant in developing countries where small-scale and artisanal workers and communities depend on fisheries for their food security, livelihoods. Unsold aquaculture products increase live fish stocks, creating higher costs for feeding and more fish mortalities.
- Covid-19-related restrictions on crews along with market conditions have reduced fishing, leaving a slight decline in

global wild catches last year.

- The coronavirus has also caused consumer preferences to shift as households stock up on non-perishable foods, replacing the demand for fresh fish with a preference for packaged and frozen products.

- Before the pandemic annual fish consumption had grown significantly over the last decade to an average of more than 20 kilos per person.

Scottish Salmon Producers Want Compensation for Seal Damage

The Scottish government has refused to introduce a compensation scheme for seal damage to fish farms which has been sought by the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation. The government said it would “work with the industry to find sustainable solutions.”

“If fish farmers are not allowed to kill seals even if they break into a salmon pen, the industry should be compensated for the resulting losses,” SSFPO retorted.

New regulations were introduced in Scotland from the end of January, which prevented farmers from shooting seals “as a last resort.” The Scottish government said they were introduced to ensure that exports of seafood to the United States would after January 2023, when the US Marine Mammal Protection Act would prevent exports if shooting of seals was still allowed.

“We appreciate that part of the sector may face the risk of increased seal predation following changes to the seal licensing system. While some producers have already moved away from the lethal control of seals, we will work with the industry to find sustainable ways of protecting fish from predators, and will discuss the requirement for guidance on seal related issues. There are currently no plans to compensate for stock loss as a result of seal attacks,” said Marine Scotland when publishing “guidance” on how the seal licensing regime that will operate.

“Despite repeated requests, the Scottish Government has so far failed to provide any guidance on what fish farmers should do if a seal gets into a pen, or how to deal with seals harassing or attacking fish from outside the pen. Shooting seals is only ever a last resort. Scotland’s seal population is booming with numbers estimated to be at least 132,000. The sector has spent stg£8m in the last 12 months on anti-predator nets to protect fish from seals. Seals also represent a threat to wild salmon stocks,” the SSPO said.

EU Gives Licences to French Vessels for UK Waters

The European Commission issued 59 licences for French fishing vessels to operate in the UK 6-12-mile zone at the end of January, according to the French Department of Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture. The only condition imposed on French fishermen to operate in the 6-12 mile zone is to be able to produce a valid licence, issued on the vessels being shown to have a track record of fishing in the area.

“About sixty licences have yet to be allocated,” said Olivier Lepretre, President of the Hauts-de-France Regional Fisheries Committee. “We were particularly worried about the fishery resource and its protection in the Straits of Dover. Access to the area will once again allow fishermen to fish sustainably and responsibly. While French fishermen need to be able to access British waters as quickly as possible, it is also essential to guarantee the British access to the European market and to facilitate trade.”

UK Consultation on MPAs

A formal consultation is open in the UK until March 28 for the next phases of the Government’s plans for a ‘Blue Belt’ of marine protected areas around the UK. The first phase refers to four of England’s 40 offshore Marine Protected

Areas.

Now that the UK has left the EU, the UK Government has powers to implement evidenced based marine management that, it says, “will help ensure our seas are managed sustainably, protecting both the long-term future of the fishing industry and our precious wildlife and habitats.”

The MMO is consulting on byelaws being proposed under new powers introduced under the Fisheries Act, the UK’s first major domestic fisheries legislation in nearly 40 years. These byelaws aim to prohibit fishing activities in Marine Protected Areas where there is evidence that they harm wildlife or damage habitats. The proposed byelaws seek to prohibit the use of bottom towed fishing gear in all four sites and additional restrictions for static gears over sensitive features in two of the sites.

The consultation follows a call for evidence, which closed in December 2020, where the MMO sought additional evidence and views on the draft assessments and management options for the four offshore Marine Protected Areas. These first four Marine Protected Areas were chosen as a priority to help protect their vibrant and productive undersea environments and include the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, which has the largest shallow sandbank in British waters and supports commercial fish species such as cod and plaice, as well as sand eels that provide an important food source for kittiwakes, puffins and porpoises.

The consultation follows a call for evidence, which closed in December 2020, where the MMO sought additional evidence and views on the draft assessments and management options for the four offshore Marine Protected Areas. These first four Marine Protected Areas were chosen as a priority to help protect their vibrant and productive undersea environments and include the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, which has the largest shallow sandbank in British waters and supports commercial fish species such as cod and plaice, as well as sand eels that provide an important food source for kittiwakes, puffins and porpoises.

Norwegian Government Approves Previously Rejected Submarine Fish Project

The Norwegian Government has approved a futuristic salmon project that it had earlier rejected, to develop a 900-foot long “submarine-like” offshore fish farm.



Eidsfjord Sjøfarm AS has been given a “partial go-ahead” by the Ministry of Trade and Industry over-ruling the rejection by the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries. The project has been dubbed



French trawler pictured departing Killybegs - Photo by John Cunningham

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‘The Eidsfjord Giant.’ It is to be sent back to the Directorate for further discussions about its eventual development. The Directorate says it will now also assess whether the application meets other conditions for obtaining development permits, including the requirement for major investment.

Norwegian Fisheries and Seafood Minister, Odd Emil Ingebrigtsen, said he looked forward to an “exciting project.”

Rolls-Royce of the UK is involved in the technical development of the Eidsfjord Giant, which is 270 metres long and holds six closed fish wells. Eidsfjord Sjøfarm applied for 17 development permits for the concept, which will involve large investment.

It is intended to enable fish to grow up to 2.5 kg before being transferred to larger pens and is one of a number of futuristic and potentially exciting offshore salmon projects currently under consideration in Norway.

Will UK Producers Go to Europe?

Industry sources suggest that there are UK shellfish exporters who are considering establishing companies in the EU to get around their Brexit problems.

Doing so could help reduce the amount of paperwork needed to export their products to the EU.

Noise Is A Problem Beneath the Sea Surface

“Humans have drastically altered the underwater soundscape, in some cases deafening or disorienting whales, dolphins, and other marine mammals that rely on sound to navigate,” a team of international researchers has concluded.

“Far beneath the ocean surface, a cacophony of industrial noise is disrupting marine animals’ ability to mate, feed and evade predators. Rumbling ships, hammering oil drills and booming seismic survey blasts, even the cracking of glaciers into polar oceans and the rattle of rain falling on the water’s surface can be heard deep under the sea.

It’s a chronic problem that weakens the animals all the way from individuals to populations,” according to maritime scientists who provided 500 research papers on the issue which were analysed and published in the international journal, ‘Science.’

They have called for a global regulatory framework for measuring and managing ocean noise in their analysis.

World’s First Energy Island

The Danish government has approved a plan to spend nearly €30 billion to build what it claims will be world’s first energy island, located in the North Sea about 43 nautical miles off the country’s west coast.

It is intended to produce and store enough green energy to cover the electricity needs of 3 million European households, according to a government statement. It will be linked to hundreds

of offshore wind turbines and also supply green hydrogen for use in shipping, aviation, industry and heavy transport.

The Dogger Bank

Well-known through being mentioned on weather forecasts, the Dogger Bank has become the focus of new attention through research related to ‘Doggerland’ which once covered a vast area of land between what is now the East Coast of England and the European mainland.

Some ancient islands now submerged beneath the North Sea survived a devastating tsunami about 8,000 years ago and may have played a key part in Britain’s human prehistory, according to a new study, reported on Live Science website.

The research suggests some parts of the ancient plain known as Doggerland, which then connected Great Britain with the Netherlands, withstood the massive Storegga Tsunami that submerged most of the region in about 6200 B.C.

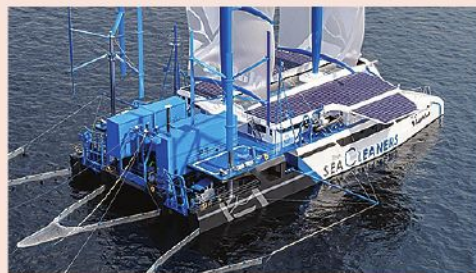
It was caused by the underwater collapse of part of Norway’s Continental Shelf, about 500 miles (800 kilometres) to the North. Scientists had long thought the towering wave entirely submerged the Doggerland region between the east coast of England and the European continent.

The new research, based on submerged sediment cores sampled during ship expeditions in the North Sea, suggests some parts of Doggerland survived the ancient tsunami and may have remained inhabited by Stone Age humans for thousands of years.

If they did, the surviving islands of Doggerland might have played a part in the later development of Britain,

A Yacht Eating Plastic to Clean the Oceans!

A French ocean adventurer and his team claim to have designed a yacht which will scoop up plastic garbage to stop it blighting the world’s oceans, and converts the same waste into fuel to help power the boat. Yvan Bourgnon is a competitive ocean racing yachtsman. “My encounters with floating carpets of trash became more and more frequent.”



With a team of designers plans have been drawn up for a 56-metre (183 foot) long catamaran called ‘Manta’ which would be propelled by a combination of high-tech sails and electric motors. They hope to produce a working prototype by 2024 which, as it moves through the water would use conveyor belts to scoop up waste, sort it, then feed it into a burner, that will melt the plastic, producing gas which drives a turbine, and in turn generates electricity for the boat’s systems to use.

According to Bourgnon, if 400 of these boats were to be made, “they could clean up one-third of the plastic debris in the oceans.”

Managing Crab and Lobster Catches Could Offer Long-Term Benefits to Fishermen and the Environment

The UK’s commercial fishing industry is currently experiencing a number of serious challenges. However, a study by the University of Plymouth has found that managing the density of crab and lobster pots at an optimum level increases the quality of catch, benefits the marine environment and makes the industry more sustainable in the long term.



Published in *Scientific Reports*, a journal published by the *Nature* group, the findings are the result of an extensive and unprecedented four-year field study conducted in partnership with local fishermen off the coast of southern England.

Over a sustained period, researchers exposed sections of the seabed to differing densities of pot fishing and monitored any impacts using a combination of underwater videos and catch analysis. They found that in areas of higher pot density, fishermen caught 19% less brown crab and 35% less European lobster, and their catches of brown crab were on average 35 grams per individual (7%) lighter.

The effect on marine species was also significant with two ecologically important reef species, Ross coral (*Pentapora foliacea*) and Neptune’s Heart sea squirt (*Phallusia mammillata*), 83% and 74% less abundant respectively where pot density was higher.

Researchers say the study provides evidence of a pot fishing intensity ‘threshold’ and highlights that commercial pot fisheries are likely to be compatible with marine conservation when managed correctly at low, sustainable levels.

The study was carried out by academics from the University’s School of Biological and Marine Sciences, with funding from Defra and the Blue Marine Foundation and working with the Lyme Bay Consultative Committee. It builds on an interim report published by Defra in 2019, and research published in October 2020 which used previously unseen footage to show the environmental impacts of pot fishing.

Dr Adam Rees, Post-Doctoral researcher and lead author on the current research, said: “The effects of bottom-towed fishing have been clearly shown as part of the University’s long-term monitoring project in Lyme Bay. But before we started this research, very little was known about the precise impacts of pot fishing over a prolonged period. We have shown that – if left unchecked – it can pose threats but that changing ways of working can have

benefits for species on the seabed and the quality and quantity of catches.”

The study focussed on the Lyme Bay Reserve, a 206 km² area that has been protected from all bottom-towed fishing since 2008. It is part of the Lyme Bay and Torbay Special Area of Conservation, a 312 km² section of the English Channel that is predominantly fished by small boats operating out of towns and villages.

The University has been assessing the seabed recovery since 2008 and has previously demonstrated that several species have returned to the area since the MPA was introduced. Recommendations from this work have been included within the Government’s 25-year Environment Plan, and a major UK government report into Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs), led by former Defra Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon.

This latest study comes just days after the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) signalled its intent to ban bottom trawling at various offshore MPAs around the UK.

Dr Emma Sheehan, Associate Professor of Marine Ecology and one of the study’s co-authors, said: “Over a decade ago, the fishing community in Lyme Bay realised that changing the way they fish was essential to the sustainability of their industry. We have worked closely with them ever since to take their concerns into account and attempt to provide them with solutions. This study is the latest part of our ongoing work to establish the best ways to both preserve their traditions and enhance the environment they work in.”

Martin Attrill, Professor of Marine Ecology and senior author on the research, added: “The fishing industry is currently facing huge uncertainty. And we of course know that every fishing community is different. But with the drive to further enhance marine protection around the UK, some of the lessons we have learned in Lyme Bay could help other fleets make changes that can secure their long-term future.”

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Irish Company Designs Floating Green Energy Solution

SolarMarine Energy Ltd, an Irish Small-Medium Enterprise (SME) based in Co Mayo, has designed an innovative floating hybrid renewable energy system, which could offer sustainable low carbon solution for Irish coastal communities.

The research and development project was funded by the Marine Institute's 2018 Industry-Led Awards scheme. Under the scheme, the Marine Institute provided €2.4 million in funding for research projects to twelve companies, working in collaboration with five Higher Education Institutions.

For this research project, SolarMarine Energy Ltd designed a floating solar energy structure to produce green hydrogen. Green hydrogen is generated using excess renewable energy that can be used as a clean fuel, for heating and transport or to store and transport energy. SolarMarine Energy's research indicates that floating solar energy is ideal for island and coastal communities.

Eamon Howlin, CEO of SolarMarine Energy said, "The floating solar industry is only emerging in Europe having been established in Japan in 2014, and has a projected market value of over \$1 billion by 2023. Thanks to our collaborative study in partnership with the Marine Institute and University College Cork, SolarMarine Energy Ltd are playing an important part in this developing industry."

Dr Paul Leahy, Science Foundation

Ireland MAREI Centre at University College Cork (UCC) said, "Our collaboration with SolarMarine Energy has been very successful and we would like to continue working with the company on a follow-up demonstrator project. A floating solar array prototype located near UCC's Beaufort Building in Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, would allow SolarMarine and UCC to capitalise on the design work undertaken under the Marine Institute funded project, and bring the SolarMarine floating solar concept closer to market."

Dr Niall McDonough, Director of Policy, Research and Innovation at the Marine Institute said, "Supporting new marine renewable energy solutions is a strategic priority for Ireland to meet the targets of the Climate Action Plan 2019. Through our competitive funding programme, the Marine Institute provides grants to companies in Ireland to undertake research and to develop innovative concepts, prototypes, solutions and business models. This kind of support is essential to boost ocean business and to enable the transition to a climate-neutral blue economy."

I-Form and Westport-based w1Da to Collaborate on Development of Highly Efficient Electric Motors for the Marine Industry

I-Form, the SFI Research Centre for Advanced Manufacturing, has agreed a collaboration with Westport-based w1Da to accelerate the development and production of eco-friendly electric marine motors.

The two-year programme, which is worth €225,000, will focus on 3D printing of high-strength, low-weight components that are key to the advancement of next generation electric motors.

The I-Form research team at UCD will be led by Prof Denis Dowling, Prof Alojz Ivankovic and Dr Andrew Dickson.

"The I-Form team at UCD brings together materials science, engineering and data analytics expertise to develop advanced manufacturing processes. The partnership with w1Da is an important example of how these skills can be applied to the design and manufacture of sustainable solutions with lower carbon emissions," said Prof Dowling.

Rory Staunton, w1Da's Chief Technology Officer (CTO), said: "This project will create synergy between our hydrodynamics and power electronics know-how and UCD's extensive expertise in 3D printing and advanced materials. We will work together to develop more efficient 'zero emissions' motors across the marine industry. High-strength, low-weight recyclable composite materials are a key factor in delivering long range and efficient propul-

sion and regeneration systems. Our new electric motors will provide recreational and commercial boat owners across Ireland with a sustainable, pollution-free alternative to noisy, petrol outboards and unreliable diesel engines."

Joe Casey, w1Da General Manager said: "the research and development collaboration with UCD is a key element of our company's plans to expand eco-friendly manufacturing, attract further sustainable investment, establish sales across Europe and recruit more skilled staff in the West of Ireland in 2022."

w1Da is based near Westport, County Mayo is being advised by Mike Feeney who is a former executive director of Enterprise Ireland. The company is supported by private investors, grant aid from the Marine Institute and Mayo Local Enterprise Board.

I-Form's mission is to shape the future of manufacturing through high-impact research into the application of digital technologies to materials processing. I-Form brings together a nationwide pool of expertise in materials science, engineering, data analytics and cognitive computing.



MFV Caher Star fishing for razors - Photo by Matthew Dunne

Energy Giant Shell Joins Forces with Irish Company in Celtic Sea Development

The energy giant, Shell, has signed an agreement with the Irish company, Simply Blue Energy, to develop a floating wind farm off the South Coast.

The Emerald Project will be located in the area of the Kinsale Head Gas Field which is currently being decommissioned about 35 nautical miles off the Cork shoreline.

Simply Blue is headquartered in Cork and will lead the joint venture, supported by experts in Shell involved in development floating wind projects. Shell has taken a 51% share of the Kinsale venture to develop the Emerald Project floating wind farm in the Celtic Sea.

In the early stages at present, the project is to use renewable floating wind-powered generators. 300MW of installed capacity is planned initially, with the potential for a total installed capacity of 1GW, which the partnership says would be equivalent to the capacity of the Moneypoint power station.

Floating wind technology can be installed in deeper waters than fixed wind turbines allowing this project to be placed 35km – 60km offshore, reducing visual impacts. Depending on the size of turbines selected, the first phase of the project will include between 15 and 25 turbines. The assembly, installation and deployment of these turbines could stimulate hundreds of high-quality jobs in the local supply chain. Long-term operations and maintenance of the turbines will also require local skills and services in Cork Harbour for up to 25 years.

Simply Blue Energy says it will "engage with coastal communities" and local supply chains and create skilled jobs in floating offshore wind projects. "The assembly, installation and deployment of these turbines could stimulate hundreds of high-quality jobs in the local supply chain. Long-term operations and maintenance of the turbines will also require local skills and services in

Cork Harbour for up to 25 years."

"We intend to ultimately enable Ireland to increase its energy independence, while also reducing emissions," according to Sam Roch-Perks, CEO Simply Blue Energy. "Floating wind energy is a major opportunity for Ireland to become a 'Green Gulf', by realising the benefits of its vast marine and offshore wind resources without negatively impacting beautiful coastlines. This marks a milestone in the Cork region which previously benefitted from the supply of natural gas from the Kinsale Gas Field. The decommissioning of the field enables redevelopment of the offshore area for floating wind, supporting Ireland's need to fight climate change, decarbonising the economy and ensuring security of energy supply."

Shell's involvement seems to underline that company's commitment, which is stated through 'Shell New Energies' that is partnering the Irish project, as an "ambition to be a net-zero emissions business by 2050, or sooner."

The relevant importance of coastal communities in the increasing level of development offshore was reflected by Shell's Vice President in charge of offshore wind development. Colin Crooks committed the company to "working alongside coastal communities to create shared value, that's key to success and this is why we have chosen and look forward to working with Simply Blue Energy who are rooted in the local community."

Progression of the project is dependent on securing all relevant 'on and offshore' governmental and regulatory consents; an appropriate grid connection and a route to market through the Renewable Energy Support Scheme.



WATER SAFETY IRELAND REPORT

15 Public Lifebuoys Stolen Every Week

John Leech, Chief Executive of Water Safety Ireland reports: Reducing theft, damage to and interference with lifesaving equipment is an ongoing task. Councils around the country endure stolen ring buoys which are costly to replace. They are also damaged and interfered with and we always warn that “A Stolen Ringbuoy can be a Stolen Life.”

We issue this warning repeatedly, but still damage and theft occurs.

Attempts are underway to combat the vandalism which endangers lives.

Four companies are piloting a range of innovative solutions to supply low-cost, retrofit, technology solutions to alert, monitor and report when ringbuoys are stolen. The project is being led by Dublin City Council's Smart City Team which is supported by the Water Safety Development Officers in Dublin City, Fingal, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin Country Council's.

Fifteen ring buoys are stolen every week in Dublin City Council area.

The project has been funded through the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's, Public Service Innovation Fund 2019 and has been match-funded by Dublin City Council's Smart City Section along with the Water Safety Development Sections of each of the four Dublin Region Local Authorities – Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Fingal County Council and South Dublin County Council. It is supported by Water Safety Ireland and its genesis started in 2018.

This is part of an innovation challenge that commenced in 2020 to find technological solutions to address the ongoing difficulties that County Councils endure of stolen ring buoys.

The proposed solutions aim to monitor in real time when ringbuoys are stolen. There are several benefits which include reducing the number of ringbuoys stolen or interfered with, reducing the cost of maintaining the ringbuoys and reducing the time taken to replace them by County Councils.

In Dublin City Council, approximately fifteen ring buoys are stolen every week. This equates to approximately six hundred ring buoys replaced each year costing approximately €20,000.

This unique pilot project is being managed through an innovative procurement two-phase multi-party framework agreement. It is the first time such a framework is being used in Ireland and has been supported through the European Assistance for Innovation Procurement (EAFIP),

a European programme for innovation procurement. Procurement specialists in the Netherlands Corvers Commercial & Legal Affairs Ltd. and A&L Goodbody have advised throughout the process.

Phase One is a nine-month trial phase, which comprises of three months preparation and six months live testing which commences in early March. The four Companies who have taken up this challenge are Civic Integrated Solutions Ltd.; mSEMICON Teoranta; RE:SURE Intelligence Ltd. and ZiggyTec Ltd.

All companies whose solutions are deemed successful at the end of Phase

One will automatically proceed to

Phase Two. There are twenty-three local authorities, including the four Dublin Regional Councils which are listed on the framework. In Phase Two, they can draw down on the successful solutions through a mini-competition and buy them without going

out to tender themselves and having to comply with the heavily administrative necessary procurement Government guidelines. This way, the solutions can be scaled up and deployed nationally as individual local authorities see fit.

Early indications are very interesting and I am confident that it will help save lives when the successful systems are rolled out around the country.



So, until next month, enjoy your aquatic pursuits or sports and always wear a lifejacket on or near the water and use your influence to further reduce the number of drownings on our island nation to improve our nation's safety culture.

Dave Wall, Conservation Officer at the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group writes about 'An Ocean of Noise.' Military sonar is the suspected cause of mass mortalities of beaked whales off the Irish coast in 2020, 2015 and 2008, with anywhere from dozens to hundreds of animals being killed in each event.

An Ocean of Noise

A recent paper in the journal 'Science,' which reviewed the findings of over 500 scientific studies, has helped define the growing problem of human-generated noise pollution in our ocean.

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group



For years, the IWDG has been highlighting the growing cacophony of noise that is polluting our seas and impacting our protected whale and dolphin species, their prey and their ecosystems. This noise comes from a wide diversity of man-made sounds including shipping, seismic surveys, military sonar, piling, drilling, dredging, acoustic noise deterrents and bottom trawling.

Whales, dolphins, and porpoises live in an acoustic world and use sound to navigate, forage, avoid predators, socialise and find mates.

They evolved over millions of years in an ocean free of man-made sounds and are struggling to cope with the noise pollution we have added to the ocean in the past 200 years.

The scale of the impacts of noise pollution ranges from a single ship impacting animals in its vicinity, to seismic surveys that can desensitise (make noisy) thousands of square kilometres of ocean and impact entire populations of animals.

A 2019 University College Cork study showed that seismic surveys can reduce cetacean sightings across a large marine ecosystem. The study reported an 88% decrease in sightings of baleen whales and a 53% decrease in sightings of toothed whales, across multiple habitats during active seismic surveys in Irish waters.

Noise from oil and gas surveys has been shown to force some large whales to 'shout' above the increased noise, while other whales fall silent, inhibiting natural levels of communication. Prolonged seismic surveys may exclude whales from preferred habitat for weeks or even months.

Some noise pollution is even more sinister and military sonar has been directly implicated in the deaths of hundreds of deep-diving beaked whales around the world.

It is thought that the very loud noise generated by the sonar scares deep-diving whales, increasing their heart rates, causing bubbles to form in the blood and soft tissue, akin to the bends in scuba divers.

Military sonar is the suspected cause of

mass mortalities of beaked whales off the Irish coast in 2020, 2015 and 2008, with anywhere from dozens to hundreds of animals being killed in each event.

Fishing too has recently been highlighted as a source of noise pollution, beyond the noise generated by the vessel itself. A recent paper by researchers at the National University of Ireland, Galway and the Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences highlighted that bottom trawling generates significant amounts of noise pollution, at levels that may harm whales and dolphins. This effect is particularly problematic where bottom trawling occurs in and around subsea canyons, which can act to focus the noise.

There is a large body of evidence to indicate that the increased cacophony

of background noise in our oceans is affecting the health and reproductive success of whales and dolphins at a population level. Even if the noise does not directly cause the death of the animals (as in military sonar), it can cause stress, exclude animals

from their preferred habitat, and interfere with communication, feeding, navigation and reproduction.

Noise pollution is contributing to the reduced health of individual animals and populations, with unknown consequences for ocean ecosystems.

There are technical solutions to many sources of noise pollution such as building quieter ships, limiting use of civilian and military sonar and developing new and quieter methods of mineral and oil and gas extraction.

However, the bad news is that research also tells us that global CO2 emissions are contributing to a noisier ocean because low frequency sounds travels further through the increasingly acidic waters.

We are still learning the full extent of the impact noise pollution is having on our marine ecosystems, but in this current era of biodiversity emergency is anyone listening to the disturbing sounds coming from our ocean?



Seismic guns being used at sea - Photo IWDG



www.iwdg.ie

news from **Castletownbere**

Helen Riddell

Lifeboat Rescue

Castletownbere RNLI lifeboat launched on the night of Tuesday 10th February to go to the assistance of a seriously ill skipper on board a fishing vessel south-west of Castletownbere.

The lifeboat was launched under the command of Coxswain Dave Fenton with crew Marney O'Donogue, John Paul Downey, Kyle Cronin and Donagh Murphy and located the 30m vessel at 12.09 nineteen miles south-west of Ardnakinna lighthouse. Conditions on-scene were challenging with a 3-4 metre swell and gusting east northeast winds up to Force 6.

The lifeboat escorted the trawler to just inside the mouth of Castletownbere harbour where a local pilot went onboard and took command of the vessel. The casualty, a man in his late fifties, was transferred to the lifeboat in calmer waters and was brought to Castletownbere RNLI lifeboat station where he was transferred a waiting ambulance and taken to hospital for medical assessment and treatment. Meanwhile, the fishing vessel was safely berthed at Castletownbere Pier.

Commenting on the callout Castletownbere RNLI Lifeboat Deputy Launching Authority, Felix O'Donoghue, complimented the crew on its rapid response, maintaining strict COVID-19 protocols and the safe transfer of the ill casualty.

Commercial Diving Programme

Surface Supplied Diving QQI Level 6 will run at the National Fisheries and Diving College, Castletownbere from 6th-30th April. The course is open to anyone interested in pursuing a career in the Irish aquaculture sector as a commercial diver. BIM Commercial Diving courses are the only courses in Ireland approved by the UK authorities. For further information contact diving@bim.ie or contact 027 71230.

Beara Top Tyres Fundraiser

An initiative set up by Beara Top Tyres to collect used vehicle batteries has raised €1,050 for the Giving for Gary Fund in aid of local man Gary Hartnett and also purchased two iPads for CoAction Castletownbere. Damian O'Sullivan of Beara Top Tyres extended his thanks to all those who dropped off batteries throughout the past year. Used batteries can be dropped off again to Beara Top Tyres throughout 2021.

Sewage Works

Irish Water has announced that work

on the new Castletownbere Sewerage Scheme has commenced. The new wastewater treatment plant and sewerage infrastructure to be constructed as part of this scheme will eliminate the discharge of untreated wastewater from Castletownbere into Bantry Bay. Irish Water, working in partnership with Cork County Council, are investing over €13 million in the project. Once operational, the new plant and associated infrastructure will ensure compliance with wastewater discharge regulations. It will also improve water quality in Bantry Bay and protect recreational waters for swimming, surfing, fishing, boating and sightseeing, as well as protecting the integrity of the local marine environment. Glan Agua MEIC Ltd. is working on behalf of Irish Water to deliver this essential project, which will be delivered in compliance with stringent Covid-19 controls. Works on the project are expected to commence towards the end of February 2021 and will take 16 months to complete. The project will involve construction of a new wastewater treatment plant at Droum South, as well as a long marine outfall pipeline that will safely discharge treated wastewater near Doctor's Rock to the south of Castletownbere town.

Irish Water and the contractor Glan Agua MEIC Ltd will be in contact with the local community in Castletownbere in the coming weeks regarding the upcoming works as well as throughout the project. For further details see www.water.ie/castletownbere.

Beara Further Education Centre

The Beara Further Education Centre are running a number of courses which are available online. For further details contact Noreen on 086 8239147 or email noreen.murnane@corketb.ie

COVID-19 Supports

Castletownbere Development Association and GAA clubs throughout Beara are available to help the local community in providing help with grocery collection, medication pick-up, fuel delivery, checking in on neighbours and undertaking any other tasks where necessary during the current time. Anyone who requires assistance can contact Sandra on 087 2927534. Cork County Council's COVID-19 Community Support programme is also available to assist anyone living alone or who needs support at the current time. They can also arrange delivery of food or medication and other practical supports.

The number to call is 1 800 805 819.

From Ocean to Plate: AIT Scientists Working to Boost Sustainability of Irish Seafood Sector

When it comes to the collection of data about Ireland's €1.25 billion seafood sector, we are lagging behind many of our European counterparts, that's according to Irish researchers heading up a new seafood sustainability initiative.



Dr Sinead Mellett, Prof. Neil J. Rowan and Lorna Walsh at the AIT Bioscience Research Institute are working with Neptunus, a €2.3 million Interreg Atlantic Area project, to improve sustainability and resource efficiency in the seafood sector.

The seafood sector is of vital importance to the Irish economy, particularly in rural, coastal communities, and accounts for 16,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly. Despite this, it faces serious challenges and threats, including climate change and rising fears of marine debris.

Previous research has shown that two of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions from wild fish is fuel consumption, while feed is the biggest culprit for farmed fish due a significant quantity of it being imported.

Working with NUIG More-fish researchers and Neptunus project leads, Dr Eoghan Clifford, Dr Ronan Cooney and Alan Kennedy, the team are making these processes more sustainable – from ocean to plate. “We are looking at the different inputs, outputs and impacts associated with seafood production all along the value chain, and this helps with process efficiency, energy efficiency and decision support systems,” Dr Mellett explains.

Smoked salmon is one of Ireland's largest seafood exports. Dr Mellett and her colleagues are carrying out a lifecycle assessment of smoked salmon production to see how it can be improved. “We're undertaking scenarios to show whether it is more sustainable to smoke the salmon in Ireland or whether it would be more economical or sustainable to do so in the country where it's actually going to be consumed.”

Neptunus draws on the expertise, knowledge and experience of eleven academic partners across five countries, all based along the Atlantic coast. Several Irish companies are also involved with the

project, including Wild Atlantic Oysters, Irish Seaspray, Hexafly, and Sure Engineering. Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Ireland's seafood development agency, is also a partner in the project, providing expert opinion and links to public bodies.

“With all of the skills of all the partners, we're able to develop strategies and recommend policies to help companies transition from a linear economy – which is where you harvest, produce, consume and dispose – to a circular economy, where you recycle instead of disposing of the waste,” Dr Mellett says.

The researchers hope that by modelling the environmental impact of recycling versus putting product into landfill, they can demonstrate to companies what their resource usage is from a water and energy perspective.

With the global population growing by about 80 million every year, it is estimated that by 2030, we will need 30% more water, 40% more energy and 50% more food. “Food, water and energy are some of the most important resources we have and need to be managed more efficiently,” Dr Mellett stresses, adding that transitioning to a circular economy will benefit companies economically.

The team are also looking for ways to help consumers make better choices when buying seafood, including the development of eco labels. “This is great for the consumer because they'll be able to make more informed, sustainable and environmentally conscious decisions based on what's on the label,” she explains.

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the project will run for three years and result in increased sustainability and economic benefit in seafood production in the Atlantic region. Learn more about the Neptunus Project at <https://neptunus-project.eu/>

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RNLI REPORT

Niamh Stephenson, RNLI Regional Media Manager, Ireland and the Isle of Man, reports on the successful 'Launch-a-Memory' appeal and fondly remembers a great RNLI Volunteer 'Buddy'

Launch-A-Memory Appeal Fills 10,000 Spaces On Clifden Lifeboat

The RNLI's 'Launch-a-Memory' appeal has come to an end as the 10,000 spaces for the names of loved ones to go onboard Clifden RNLI's new Shannon class lifeboat have all been filled.



The lifeboat is currently being built in Poole and during that process the names will be placed on a decal of the letters making up the R N L I and the number of the lifeboat to be put on port and starboard. This appeal was a first in Ireland and has been hugely successful. Every name on the lifeboat has a story behind it and we have been privileged to share a few with the permission of the donors. While this appeal is over and there will be a wait until the lifeboat arrives into Clifden, each of the donors has received a beautiful certificate with their loved ones name and are kept up-to-date by email on how the lifeboat build is coming on. Supporters want to be kept informed and feel part of the charity they are helping to

fund. To read the story behind some of the names and to see photos of the loved ones, the RNLI has set up a special dedication page at rnli.org/launchamemory

There are plans for a third 'Launch-a-Memory' lifeboat with the station to receive it not yet confirmed. This could be anywhere across the RNLI's all-weather lifeboat fleet in Ireland and the UK. To everyone who has donated to have a name on the lifeboat, 'thank you so much.'

Clifden RNLI Involved in Search Operation After EPIRB is Accidentally Activated Off the Connemara Coast

Clifden RNLI launched both its Shannon

class all-weather and Atlantic 85 inshore lifeboats on the morning of Friday 26th February after an EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) was accidentally activated, giving a position west of Turbot Island. The volunteer crews were requested to launch their lifeboats at 9.28am and they immediately made their way to the scene. An Irish Coast Guard helicopter was also tasked. Weather conditions at the time were good with a south westerly Force 4 wind, good visibility, and a moderate ground swell.

The lifeboat crews conducted a thorough search for approximately two and a half hours, but nothing was found. During the search, information was relayed to the crews that the EPIRB may have been accidentally activated at a property on a nearby empty island. The crew conducted a shoreline search on the island. The search was subsequently called off and the lifeboats were stood down at 12.19pm.

Speaking following the call out, John Brittain, Clifden RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager said: 'While we were quite concerned when the pagers went off this morning, we are glad that all is well and that no one was in danger. This was a false alarm in the sense that an EPIRB was accidentally activated, but we would always much rather launch and search to ensure everything is ok, than not launch at all. I would like to commend our volunteers and our colleagues in the Irish Coast Guard for their team work in today's search. We would encourage anyone who gets into difficulty or sees someone else in trouble, to dial 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard.'

Open-Water Swimming

Open-water swimming continues to see an increase in popularity.

Recently, the RNLI have been working with 'Swim Ireland' on an incredibly successful series of online seminars running from January to early March which have looked at 'Weather & Waves' and Tides & Currents' and have brought in guest speakers. The spotlight on this activity has been very welcome as stations are called out to help swimmers who get into difficulty.

Galway RNLI rescued a swimmer who got into difficulty off Blackrock beach in Salthill on a Saturday afternoon. The alarm was raised by a member of the public who saw the woman struggling in the water between Blackrock and Ladies Beach. The lifeboat crew were directed to the woman who was a couple of hundred metres from the shore opposite the Galway Bay Hotel. They took her on board the lifeboat and brought her back to the station where an ambulance was waiting. Thankfully she recovered.

A couple of days later Tramore RNLI launched to a swimmer in difficulty near the Guillamene Cove. The swimmer was brought onto the lifeboat and to safety. With restrictions still in place for a while longer, a lot of us are looking to exercise and get outdoors. Please seek advice before undertaking a new activity and bring a swim 'buddy' with you if you are out, they don't have to be in the water with you.

'Buddy' Valkenburg and Ballyglass

Sadly, we recently said goodbye to a great RNLI volunteer. I had the pleasure of knowing him in the years before he retired, and it was with great fortune that we kept in touch as Buddy's good opinion was much sought after and when granted you did not squander it. Buddy was not his given name but it's the one everyone knew him by, and everyone knew 'Buddy Valkenburg.' The below is from Ballyglass RNLI's social media page as they are the people who knew Buddy best.

"In the early 1960's Buddy set about forming Belmullet Sea Angling Club which has gained recognition the world over. From Valkenburg's shop in Belmullet, Buddy wrote to invite anglers to Erris from around the country. Then branching out to the UK and further afield. Knowing the dangers of the sea around Erris and the popularity of angling growing steadily. Buddy began in the early 1970's to correspond with the RNLI, with a view to having a station in Erris. Buddy and the late Paddy Leech among others, never gave up on the idea, which many called a dream.

On the 26th of August 1989, the "City of Bradford V" steamed into Broadhaven Bay under escort from the Irish Navy and a flotilla of local boats. The dream was a reality. Buddy went on to hold every role in Ballyglass RNLI and his dedication to the service of the RNLI was rewarded in 2014 when Buddy was made an Honorary Life Governor of the RNLI, the highest honour the organisation can bestow on anybody. No one deserved it more than Buddy."

As I write this I can almost hear Buddy giving out that I should even think of mentioning his passing here, that surely there must be other more important RNLI business to discuss here. That was the beginning of every chat with Buddy, an admonishment that you should even be wasting a minute of time talking with him when there were others you should be with but once it was done you could get on with the conversation. He was a dear, kind man and great fun.

His passion for the RNLI and his regard for the men and women who saved lives on the water was so strong. I had the pleasure of being present when the RNLI presented him with an Honorary Life Governorship in 2014 and true to form he wanted to sit quietly down the back of the room, out of sight of everyone, even though the front rows were reserved for awardees. He only moved when I told him that in walking all the way from the back of the hall that he would draw even more attention to himself whereas from the front row he could scoot up and down in a jiffy and not be noticed. However, he was indeed noticed, and he got the applause and cheering he deserved, much to his embarrassment. He will be greatly missed, and the RNLI is at a loss of his service and wise counsel. Rest in peace dear Buddy.



Buddy Valkenburg, Ballyglass Station Branch who was presented with an Honorary Life Governor award by the then RNLI Chairman Mr. Charles Hunter-Pease.

news from the North West

editor@marinetimes.ie

Recognition of IIMRO as a Seafood Producer Organisation Welcomed

Sinn Féin spokesperson on Fisheries and the Marine Pádraig Mac Lochlainn TD has welcomed the announcement by the government that they will now recognise the Irish Islands Marine Research Organisation as an EU fish producers organisation.

Teachta Mac Lochlainn said; "This is a good day for the small island based fishing fleet in Ireland to achieve this significant fish producers recognition.

"I applaud the efforts of Seamus Bonner and all in the IIMRO for their long number of years campaigning and persuading to achieve this status.

"This recognition - the first in Ireland for a small scale and inshore representative fishing body - will allow IIMRO to properly negotiate for fair and equitable access to quotas, properly resourced marketing of their product, a rightful place during negotiations and be a stronger representative body for their members.

"I hope that there will be further announcements soon of other smaller scale and inshore representative bodies being afforded producer organisation status so that they can play their full part in a prosperous and sustainable future for all involved in the Irish fishing industry."

Announcing the recognition of the IIMRO as a Producer Organisation, Minister McConalogue said, "In our Programme for Government, we committed to supporting the inshore fishing fleet in generating greater marketing and promotional capacity by facilitating the establishment of a Producer Organisation for these smaller fishing vessels, thereby providing additional opportunity for the island and coastal communities involved in the inshore sector. In 2020, my Department put in place new Recognition Criteria to be satisfied by producer groups seeking recognition as an EU Producer Organisation and these were designed in particular to make it easier for inshore fishermen to achieve recognition. I am very pleased to now approve the first inshore fisheries Producer Organisation, which focuses on our offshore islands, and I anticipate that further inshore Producer Organisations may soon follow."

The IMMRO is based in Árainn Mhór

Island, County Donegal and represents the interests of island fishers throughout the islands of Ireland. The Minister noted, "PO status for the IIMRO is a result of the hard work carried out by island fishers and their contribution to local economies. Fishing is the backbone of island life in Ireland and important for the cultural and economic wellbeing of the islands."

No Electric Engines for Fishing Boats!

Writing in the Newsletter of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, Chief Executive Sean O'Donoghue refers to climate change and "mitigation measures."

"If Brexit were not the main issue for the Irish fishing industry, there is no doubt that climate change and the mitigation measures it has generated would be a major item to consider.

"This is a double-edged sword as it will have consequences for the fishing industry, as yet unknown, regarding the damage warming seas will have on our traditional fisheries and at the same time fishing will be facing enormous challenges regarding reducing greenhouse gases.

"The general public will happily change to electric cars, but this is not an option for a fishing boat.

"The technology to provide "clean" engines for large fishing vessels has quite a distance to go before there is an economic alternative to current engines.

"However, the fishing industry is nothing if not resilient and inventive and will continue to find ways to make the most of what happens."

Task Force Highlights Governments Total Failure to Fishing Industry

Following the announcement by Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., of the establishment of a Seafood Sector Taskforce, reactions have been very strong and no more so than from Fr John Joe Duffy who hails from a fishing family and a tradition that has seen its fair share of ethnic cleansing over the decades.

In a statement to the Marine Times, Fr Duffy says that the; "Irish Government's inept Response to their shameful, disastrous discarding of Irish Fishing is to scuttle a



Winter trawling on Lough Foyle off Greencastle - Photo courtesy Enda Craig

large % of our fleet and make us a 2nd Scapa Flow.

"The establishment of the Task Force into Fisheries post Brexit deal confirms the Government's complete and total failure to deliver for the Irish Fisheries Sector either during the Brexit Talks or subsequently when commitments were given that burden sharing was going to be pursued at European level. The political charade of the past two months finally ends with a task force being established with a two item agenda, notably to look into the setting up of a tie up scheme in the next two months post April 2021, followed by a decommissioning scheme to be established over the next four months.

"It is bizarre and sad to witness a tie up and decommissioning task force being established at a time when our Fisheries sector has sustained the greatest hit, the most savage cuts in the history of our state, and the entire agenda of that task force is not to revive the sector, or sustain it but to curtail and reduce its capacity. The remit of the Task Force is firstly, to immediately tie up our fleet from as early as late April 2021, and secondly to decommission the pelagic and prawn fleet from mid 2021 onwards. Our Government has surrendered without any fight to the EU for the second time in two months, as a nation we are now to decommission the most modern fleet in Western Europe, a fleet that took years to build up through hard work and dedication, what other nation would even consider such a capitulation in order to appease our European partners.

"Despite the rhetoric of our Government supposedly fighting for the Marine sector, and getting the EU to burden share it is now clear that we are on our own and the price we are paying is the highest of any European State. The reality is, as I stated before we failed to protect Irish Fishing interests in the run up to the agreement being made on December 24th, and in accepting that agreement, at a time when French, Spanish, Danish, German and Dutch fishing interests were clearly protected especially in Herring and Mackerel Fisheries and the North Sea Stocks. We as an island state and the state with the largest maritime sea area of the EU were thrown overboard, discarded because our political leaders were asleep and in the wheelchair and at sea when it came to negotiating.

"The imminent future of the Irish pelagic and prawn fleet is "the ship breaking yards of Turkey and China", that is not my considered opinion, that is the policy of our Government as recommended by the Taskforce guidelines, what a disaster for any national Government. The Government have lead us onto the rocks of destruction and failure, straight to a modern day Scapa Flow scenario, decommissioning of a modern fleet is the final very sad and heart breaking chapter in the 50 years of lost opportunities since our membership of the EEC/EU, a history that will save it's harshest criticism for those that were on this Brexit Talks watch, for they have exercised the most destructive influence on the entire sector ever since our European journey commenced in 1973."

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Piebald Leucistic Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata* L.) from the Irish Sea off Howth

Declan Quigley Reports

During late November 2020, the MFV 'Bonne Chance' (S434) [Skipper: Stephen Attley] captured a mature male piebald leucistic Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata* L.) measuring 72.0 cm TL, 45.5 cm DW, and weighing 2.22 kg (whole), while demersal trawling in the Irish Sea off Howth, Co Dublin (Figure 1). The unusually coloured specimen was kindly donated by Sean Doran (*Doran's on the Pier, Howth*) to the Natural History Museum in Dublin.



Figure 1. Piebald leucistic Thornback Ray captured by the MFV Bonne Chance in the Irish Sea off Howth, Co Dublin

Apart from a few scattered dark patches on the dorsal surface and along the tail, this piebald leucistic ray was almost completely white, but the eye colour was normal (Figure 2), distinguishing it from true albinos which lack normal dark retinal pigmentation and have abnormally coloured red or yellow eyes. Despite its aberrant colouration, the ray was in relatively good condition, and had survived to reach sexual

maturity amongst its normally coloured conspecifics.

Thornback Rays exhibit a wide range of dorsal surface colour patterns which may represent adaptation to local environments. Indeed up to seven different polychromatic types have been described. Leucism is a genetically inherited disorder controlled by a single recessive allele which generally

results in either complete or partial lack of pigmentation of the skin, but normal pigmentation of the iris (eye). Albinism is also a genetically inherited disorder controlled by several different genes in which the pigment melanin is either absent or non-functional, resulting in a lack of normal pigmentation in both the skin and iris.

Leucism, and more rarely albinism, has only been reported in about 4% (23) of the 633 species of Batoidea (skates and rays) currently recognised world-wide, including four species from Irish waters: Blonde Ray (*Raja brachyuran*), Thornback Ray (*R. clavata*), Homelyn Ray (*R. montagui*), and Cuckoo Ray (*Leucoraja naevus*).

There are only three previous records of leucism in *R. clavata*. During 1893, a female specimen measuring 82.8 cm TL was captured off the Isle of May, Firth of Forth (NE Scotland). On 13th September 1929, another female spec-

imen measuring 77.5 cm TL was captured in the North Sea, 12.8 km off Scarborough (Yorkshire, UK). On 22nd March 1989, the MFV 'Roving Swan' (Skipper: Mr Patrick Sheehy, Dingle) captured a leucistic specimen measuring 58.0 cm TL and weighing 1.415 kg, while trawling in Dingle Bay, Co Kerry (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Normal dark eye colouration of the piebald leucistic Thornback Ray
Figure 3. Leucistic Thornback Ray captured by the MFV Roving Swan in Dingle Bay during 1989



There is only two confirmed cases of true albinism in *R. clavata*. On 11th August 2011, a mature albino male measuring 83.0 cm TL, was caught by rod and line on the SW coast of Norway (North Sea). On 16th December 2019, a mature albino female Thornback Ray weighing 4.427 kg, was captured on rod and line by Arran Anning on the Watchet Reef (Somerset, UK) in the Bristol Channel (Figure 4).

Declan is always interested in receiving reports about unusual specimens captured by fishers (087-6458485; Email: declanquigley@eircom.net)



Figure 4. Normally coloured and albino Thornback Rays (Bristol Channel)

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Westbound loaded with herring heading into Killybegs - Photo courtesy John Cunningham

Disappointing Marine Fund Excludes Irish Islands

Green Party MEP and Spokesperson for the Marine Grace O’Sullivan, has expressed disappointment at a number of ‘shortcomings’ in the €6bn EU fisheries fund announced recently. Speaking after a PECH (fisheries) Committee overwhelmingly voted in favour of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), Deputy O’Sullivan said it’s bad news for small-scale Irish fishers.

“The EMFAF is deeply flawed. I voted against it and was vocal in my opposition along with my colleagues in the Greens/EFA group. I’m despondent that my fellow-MEPs chose to support this inequitable funding.

“Island and coastal-populations are dependent on small-scale fishing, and I’m sad to say this agreement will see more subsidies given to the intensive fishing industry instead.

“Myself and my Greens/EFA colleagues were a strong voice in negotiations calling for equity and fairness in the distribution of fisheries funding. Sadly, voices representing big industry won out.

“We also fought for the interests of remote Irish islands, where fishing is a vital part of the economic sustainability of communities. We called for their inclusion in the provisional agreement, but again, economic interests took precedence over

communities and sustainability and the provision was removed.”

MEP O’Sullivan noted that the agreement is counter-productive to the fight against overfishing, just months after the EU missed its legal commitment to end overfishing in its waters.

“At a time when strong action is needed against harmful subsidies that encourage overfishing, this agreement goes in the opposite direction. This will weaken the hand of the EU in ongoing international negotiations to end harmful subsidies worldwide.

“The EMFAF agreement also does not achieve the Parliament’s demands for the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity.

“The EMFAF should have been rejected. It will create further uncertainty in an already-struggling sector. It’s a sad day for sustainable Irish fishing.”

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