

IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER

MARINE TIMES

SEPTEMBER 2021 - PRICE €3



Chloe Connor off Skerries - Photo: Richard Guildea



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The SFPA and The Fishing Industry Is it an “out-of-control State body” or an efficient regulator of a difficult industry?

What is preventing improvement in the toxic situation which now exists?

“Hopefully an amicable solution to this can be found and that we will not have to revisit the issue,” said the Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

“He won’t have much hope of that,” commented a disgruntled fishing industry representative.

See inside for the report by Tom MacSweeney

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Menhaden towing for Tuna in the Bay of Biscay.
Photo taken on the Sea Spray by crew member Donal Hurley.



the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

Do We Live in a Democracy at All?

I thought that the article by Brendan Byrne in last month's edition was stunningly accurate in its description of the status of our Minister lads and describing him as a "Prisoner" within his own Department.

He is not the First Minister for Marine to suffer that suggestion but I believe that he may have the dubious distinction of having a report of a meeting published on Social Media 24 hours BEFORE it actually happened.

What a farce lads - leaving aside the problems which our Industry certainly has - would it not be nice to know that it was in the hands of someone with the power to make some decisions.

He is not the First Minister to be "toothless" in that Department - or indeed in many of the Departments of our Government.

We must question if we in fact live in a Democracy at all ????

The word **DEMOCRACY** comes from the Greek words "DEMOS" meaning People and "KRATOS" meaning Power - so Democracy can be thought of as "**POWER of THE PEOPLE**" - a way of governing which depends on the will of the people.

A Democracy at least **IN THEORY** is government on Behalf of the People according to their will.

Obviously, the people en masse cannot be ruling the country, so we elect representatives.

The representatives cannot do it - So, many years ago the elected representatives appointed people to help them carry out what appeared to be the will of the People.

Thus emerged what we call the Civil Service.

Can we or they - the Civil Service hierarchy in Ireland - honestly say that the will of the people is being served?

As we watch the various Ministers gamely trying to justify lack of action within their own Departments to the media can we feel anything but sympathy for them. It appears that No Minister is allowed to engage without the ever presence of his Senior Civil Servants????

Why is that?

Do the Civil Servants not trust their Minister?

Again we must come back to the question of "Who is actually in Charge?"

It is fairly obvious who isn't!!!!

In commercial life one of the things that keeps us focused is **ACCOUNTABILITY**. If there is a "Cock Up" Ministers will be called on to resign despite the fact that they frequently will be innocent of the error.

We recall the famous **Electronic Voting Machines**; The purchase of the big **Printer / Photocopier** which did not fit in the office for which it was purchased; The Debacle which is the **New Children's Hospital**.

I wonder if those responsible for these errors suffered any punishment?

Just wonderin'

-0-

The clouds are gathering for a rough end to 2021 - As we enter the autumn and winter months one gets the impression that nothing has really changed despite all the meetings, all the supposed listening and the multitude of virtual townhall meetings, the two protests one in Cork the other in Dublin and the ongoing work of the Seafood Taskforce - massive effort but zero return. - Brendan Byrne CEO IFPEA. (Read more on page 13)

BIM New Fishermen Scheme
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Jerdemar, Skellig tour boat out of Portmagee - Photo: James Grandfield

Government Must Compensate Gaffney Family from EU Fund

Fine Gael MEP, Sean Kelly has called on the Irish Government and its Department of the Marine to do right by the Gaffney family in Arklow and compensate the former fishing vessel owner CJ Gaffney.

CJ Gaffney Ltd purchased the Mary Kate trawler in 2007 which was deemed fit for purpose by several surveys and passed as seaworthy by the Marine Survey Office. Following the purchase of the beamer Mary Kate in the Netherlands in 2007, Mr Gaffney began fishing the vessel in January 2008, he noticed that it was significantly more unstable than his previous older boat. Tests showed 20 tonnes of unaccounted steel were in the vessel!

Mr Gaffney says he has been locked in a battle for justice and compensation for well over a decade, but with no success.

Speaking on East Coast FM, Mr. Kelly said, "Different Ministers have dealt with this. I was in touch with the European Commission they are very sympathetic. It needs to be resolved. I think for Ireland where it is concerned, this is just the one-off case. So, there's no question of opening the floodgates and also it can be used as a template to ensure that we tighten the regulations so that the German authorities and others won't make the same mistake in the future.

"We need to deal with this quickly and I would hope that the Irish Government, notwithstanding the reply he got from the Department of the Marine, will rethink

their approach because the European Commission has made it very clear that they would like to see CJ being compensated under the Marine and Fisheries Fund and the Irish authorities have been given to go ahead to do that, but they are saying they can't do it because the legislation doesn't allow it. That's that makes no sense to me."

Mr Gaffney has now written to the German government seeking an explanation as to how they had continuously issued safety certs for a fishing vessel that should have never passed any safety criteria.

Seán Kelly MEP has confirmed that he has received written confirmation from the EU Commission, laid out in explicit terms that the EU advised the Irish government that compensation for CJ Gaffney could be drawn down under the European Fund for Maritime and Fisheries.

The Irish government must do this themselves as the EU had no authority to put forward the request themselves, but if the Irish government did so, the funds would be granted. But as is evident over the past number of years and indeed different Ministers there doesn't seem to be an appetite to help the Gaffney family. Why?

Get Ready for October 1st Brexit changes.

The sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for trade between Ireland and Great Britain are changing. **This will impact you if your seafood is traded with or through Great Britain.**

➔ Find out more information on what is required by visiting BIM's Brexit Hub www.bim.ie/brexit-hub



Achill Island RNLI's Tony McNamara, Retires as Lifeboat Operations Manager After 32 Years Service

Achill Island RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager, Tony McNamara has retired after three decades of volunteering for the charity in an operational role. Tony will however, continue to volunteer with the Achill Island RNLI Fundraising Branch.



Tony has been involved with the RNLI in Mayo since 1989 when a new lifeboat station opened at Ballyglass, the first all-weather lifeboat station to be opened in Ireland since 1929. Tony was stationed in Belmullet Garda Station where he worked as a Garda Sergeant at the time and where he was later promoted to the role of Garda Superintendent. He was further promoted to Chief Superintendent in 2005 before retiring from that role in Castlebar in 2009.

Tony was involved with Achill Island RNLI from its outset in 1994 when the Achill Lifeboat Committee was set up to work towards the establishment of a permanent lifeboat station on Achill Island in 1997. Tony was the Second Coxswain at Ballyglass RNLI until 2002 when he was appointed Honorary Secretary on the retirement of the late Paddy Leech, a role he held until 2005. Tony had at the same time been a committee member at the Achill Island Lifeboat Station since its inception in 1997.

Having moved back to Achill, Tony was appointed Deputy Launching Authority for the station before taking up the role of Lifeboat Operations Manager in 2017 on the retirement of Tom Honeyman. This role saw him managing all operational activities at the lifeboat station, authorising the launch of the lifeboat and the day-to-day management of the station.

As Lifeboat Operations Manager, Tony was also a key link to the fundraising branch where he now continues to volunteer his time to raise the essential funds needed to help save lives at sea. Like all lifeboat stations, Achill Island RNLI relies on donations from the public to operate and Tony very much enjoys the camaraderie and social aspect that comes with being a member of the branch.

Reflecting on the last three decades, Tony who is also a keen angler and a former scuba diver said: 'The story of the RNLI encompasses the spirit of the volunteer - the

crew, the fundraisers and the public who value that commitment and support it so generously.'

While many of Achill Island RNLI's call outs are to medical evacuations from Mayo's inhabited islands, Tony, as Lifeboat Operations Manager, has over the years set off his crew's pagers for a range of other incidents too including to swimmers, surfers and boat users who found themselves in difficulty.

Some call outs are etched in Tony's memory. These include the tragic Rescue 116 accident in March 2017 off Blackrock Island which claimed the lives of all four crew members onboard. Tony was the first point of contact at Achill Island RNLI by the Irish Coast Guard and this request was one which would see the all-weather lifeboat, *Sam and Ada Moody*, and her volunteer crew search for 28 consecutive days. Tony also sadly recalls the tragic drowning of two young siblings, also his neighbours, in Blacksod Bay in July 2001 when he responded with the Ballyglass RNLI crew.

There are better memories too including back in December 1993 when four surfers were miraculously rescued over two miles off Easkey having spent several hours in the freezing, dark sea. Tony was the Ballyglass RNLI Coxswain that night and he remembers the euphoria onboard the lifeboat when all four were found alive.

Following Tony's retirement, Ciaran Needham has taken up the helm as the new Lifeboat Operations Manager at Achill Island RNLI: 'I am delighted to be handling the baton to Ciaran and I wish him well in

that role' Tony added. 'I have no doubt that Ciaran will be very successful in leading the station into the future as we approach the 200th anniversary of the founding of the RNLI in 2024.'

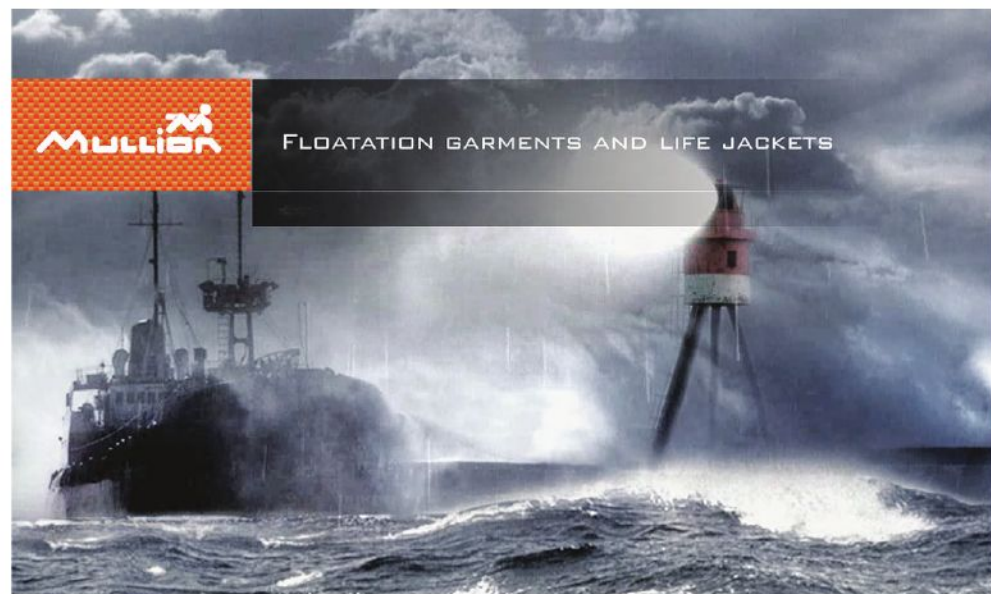
Married to Anastasia for 48 years with three daughters, Ruth, Claire and Lucy, and six grandchildren, Tony said he is looking forward to retirement: 'I look forward to the freedom from the pager and mobile phones which have been a constant in my life since I joined the Ballyglass crew in 1989 but I will miss the RNLI family and the contact I had with our friends in Malin Head Coast Guard Radio Station who monitor the emergency radio channels day and night.'

When speaking about his lifeboat family, Tony said: 'I would like to thank my Deputy Launching Authority, Marie Kilbane, herself a former crew member, who covered for me in my absence. Likewise, our Honorary Medical Advisor, Doctor Noreen Lineen Curtis who has always been there for us and was always ready to go to sea when needed. I want to thank all the team at the coalface - our crew who never seek the limelight but who carry a pager day and night to answer the call, I will miss the regular contact with them.'

Rob King, RNLI Area Lifesaving Manager, paid tribute to Tony: 'I would like to thank Tony for his years of operational service with Ballyglass and Achill Island RNLI stations and for his guidance and leadership during his tenure as Lifeboat Operations Manager. I am delighted that he will remain involved with our fundraising team, and I wish him well.'



Relaunch of National Marine Memorial: Terry Byrne, Aviva (Board of Management), Lord Mayor of Ringsend Derek Buckley, Edel Currie, Dublin Port Community Engagement Manager, Margaret Dunne, Chairperson of the Ringsend and Irishtown Tidy Towns & Environmental Group (RITE) with RITE Committee members and local residents at the relaunch of the Irish Mercantile Marine Memorial on Sean Moore Road, Ringsend, Dublin, supported by Dublin Port Company and Aviva. Photograph: Paul Sherwood, Coalesce.



Designed for and by fishermen

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(Above): Kay Paula out of Youghal - Photo courtesy Finbarr Clohessy
(Below): Tonnta out of Union Hall - Photo courtesy Niamh Collins

(If you have a photo that you would like to see in the Marine Times please do email us at editor@marinetimes.ie or WhatsApp us at 087-7989582)



Industry Slams SFPA Operational 'Fees'

IFPEA and IFSA have issued a joint statement on the announcement that the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) will, from October 1st, impose a landing fee of one euro per tonne for the first 50 tonnes and fifty cents for each tonne thereafter.

In a letter of intent sent out to the industry (August 5th) the SFPA state that they will "be charging fees in respect of food safety official controls carried out at approved establishments and approved vessels, as required by the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 which came into force on 1/1/2019. This EU regulation introduced a suite of charges for food safety official controls at approved establishment and vessels. Article 20 of SI No 22 of 2020 gives legal effect to this Regulation".

The letter goes on to say that "all approved establishments and vessels are required to complete and submit to the SFPA for the purpose of issuing invoices and a template of the self-declaration form, all approved establishments and vessels are required to complete and submit to the SFPA for the purpose of charging fees. The self declaration form must be submitted the SFPA within a week of quarter end. The SFPA will issue the invoice for fees to the operator by the end of the same month.

Chairman of the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance (IFSA), Cormac Burke, says that the imposition of these new fees would be laughable if the situation wasn't so serious.

"Here we have an organisation that has been officially declared as incompetent in three separate Irish Government reports as well as an independent EU report - an organisation that receives in excess of 25 million euros of Irish taxpayers' 'operational' money every year and now they intend to charge fishermen and processors for the pleasure of the SFPA's infamous mismanagement and harassment of this industry," he said.

"It's also no secret that this organisation has, and continues to have, internal problems - all of which have given the SFPA the tag of 'dysfunctional' for so many years," Cormac said, adding that while such a fee may sound minor, it in fact mounts up to annually 200 euros for inshore vessels, 500 euros for demersal vessels and, for the pe-

logic processing facilities, a possible 27,000 euros per year for EACH factory.

"With the SFPA presumably financially comfortable with the millions of euros of State aid it receives, one can only believe that this is not a money-making exercise by the SFPA but is solely intended as yet another form of burden on an already under-pressure industry.

"I can't help feeling that Ireland's fishing industry - from the inshore men all the way to the large pelagic processors - are being pushed just to see when will the breaking point come. Well this might just be the straw the breaks the camel's back as it is an unfair penalty that will effect ALL fishing vessels and fish factories!" Cormac concluded.

CEO of the Irish Fish Processors & Exporters' Association (IFPEA), Brendan Byrne, says that he will be seeking clarification on these intended imposition of fees by the SFPA.

"We are shocked at the casual approach adopted by the SFPA in imposing these fees on the fishing industry.

"We as a representative body will be requiring a discussion on this matter before any fees are to be levied on the sector and we feel that the Minister and Government needs to commit to a real and meaningful reform of the SFPA, as opposed to the current farce of reforming a dysfunctional organisation from the inside or from within their existing structures," he said.

"Successive reports have found and concluded the SFPA to be 'not fit for purpose',

to be lacking in management and internal organisational ability - in fact not one single report or study has found them to be fit for purpose. I refer directly to the Wolf Report in 2011, Moran study and the PWC report in 2020 - all providing shocking assessments of the SFPA.

"In light of these circumstances how could the fishing sector be expected to pay thousands of euros to such an organisation?" Brendan said, adding that the IFPEA and the IFSA will be requesting the Minister to reform the 2006 Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, in order to provide proper oversight of the SFPA.

"We will be further requesting that the SFPA implement an agreed protocols of engagement with the fishing industry - they are currently working on such a document for the past SEVEN years but yet it remains unfinished.

"The SFPA requires an immediate independent board to oversee the daily functioning and nothing less than that will be accepted.

"There is no circumstances whereby the industry can agree to payments to an organisation which at present is struggling to be managed internally or function within the role expected of them effectively - meantime the Government stands idly by without taking any action.

"Today's circulation only adds to the farcical nature in which fisheries and marine are operating at present - it's beyond a joke to be honest," Mr Byrne concluded.



(Above): Supreme II landing their catch at Clogherhead. Photo by Richard Guildea.
(Below): Liam Flannery of the Megan Sofia with crewmen Paul and their 10th Northern Stone Crab from their pots west of the Blaskets. Photo courtesy Kevin Flannery.



YOUR INDUSTRY NEEDS YOU!

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

Established on February 12th this year as an independent nationwide voice for the fishing and seafood sectors in a bid to highlight this Government's disgraceful neglect of Ireland's marine resources and of the heritage and traditional rights of coastal regions, the IFSA has gained huge support already and has a strong social media following on the IFSA facebook group and the www.irishfishingseafoodalliance.org website.

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

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

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

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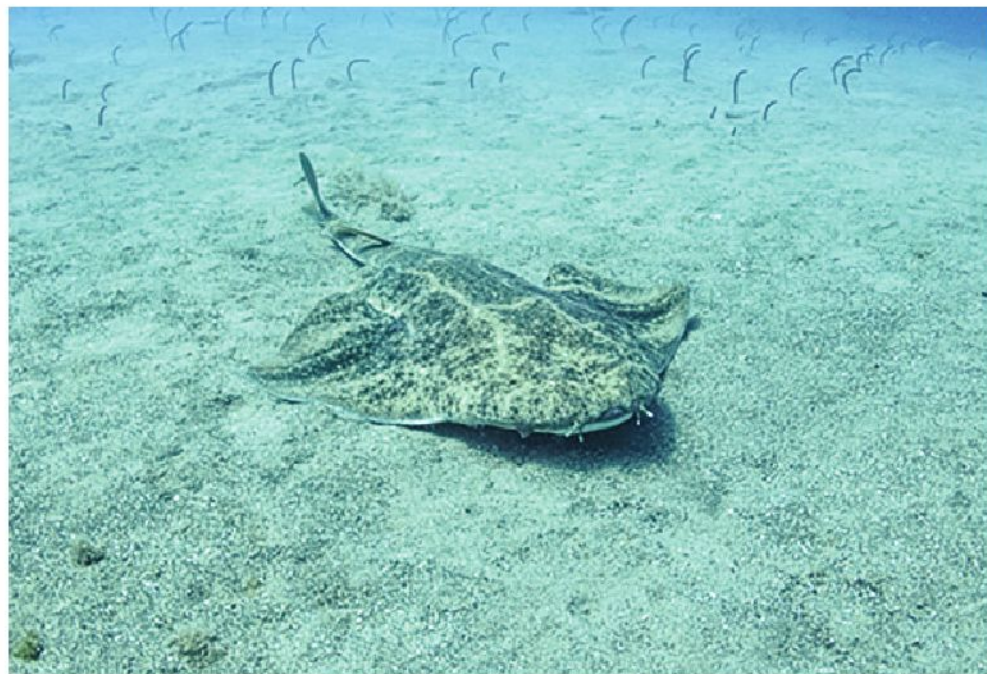
Thank you for your support and for becoming a part in this industry's rapidly growing fight for justice.



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The Angels of Ireland Need Your Help!

The Angel Shark is a species by many names, Monkfish, Fiddle-fish, Devilfish, Banjofish, Iasc Brathair and even Bafoon! Our native Angel Shark (*Squatina squatina*) is a flattened ground dwelling shark that catches its prey of small fish and crab by burrowing in the sandy/muddy bottom and surprising them. Indeed, when viewed from above it is easy to see where this shark gets its many names!



Ireland once had good a population of Angel sharks and they could particularly be found in Tralee Bay, Clew Bay, around the Shannon estuary and at one stage maybe all around the coast.

However, today it is not a shark many will be lucky or privileged enough to ever see, as what once was a common species gliding across the seabed from the East Atlantic to the Mediterranean is now a critically endangered shark across its entire range and is now more endangered than the Giant Panda and is very much in need of our help.

Sharks and rays have a very slow reproductive cycle, meaning they take a long time before they become mature and often only producing very few young once mature. This means that their population numbers can, and have been, accidentally pushed to the edge of survival. This has unfortunately happened to this very distinctive looking shark, as well as some of its relatives such as the Flapper Skate and Undulate Ray.

So, we need your help! We would love to hear about any stories, records or memories where you have come across any Angel Sharks, Undulate Rays or White, Blue and Flapper skates or if you know anyone who might have please do get in contact with us at irishelasmobranchgroup@gmail.com.

All the records collected help us better understand the ecology and behaviour of these species around the Irish coast, both seasonally and over the years. If you would like to learn more about the Angel shark or some of the projects around the world that are working to save them then please do visit the angels sharkproject.com website.

Recently, in a very exciting turn the Welsh Angel Shark Project team have successfully managed to satellite tag an Angel shark! Please see the advice on the poster below of what to do if you encounter this tagged or indeed any Angel Shark! But do return them alive back to the sea, with or without a tag, photograph and let us know.

MARINE TIMES

NEWSPAPER FOR IRELAND'S FISHING, MARINE AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES



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THE SFPA AND THE FISHING INDUSTRY

This month we have a main report on the relationships between the fishing industry and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. (See pages 16 & 17)

The description most applied to those 'relationships' is 'toxic'. It came from several sources in the industry as we compiled the report.

The SFPA attitude is that it wants to build relationships and is open to discussions. It says - and it can be understood - that there will be difficulties between a regulatory authority and those it is required to monitor, control and, when necessary, penalise.

But we have also been told of meetings between industry representatives and the SFPA which appeared to have reached amicable agreements of some sort, but which were then changed or rejected when referred to the Authority's headquarters.

We have also heard from fishermen who are reluctant to be named when they voiced criticism of the SFPA, for fear of being targeted.

But there were some fishermen also who expressed the view that not all SFPA officials were anti-fishing.

However, the facts are that the SFPA has been described as "unfit for purpose" by representative organisations and in much stronger terms in places such as the Oireachtas Committee when it dealt with fisheries and had SFPA top officials before it, who heard very strong criticism of the Authority.

It is not good for an island nation that there should be such a poor - which is a moderate term used in the context of this issue - relationship between the SFPA and the industry.

What can be done about it, how can it be improved for the best interests of all involved?

Meeting, talking, discussion, are ways to agree, disagree, but work co-operatively in the best national interest.

At the Oireachtas Committee politicians of all political hues were critical of the current situation.

The overall aegis of the SFPA operation lies with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. However, according to the Department the Minister is excluded from any involvement in operational matters concerning the SFPA.



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR TAGGED ANGELSHARKS

We are excited to announce that the first Angelsharks have been tagged in Wales to study movement of this rare species. The tagging was designed to ensure minimal impact to the shark and completed by trained personnel under license*.

We need your help:

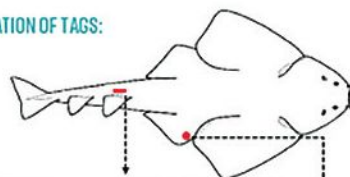
- If you accidentally encounter a tagged shark, we ask that you **do not remove the tags** and follow our best practice guide to safely release the shark.
- Please record the ID numbers on the two tags and report your encounter to www.angels sharkproject.com/map or angels sharks@zsl.org.
- The tag will release from the shark in 2022. If you find it on a beach, please collect it and email angels sharks@zsl.org.

Your continued support is very much appreciated.

Remember: Angelsharks are highly protected in Wales, UK & Europe and it is illegal to target this species.

* The tagging procedure was conducted under an Animals (Scientific Procedure) Act Project Licence, authorised by the Home Office, and a Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) license granted by Natural Resources Wales (no. 5089787/1).

LOCATION OF TAGS:



VISUAL ID TAG



MINIPAT SATELLITE TAG



BIM Young Chef Ambassadors Begin Their Own Taste The Atlantic Seafood Journey

Following the recent announcement of five young chefs being appointed to the Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) Taste the Atlantic ambassador programme, each of the chefs have now been paired with a knowledgeable seafood producer along the Taste the Atlantic trail. The producers have agreed to mentor their young chef and teach them everything they know about Ireland's quality seafood.



Kevin King, originally from Clifden, Co. Galway and now working as Senior Sous Chef at the Connemara Sands Beach Hotel and Spa in Ballyconneely has been paired with The Sligo Oyster Experience.

Andrew Zeppa is from Dublin and has been working at the Yacht Pub and Upper Deck Restaurant in Clontarf for several years. The Burren Smokehouse, world renowned for their amazing smoked seafood have agreed to be his mentor over the coming month. The Burren Smokehouse, also hosts a visitor attraction on the Taste the Atlantic route called the 'Irish Salmon Experience'.

Andrew's challenge now is to learn as much as he can about Ireland's premium seafood offering and create a range of dishes to showcase what he has discovered on his journey. Kevin and Andrew, along with the three other chefs (which we will feature in future issues of the Marine Times), will then present their menu ideas to a panel of seafood experts, including Michelin starred

Chef JP McMahon, for their feedback. The programme aims to promote the wealth of seafood available along the Wild Atlantic Way and inspire chefs to include more of it on their menus so that visitors can 'Taste the Atlantic' on their plate.

BIM's Taste the Atlantic Ambassador Programme is an exciting initiative created by Bord Iascaigh Mhara in partnership with Chef Network to drive awareness of the provenance of Irish seafood among young and aspiring chefs. All of the Ambassadors will receive one-to-one mentoring with one of Ireland's leading seafood producers along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Taste the Atlantic, A Seafood Journey! was developed by BIM in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and the trail, sweeping from Malin Head, Co. Donegal to Kinsale, Co. Cork, showcases the incredible range of seafood producers and visitor attractions along the Wild Atlantic Way to visitors. This initiative is supported by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

A New Online Course in Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture is Now Available

As Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) is a relatively new concept, a new online training course has been developed as part of the IMPAQT research project, which is co-ordinated by the Marine Institute. The free online course is available on the Open University's *OpenLearnCreate* platform.

IMTA involves farming multiple, complementary species from different levels of the food chain together for their mutual benefit. The new massive open online course (MOOC) aims to facilitate the effective transfer of knowledge on IMTA, precision aquaculture, and the results of the IMPAQT project to interested stakeholders, policy actors and the aquaculture industry.

The EU's Horizon 2020 IMPAQT project (Intelligent Management System for Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture) aims to promote aquaculture production based on the IMTA concept.

Coordinated by the Marine Institute, the IMPAQT research project has developed a computerised, artificially intelligent, management platform, which analyses the environment, fish behaviour, and data from satellites and images, as well as inputs from the farmer on site. This platform provides information on fish welfare and water quality, and real-time operational feedback and advice to the farmer on the management of their site. The IMPAQT system has been designed and tested at the Marine Institute's research site in Lehanagh Pool in Co Galway, the Keywater Fisheries IMTA site in Co Sligo, as well as four other aquaculture sites in Europe and China.

Frank Kane, Marine Institute and IMPAQT Coordinator said, "This new course presents the outputs and results from the IMPAQT project in an accessible, understandable and dynamic online format. The online training course will help to strengthen the research and innovative aquaculture landscape, by transferring the key aspects of IMTA to stakeholders, investors and enterprises interested in starting up or integrating an IMTA system."

The new online course, IMPAQT MOOC, will be of interest to those working in the aquaculture sector (fish farmers, farm

owners, regulators, policy makers), as well as those who support the sector (technology suppliers and developers, representative organisations, trainers and educators, regulators and policy makers), along with investors in the sector.

The IMPAQT MOOC can be completed in eight hours, and is divided into four modules which focus on the concept and practices of IMTA, the sustainability and socio-economic assessments of IMTA, and on sensors, monitoring and precision aquaculture in support of IMTA. It is possible to select individual elements from the course to complete. The course includes text and short videos presented by the IMPAQT project partners.

The course provides an introduction to aquaculture and the concept of IMTA, outlining the potential benefits and challenges. It details the IMTA experiences in the IMPAQT project and for extractive species such as seaweed, mussels, oysters, scallops and lobsters. IMTA in China and Turkey is also covered. The sustainability and circularity of IMTA are presented with reference to life cycle assessments, socio-economic analysis, ecosystem services and IMTA modelling. Aquaculture sensors and the technologies to facilitate monitoring and management, along with the intelligent management system developed are included in the Precision Aquaculture module, as are the analysis of fish quality and biofouling on sensors.

For more information, or to enrol in the new IMPAQT MOOC visit www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=7116

The IMPAQT project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 774109. For more information visit <https://impaqtproject.eu/>

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Maritime Ireland Radio Diary



What is it that motivates people to take on the task of restoring old boats?

It is a task that can be very challenging, very expensive and, sometimes, very discouraging.



O'Keefe family aboard Lady Min (Simon O'Keefe pictured below aboard the lady min) — Photos John Dolan

Along the way the great hopes of restoration can be defeated by problems which arise, so the dedication of those who set out to restore old boats and succeed in doing so is immense.

Two of them have made a big impres-

sion – the 96-year-old gleeiteog *Loveen* in Galway City and the 119-year-old *Lady Min* in West Cork.

They are impressive boats, the restoration of which helps perpetuate Ireland's maritime history. Reporting these projects

is a joy, hearing the stories of why such demanding tasks were undertaken and the pleasure and satisfaction amongst those who have led them when, once again, they result in returning to the water what would otherwise have disappeared from our marine heritage.

The Lady Min – A Family Tradition

The *Lady Min* was built in 1902, making her 119-years-old. She was originally launched in Schull and was re-launched there after a three-year restoration project returned her to the waters of West Cork. It was the culmination of a project in which a family honoured the man who had designed and had the boat originally built.

Simon O'Keefe first told me about his restoration plan for the boat when I met him at the Traditional Boats Gathering in Baltimore in 2018. "A very challenging job which I have self-imposed but am

determined to complete," he said. "If that is achieved it will make her the oldest Irish-designed and Irish-built sailing boat on the water. The *Lady Min* is a source of pride in our family. Restoration is an expensive process. She is old, but there is nothing wrong with her. I am determined to get her back to sailing condition and ability."

He put the restoration work into the hands of noted Ballydehob boat-builder, Tiernan Roe, not far away from where she was first launched.

When he started the project Simon had to decide whether to spend ages working out the total cost or "take the plunge". The O'Keefe family's commitment to the boat goes back to it being designed and built by shipwrights at Schull under the direction of Simon's great-grandfather, Maurice. When the 30-foot gaff cutter was originally launched she was something of a sensation with a hull which was described by traditionalists as having "undoubted speed." But some questioned whether "she would last very long." They



were wrong. Apparently, she was so fast in racing that she was regarded as a “thorn in the sides of the Cork racing fraternity.”

Although many of the, supposedly, more rugged boat types which were her contemporaries have long since disappeared, the *Lady Min* survives.

“And sails well,” Simon said. “She can go fast,”

Generations of the O’Keffee family were aboard in Schull for the re-launch. “It was an emotional and wonderful moment when we gathered aboard,” said Simon. “It is so great that everything has worked out as I had hoped. I’ve heard horror stories about restoration but that did not happen with the *Lady Min*.”

That she has been saved for future generations is the embodiment of the attraction of boats in the life of a family.

The Loveen - Galway Hooker People Are “Extraordinary Ordinary”

The restoration of Galway’s 96-year-old ‘Loveen’ has been going on since 2019, spearheaded by Galway Hooker Sailing Club.

The Hooker Club keeps the tradition of these great boats alive in the Claddagh. The *Loveen* will be returned to the waters of the Corrib this month.

Ciarán Oliver’s family history goes back over a hundred years to what was then known as the fishing village of the Claddagh in Galway. His great-great uncle, Máirtín, was the last ‘King of the Claddagh’.



The *Loveen* doesn’t go back quite that far, almost but not fully, just 96 years. It

is no surprise though that Ciarán is heavily involved in restoring this gleoiteog, the second last Claddagh hooker still in existence.

Ciaran is Commodore of the Galway Hooker Sailing Club which has led the two-year project to restore the *Loveen*. His family were founder members of the club, dedicated to continuing the tradition of Galway Hooker sailing and the culture around it on the Claddagh, in order to make sure the next generation know all about it.

The boat was bought by the late Nick Dolan, a local boatman and a close friend of the Oliver family, before he died in 2011. He was the fifth owner when he bought her the year before he died. The following year she was presented to the Galway Sea Scouts, who have enthusiastically supported the restoration. The Port of Galway has also been supportive.

“Our mission is to promote and facilitate the art of sailing and restoring Galway’s traditional boats in both our local Galway community and beyond,” says the Hooker Sailing Club. “We are an all-inclusive club with membership open to anyone who shares the same passion and drive as our club vision which is to keep this traditional type of sailing alive for future generations. The club brings to both a local and international audience, the art of traditional boat building and restoration.”

Big numbers of volunteers took part in the restoration as well as experts such as the well-known Cólín Hernon.

Based on the Claddagh Quay it has already restored the *Lovely Anne*, a 137 year-old workboat built between 1884-1885. After being part of Galway’s hooker fleet in the early 1900s she was sold over 46 years ago in Spiddal to Jim Parkinson, who used her as a fishing vessel for many years. Later, Jim relocated to Killybegs, Co. Donegal, with *Lovely Anne*, where she resided until the club gave her a new chapter of life.

The next restoration project is the *Lon Dubh*.

“Great people, extraordinary ordinary people,” says Ciaran Oliver of the members and supporters of the Galway Hooker Sailing Club.



Restoration of Galway’s 96-year-old ‘Loveen’ has been going on since 2019, spearheaded by Galway Hooker Sailing Club and exciting news on August 22nd as they took *Loveen* out of the workshop, stepped the mast, put in the bowsprit, gaff and boom and measured it up for sails. Another milestone reached in the restoration of *Loveen* - Photos Galway Hooker Sailing Club Facebook Page



Keep In Touch

Ireland’s connection with the sea is as old as time itself.... The sea around our coastline, our inland waters, our lakes and rivers are all part of Ireland’s maritime culture, history, tradition and development. Socially and economically they are vital to this island nation. The MARITIME IRELAND RADIO SHOW and PODCAST brings together Ireland’s maritime community’ Your views on maritime matters are always welcome. Email: maritimeirelandradioshow@gmail.com Suggestions for topics to include on the show are always welcome. Text: 0872 555197 Follow on Twitter: @TomMacSweeney

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- DUNDALK FM 97.7 FM
- ERRIS FM 90.8 FM
- KILKENNY CITY RADIO 88.7 FM
- RADIO CORCA BAISINN
- SOUTH WEST CLARE 92.5-94.8 FM
- UCC RADIO CORK 98.3 FM
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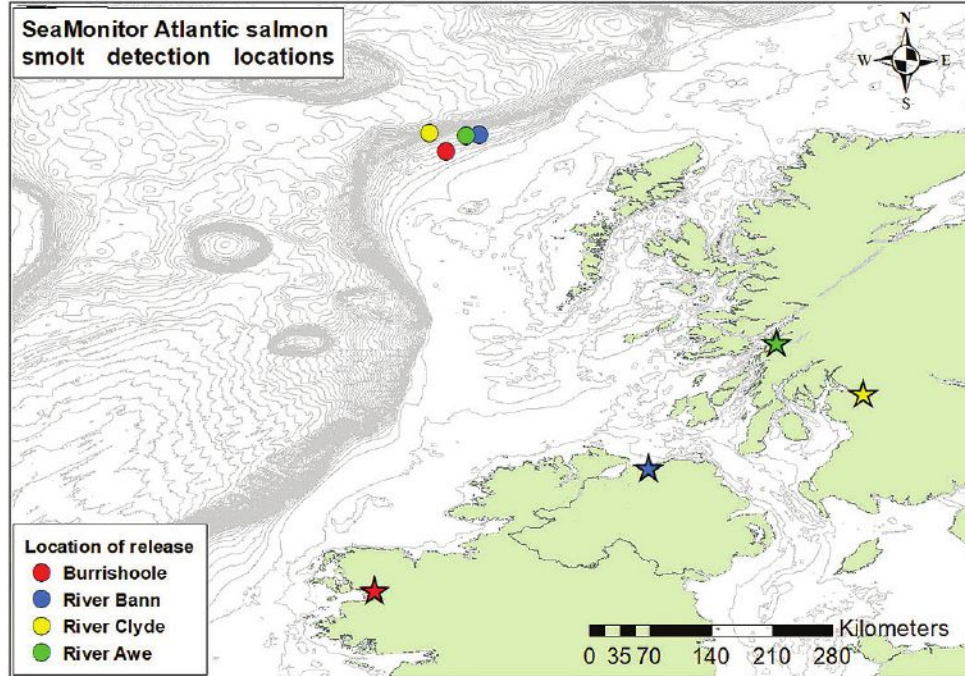
- WEDNESDAYS 6 p.m.
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- FRIDAYS 3 p.m.
- THURSDAYS 4.30 p.m.
- THURSDAYS 6 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 9 a.m. – SUNDAYS 5 p.m.
- FRIDAYS 4 p.m.
- MONDAYS 9.30 p.m.
- WEDNESDAYS 1.35 p.m. & 6.30 P.M.
- MONDAYS 5 p.m.
- FIRST FIRDAY OF EACH MONTH
- HOUR-LONG PROGRAMME AT 6 p.m.
- MONDAYS 5/6 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 9.30 p.m. SUNDAYS 5.30 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 9.30 p.m. SUNDAYS 5.30 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 1 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 1 p.m./WEDNESDAYS 10 p.m.
- SATURDAYS 2 p.m.
- TUESDAYS 6.30 p.m.

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Advanced Technology Delivers for the SeaMonitor Project

Ocean tracking of Atlantic salmon extends to 600km

The ability to track free swimming salmon juveniles has been extended hundreds of kilometres into the open ocean using advanced robotic technology. As part of the EU INTERREG VA-funded SeaMonitor project, Dr Ross O'Neill, Marine Institute and Kieran Adlum, P&O Maritime, tested a remotely operated "ocean glider", equipped with an acoustic tag detector along the steeply sloping area of the shelf edge approximately 130km north-west of the Scottish Hebrides.



The ocean glider was deployed from the RV Celtic Explorer on 16th April during the 2021 Irish Anglerfish and Megrin Survey. During its two-month mission, the glider successfully detected four individual juvenile salmon smolts measuring only 15 to 19cm, nearly 600 km from their home rivers in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

These fish had been tagged between four and six weeks previously with electronic acoustic transmitting tags along with hundreds of other juvenile salmon as part of the SeaMonitor project but also as part of the West Coast Tracking Project, a partnership between the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Fisheries Management Scotland and Marine Scotland, EU INTERREG VA-funded COMPASS project and Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI) research initiatives. One of the main aims of these projects is to investigate the persistent low marine survival of Atlantic salmon in the early stages of their oceanic migration to feeding grounds in the North Atlantic.

The four fish originated from the River Burrishoole in Co Mayo Ireland, the River Bann in Northern Ireland and the Rivers Clyde and Awe in Scotland.

Up to now, most tracking studies had been limited to estuarine or coastal areas due to technology limitations and the need for stationary receivers.

According to Dr Niall Ó Maoiléidigh of the Marine Institute and Principal Investigator for the SeaMonitor Project, "The detection of these fish confirms the importance of the shelf edge in this amazing journey, as the faster currents associated with the steep slopes most likely act as an aquatic transport system facilitating the northward migration of these tiny fish through a very harsh environment."



Prof Colin Adams University of Glasgow and Principal Investigator for the SeaMonitor Project said, "This study shows that tracking salmon

over considerable distances at sea can be achieved which is crucial for research into highly migratory marine species especially where mortality may be occurring far from the shore."

Dr Ciaran Kelly, Director of Fisheries Ecosystems and Advisory Services at the Marine Institute said, "The use of the glider to track the movements of even very small fish has been clearly demonstrated and this will encourage the use of autonomous underwater vehicles to improve information

on many marine species of animals which may be endangered or threatened without interfering with their natural migrations."

Sharon McMahon, Loughs Agency CEO said, "with funding from the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, the SeaMonitor project led by Loughs Agency, is breaking the boundaries of research into the marine migration journey of the iconic Atlantic Salmon. This innovative research will help to identify migratory routes and factors influencing salmon survival at sea, providing data to inform future research and decision making".

Underlining the importance of the project Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body said: "Our shared marine environment is under threat with many species, such as Atlantic Salmon being endangered. The research that is funded by the INTERREG VA Programme, is being undertaken by the SeaMonitor project, and will provide invaluable data that can be used to gain a better understanding of the migratory patterns of Atlantic Salmon and what is potentially disrupting them. This research will inform future environmental protection efforts, on both sides of the border, and is a testament to the partnership-based approach which underpins the INTERREG VA Programme."

This result represents a huge input by many participating institutions and organisations in organising and tagging salmon juveniles (smolts) as they leave

their natal rivers to migrate to oceanic feeding grounds to deployment and successful piloting of the ocean glider.

The active tracking technology allowing the detection of marine species is constantly evolving and while techniques have also been used in Canada and the USA, this is the first time it has been applied to Atlantic salmon in Europe. The glider is part of the SeaMonitor integrated cross-jurisdiction major network of acoustic receivers, robotic underwater vehicles, satellite tracking and passive acoustic receivers in European waters and its use will be extended to track cetaceans, basking shark and skates as well as to collect physical oceanographic data. When combined, the data will enable a holistic view of the regions mobile marine species and will prove invaluable to the regions managers, as well as establishing an integrated network of marine receivers for future applications and extended monitoring.

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Dept. of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Ireland.

For more information about the project visit: www.loughs-agency.org/seamonitor or follow the project on Twitter (@SeaMonitor1). SeaMonitor is a project supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

marine.ie

Our ocean is our greatest national resource

Ár n-aigéan an acmhainn náisiúnta is mó atá againn



The Clouds are Gathering for a Rough End to 2021



Brendan Byrne CEO of Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association (IFPEA)

As we enter the autumn and winter months one gets the impression that nothing has really changed despite all the meetings, all the supposed listening and the multitude of virtual townhall meetings, the two protests one in Cork the other in Dublin and the ongoing work of the Seafood Taskforce – massive effort but zero return.

Opportunities were a plenty to meet the fishing communities halfway, or to alter the course of the Government in terms of fishing policy (lack of any fishing policy I should say) but they chose not to... it was back to old ways for our political friends, the politicians would run down the clock and we in the fishing community would simply go away.

Not this time, if they calculated we were going to walk away from the commitments given by the industry at the recent protests then they are wrong, we are still here and we will continue on our work to restore fairness, equality and a level playing field for the Irish Fishing industry.

Don't press send Minister before you at least meet!

When the timing of a press release sums up the entire attitude of the Minister and his Department. I think we were all genuinely shocked at the conduct of the Ministers Office, when he visited the south recently. Not alone the releasing of a press statement for a meeting that at that point had not taken place but when we distil down through the debacle, we discover the true extent of what is wrong.

The very fact that all of us that planned or waited to attend these meetings in the various locations around the coast with the minister, we did so in good faith, hoping that what we had to say, would in some way impress upon the Minister a much-needed change of course in policy or direction of his department – that we would be listened to and heard. Not so then, the fact that the statement providing a summary of the meetings was written long before any words were spoken at any of these meetings – shows to us the true intent of these coastal meetings.

Obviously, it was agreed at political level that these statements be prepared in advance, not from the perspective of concern for the industry but from the viewpoint of political opportunism, spin over substance again the ruination of Irish Politics. Yes, regrettably it was only another box ticking exercise.

Unbelievable, after all that has happened in 2020/2021 that the political mandarins and our Minister still have not realised the penny has dropped, and it is a much different fishing sector they are now dealing with than was the case for the past 20 years.... this nonsense has to stop, the

Fishing Industry will not put up with this baloney anymore.

Real and meaningful engagement needs to be what it says on the tin – real and meaningful.

Will the Seafood Taskforce map the future – or will the silent drag bury it?

I was up to the last meeting of the Taskforce. Extremely praiseworthy of the process and endeavours of the group, but I detect a silent drag or incumbrance pulling us back, no not from the membership of the taskforce, they have the ambition and confidence that is equal to the fishing sectors they represent – this hindrance as I see it, is the silent hands that hold us back as a fishing sector for quite some time now.

The ordinary membership of the Taskforce work hard and always in good faith, they are committed to the goals of obtaining what is best for the Irish fishing industry, of dealing with the devastating consequences of Brexit/TCA and ultimately future proofing the industry for the next decade or more.

Therefore, what is the basis of my concerns? It appears to me that another sell out of ambition is about to occur in fishing! Another lost opportunity to add to the litany of lost opportunities in Irish Fishing.

The Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR Fund) should act as a stimulus fund for the entire Irish Fishing industry – right across the board from fish producers both small and large, to fish processors and exporters, to aquaculture and to all of our coastal communities.

Ideally, this is a no brainer, European Funds earmarked to assist those most directly impacted by Brexit and until recently everyone at political level was stating that fishing was the most impacted of all sectors – will that translate into an appropriate level of supports and a package that reflects those realities?

It could be that we are witnessing the early stages of another sell out of the fishing sector, not from the EU on this occasion but from our own national government and the silent players that operate against the fishing industry. Is it a case that fishing just does not have the influence with the permanent Government (Public Service) or at political level to guarantee a share of the BAR Fund that represents the massive hit the sector took in order to obtain an orderly

Brexit/TCA, my advice is watch this space between now and the end of September – I am getting very sceptical here. As Martin Luther King correctly stated albeit in a much different context “in the end, we remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Never were there truer words spoken, and I can easily identify that these words have relevance in terms of where we find ourselves at present in terms of the fishing industry – too many key players are too silent notwithstanding the length of time it is taking to reach conclusions or recommendations at Taskforce level.

Has Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) lost it way or was that just a blip ... or a wobble I witnessed.

Following on from my previous point, I am beginning to become extremely worried as to what are the exact functions of BIM in terms of the fish processing sector. While I would be the first to admit that the staff of BIM that interact on a routine basis with the industry are par excellent, helpful and always available and have the best intentions and ambitions for the fishing industry. I am not as certain that the same can be conclusively stated for the leadership of the organisation.

I have a growing concern regarding the overall direction and leadership of this organisation and I base this on real time experience. Needless to say, we all know that BIM is charged with “the developing the Irish Seafood industry under the Irish Sea Fisheries Act 1952” and I respect the fact, that at present the board is transitioning from one Chair to another Chairperson, but when a situation arises when the ambition of the processing sector fails to be recognised by the organisation charged with its development, then alarm bells should begin to ring out and corrective action needs to be taken immediately.

No doubt, I will have to revisit this in my later articles but as the old saying goes – things should never be left until it is too late to do anything about it. The reality is that BIM has a long successful and well-respected history of leading in the Irish Fishing industry, I would hate to see that disappear through a blip or wobble in leadership or direction at this critical juncture.

A welcome to the new man and a reality check for the autumn and winter fisheries.

The IFPEA wish to extend “An Irish Welcome – Cead Mile Fáilte” to Tim Donovan who joins the SFPA at Authority level, his arrival is at a critical time with the Control Plan still not approved at EU Commission level. We wish him well in his time ahead and we look forward to working closely with him.

As the Marine Times publishes its September edition, we still have no certainty in the fishing industry as to how we can land and weigh catch within our processing plants, this has been an unequalled disaster since the decision was handed down on 13th April 2021 by the EU Commission.

In the 140 plus days since then, without rehashing it all, but it must be stated we had a Department and a Minister that have taken a sabbatical from their responsibilities. Only in Ireland would you get a Government that would leave the field of play when the entire fishing industry is in jeopardy or in serious trouble – I still can neither fathom or comprehend what I have witnessed since April, if this is new politics then it is built on the principles of weakness and spectatorship – whereby they are place themselves on the side-lines.

In the absence of a temporary management plan which must incorporate a restoration of in-factory weighing, if this interim measure is facilitated through the Government making the case to the EU Commission that the draft new control plan which includes massive number of new proposed regulations be adopted as a fall-back position. The narrative coming from the political decision makers thus far has been weak and lacking in coherent understanding of the impacts that removal of the control plan is having on all fishing sectors since April. My yard stick of judgement is always – if the control plan had been removed in Spain or France – what would their Governments do? umm, well readers they certainly would not spend 147 days telling the French they can do “nothing”... or if they did, their time would be short in office.

As a former politician, I firmly believe the current administration or at least those that have responsibly for Marine matters have made a cataclysmic miscalculation or gross underestimation of the strength of negative feeling presently in our coastal communities towards the inertia or apathetic torpor of this Government on marine matters.

The Government seem to be, as I see “in blissful ignorance” of how they are just continuing to get it all wrong and how they are failing to convince the fish industry they understand the challenges at present. The lack of real and meaningful engagement is going down disastrously, when we meet a Minister, we expect some direction or vision for the future – if that is lacking then then confidence will never be restored. Just meeting for the sake of meeting is not engagement – you meet with a sector to hear the challenges, concerns and issues of the day - it is a two-way process.

The subsequent failure to enact change and the lack of progress to facilitate change, to change direction and improve matters within a sector is what is leading to the apathy in the sector towards the decision makers.

Time and tide will wait for no one ... and politics is a fast-moving game. Let's be having the change and improvements that are so urgently required within the Irish fishing industry Minister... now readers that would be “a press release worthy of an early release.”



Castletownbere harbour - Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography

news from **Castletownbere** Helen Riddell

Castletownbere RNLI

Castletownbere RNLI lifeboat responded to two callouts in August. On August 5th, a 32-foot yacht, with five persons on board started to drag her anchor near the north shore of Dunmanus Bay in deteriorating weather conditions. The skipper became concerned and raised the alarm with Valentia Coastguard Radio. The Castletownbere lifeboat was tasked and launched under the command of Coxswain Dave Fenton with crew Marney O'Donoghue, Sean 'Bawn' O'Sullivan, Joe Cronin, Seamus Harrington, Aaron O'Boyle and Donagh Murphy.

The lifeboat escorted the yacht from Dunmanus Bay into calmer waters at Lawrence Cove Marina on Bere Island. Commenting on the callout Coxswain Fenton, said 'the yacht made the right call in seeking help and moving to a safer mooring, there was a small craft warning in operation and the weather was deteriorating. In circumstances such as these, it is always better to err on the side of caution.'

On Friday August 13th the lifeboat was tasked to assist in a yacht which had broken away from its mooring at Trafrask, Adrigole. A member of the public spotted the stricken yacht and was concerned that the vessel would be damaged if she washed up on the rocky shoreline. They contacted the

Coast Guard's Marine Research Coordination Centre in Valentia to raise the alarm. On reaching the yacht, the lifeboat launched its inflatable Y-boat with two crew members and attempted to tow the yacht. However, the grounded yacht would not move. The crew then attached a tow to the lifeboat and the yacht was pulled clear and reattached securely to a mooring.

Commenting on the callout, Lifeboat Operations Manager, Paul Stevens stated that: 'However minor the problem may seem at the time, members of the public should never hesitate to call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard - an early response from the emergency services ensures that situations such as this can be dealt with quickly and effectively'.

Coast Guard

Some of the Castletownbere Coast Guard team were recently presented with their 10 year service medals with the Irish Coast Guard by sector manager Damien Kelleher.

Leo O'Shea received a medal for 10 years of service, Brian 'Boss' O'Sullivan received a medal for 23 years of service, and Paulina Kaupila received a medal for 18 years of service. Several other members of the Castletownbere team are due to receive their long service medals later this year.

Beara Education Training Board

The Beara Education Training Board have a number of classes due to start in the autumn which include art, computers, healthcare, cookery, English and mindfulness.

All courses will be run in line with national Covid-19 guidelines. For further details please contact Noreen by phone, text or WhatsApp on 086 8239147 or email on noreen.murnane@corketb.ie

Funding for Castletownbere

Castletownbere is one of six Cork towns which are set to benefit from Cork County Council's Streetscape Enhancement Scheme. The council has allocated €320,000 to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfront and street facades in each of the six towns in a scheme which is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and is part of the Government's five-year strategy to revitalise rural Ireland.

Grants of up to 100% or €8,000 are available to cover works including painting, signage replacement, shopfront improvement, scaffolding, materials, lighting, street furniture and planting. Business and property owners are encouraged to apply through their relevant local Municipal District Office. The closing date for applications is September 7th.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Gillian Coughlan welcomed the scheme saying, "enhancing building facades and shopfronts can lead to a distinct and memorable identity for towns, reinforcing pride of place for residents and unforgettable impressions for visitors. The Streetscape Enhancement Scheme funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and distributed through Cork County Council's Municipal District Offices will be a fantastic resource for the communities of Bandon, Castletownbere, Charleville, Fermoy, Macroom and Passage West. This scheme will enable property owners and businesses in these towns to further partake in the great community effort that goes into creating a colourful welcoming town centre."

Calendar

Lorraine Crowley extended her thanks to everyone who supported the This is Beara Calendar 2021 in memory of well known Beara photographer, the late John Eagle.

Sales of the calendar this year have raised €4100 which will be split between St Joseph's Community Hospital, Castletownbere and Cancer Connect. John, who was a frequent contributor to the Marine Times, produced the first calendar shortly before he died and asked Lorraine to continue it in his memory.

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THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

The Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation (IIMRO) has called on the Minister for the Marine to set up a public consultation on the allocation of fishing opportunities post-Brexit to allow for “the most gain for the most people from a properly managed public resource.”

Jerry Early is Chairman of IIMRO and outlines to MARINE TIMES Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney, the reason the organisation has made this call.

LINKEDIN, the international social network organisation that focuses on professional networking, lists Jerry Early as Chairman Comharchumann Arainn Mhór; Board member Comhar na nOileán; Business owner Arranmore Hostel; Board member FLAG (Fisheries Local Action Group) North; Board Member Comhdháil Oileán na hEireann (the Islands’ Federation). There is no doubt, he is a busy man and that the islands and fisheries are very important to him.

He is also Chairman of IIMRO, the Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, which is how I came to know him and my primary experience of dealing with him.

He makes his views very clear, definite and unambiguous as we talk: “I am concerned about the future of the small-scale fleet and traditional, seasonal, inshore fisheries along the West Coast. There are constant blows coming in quick succession and it is difficult to choose which one will be the straw that finally breaks the camel’s back.”

As we talk, he refers to the difficulties which the entire Irish fishing industry is facing and says that, while the primary role he has is to represent the interests of the islands’ fishermen, he realises and appreciates that the same arguments can be made for areas and communities all around the coast.

“There’s been a lack of investment, there’s been a lack of foresight. There are challenges ahead for us all. We have been feeling pain for a long time on the islands. The fishing industry has suffered generally. The pelagic sector has suffered.

“Ireland has a brilliant seafood product. Let’s get the high-end value. That’s what we need. It’s a brilliant product we have.”

Like many other people in the fishing industry, he speaks about the need for the government to achieve a fair deal for Irish fishing in EU and Brexit negotiations, but several times he makes the case that what is obtained should be shared equitably and that must include the islands and island fishermen.

“I don’t intend to be controversial, but there is a chance to re-boot the system as a result of the crises of Brexit and Covid. We need to rethink the allocation of fishing opportunities away from the industrial scale, high-volume,



“Fishermen are hunters

low-value commodity fisheries.

“Fishermen are hunters, they are not cultivators,” is a phrase which makes a strong impression. He outlines his view that there can and should be a re-construction, a re-booting to benefit all sectors. But he also indicates that there seems to be an official, different mindset in government which seems towards curtailing fishing and fishermen’s opportunities. “I think we can look in a very constructive manner towards rebuilding, start with fairness, with a fair share for everyone. There has been a lack

than to encourage them.

“As I said, we need to focus on sustainable seasonal fisheries for the flourishing of island and coastal communities into the future. This approach would benefit communities and families all along the coast too, socially, environmentally and culturally. The future theme for all of us is to be doing more with less.”

Jerry Early is a thoughtful exponent of the islands views and maintains a determination to get equitable treatment for the islands.

of burden-sharing which must change. Everyone has been feeling pain, yet Ireland has this brilliant fisheries product. Our government must look at this. Share the resource with everyone and equitably.”

So, what is it that keeps island fishermen going in these times and with the difficulties which they face? I’ve asked many fishermen that question in recent months as the challenges they face have mounted.

Jerry’s answer reflects what fishermen in leading ports around the country have told me – that theirs is a tradition, a history, that they want to see maintained, but that it is increasingly different to ensure that.

“I am a representative of the islands, and it is my duty to highlight their interests but, like elsewhere around the coast, it is difficult for fishermen, difficult to encourage young people into the industry, to assure them that there is a good future. They have to be aware of the difficulties and the challenges.

“It is a traditional way of life for the islands and very, very hard to turn that off, to turn away, to do something else. Where do the fishermen go to? It is historical for the island communities. Fishermen are hunters, not cultivators and that is something you cannot switch off. They are conscious of all the difficulties with stocks and species, but they have always been most aware of those situations. We need to focus on sustainable fisheries for the flourishing of island and coastal communities into the future and seasonal fisheries are very important.

“Fishing is all that some people know. It is their tradition, and it is very hard to walk away from that. But it is hard to get younger people involved. It is difficult to get crew. There is no forward investment, no incentives for them to go into the sector. It seems to me there is more planned effort to curtail fishermen

The SFPA and The Fishing Industry

Is it an “out-of-control State body” or an efficient regulator of a difficult industry?

What is preventing improvement in the toxic situation which now exists?

Report by Tom MacSweeney

“Hopefully an amicable solution to this can be found and that we will not have to revisit the issue,” said the Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Jackie Cahill, when he concluded a debate about the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the fishing industry.

“He won’t have much hope of that,” commented a disgruntled fishing industry representative. “The SFPA needs a root-and-branch change of its attitude and the people who have an anti-fishing industry need to change their attitude.”

Cahill is a Fianna Fáil T.D. from the inland county of Tipperary and had presided over a debate which heard the SFPA’s top-level officials deny allegations by the industry and quoted by members of the Committee, that it was “unfit for purpose.”

“We are open to having any meeting or dialogue,” said Dr. Susan Steele, Chair of the SFPA who this month leaves the Authority to take up her new job as Executive Director of the EU’s Fisheries Control Agency. That agency is governed by an Administrative Board, made up of one representative per EU Member State and six representatives of the Commission. The Administrative Board nominates the Executive Director for a period of five years.

She leaves an organisation which is poorly regarded across the fishing industry and, as that disgruntled fishing industry executive indicated, regarded as having an anti-fishing attitude.

According to the Chairman of the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance (IFSA), Cormac Burke, the SFPA has been officially declared as incompetent in three separate Irish Government reports as well as an independent EU report.

But, is this fair to the independent State organisation set up with specific tasks?

The SFPA was established under the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 as Ireland’s competent authority for Seafood Safety and Sea-Fisheries Protection. The first stated requirement was to “Secure efficient and effective enforcement of sea-fisheries law and seafood safety law.”

The EU had been complaining about Ireland’s system of fishery control and since 2001 had sent what were described as “missions to assess compliance with Ireland’s obligations as a Member State under the Common Fisheries Policy.” A conclusion was reached that these were deficient in several areas and the Commission took proceedings against Ireland in the European Court of Justice which in November 2004 issued a judgment against Ireland that it had “failed to fulfil its obligations, including - Failing to comply with community rules on conservation; Inadequate monitoring of fishing activity; Failure to ensure appropriate inspection of landings; Failure to record catches, inspections and other controls; Failure to put in place criteria and detailed rules for the use of fishing quota; Failure to

prohibit fishing in excess of quota and; Failure to initiate administrative and criminal proceedings.

There had also been controversy in Ireland about political interference with the granting of fishing licences.

Following the Court decision and based on the Commission’s opinion of insufficient progress on remedying these deficiencies, a reasoned opinion was made against Ireland in July 2006.

The government was left with no alternative but to act and the SFPA was their answer. It was established in 2007 under the provisions of the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act of 2006.

So, the SFPA was an authority established out of the need to improve Ireland’s compliance with the terms of the Common Fisheries Policy and food safety legislation.

In May 2008 the then Chairman of the SFPA, Peter Whelan, told the then Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: “There continue to be breaches of sea fisheries and seafood law and SFPA works towards a day when this will not be the case. Ireland has much to gain from a fully compliant fisheries sector and SFPA will work towards meeting that goal.”

Thirteen years later the SFPA is embroiled in disagreement, controversy, and criticism with the industry over several issues, ranging from penalty points to weighing of fish and leaked information to the media which has been seen as seriously damaging to the public reputation of fishing industry. It has also been criticised in reports about its internal operations.

Why has all this happened?

It is not easy to ascertain the answer.



“The Minister and Government needs to commit to a real and meaningful reform of the SFPA, as opposed to the current farce of reforming a dysfunctional organisation from the inside or from within their existing structures,” says the CEO of the Irish Fish Processors & Exporters’ Association (IFPEA), Brendan Byrne.

In an industry which has often been more internally divisive than cohesive, anger and disagreement directed at the SFPA has united the major industry representative bodies in opposition to and criticism of the Authority.

Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation (KFO); the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO); the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation (ISEFPO); the Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation (ISWFPO) and the IFPEA jointly declared the SFPA “not fit for purpose” and said it “needs to be reset as a matter of urgency.”

How have relations between the State’s independent agency, established in 2007 to “secure efficient and effective enforcements of sea fisheries law and seafood safety law”, become so toxic?

“Because it acts like a police force and there is an atti-

tude that fishermen are criminals are enemies to be treated like that,” says a fisherman in the North/West, who will only speak on the assurance of anonymity in publication.

This is a regular experience when trying to get comment about SFPA activities. Individual Skippers have said that they fear being targeted if they are identified.

As in most stories, there are two sides.

In the South East a Skipper says “they are not all bad, there are decent people who are prepared to be understanding and helpful, but there does seem to be a mantra from higher-up which is not favourable to fishermen.”

Individual SFPA staff are not easy to get to comment, but privately concern has been expressed by some that a bad relationship has gone “too far.” But saying so to a journalist for public usage means that staff think their “prospects might not be helped.”

Quite a number of former Naval Service personnel became staffers of the SFPA, could that have led to a “police-type enforcement attitude”? That was one suggestion made as we research this article.

The SFPA’s Chair, Dr. Susan Steele, told the Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine debate on the fishing industry in June that it had carried out the first comprehensive review of its operations in 2019 – twelve years after it was established.

“It recognised the significant changes that have taken place since the establishment of the organisation in 2007 in terms of the expansion of our remit and scale. The SFPA has grown from an organisation with 77 people and a budget of less than €11 million in 2015 to a budget of €24.8 million and a current staff number of 155 in 2021.”

Following the review and a report by consultants PWC, an Advisory Board was set up and a Director of Transformation appointed.

“On the building of relationships with the industry and our on-going discussions with those working in it, meetings have taken place and working groups have been formed. We are working very hard to rebuild the relationship with industry,” Dr. Steele said.

However, the picture as seen from the fishing industry’s side is different.

“You can have meetings with them certainly and the people you meet with can seem to be genuinely interested in improving things and seriously discussing issues raised. But when you think that things are going to be sorted, they refer back to the head office in Clonakilty and then the goal posts are changed and nothing is agreed. It’s frustrating,” a source who has regularly participated in meetings told this paper.

There are several issues which are the cause of distrust.

One of the most resented is the leaking of the EU decision to end the weighing derogation which appeared in national newspapers before the industry was told formally. The SFPA says it told the industry that a change was coming and has denied that it was responsible for causing it. At the Oireachtas Committee its top officials said that leaked information which appeared in the national media about the EU decision, did not come from the SFPA.

It has not proved possible to identify where the leaking of this information, which the fishing industry organisations have said did serious damage to the public reputation of the industry, came from. However, it appears to have come from a State source. It rankles with the industry that the government, the Department of the Marine and the

SFPA refused to make the report, on which the media leaks were based, available to industry representative organisations.

“Sanctions have been imposed on the entire fishing fleet, yet not one fisherman has seen any evidence or any information that was compiled by the 2018 audit or the 2019 administrative inquiry, which the SFPA carried out. Why withhold evidence and yet proceed to punish the entire sector? A real dangerous situation is happening here,” according to Michael Collins, T.D., from West Cork who voiced his criticism strongly at the industry public protests in Cork and Dublin this Summer. “The SFPA says that it has not shared any copy with anybody outside of its own remit, as such, but then there are leaks all over the place. Nobody is answerable for where the leaks emanate from and who is responsible. This is damaging good, hardworking, honest fishermen. Severe damage has been done.”

“It has become very apparent to me that the relationship between the SFPA and the sector is at an all-time low. I mean rock bottom. There is no point in skirting around this and pretending it is not the case,” is the view expressed by West Cork Fianna Fáil T.D., Christopher O’Sullivan. “The industry feels it has been let down by the SFPA.”

In a written submission sent to TDs who are members of the Oireachtas Committee, prior to the SFPA going before them in June, “paragraph after paragraph related to fraudulent methods, methods by which in-factory weighing can be circumvented and the potential for fraud,” said Deputy O’Sullivan. “Reference was made to the one proven case and to the other case in the courts. Yet little or no reference was made to the overwhelming majority of those engaged in this industry being completely compliant. That sets a narrative and an attitude of ‘us and them.’ The relationship between the SFPA and the industry is at an all-time low and something drastic must be done to mend it. The relationship now is fairly toxic.”

Dr. Steele said that “it is normal for the relationship between an industry and its regulator to be strained at times. The most important thing, however, is that we keep communication going. We are always happy to meet with representatives of the industry. We want to open dialogue. We believe strongly in our role in promoting compliance and in working with the industry in that regard.”

“The Irish industry is the most regulated in all of Europe, our fish producers and fishers are the most regulated in all of Europe,” according to Sinn Féin’s Spokesman on Fisheries and the Marine, Pdraig Mac Lochlainn. “This report was leaked in the national media at a time when the industry was in serious trouble having lost a further 15% of quota under the EU-UK trade agreement. The industry was in serious trouble and reports were in the media of tens of thousands of tonnes of over-fishing and potential fines of tens of millions of Euro. This presented a picture of an industry that was criminal in its responsibilities. It was appalling. The industry had no ability to defend itself.”

More issues between the industry and the SFPA have arisen, with more anger directed against the SPA announcement that, from October 1, it will impose a landing fee of one Euro per tonne for the first 50 tonnes and fifty cents for each tonne thereafter. The Authority sent a ‘letter of intent’ to the industry in early August saying that the fees were in respect of food safety official controls carried out at approved establishments and approved vessels, as required by the EU Official Controls Regulation.

“The imposition of these new fees would be laughable if the situation wasn’t so serious,” says Cormac Burke, Chairman of the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance. “Here we have an organisation that has been officially declared as incompetent in three separate Irish Government reports as well as an independent EU report - an organisation that receives in excess of 25 million Euros of Irish taxpayers’ ‘operational’ money every year and now they intend to charge fishermen and processors for the pleasure of the SFPA’s infamous mismanagement and harassment of this industry.”

“We are shocked at the casual approach adopted by the SFPA in imposing these fees on the fishing industry,” said

the CEO of the Irish Fish Processors & Exporters’ Association (IFPEA), Brendan Byrne. “We feel that the Minister and Government need to commit to a real and meaningful reform of the SFPA. Successive reports have found and concluded the SFPA to be ‘not fit for purpose’, to be lacking in management and internal organisational ability. In fact not one single report or study has found them to be fit for purpose.”

The industry and individual fishermen have faced heavy legal costs in challenging SFPA decisions in the Courts.

The Chief Executive of Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation, Seán O’Donoghue, welcomed the High Court ruling which found against the SFPA for its failure to approve a new state-of-the-art conveyor belt fish weighing system, installed in Killybegs at a cost of €409,000.

Justice Garrett Simons found that the SFPA acted *ultra vires* by continuing to withhold approval for the pier-side weighing facility by reference to ‘ownership’ concerns raised by the European Commission. There is no legal basis for these concerns,” he declared in his judgement.

“We stated that the SFPA acted outside of its powers, the relevant regulations and Irish and European law,” said Mr. O’Donoghue. “We also correctly claimed that the SFPA acted in breach of fair procedures, arbitrarily, unreasonably and irrationally. We were outraged that an SFPA *diktat* to unilaterally impose a new policy of unpacking and weighing fish on the pier before repacking and ultimately spoiling the fish could have been considered without any advance notice. We regret that the only avenue open to us to counter SFPA moves to impact punitively on our livelihood, is to resort to legal action. Nonetheless, we in the industry have, and continue to be, more than willing to work with the SFPA on finding workable solutions to all and any issues which arise.”

So, can the present situation be changed?

Will politicians take action to resolve what has been stated at the Oireachtas Committee hearing?

According to Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the industry is worth over €1 billion to the Irish economy. Irish waters are worth much more than that to non/Irish European vessels which take the major share of the natural resource of fish catches which it provides.

Successive governments have shown lack of interest in the fishing industry. The current government has declared support and promised to undo the damage of the Brexit impact and to fight for the industry at EU level. But talk has been more evident than action.

The industry continues to declare that it will work with the SFPA to find solutions to the current issues. The SFPA says it is willing to build relationships with the industry.

So, what is preventing a radical improvement in the toxic situation which now exists?

Is it an “attitude”?



The SFPA was established in 2007 under the provisions of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 and operate under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Its functions were stated as being to:

- Secure efficient and effective enforcement of sea-fisheries law and seafood safety law
- Promote compliance with and deter contraventions of sea-fisheries law and food safety law
- Detect contraventions of sea-fisheries law and food safety law

- Provide information to the sea-fisheries and seafood sectors on sea-fisheries law and food safety law and relevant matters within the remit of the Authority, through the Consultative Committee established under section 48 of the above Act, or by any other means we consider appropriate

- Advise the Minister in relation to policy on the effective implementation of sea-fisheries law and food safety law

- Provide assistance and information to the Minister in relation to the remit of the Authority

- Collect and report data in relation to sea-fisheries and food safety as required by the Minister and under community law

- Represent or assist in the representation of the State at national, community and international fora as requested by the Minister

- Engage in any other activities relating to the functions of the Authority as may be approved of by the Minister

In a statement to the MARINE TIMES, the SFPA said: “we operate under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

“The PwC report, which was completed in 2020 and its recommendations provide a clear path for the changes that are required to ensure that the organisation can effectively and efficiently deliver on our remit as the sea-fisheries regulator into the future. Several actions which would enhance the organisation and increase its efficiency and effectiveness were identified. In all, the review made 46 recommendations which can be classified into 6 pillars. The implementation of the review is included in the Programme for Government and the SFPA is committed to delivery of all 46 recommendations, with the necessity for change widely accepted at all levels within the organisation. The delivery of the recommendations is overseen by an independent three-person Advisory Board appointed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Of the 46 recommendations made in the review 16 are complete, 22 are in progress and 8 have yet to commence. The 8 recommendations that have yet to commence are dependent on the completion of other recommendations or can only be completed at certain points of the year.

“The 2020 financial budget for the SFPA is €17.361 million. The total staff of the SFPA is 162 -125 Front line inspection and enforcement personnel in Ports, or direct support roles to SFPA operations in Ports, Trade compliance, Enforcement, Food Safety and Fisheries Control, Data Management. This includes 76 Sea Fisheries Protection Officers and 9 Senior Port Officers; 37 Back office functions, such as IT, HR, Finance and Corporate Affairs.

“The SFPA is a regulatory authority with a broad remit across sea-fisheries protection and seafood safety that includes fishery control, food safety official control, food trade controls, and fishery data provision. We are committed to working closely and in cooperation and collaboratively with the fishing industry - from fishers/producers to processors - to promote compliance, safeguarding marine resources and ensuring Irish seafood is safe to consume. As is common with any regulated industry, regulatory changes may require modifications to industry practice. We recognise this and our approach is to seek to work with operators for maximum compliance, supporting and promoting awareness and when needed using enforcement action, sparingly and proportionately.”

Will Action Be Taken by Government?

The MARINE TIMES asked the Minister for the Marine’s office if the Minister had made any representations to the SFPA about the description of it by the industry as “unfit” for purpose and if he was concerned about this description and whether he intended to take any action to resolve this issue. No response had been received at the time of going to print.

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IFA AQUACULTURE

In her monthly column, IFA's Aquaculture Executive, Teresa Morrissey, writes that Irish aquaculture must be part of the global move to meeting the world's need for quality, guaranteed, sustainable food production.



Meeting Global Demands

Aquaculture production will be key to meeting global demands for seafood produce in the coming years. As such, Irish Aquaculture production needs to be part of the global move towards meeting these demands.

There is a growing emphasis on circular economy and sustainable, efficient food production systems emerging from EU and National policy. Innovation, technology and efficient aquaculture farming practices will drive the adaptation needed to fulfil EU Green Deal goals of developing sustainable food production systems and ensuring food security.

Innovation and efficiency are central elements to achieving these ambitious targets. Smarter, more efficient food production systems are what is needed in order to increase production sustainably and ensure secure food sources into the future.

IFA and the Seafood Task Force

The inclusion of IFA Aquaculture on the Seafood Taskforce provides an opportunity for Irish Aquaculture to contribute to initiatives and developmental strategies to strengthen and enhance coastal communities dependent on the seafood industry, to build a platform for meaningful development of a sustainable Irish Aquaculture industry.

The Irish aquaculture sector has been severely impacted by Brexit due to delays in logistics with transport, and additional paperwork for UK customs for seafood

product and trade travelling via the UK landbridge. Additional costs have emerged as a result of Brexit, with expected additional costs in transport and logistics, and unclarified costs, in the form of veterinary certification and inspections, upon entry into the UK as a 'third country'. IFA continues seeking immediate clarity from UK customs and agencies here regarding proposed costs and fees for companies trading with GB customers that could be hit with extraordinary costs for inspections fees per consignment entering GB on a daily basis from 1st October next.

The Seafood Taskforce provides an opportunity for Irish Aquaculture to contribute to initiatives and developmental strategies to build a platform for meaningful development of a sustainable Irish Aquaculture industry. As part of this work, we must also examine how innovation in Irish aquaculture can play a very important role adding real value to produce. Proposals by IFA Aquaculture are being made to the Minister to support our seafood sector and coastal communities, in particular securing a fair share for aquaculture producers from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve Fund. The final report of the Seafood Taskforce is due to be published in September and will include recommendations for Irish Aquaculture development.

€1 Million Capital Grants Awarded to 13 Aquaculture Enterprises

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD, recently announced the award of €1 million in grants to 13 aquaculture enterprises under his Department's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Programme.

The grant awards will support total investment in these businesses of €2,917,572. The grants are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union and are subject to terms and conditions.

Announcing the grants, Minister McConalogue said: "I am delighted to announce €1 million in grant awards to a further 13 aquaculture investment projects, bringing the total awards in 2021 to €3.8 million to 57 aquaculture enterprises, supporting €10 million of investments in our aquaculture sector. With these latest awards, the €30 million allocated to the

aquaculture sector in my Department's EMFF Programme is now fully committed.

"However, a new Seafood Development Programme for the 2021-27 period is being prepared and I have already put in place arrangements for an interim Seafood Capital Investment Scheme to ensure capital grants to aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing enterprises continue to be available pending the completion and adoption of the new Programme. I understand that BIM intend to open that scheme to the aquaculture sector very shortly."

A full list of the grant recipients can be found on www.gov.ie

IFA Aquaculture to Host AGM - Oct 2021

Following the success of IFA Aquaculture's first online AGM in October 2020, it is planned to host the 2021 AGM in October 2021 on a date yet to be decided.

It is hoped the AGM would take place in person at a suitable venue should Government restrictions allow, however, the AGM will take place online if Covid-19 restrictions are still in place by October.

The 2-year term of the current IFA Aquaculture Committee is currently coming to an end, and elections may be held for any vacancies on the committee that may arise. Notice of the AGM and all relevant documents will be circulated to members no later than 14 days in advance of the AGM as per IFA Aquaculture rules.

IFA Welcomes Pivotal Decision for Salmon Farming

IFA Aquaculture welcomes the decision of the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB) to grant an aquaculture licence to MOWI Ireland at their site in Shot Head in Bantry Bay.

IFA Aquaculture welcomed the news as a pivotal moment for the aquaculture sector in Ireland. The development of a new aquaculture site at Shot Head in Bantry Bay for Irish Organic Salmon is a progressive move forward for the Irish Aquaculture industry, which comes the creation of 8 new jobs and €6 million investment by MOWI Ireland.

The licensing decision for this site was appealed to ALAB in 2015, so the licence determination arrived at by the board is a comprehensive one with consideration given to environmental objectives. This site development will proceed with significant

investment in international best practice for salmon farming, ensuring the economic potential and sustainable development of the Irish Aquaculture industry.

The Irish Aquaculture industry provides essential employment for rural coastal communities with almost 2,000 direct jobs and over 16,000 indirect jobs with the value of Irish Aquaculture worth €180 million; the majority of which (€120 million) coming from Irish Organic Salmon production. A sustainable Irish Aquaculture industry has the potential to create employment opportunities and further enhance coastal communities both through direct and indirect employment.

Hatch / BIM Workshop '21

Recruitment is underway for this year's BIM/HATCH Aquaculture Accelerator programme. The two-week programme, managed by aquaculture accelerator HATCH and funded under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, is taking place in the RDI (Research, Development, Innovation) Hub in Killorglin, Co Kerry this October.

The programme seeks to develop early stage technology concepts & ideas from Ireland and enable participants to turn their projects into startups. Participating in this workshop will assist attendants in their commercial development & viability in seeking to grow and scale their business into a sustainable and profitable aquaculture company.

The BIM/HATCH aquaculture accelerator programme is taking place from the 11th until the 22nd of October in the RDI Hub, Killorglin, Co Kerry. For further details on the programme and how to apply, please go to www.hatch.blue



A recent workshop was held in the Berehaven Lodge. The meeting showcased the progress that Aquaculture has made over the years in West Cork with presentations by IFA - Teresa Morrissey; BIM - David Millard; Mowi Ireland - John Power. There followed site visits to see some Oyster, Seaweed, Salmon and Mussel sites locally. Pictured in attendance were father and son Michael and Micheál Murphy who have been farming seaweed for over 10 years. Photo by Anne Marie Cronin Photography



IRISH WHALE AND DOLPHIN GROUP IWDG NEWS

Dr Simon Berrow, Chief Executive of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, reports unusual incidents involving bottlenose dolphins, including two live strandings, one in Galway, the other in Cork.

Bottlenose Dolphins Are Still Full Of Surprises

Bottlenose dolphins are the best studied dolphin species in the world. They frequently occur close to shore, in estuaries and near human activities, making them quite accessible. They have been kept in dolphinariums throughout the world for generations. The longest study of wild bottlenose dolphins is more than 50 years old, providing incredible insights into their ecology and behaviour.



Photo © Mags Daly

Despite this they are still able to surprise and amaze us.

This summer the IWDG have learnt, largely through citizen-science, more amazing insights.

Common dolphins frequently live strand and the causes of this are many; including navigation error and disease. When the IWDG learnt in early August of a small group of common dolphins being driven ashore by two bottlenose dolphins off Ballyconneely, Co Galway, leading to one live stranding, we were very surprised.

When it happened a second time, off East Cork we were even more surprised.

Two common dolphins live stranded in Rostellan but, after being re-floated, they were driven ashore again by a group of seven bottlenose dolphins. They were moved to a different beach and re-floated but died the following day in East Ferry. Were the bottlenose dolphins being territorial? Having fun?

Last summer the IWDG told the story of *Spartle*, a bottlenose dolphin live stranded and re-floated in Scotland in 2016. She had severe sunburn leading to extensive white scarring all over her right side. She was sighted in a small group of 5-6 individuals off Ireland's East Coast in May 2020, then off Fenit, Co Kerry in July last year. The group were mainly seen off Samphire Island. They were never seen with the "resident" bottlenose dolphins in the area, which are part of the Shannon Dolphin population. They were last seen off Fenit in September but

miraculously observed back in Scotland just before Christmas!

This summer the IWDG research vessel, *Celtic Mist*, was back down off Fenit and Brandon Bay as part of the long-term Shannon Dolphin monitoring project, which now includes these two bays. Three dolphins have been regularly seen since early July in a deep pocket around 5km from Fenit. They were new to the IWDG Fenit/Brandon Bottlenose Dolphin Photo-id Catalogue and called the "Fenit 3". They have never been reported with the "resident" dolphins.

Mags Daly had a hunch and sent images to Scotland. To our amazement two of the three matched to dolphins recorded off Scotland, and the third is likely to also be a Scottish dolphin. So did *Spartle* and her group spread the word in Scotland that Fenit was "worth a visit" during the summer "but don't hang out with those local dolphins!"

Let's see if the "Fenit 3" are recorded back off Scotland.

We still have so much to learn about our wonderful marine wildlife. As Baba Dioum said: "We only conserve what we love and will love only what we understand".

Let's try and better understand our marine environment if we really want to protect it.

Many thanks to John Brittain and Frances Gallagher for sharing these events and to Mags Daly, Shannon Dolphin Project Officer and Barbara Cheney of the Lighthouse Field Station, Aberdeen.

www.iwdg.ie



BirdWatchIreland
protecting birds and biodiversity

It has been the best year on record for a particularly elegant, graceful species of seabirds, but Niall Hatch of BirdWatch Ireland also has a thought about "a Walrus hauling itself onto boats along the south coast of Ireland..."

It might seem an offbeat news story, he says, but asks if future generations may perhaps see it as the beginning of a tragedy.

Best Year on Record for The Elegant Rockabill Colony

We at BirdWatch Ireland tend to talk a lot about our ongoing work to conserve Roseate Terns on Rockabill Island* off the coast of north Co. Dublin and for good reason. It is one of the most successful conservation projects in Europe and, thanks to the support of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Commissioners of Irish Lights, for more than 30 years now our wardens and project managers have literally changed the fortunes of one of Europe's most beautiful yet most endangered seabirds.

I had the great privilege of spending some time on Rockabill Island myself this summer, right when the tern nesting season was getting into full swing. The sights, sounds and, yes, the smells of a huge seabird colony like this can almost be overwhelming, and for a lifelong bird-lover such as myself it was an experience that will not soon be forgotten.

I hope you will forgive me going on about Roseate Terns yet again, but I wanted to share with you the wonderful news that 2021 has proven to be the best year on record for these elegant, graceful seabirds. A total of 1,704 pairs nested in the Rockabill colony this year, which is a record-breaking total. At a time when there is so much doom and gloom in the world and we find ourselves facing so many negative stories about conservation and wildlife, it's nice to be able to report a bit of good news for a change.

At the moment, the Roseate Terns, along with the Common Terns and Arctic Terns that nest alongside them, have finished breeding and are now building their strength for the long migratory journeys ahead of them. For a month or so they will fish in the waters of Dublin Bay, roosting each evening at Sandymount Strand, before the time comes to depart. Most of our Roseate and Common Terns will head for the coast of West Africa, but the Arctic Terns will go even further: right to the Antarctic mainland, seemingly via places such as Madagascar, the Seychelles and New Zealand. During their lives, they travel further than any creature on the planet, with some perhaps racking up 80,000km per year.

I mentioned doom and gloom earlier, and unfortunately there is no getting away from it for long. The recently issued report from the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* has made for very stark reading indeed, and makes it clear beyond any doubt that human-caused climate change is already having a devastating impact on our planet and that time is quickly running out for us to minimise permanent damage and dire future consequences.

The marine environment in particular stands to be impacted greatly by climate change, and indeed already has been. As ornithologists, we are very well attuned to the movements of birds and changes in their distribution and behaviour. The 1990s saw the colonisation of Ireland by both

Little Egrets and Mediterranean Gulls, two warm-weather adapted, originally southern European species that are now widespread and well-established in Ireland.

We have also seen a shift in the species of fish that our seabirds are eating, as cold-water species retreat northwards and warm-water species advance. This could pose a threat to Rockabill's terns. Already we are seeing the parent birds running into foraging problems and having to fly ever further from their colony to find enough food for their chicks. They are also now catching unsuitable prey, such as pipefish, that never used to occur in Irish waters. These pose a choking hazard to young seabird chicks that their parents seem unaware of, and this has led to increased chick mortality.

Outside Irish waters, but still close to home, the situation is even more worrying. Colonies in places such as Scotland, Norway and Iceland, home for centuries to enormous numbers of nesting Puffins, Kittiwakes, Fulmars and other seabirds, have been experiencing near total collapse. This appears mainly to be driven by a lack of food for the chicks, which itself has been driven in large part by warming ocean temperatures altering the distribution of plankton, and therefore the small baitfish that feed on them. It has even been predicted that, unless something changes soon, Puffins face total extinction within the next 100 years.

We need to heed the warnings that our seas are shouting to us. Rapid changes in the behaviour and distribution of oceanic wildlife are one of the clearest signs of all that things are amiss and that urgent and meaningful action is required. A Walrus hauling itself onto boats along the south coast of Ireland might, for the time being, seem a fun, offbeat news story. Future generations may perhaps see it as the beginning of a tragedy.

Seabirds need your help: *If you would like to support conservation efforts to restore their populations, as well as to combat climate change, please become a member of BirdWatch Ireland, Ireland's largest and most active conservation charity. For full details, please visit www.birdwatchireland.ie*

Rockabill* is actually a group of two islands, "The Rock" and "The Bill", lying in the western Irish Sea about 6 kilometres east-north-east of Skerries, County Dublin



MFV Blue Horizon (flanked by dolphins) which is looking like new after a recent refurbishment at Mooney Boats. (Check out their Facebook page to see a video of the vessel with the dolphins)
Photo: Mooney Boats / Alan Hennegan

Letters to the Editor

Cheekpoint Siltation

Sean Doherty has written from Cheekpoint in County Waterford to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), An Taisce, the EU and copied to environmental organisations, politicians and the media, enclosing a selection of photographs about mud problems which he says are causing serious problems at the harbour area.



Editor,
Marine Times Newspaper

I have since boyhood spent my days in this village. The last remaining life forms are slowly being swallowed by ever increasing mud. This is the Waterford Estuary SAC Natura site. The impact and the magnates of this environmental destruction is crying out for trusted independent scientific research.

Yours sincerely,
Sean Doherty.

MEP Raises Issue of Ireland Breaking EU and UN Law in Relation to Illegal Fishing

Editor,
Marine Times Newspaper

Please note the question raised by Grace O’Sullivan MEP in the European Commission: *‘In 2019, Ireland legislated to give vessels ‘owned, operated and registered’ in Northern Ireland access to Ireland’s 6 mile zone for the purpose of fishing. The 2019 law provides a basis on which existing fishing rights, including for mussels, under the common fisheries policy and now the EUUK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) may be extended to Ireland’s 6 mile zone. However, the law does not claim to create a ‘standalone’ right to fish and is a unilateral provision, rather than an international agreement. The law lacks the management, allocation or effort control provisions essential to such an agreement.*

‘Member States are obliged, under Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2017/2403, to establish a surplus of allowable catch before opening a fishery to a nonEU country. Following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, there is no provision in Irish law (or the TCA) that permits the UK to create a mussel quota that can be fished in Ireland’s 6 mile zone.

‘These provisions are designed to protect fishing communities from the loss of inshore fisheries resources.

‘Will the Commission assess the compliance of Ireland with the obligations of Regulation (EU) 2017/2403 in the context of the EU’s new relationship with the UK?’

It seems Ireland is turning a blind eye to IUU fishing (in breach of EU and UN law) by ignoring the need to establish that there is a surplus stock available before opening up the

Bottom Mussel sector to Dutch flagships based in Northern Ireland.

It’s the letter of the law for Irish boats but anything goes for overseas “operators”.

The problem here only impacts the bottom mussel industry. The genuine traditional NI boats (prawns, ports, whitefish) can still operate under voisinage.

IUU fishing is about as serious as it gets for fishing / environmental law. Incredible to see Ireland just ignoring this.

Hope this is interesting.
Eugene Kelly

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Talent, Resilience and Sustainability the Anchor to Atlantic Dawn's Success

Back in May, EY announced their shortlist of 24 finalists for the EY Entrepreneur of the Year, defined as the true definition of “Unstoppable in their pursuit to make Ireland a better place to live and work.” One of these “Unstoppables” is Karl McHugh, CEO of the Atlantic Dawn Group in Killybegs. Karl discusses how he has gotten to where he is today, plans for the future and what it means to be nominated as an EY Entrepreneur of the Year.

Atlantic Dawn was founded back in 1967 by Karl's father, Kevin, after acquiring his first boat, the ‘Wave Crest’. Karl describes his father as a “pioneer of the industry and an early adopter who recognised the opportunities that Ireland's rich fishing grounds offered. Pelagic fishing emerged in the 1980s, in particular mackerel fishery, heralded as a new era in the Irish fishing industry.

Describing fishing as an area where you must “live it, as much as learn it”, Karl explains it as very much a way of life where he grew up, recalling childhood memories of sailing on fishing trips with his father during these early years. Karl admits his trajectory through his education & work experience was always aimed towards becoming involved in his family's company.

After completing his studies, Karl joined the business with his focus on setting up direct trading links with the main markets Atlantic Dawn operated in. Travelling to these markets, Karl gained valuable exposure to the key players and competitors within the industry. This included working abroad in the Netherlands, his goal, to broaden his network of clients and to nurture existing relationships with key business contacts. To this day, the majority of these relationships still remain a crucial part of the business.

Today, Karl's responsibilities are to oversee the business operations as a whole, including overseeing a significant capital investment programme over the past two years which includes a transition to a new hybrid fleet of trawlers and an expansion of the main production facilities in Killybegs.

Karl highlights how his nomination for EY Entrepreneur of the Year provides him with a platform where he hopes to shine a light on how the industry has been adversely affected due to the fallout from the Brexit Trade and Cooperation Agreement, which included a significant loss of fishing quota. Karl explains how “Losses



Karl McHugh with award for being selected as a finalist in the EY Entrepreneur of the Year.

were not proportionate relative to those imposed on other EU nations.” To address this, the industry is calling for a ‘burden sharing’ arrangement to be introduced in order to balance the loss of quotas amongst all EU fishing nations.

With the backdrop of the post Brexit challenges, Karl describes his company's investment strategy as being one of “courage in the face of adversity.” Atlantic Dawn has embarked on their ambitious fleet renewal programme in order to revolutionise their vessels, making them more efficient and environmentally friendly to support the marine eco-system.

When asked ‘*what makes someone a good entrepreneur?*’ Karl highlights that resilience in the face of prevailing challenges as a trait that every aspiring entrepreneur should prepare themselves for.

A hardworking approach is something that Karl describes as another important virtue for entrepreneurs. He believes “being focused, determined and hardworking will always yield positive results.” As Thomas Edison said, “success involves 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration”; there will always be plenty of twists along the way, but you need to stick to it, work hard and make your own luck.”

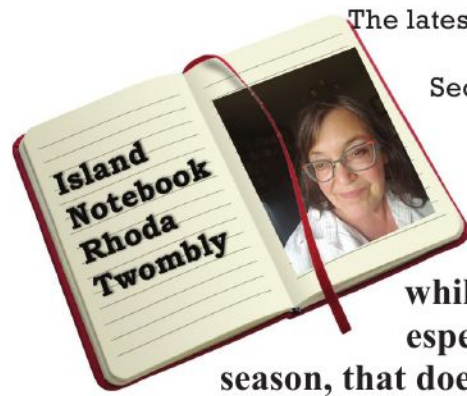
Karl is very passionate about the value of our fishing resources, seeing it as the lifeblood that sustains small rural communities around our coast like Killybegs and a crucial driver for economic activity not only in direct fishing and processing, but also in the ancillary services it supports in South West Donegal. When asked the question, ‘*What makes Donegal a unique place to do business?*’, Karl outlines the quality of the workforce within the region: “what we do have in Donegal is a tremendous workforce with a very strong work ethic. The quality and calibre of this workforce are second to none. We have loyal and hardworking staff which forms the backbone of our business, with some with us for over 40 years.”

The strategic importance of being close to the rich fishing grounds of the North Atlantic is something Karl highlights. The deepwater port and access to the nucleus of specialised services within Killybegs meant it was a natural choice for Atlantic Dawn to base much of its operations in Donegal.

Karl is looking forward to taking delivery of their new fishing vessels, the first of which the mvf “ELLA” was featured in the July issue of the Marine Times. These vessels are the first of their kind in Europe, the hybrid vessels will produce 80% less harmful NOx emissions. Despite their being no legislation that obligates Atlantic Dawn to incorporate such advanced systems, the motivation to implement positive environmental initiatives is driven by their commitment to the long term sustainability of marine resources. Atlantic Dawn sees itself, like many Irish fishing companies, as “trusted custodians of our nation's fishing resources, only harvesting what nature gives and protecting what nature needs. This is a healthy, carbon-friendly and sustainable resource, and we are committed to ensuring that it is protected so that future generations in Donegal can benefit from it.”



Atlantic Dawn's new vessel "ELLA" built by Mooney Boats in Killybegs



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

Summer is the most popular time to travel to the islands and, while Covid-19 curtailed this hugely, especially during the first part of the season, that doesn't mean that there hasn't been anything happening in our offshore communities.

Vaccination was rolled out across the islands; however, it was not always the case that islanders were vaccinated on their own island. There was wide variation on the location of administration of the vaccine. Where you got your jab varied by island, county, clinic facilities and even by the island GP. While most elderly patients were vaccinated on their island some had to travel to the mainland.

While all islanders were glad to be given the opportunity of vaccination, for most this meant travel to the mainland and clinics that were a good distance away. The general feeling is that it would have been safer and more logical to vaccinate all islanders on their own islands especially as there is a relatively small populations involved.

More Visits to The Islands

Visitors to the offshore islands have increased dramatically with the lessening of restrictions. All businesses haven't re-opened yet largely due to restrictions still in place and the cost of renovating premises to achieve the necessary safety standards. The cost is prohibitive especially considering that this will be such a short season.

However, visitors are enjoying the available dining facilities, hire bikes are fully booked every day on Inish Mor and camping and glamping facilities on several islands are very popular.

Whether it's by foot or bike visitors are discovering the beauty of the tracks and trails, beaches, and hills of our islands.

Our Rural Future

A very welcome visitor to the islands was Minister Heather Humphreys and officials from the Dept of Rural and Community Development who have been touring rural Ireland on the "Our Rural Future" roadshow. Minister Humphreys travelled to Bere Island, Co Cork at the end of July, viewing several community development projects and the Heritage Centre.

Built on the original National School, the Heritage Centre houses not only the Community Radio Station but meeting rooms, offices, a café, and exhibitions (inset photo). Very importantly the Heritage Centre is now a high-speed digital hub allowing islanders to work and study remotely.

This proved beneficial to the Minister as it allowed her to join a Cabinet meeting – the first time this has been done from an offshore island. Truly a red-letter day and historic occasion. There are eleven broadband hubs so far on the islands off Galway, Cork, Donegal and Mayo.

Connectivity is key to the sustainability of the islands. Currently National Broadband Ireland (NBI) is conducting site surveys on the islands to form a framework

of how the infrastructure will be planned. It is envisioned that availability of high-speed broadband will allow islanders to stay in their communities and work remotely, enable those who have had to immigrate for work to return, and attract new residents.

Minister Humphreys announced funding of €5.6 million over 4 years for the management of Aerfort Chonamara and the aerodromes on the Aran Islands, Cleggan and Inishbofin. Flying out to Inis Oirr, the Minister met with staff of Comhar na nOileán CTR and looked at the additional works needed on the pier. Funding of €181,000 had enabled some improvements, but a lot more work is needed to increase safety standards especially considering the increased use of the pier in recent years. The Minister has now approved the business case for further pier works from Galway County Council which are priced at €20 million.

The next stop on the island hop was Inis Meáin where the Minister met with the local development company and consulted on the works on pier Cé an Chalaídh Mhóir about which Galway County Council is currently developing a business case to allow for further improvements.

Additional funding announcements have been made over the past months by Minister Humphrey's department. In addition to the €1.1 million capital works programme announced in May 2021. Further funding of €164,295 has been allocated to Donegal, Galway, Cork and Mayo County Councils to co-fund works on their islands which include road repairs, drainage, piers and repairs to the helipad lighting on Toraigh.

Islanders of Clare Island, Mayo, presented a strong case to the Department for doubling the number of subsidised ferry sailings to the island as the existing system was severely impacting the sustainability of the island's community. Earlier and later sailings would not only facilitate tourism, it would make it possible for people with mainland jobs to commute to their island home.

Very importantly the agreed contract of €1 million over 5 years will positively impact the lives of secondary school students who have had to board on the mainland during the week. Clare islanders will now have 4 sailings a day all-year plus a "fast ferry" on a weekly basis.

Money has also been allocated to prepare a development plan for the piers on Clare and Turk Islands and their mainland pier at Roonagh. This is hugely welcome as the pier at Roonagh has needed remedial works and development for years.

Much To Be Enjoyed

While Covid-19 has caused the cancellation of live events, festivals and angling competitions, there is still much to be enjoyed on the islands. Check individual island websites for on-line events. Safe, guided walking tours are offered on many islands and in this fine weather who wouldn't be tempted to take a dip in our clear waters or picnic on the beaches.

Being mindful at all times of safety (never swim alone or use inflatable water "toys", for example) will not hamper the fun – go out and enjoy our islands!





Lost At Sea Tragedies



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WEAR IT!!!

International Fishing and Maritime News

EU Adopts Strategic Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture

The EU Commission has adopted new strategic guidelines for what is described as “a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture.”

The guidelines offer a common vision for the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to develop the sector in a way that contributes directly to the European Green Deal and in particular the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, according to an assessment published in the IFA Aquaculture Newsletter. “The guidelines will help the EU aquaculture sector become more competitive and resilient and to improve its environmental and climate performance.”

The guidelines have been prepared in close consultation with EU Member States and stakeholders, notably those represented in the Aquaculture Advisory Council. They set four inter-related objectives for the further development of aquaculture in the Union; building resilience and competitiveness participating in the ‘green’ transition’ ensuring social acceptance

and consumer information and increasing knowledge and innovation.

The guidelines are intended to support a substantial increase in organic aquaculture at EU level. In the recently-published ‘Organic Farming Action Plan’, organic aquaculture production remained a relatively new sector but with a significant potential for growth.

Following the publication of the EU guidelines, Ireland’s Department of Agriculture, and the Marine and BIM are currently drafting the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture.

IFA Aquaculture says that it has been engaged throughout the drafting process and “looks forward to contributing to the public consultation process when it is launched in the Autumn.”

Will 20-Year Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations Saga EVER End?

They may be the longest-ever series of negotiations – trying to get an international agreement on limiting fisheries subsidies – but they may be about to end. The World Trade Organisation says that there is now a “strong commitment to moving forward and doing the hard work to get these negotiations to the finish line.”

After so long not being able to do so, that may seem particularly optimistic, especially when back in 2016 world leaders made 2020 the target deadline to complete an international fisheries agreement, aimed at removing commercial pressure and protecting fish stocks from over-exploitation based on demand.

Still needing resolution are differences about how developing and least-developed countries would be treated and whether they should get special attention where they sought to expand their native fishing industries.

The new deadline for an agreement to be completed is prior to this December’s WTO Ministerial Conference.

NOAA Takes Strong Stand Against Illegal Fishing

More than thirty nations lack effective regulation to protect marine life and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, according to NOAA, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the American scientific and regulatory agency within the United States Department of Commerce.



The 2021 Biennial Report to Congress on Improving International Fisheries Management has identified 31 nations whose conservation measures fall short of those in the US, including Mexico meaning that the country may face import restrictions on fish and seafood.

“As one of the largest importers of seafood in the world, the United States has a global responsibility and an economic duty to ensure that the fish and fish products we import are caught sustainably and legally,” said Janet Coit, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries, and acting assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and deputy NOAA administrator.

“IUU fishing undermines US fishermen who operate under the strongest fishery management practices and conservation laws, and NOAA will use every tool to make sure all nations follow the same rules,” she added.

The report identifies China, Costa Rica, Guyana, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Taiwan as having vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities during

2018-2020 with a further 29, including the European Union, identified as being poorer at regulating against harmful bycatch than the US.

NOAA lists key ways to improve fisheries management, for example, by developing laws and best practice to combat IUU fishing, supporting the effective management of protected species and ensuring a fair market for the US fishing industry.

Antarctica’s ‘Doomsday Glacier’ is Fighting Invisible Battle to Survive

West Antarctica is one of the fastest-warming regions on Earth where Thwaites Glacier is known as the “Doomsday Glacier.” Since the 1980s it has lost an estimated 595 billion tons (540 billion metric tons) of ice, contributing 4% to the annual global sea-level rise during that time.



The glacier’s rate of ice loss has accelerated substantially in the past three decades, partially due to hidden rivers of comparatively warm seawater slicing across the glacier’s underbelly, as well as unmitigated climate change warming the air and the ocean. New research suggests that the warming ocean and atmosphere aren’t the only factors pushing Thwaites to the brink; the heat of the Earth itself may be adding to the problems of West Antarctica’s glaciers.

French Court Decision on Tuna in Favour of Small Scale Fishermen Could Have European-Wide Implications

French courts have ruled in favour of the Union of Small-Scale Fishers from the Occitan Region (SPMO) and three other stakeholders in a battle over access to fishing rights. The class action, supported by the Low Impact Fishers of Europe, has been going on for four years in a challenge to a 2017 Order allocating Bluefin tuna quota.

Small-scale fishermen argued that they were given minimal quotas or overlooked altogether. Judges’ annulled the Order. The decision creates case law at national level which small-scale fishers say they can use in the future to push for changes to the Bluefin tuna quota allocation process and which, they say, could also be used to challenge the allocation of other species’ quotas.

The decision could also have some wider implications as the French Court’s analysis was based on the EU-wide Common Fisheries Policy as well as implications for the application of European law in France, finding that the method used to allocate quotas was neither transparent nor objective, contravening Article 17 of EU Regulation 1380/2013 of the CFP.

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Fish and Chips Going Well in the UK

A strong recovery in the fish and chip retail sector has been reported in the UK by the government fisheries development agency, Seafish, it has published its fourth and final review into the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the UK's seafood industry. The report covers January to March 2021, a period of uncertainty for the industry as Covid-19 restrictions remained and new requirements to trade with the EU came into effect.



Aoife Martin, Director of operations at Seafish, said that adjusting to a new trading environment had caused difficulties for many seafood businesses, not least those faced by live bi-value mollusc producers. "But many businesses have faced disruption on a lesser scale, such as getting to grips with new paperwork requirements as well as experiencing logistical issues and delays. On top of this the industry has continued to deal with the challenges of operating during a global pandemic," she said.

The quarterly review found that retail sales dropped from the unprecedented levels seen in March 2020 but remained strong, with fish and chip shop trade recovering to pre-pandemic levels, having been down 77% in April to June 2020, a 'remarkable recovery' according to Andrew Crook, president of the National Federation of Fish Friers.

Fish Consumption Does Not Satisfy All European Dietary Needs

Less than half of the European dietary recommendations for fish consumption are satisfied by national seafood supplies according to a report in the *European Journal of Nutrition*. It said that only 13 out of 31 European dietary recommendations for fish consumption were satisfied by national supplies.

The purpose of the study carried out was to "to review the seafood dietary recommendations of European countries and compare them to national seafood supplies," according to Paul Fernandes of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, one of the authors of the report.

"Methods of current seafood dietary recommendations were collated from national health authorities across Europe. Food balance sheets were downloaded from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and appropriate conversion factors were applied to each seafood commodity.

"Average net per capita seafood supplies from 2007 to 2017 were derived from data on imports and production for food from both capture fisheries and aquaculture, accounting for exports. The results showed that both national dietary recommendations and seafood supplies varied considerably throughout Europe. At a national level, on a per capita basis, only 13 out of the 31 of European dietary recommendations for fish consumption were satisfied by national seafood supplies. Most of the countries with coastal access, as well as those with traditional fish-eating cultures, such as France and countries in Northern Europe, had adequate seafood supplies to meet their recommendations. The landlocked countries of Central and Eastern Europe did not have enough seafood supplies to satisfy their recommendations.

"Our findings emphasise the need to not only consider consumer health outcomes when developing and advocating dietary recommendations, but also the sustainability of food production systems. As many foods are not necessarily locally-sourced but traded as part of global production and distribution systems, it is important to consider greater consistency between national dietary recommendations to facilitate more sustainable marine food systems."

Covid 19 Has Increased Consumption of Norwegian Pelagic Fish

The Norwegian Seafood Council has reported that its pelagic sector has benefited particularly from the Covid 19 pandemic. "Pelagic consumption has risen with both the purchasing frequency and purchasing volume increasing amongst those that were already buying herring and mackerel. At the same time, new consumers have been drawn to the species, the Council's Business Development Manager for Pelagic Strategy, told the North Atlantic Seafood Forum.

Jan Erik Johnsen said that in the first half of this year very large volumes of herring and mackerel were exported to overseas markets and achieved strong prices. "By comparison, widespread restaurant and catering closures have taken their toll on Norwegian cod sales volumes and prices this year. The situation for pelagics is very positive for suppliers because prices are still at sensible levels for consumers."

Green Party Forces Curb on Fishing in Scotland

A power-sharing political agreement between Scotland's SNP Government and the Scottish Greens includes a commitment to ban all fisheries and aquaculture from at least 10% of Scottish waters. The SNP failed to get an overall majority in the last election and made the deal to acquire parliamentary control. The shared policy platform has been described as "not a Coalition, but a supportive government approach and is called "Working together to build a greener, fairer, independent Scotland."

However, it is not being viewed as particularly fair by the aquaculture sector. There will be an "independent review" to consider the effectiveness and efficiency of the current regulatory regime for fish farming, it says. This was previously announced by the Scottish Government and criticised by the industry. The document says that a vision and strategy for sustainable aquaculture must place "an enhanced emphasis on environmental protection and community benefits." There is also to be an "immediate programme of work" to better protect wildlife and the environment, including a response to the Salmon Interactions Working Group in September 2021, consultation on a "spatially adaptive" sea lice risk assessment framework for fish farms by the end of the year and strengthened controls on sea lice, wrasse and fish escapes in the course of 2021/22.

The joint party document makes a commitment to "ensure that fish farming contributes more to support communities and recreational fisheries, to promote innovation and to support services such as fish health and welfare inspections and monitoring" and to "a step change" in marine protection, including the introduction of a new category of "Highly Protected Marine Areas" (HPMAs), for inshore and offshore locations, which will cover at least 10% of Scottish waters. Within these HPMAs there will be no permitted aquaculture or fisheries of any kind, or infrastructure developments, but limited tourism and recreational activities will be allowed.

The SNP-Green policy programme also states: "The Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party believe that Scotland should have a sustainable, diverse, competitive and economically viable aquaculture industry. It must operate within environmental limits and with social licence and ensure there is a thriving marine ecosystem for future generations."

Fishing Boat Observers Face Abuse and Violence

The heavy presence of Chinese-owned fleets off several countries has been causing a lot of concern.

In Ghana it is reported that State fisheries observers reporting on the largely Chinese trawling fleet operating in its waters get threatened, abused and when these do not work, offered bribes. The allegations have been reported by the Environmental Justice Foundation.

Checking The Heart Conditions of Fish

A collaboration between the University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh, Cooke Aquaculture Scotland, Life Diagnostics Ltd, Moredun Research Institute, Benchmark Genetics Ltd, and the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC) is working on a project to check if a range of heart conditions in fish could be detected through a simple blood test.



A diagnostic tool, based on similar breakthroughs that are already in use to monitor the health of terrestrial animals such as cattle, is aimed at early detection of cardiomyopathies such as heart and skeletal muscle inflammation (HSMI), cardiomyopathy syndrome (CMS), and pancreas disease (PD) in salmon.

The test will identify tell-tale blood biomarkers that indicate a risk of disease. Researchers will be collecting and analysing salmon blood to track changes in relevant biomarkers from fish at a variety of Cooke Aquaculture Scotland sites and trials of Benchmark Atlantic salmon strains over the next few months. The University of Edinburgh will assess the samples for cardiac disease, determine the health status of the fish, and provide validation data of the diagnostic tests.

The tests, which return results in 45 minutes, could help producers to understand how fish are affected and inform best stock management choices, as well as identifying fish with greater physiological resistance to cardiomyopathies.

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Lobster boats soaking up the sun in Ardglass Photo by Christopher Feenan



RNLI REPORT

**Niamh Stephenson,
Ireland Media Manager for the RNLI**

As I write this, August is drawing to a close and talk is turning to 'back to school'. I know a lot of lifeboat crews will hope that might mean a quieter time as this summer, as predicted, turned out to be a busy one for call-outs, both triumphant rescues and sadly lives lost.

Two stations stand out in this month's column - Achill Island and Dunmore East, though miles apart both work in their communities to save lives. Their news mixes rescues with comings and goings.



Achill Island RNLI were delighted to be able to bring a patient they had medically evacuated from Inishturk almost two months ago, back to his family home. John was surrounded by his wife Mary and daughters Phil Kilbane and Anne Maher prior to his departure from Achill Island in flat calm sea conditions and glorious evening sunshine. Speaking of her father's dramatic recovery, Anne said: 'The doctor told us Dad could have died if the lifeboat didn't take him off the island back in June.' Echoing the appreciation of her sister, Phil Kilbane continued: 'The people of both Clare Island and Inishturk are forever grateful for the help and assistance of Achill Island RNLI to the islanders. A big thank you to the crew who volunteer their time, day and night, and for bringing our Dad back home safely this evening.' Prior to the departure, local family Katie and John Sweeney and their son Seamus Tiernan were present on the pier to wave John off. Seamus, a talented and well-known musician, played some traditional Irish tunes for John, much to his delight, as he boarded the Sam and Ada Moody. Pictured (r-l): Anne Maher, Michael Cattigan, Achill Island RNLI Lifeboat Mechanic, John O'Toole, Patrick McNamara, Achill Island RNLI Lifeboat Crew and Phil Kilbane.



Volunteer lifeboat crew from Fenit RNLI rescued a swimmer on Sunday night, 22nd August following an extensive search after clothes had been found on a beach at Castlegregory earlier in the day. Fenit RNLI and Rescue 115 had been requested to launch by the Irish Coast Guard yesterday morning at 11am after the discovery of clothes on a beach in Castlegregory. At 8.30pm volunteer lifeboat crew with Fenit RNLI spotted a head above the water and took the swimmer onboard the All Weather Lifeboat. It is not known how long the swimmer had been in the water but the casualty was brought to Fenit Harbour to be met by ambulance and brought to hospital.

Achill – A Retirement and A Return

Achill RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager, Tony McNamara has retired from his operational role with the RNLI after three decades of volunteering, although thankfully he will continue to volunteer with the Achill Island RNLI Fundraising Branch.

Tony was involved with the RNLI since 1989 when a new lifeboat station opened at Ballyglass, the first all-weather lifeboat station to be opened in Ireland since 1929. He was the Second Coxswain there until 2002 when he was appointed Honorary Secretary on the retirement of the late Paddy Leech.

In moving to Achill, Tony was appointed Deputy Launching Authority for the station before taking up the role of Lifeboat Operations Manager in 2017 on the retirement of Tom Honeyman. This role saw him managing all operational activities at the lifeboat station, authorising the launch of the lifeboat and the day-to-day management of the station.

In bidding Tony farewell, we welcome Ciaran Needham into the role; he has big shoes to fill but do it he will, and we look forward to working with him.

In a heart-warming lifeboat call-out, Achill Island RNLI were delighted to bring John O'Toole (88) whom they had medically evacuated from Inishturk almost two

months ago, back to his family home. John had spent time in hospital and recuperating at a nursing home before returning home. What a way to arrive home.

Dunmore. Kilmore and Rosslare

Recently we had the announcement of the three bronze medals for Gallantry for the Coxswains of Dunmore East, Kilmore Quay and Rosslare RNLI and the accompanying medal certificates for the lifeboat crews involved in the rescue of the crew of the Lily B off the Wexford coast last October.

Nine lives were saved and an environmental disaster was avoided when the three lifeboat crews battled for hours to avoid a one hundred-metre cargo vessel from hitting rocks at Hook Head. We look forward to celebrating with them in the future and of course we also have the ceremony for the bronze medal awarded to the Castletownbere Coxswain, Dean Hegarty and Letter of Thanks to the lifeboat crew, for their rescue of six crew off a 25-metre fishing vessel at an area known as 'The Pipers' in 2018.

Fenit Rescue

Recently we appointed a new volunteer lifeboat press officer for Fenit RNLI, Eilish Power.

The lifeboat crew from Fenit RNLI res-

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cued a swimmer following an extensive search after clothes had been found on a beach at Castlegregory earlier in the day. It was a story that made headlines, but the crew were just happy he had been located and brought safety home after such a long search.

Aran Islands

Aran Islands were called to two medical evacuations from Inis Oirr and Inis Mór. One was to a cyclist on a day trip who had sustained an injury after a fall from a bicycle.

The second was to transport a patient from Inis Mór who needed further medical attention. These call-outs are important for island communities and bring the lifeboat crew a lot of pride.

Kilmore Save Four from Yacht That Sank

Kilmore Quay RNLI rescued four people in the very early hours after their 14m yacht got into difficulty and subsequently sank 50 miles off the Wexford coast.

The crew were requested to launch at 2.44am. The yacht had been on passage from Dublin to Vigo in Spain. It was 11am before the lifeboat arrived back to Kilmore Quay with all crew onboard, safe and well but tired and I'm sure ready for a good breakfast.

New Shannon Class Lifeboat for Dunmore

Finally, to end on exciting news for the sunny South-east. Preparations are well underway to bring the RNLI's latest lifeboat for the Irish fleet to its new home at Dunmore East next month.

The €2.4 million vessel will be the first Shannon class lifeboat to be based in the south-east. It's hello to William

and Agnes Wray (boat number 13-41) and goodbye Elizabeth and Ronald, which has been saving lives at sea there since October 1996.

Put it in your diaries, Dunmore East will be bringing the new lifeboat home on Sunday, September 26 and what time should she arrive into her new berth at? Well that would be 13.41 hrs of course and if you need that explained, read above.

..... And A Doggie Story

We also had an animal rescue when Dunmore East RNLI launched to rescue Ellie who had fallen over a 30-metre cliff, half a mile to the East of Portally Cove.



In lifeboat camera footage the dog was sighted on a ledge at the bottom of the cliff and two of the volunteer crew launched the lifeboat's XP boat and made their way to the base of the cliff where one of the crew was able to climb onto the rocks to rescue Ellie the dog. Thankfully Ellie was unharmed after her ordeal. I'm told she wagged her tail all the way home on the lifeboat!

With Thanks

When you work with the RNLI, it's not unusual for people who might see you out and about to ask you to send on their thanks or thoughts to the lifeboat crew from 'that callout the other day.' At busy times it can be difficult to know which one they mean, and you don't wish to offend. I do pass on thanks to all involved and know I'll have hit it right at least some of the time.



Local Women Set Impressive Record in Lake Swim for Lough Ree RNLI

Just before tea time on the 25th August, Serena Friel and Karen Reynolds swam under the Town Bridge in Athlone to complete an amazing 32km swim, the entire length of Lough Ree, in 10 hours and 13 minutes raising thousands of euro for Lough Ree RNLI by completing this daunting challenge.

Athlone women Serena and Karen enjoy a regular swim at Coosan Point in the shadow of the emerging Lough Ree RNLI boathouse which is due for completion next month. With a local community fund raising project ongoing the two swimmers decided to play their part and the 'Lough Ree 32k Challenge' was born.

After weeks of training, coaching and planning and with great organisational support from work colleagues, family and friends the girls took to the water at 7am at Lanesborough Bridge at the north of Lough Ree on the Longford/Roscommon border.

Setting off in foggy conditions, Karen was first in the water for this relay swim. Herself and Serena alternated every hour on their way down the lake. The decision to delay the challenge a few days due to weather patterns proved very wise and the swimmers enjoyed excellent conditions on the water throughout the swim.

As the swim progressed the support crew on the accompanying boats realised that something special was on the cards. On board reports ticked off all the landmarks down the lake from Quaker Island on down towards Hare Island. In Athlone and on social media excitement began to mount when by mid-afternoon the swimmers had passed Hudson Bay.

Large crowds of well-wishers and supporters gathered on the quayside in Athlone, from the White Bridge to the Town Bridge in anticipation of their arrival. Just after 5pm accompanied by the Lough Ree RNLI volunteer crew on board the 'Tara Scougall' and the support flotilla, which had been alongside them all day, Serena Friel and Karen Delaney crossed the finish line in Athlone to loud applause.

In completing the 'Lough Ree 32k Challenge' the women set a record that will take some beating. Following the record breaking achievement Serena thanked 'swimming partner Karen, coach David Warby and all who supported the challenge in any way.'

Lough Ree RNLI Operations Manager Jude Kilmartin, said: 'the charity is most grateful to Serena and Karen for a terrific initiative which has already raised over €6,000 for the charity.'

The Gofundme page remains open for donations at <https://gofund.me/199d3d04>

Lough Ree RNLI volunteers got an opportunity recently to examine progress on the building of the new €1.2m boathouse at Coosan Point, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

As the charity enters its tenth year of service on Lough Ree the local RNLI volunteer lifeboat crew look forward to the completion of a state of the art boathouse beside its current base at Coosan Point on Lough Ree.

Built on a site donated by the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, which will have its national headquarters under the same roof, the 280sqm two storey facility will transform the ability of Lough Ree RNLI to offer a vital service to the midlands. At its heart is the boathall which will be home to the Atlantic 85 Inshore lifeboat 'Tara Scougall' allowing for quicker access on to the water via a new purpose built slip-way.

Other facilities include a large meeting room to facilitate ongoing training of crews and water safety education for community groups. Alongside is a communications centre, managers office, mechanics workshop and a small shop.

The main contractors, Woodvale Construction from Omagh, Co. Tyrone have been on site since last autumn. Built to the highest specifications and heated geothermally it is expected that the facility will be handed over to the RNLI in September with the local volunteer crew taking possession in October.

Given that this is one of the busiest RNLI stations in Ireland, with

almost 400 call outs, 30 already this year, assisting over 300 vessels and coming to the aid of over a thousand people this building is a critical piece of infrastructure for a lakeside community.

Locally, the Lough Ree RNLI fundraising committee started a campaign to raise a community contribution of €100,000. Treasurer Vincent Rafter said that he wanted to 'thank those who had already donated and organised 'Go Fund Me' pages.' He said that 'while great progress had been made at a difficult time for all charities it is hoped that one final wave of generosity from local businesses, community organisations, sports clubs and individuals will see the target achieved.'

(Inset pics): Framed - Serena Friel and Karen Reynolds and passing the White Bridge RNLI Lifeboat with swimmers in the foreground.



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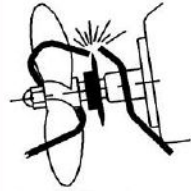
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The 'Devil' in the Detail

What do you get if you combine a lifetime of experience in engineering, fishing and aquaculture? – the world's most advanced and efficient cage cleaning system.

The brainchild of brothers Michael and Tim Ford in Tasmania who founded the Aqua Clean Tas company, the innovative *Tassie Devil Tracker 4000* cage net cleaning system has rapidly gained international acclaim as the fastest and most efficient cleaning operation of its type ever designed.

With a background in fabrication and diesel mechanics, both of the Ford brothers have been heavily involved in the aquaculture and fishing industry for many years and have worked as cray fishermen whilst also owning a fabrication business, then both transitioned into maintenance roles which provided maintenance support to local salmon farming companies in Tasmania, which included the servicing of various high-pressure net cleaning systems.

It was from this latter experience that Michael and Tim saw the opportunity for a new and better system to improve on the traditional high pressure net cleaners, with particular attention to better efficiency and running costs.

The result of their first efforts gave birth to the *'Tassie Devil 4000'* net cleaner - a hydraulically-driven propeller cleaning head mounted on a vessel and manually dropped up and down on the hydraulic lines to clean the outside of predator nets – a very effective but basic cleaning system which was very soon to evolve into a state-of-the-art piece of aquaculture engineering.

Enter the Mach II version - the *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* – the same successful cleaner head for working inside all types of nets and cages as the original but now with gripping tracks and cameras and including the capability to be remotely operated.

"After three years of Aqua Clean Tas being in operation we have now got the *Tassie Devil Tracker 4000* cleaning system fine tuned to a machine that we are very confident to export to customers around the world," said Aqua Clean's Sales Director Nick Penno, adding that the company now has cleaning systems in operation for Salmon, Trout, Barramundi (Sea Bass), Bluefin Tuna and Kingfish all across Australia -- from the cooler waters in Tasmania to the tropical waters off Broome in Western Australia.

"Each of these different types of farms have provided us with varying challenges that have often proven too difficult for other makes of high-pressure cleaners and we are proud that we have developed a machine that has been able to overcome these," he said.

Nick himself is a good example of the confidence that people hold in the *Tassie Devil 4000* product and the Aqua Clean company as he previously worked for one of the world's largest farmed salmon companies as manager of net cleaning operations – a role in which meant he has dealt with many different makes of net cleaning

systems but, after seeing the results of the Aqua Clean company's product, he left his job decided to join the Aqua Clean team.

"After seeing how the *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* system worked compared to other machines on the market I believed that Tim and Michael had a product that will be very successful around the world so I left my role am excited to work for them," Nick said.

So, what's so special about the *Tassie Devil Tracker 4000* system?

For all farmed fish operators, the immediate attraction of this system is its working efficiency and economy of use.

As the system is not powering a high-pressure water pump, but only uses a small engine it requires less than 10lt of diesel per hour - in comparison to some other makes of similar machines that can require upwards of 80lt per hour and some other systems that need to run separate engines to power their high-pressure pumps and hydraulics and use over a shocking 120lt per hour.

Also, as this system does not need to run a high-pressure pump, the associated costs that come with servicing and maintaining the system are also dramatically reduced – which in turn means that without the use of the pressure water pump reliability goes up.

The same patented dual seal design motors that run the propellers are running the tracks and out of all the machines produced there has only been a fail rate of just 1%.

Performance

The *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* incorporates the use of Danfoss hydraulic pumps and motors, using high-quality synthetic bio-oil in the system, which has proven to be robust and reliable, and helps avoid the tradition problems with hydraulic high pressure systems when most companies need to have a mechanic or contractor that is capable to fix them. As most farms have vessels with hydraulics the know how to repair the TDT 4000 system should something go wrong is a quick and easy fix.

In terms of performance, the *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* is an extremely powerful system, with propellers providing the thrust to hold the machine on the net and, as well as performing the cleaning operation, these have proven to be able to clean even the toughest of fouling on a regular basis without any issues and Aqua Clean proudly claim that no other high-pressure cleaners on the market would be able to clean these nets.

The system will easily clean over 1000spm per hour on dirty nets, this drops to around 800sqm on nets with very heavy mussels, weed and algae growth and can clean fouling off the very dirty nets up to four times faster than traditional high-pressure cleaners.

As the system has a small engine and hydraulic pump in the power cabinet this has a smaller footprint than most competitors - allowing customers to install the system to smaller boats and it can be run as a single man operation.

The power cabinet supplies all the power to the electronics (TVs, topside control box and controllers) so no power supply from the vessel is needed. The system is run using a standard Sony PlayStation controller which is unencrypted so that spares can be kept easily and cheaply – keeping the system uncomplicated means that it is possible to make any repairs easy and ensure downtime is at a minimum.

The full system can be installed in less than three hours depending on the vessel and can easily be transferred from vessel to vessel if required.

Of most importance, the complete *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* system is priced under most of the current ROV cleaners on the market and with significantly less maintenance and fuel costs combined with a lot less downtime it has proven to be very cost effective.

So much so that some customers have reported savings of over \$200,000 AUD / €127,500 / £110,000 per year on fuel alone compared with the previous high-pressure cleaner they operated.

Adding the savings of not having to run and repair a high pressure water pump and the decreased amount of down time these savings can easily amount to over \$300,000 per year.

"Overall, we have aimed to make a very reliable and efficient cleaner that will clean any fouling put in front of it at a time when rival companies are making more elaborate ROV flying cleaners that can't compete in terms of performance and efficiency," concluded Nick Penno.

Due to Aqua Clean's success in Tasmania and Australia, demand is now spreading across the international aquaculture sector and Scotland is the latest to order the *'Tassie Devil Tracker 4000'* and this system is due to be installed in August.

This new system will also be promoted at the upcoming Aqua Nor event by Petter Pettersen and his company Marine Ctrl AS.

Petter Petter, and his business partner Malcolm Chalmers, have many years' experience in the sales, maintenance and production of net cleaners for aquaculture and are Aqua Clean Tas' representatives for the UK, Europe and the Mediterranean.



The *Tassie Devil Tracker 4000* system unboxed and at work (below).



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On 23rd August 2021, the MFV 'Realt an Oileain II' (G733) [Skipper: David Heaney] retrieved a specimen of Henslow's Swimming Crab (*Polybius henslowii*) measuring 26 mm carapace width (CW) which was attached to the surface buoy of his crab pots while fishing over a depth of 80 m north of Inishbofin (53.75°N, 10.33°W), Co Galway (Figs. 1). David remarked that he had seen several of these unusual crabs on the near surface buoy ropes over the previous few days. The specimens represents the most northerly records of *P. henslowii* from Irish waters to date.

P. henslowii has rarely been reported from Irish waters. Indeed, there are only 12 known records, and most of these were recorded from the SW coast. The first specimen was observed during the mid-19th century (prior to 1856) amongst surface shoals of Sea Nettles (Acalephae) at Crosshaven, Co Cork. Considerable quantities were captured by a trawling smack off Valentia, Co Kerry during early 1899, one of which is currently on display in the Natural History Museum in Dublin (Fig. 2 below).



During August 1904 and 1906, four specimens were taken during research cruises by the RV *Helga* in offshore surface waters (over depths of 238-991 m) off SW Ireland, including the Porcupine Seabight. During October 1978, a specimen was captured at a depth of 6 m off Bantry Pier, Co Cork, and another during August 1981 at a depth of 5 m in Mulroe Cove, Durrus, Dunmanus Bay, Co Cork. During September 2003, three specimens were taken during intertidal beach seine surveys in Co Kerry (Ventry and Brandon) and Co Galway (Salthill). More recently (August 2014), several specimens were found in the stomach of a Blue-fin Tunny (*Thunnus thynnus*) captured by the MFV *Ocean Pioneer* (S45) and MFV *Boy Jason* (S440) while pair pelagic trawling for Albacore (*T. alalunga*) in surface waters (over a depth of 2000 m) off SW Ireland (ICES VIIIk). The crabs were discovered by Stefan Griesbach (*Gannet Fishmongers*, Galway) while gutting the Blue-fin Tunny (Fig. 3 below).



Henslow's Swimming Crab is a warm-water benthopelagic species, ranging from NW Africa (Cape Spartel, Morocco, 35.7856°N, 5.9314°W), Western Mediterranean Sea (rarely eastwards of

Malta), and along the European Atlantic northwards to SW Ireland and the English Channel, with isolated records from as far north as the Orkneys (59.0500°N, 1.7833°W), Skagerrak (Hällö Lighthouse, Sweden, 58.3359°N, 11.2174°W), and NE Scotland (River Don, Aberdeen, 57.1497°W, 2.0943°W). A number of specimens has been recorded from the UK side of the Irish Sea, including Skokholm and Dale Beach (SW Wales, June 1960), Hinkley Point (Somerset, Bristol Channel, September 1989), Liverpool Bay and Solway Firth (June 2006). During 2008, unusually large numbers of pelagic larvae of *P. henslowii* were discovered for the first time in the southern North Sea.

P. henslowii is superbly designed as a powerfully agile pelagic swimmer. Although large aggregations of *P. henslowii* have often been observed swarming in offshore surface waters, the species has also been recorded from demersal depths of at least 1245 m, and from shallow inshore waters where occasional mass strandings have been reported. Enormous numbers were washed ashore at St Ives (Cornwall) during 1878 and 1879, and at Shoreham (West Sussex) after a great storm on 24th January 1881. The species was formerly used as a land fertilizer in Portugal. In Galicia (NW Spain) it has been estimated that *P. henslowii* may represent >90% of the total Decapod crab biomass on the continental shelf.

In southern European waters adult Henslow's Swimming Crabs which reach a maximum CW of 50 mm, prey voraciously on shoaling fish in both inshore and offshore surface waters e.g. Round Sardinella (*Sardinella aurita*) and Lanternfishes (*Mycophum punctatus*). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, *P. henslowii* was frequently taken in Herring (*Clupea harengus*), Pilchard (*Sardinia pilchardus*) and Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) nets in the English Channel off Cornwall and Devon. *P. henslowii* in turn, is an important food item in the diet of large oceanic pelagic shoaling fish (e.g. Blue-fin Tunny), as well as surface-feeding sea birds such as Yellow-legged Gulls (*Larus cachinnans*). During the mid-19th century, species was discovered in unspecified fish stomachs in Falmouth Bay, Cornwall.

It is possible that Henslow's Swimming Crabs may be more common in Irish waters than the current paucity of records would suggest, particularly in offshore surface waters and during exceptionally warm years. Indeed, it is possible that the recent appearance of the species in the NE Irish Sea, southern North Sea and off the west coast of Ireland (Inishbofin) may be an indicator of the increasing trend in ocean warming and general climatic change.

Declan is always interested in receiving reports about unusual specimens captured in Irish waters (declanquigley2021@gmail.com; 087-6458485)

Henslow's Swimming Crab (*Polybius henslowii*) Surfaces off Inishbofin, Co Galway

Declan Quigley reports



Figure 1. Henslow's Swimming Crab (*Polybius henslowii*) captured off Inishbofin

New All Terrain Beach Wheelchair Arrives in Youghal



Pictured is Leanne Hehir with the new all-terrain wheelchair that helps people living with a disability enjoy the blue-flag Redbarn Beach in Youghal, Co. Cork. The wheelchair is the first one of its kind in East Cork and is the result of a partnership between Cork County Council, the Disability Federation of Ireland, Cork Sports Partnership, The Irish Wheelchair Association and the Quality Hotel & Leisure Centre Redbarn.

The 'Hippocampe Beach and All Terrain Wheelchair' helps individuals with disabilities to access the beach and allows users to share experiences with family and friends. The seat is composed of thick and hydrophobic foam that does not absorb water and dries quickly, allowing those who use it to enjoy both the sandy shoreline and the waters of Redbarn.

Those wishing to use the new all-terrain wheelchair is asked to make a booking in advance through The Quality Hotel & Leisure Centre Redbarn on 024-93095.



Dunmore East - Photo by Brian Motyer

Coast Guard Director Leaves After Disagreements with Department of Transport

The Director of the Coast Guard Chris Reynolds, on assignment as Head of Mission at Eucap Somalia posted a note on Facebook in August stating: "With a heavy heart I will not be returning but staying on in Somalia. After a decade as Director probably enough."

The Department of Transport had turned down his application for extended leave of absence to September next year.

A former Naval Service officer, he was appointed to head the Irish Coast Guard in 2007 and was seconded to Somalia with the EU in July 2016.

There had been difficulties between him and the Department.

In March he stated that the Department of Transport was "tracking his social media posts" which he described as "scary". This followed criticism he had made of the departmental oversight of the Coast Guard where he had said in a Facebook posting: "I have heard that the Irish Coast Guard has stopped doing cliff rescue. Anyone know why?"

The Coast Guard said it had temporarily ceased operations for a number of coast and cliff rescue teams for what were quoted as "safety reasons" due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Director Reynolds later said he had been given a "formal written reprimand" by the department's HR section.

After the Rescue 116 crash in March 2017, he had returned to the Coast Guard for fifteen months, before his promotion from Deputy to Director of the EU Somalia Mission.

Relations between Chris Reynolds and Department officials had become poor and

he had also claimed that he was prevented from visiting Irish Coast Guard stations on his own without a civil servant accompanying him.

"I had identified that the organisation was deficient in health and safety, in resources and aviation expertise," he said and that he had argued as far back as 2011/12 for more resources for the Irish Coast Guard and that these areas were addressed after he had identified them. "The case I made for extra staff and funding was granted. I am happy that I was able to put the Irish Coast Guard back together again."

Reynolds confirmed in a media interview since his resignation announcement that, at one stage, he had suggested to the Tanaiste and Minister for Defence, Simon Coveney, a merging of the Coast Guard with the Naval Service. The MARINE TIMES had reported previously on this.

The Government announcement of revised plans for search-and-rescue has suggested that the Air Corps could be re-engaged in SAR, from which it was withdrawn in 2004, leaving it primarily to the Coast Guard.

Though there had been reports that he was concerned about this, in a media interview following resignation, he said he had nothing against the Air Corps returning to search and rescue "if it can guarantee it is available 24/7".



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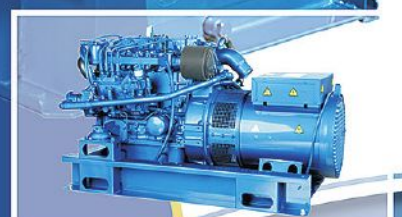
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