

MARINE TIMES

IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 2022 - PRICE €3



Celtic Warrior II off Old Head at Kinsale - Photo courtesy Carroll O'Donoghue (www.KinsaleAngling.com)



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Brexit Hangover Erodes Fisheries Council to Role of Farcical Circus

Rockall - "Why are we allowing this to continue a year on?"

SFPA Announces New 3-Year Strategy

How Will It Deliver On "Collaboration With Stakeholders" What Does It Really Mean?

See inside for full reports plus so much more

Newspaper for Ireland's Fishing, Marine and Coastal Communities

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the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

Story of the Greyhound

The Art of Kicking a Can down the Road has become an Olympic Sport not only in Government Departments lads but very much so in the Lending Departments of our Pillar Banks.

I know lads that projects must be properly assessed but you must acknowledge and respect the experience and knowledge of the Fisherman/Promoter and acknowledge that he is not a Lunatic by putting assets which he has accumulated over a tough lifetime on the line to enhance or expand his Business.

Particularly when in most cases the Lenders and their Sector Teams have not a clue of the realities or the practicalities of the Fishing Industry.

That is a strong statement lads- but sadly I have had first hand experience in the past weeks of the ignorance which exists amongst lenders.

It is terrifying that people with so little knowledge of the real issues can have so much power over the futures of so many people.

There are things which matter Lads and which really can affect a credit decision – and there are things which have no more

significance that ticking a box.

If we get a letter from the Client's Accountant confirming that his/her Tax affairs are in order - why also then do we need a Copy of the actual Tax Return ? Do we not trust the Accountant- do we think he is an Idiot or a Crook???

I have a medical (*and some would say a Mental Condition*) which requires for me to have regular Blood Tests. When the result issues the Practice Nurse will ring me.

I don't insist on seeing the print out from the Lab !!!!!

We must try to return to the situation where some semblance of trust exists between Banker and Client.

On the topic of getting the additional "Independent" Surveyors and Legals as insisted on by the Banks I have a situation where a Ball was Dropped and the Bank and the Client are staring at a significant shortfall in the face.

I am trying – **and WILL**- force the Bank to revert to the Professionals who were paid for by the unfortunate borrower.

Why insist on a Professional Opinion if you are not prepared to rely on it.

Relying on it includes relying on the Professional Indemnity Insurance of the Person or Company giving the opinion!!!!

So if they make a bags of it **CLAIM against their PI** – That's what it's for Lads !!!!

I am in no way Anti Banks here lads but they are betraying at the moment the excellent Customer Relationships built up over many years.

Being close to your Customer is **NO SIN** lads and being friendly with your Customer does not increase the possibility of something going wrong.

It takes two to Tango but it works better if both parties are dancing to the same tune.

"Relationship Management" would still be on the Menu of all of the Banks and if properly done will lead to additional Business Opportunities – including sale of ancillary products for the Bank.

The air of suspicion and double checking which permeates almost all transactions is

not Welcoming despite the efforts of the remaining few REAL Relationship Managers in the Service.

I know that a lot of it is regulatory but maybe you might help the Client through it more than you do.

That is not a good foundation for additional Sales and the situation whereby your Client is dealing with you because he/she has no option is not healthy.

Non Interest Income is and I believe will become even more important to the Banks as pressure will mount on the Lending Rates and the possibility of other lenders entering the Market.

New Lenders may not have to cover the expense of the Branch Networks which although being reduced are still expensive and very necessary.

The news that the Government Shares in AIB may be sold and that the Bail Out will shortly be repaid.

I am sure that the advanced Financial minds amongst our more Socialist parties will have their own spin on it and be offering "Advice".

I know that the Charges and the Interest Rate Margins are higher here but any business must be allowed to make profit in order to repay its Loans and surely as owners of the Banks the Government will want them to be profitable.

I am sure that the other financial experts will have a view on that.

Profit is no sin lads.

Profit is where we get Tax and Wages and scope for development!!!

I am reminded of the man who owned the champion Greyhound who was winning round him. This was as a result of excellent training and a superior diet of the best food and meat. One of his owner's People before Profit advisors suggested that if he could train the Greyhound to live on Nothing- costs would be reduced and profits increased.

Story is that he took that advice and just at a point where he had "trained" the Greyhound to live on nothing ...

.... IT DIED !!!!

Happy New Year everyone - Stay safe



Western Chieftain - Photo by Tommy Dirrane

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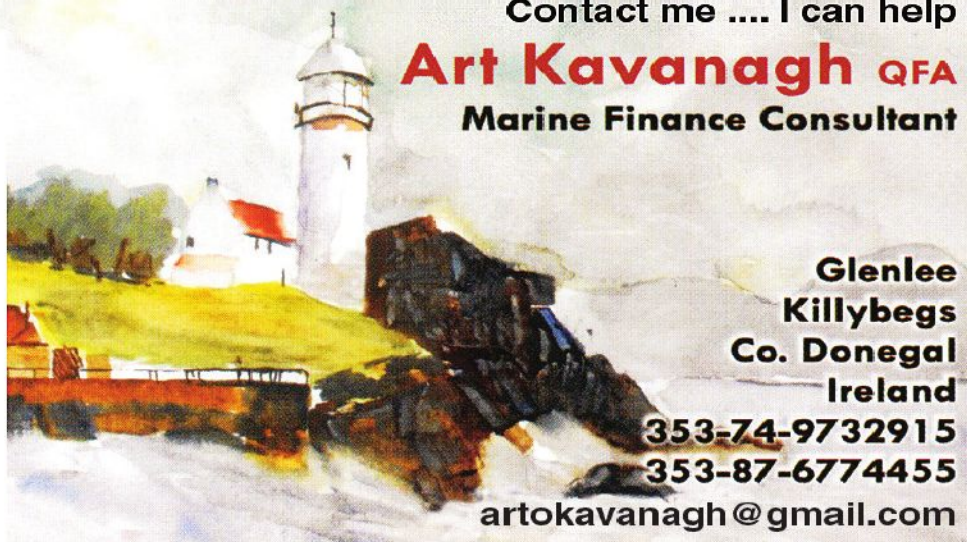
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New Control Plan Announced Just Before Christmas

“Will Minimise Industry’s Risk of Non-Compliance” says SFPA

Investigation Audit Report Still A ‘Secret’ Document

Four days before Christmas Day, on Tuesday, December 21st, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority issued a media release stating that “a new Control Plan has been approved by the European Commission for the Irish fishing industry, to be implemented from New Year’s Day.”

It looked a bit like the practice of government slipping in an announcement as a major holiday approached.

“The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) confirms that a control plan has been approved by the European Commission for implementation from 1st January to 30th April 2022 covering the spring pelagic fisher season, as well as demersal fishing activity,” the media release said. “During this period, the SFPA will continue its work towards securing European Commission approval of a permanent control plan that will provide certainty for the industry along with eliminating concerns on Ireland’s control measures and will minimize the risk of the industry’s non-compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy, which led to the Commission’s revoking of Ireland’s control plan earlier this year. During the first four months of the new year, the SFPA will continue to engage with the Commission and industry on developing a fair and effective permanent control plan.”

There was no mention that this revocation and the report audit on which it was based is being apparently treated like a “secretive document” which neither the Commission nor the SFPA will make public to the fishing industry. The Commission and SFPA have been accused of acting as “judge and jury” against the industry and denying it the opportunity to challenge the decision.

Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation has said it will pursue every legal avenue open to it to insist on publication of the audit details which would vindicate his members (See page 32).

The Irish Fish Producers and Exporters’ Association has also strongly criticised the Commission and the SFPA for refusing to disclose the contents of the report.

Was the Minister for the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, aware that this announcement was going to be made just before Christmas?

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Marine told the Marine Times: “The Fisheries Control Plan is an operational matter within the remit of the SFPA and questions on this should be redirected to the SFPA. The SFPA as appropriate has been in direct communication with the Commission on this matter. Approval of the Control Plan is a matter for the EU Commission and not a matter for the EU Council. The SFPA has kept the Minister informed of the position.

“The Minister has had on-going communication with Commissioner Sinkevicius on this and a range of other matters. The Minister has ensured that the Commissioner was fully aware of the importance of having a Control Plan in place.”

It proved difficult to get an indication of what exactly was in the plan. At the time of going to press with this edition of the MARINE TIMES we were still seeking this, and told that it was hoped to provide the information but “it is of course holiday season.”

That did not stop the Commission or the SFPA announcing the new plan or adding blame to the industry for the revocation of the previous plan in its media release which said that it “will minimize the risk of the industry’s non-compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy.”

Again, no acknowledgment of non-disclosure of what is contained in the disputed “secretive document”.

THE BACKGROUND

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) announced an online consultation on the 4th of June 2021, to gather feedback and opinion on a draft revised Control Plan for a derogation to weigh fish after trans-

port in Ireland. Submissions were invited on the content, scope and implementation of the draft plan and those received before the deadline of 18th of June 2021 would be used to inform the final document to be submitted to the EU Commission for its approval.

The SFPA said it was considering the submission of a new Control Plan to the European Commission following the decision of the European Commission to revoke with immediate effect Ireland’s Control Plan thereby removing the derogation for the fishing industry to weigh fishery products following transport away from the place of landing. Currently all fishery products must be weighed at the place of landing before those products are transported, held in storage or sold. Sample weighing for certain fishery products landed in standardised boxes continues to be permitted.

The SFPA received 21 written submissions to the consultation. The submissions were received from a wide variety of groups including Producer Organisations, Seafood Industry representatives and Seafood Companies. Submissions were also received from individuals working in the Seafood Sector.

The majority of submissions related to the non-inclusion of Pelagic landings by fishing vessels greater than 10 metres in draft Control Plan, with the SFPA being asked to revise the plan by including these pelagic Landings. Submissions were also received highlighting practical difficulties for fishers in having to weigh fish at landing.

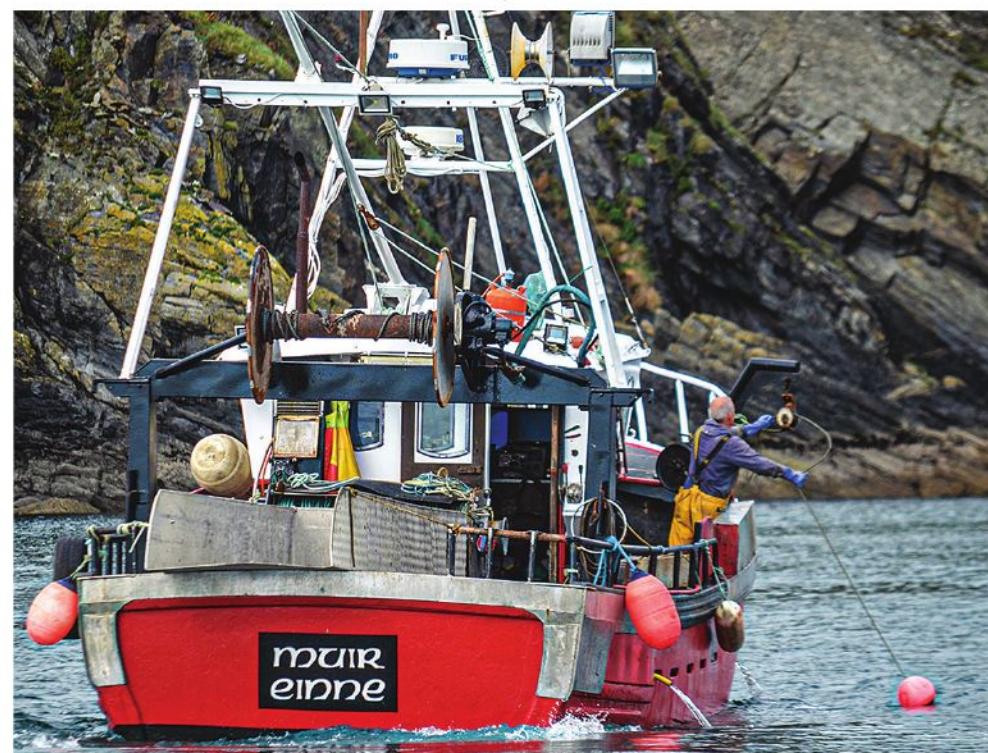
The SFPA took the submissions into account whilst developing a new Control plan and that Plan has been submitted to the European Commission for their consideration.

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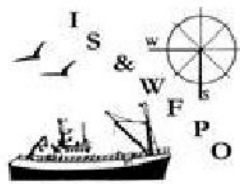


Muir Einne off Old Head at Kinsale
Photo courtesy Carroll O'Donoghue (www.KinsaleAngling.com)

The Dawning Reality



"Ireland now has a seat on the United Nations so why are we not using our influence to raise the wrongful destruction of one of our oldest Industries, so others can enter our waters and take for themselves our most renewable resource that currently ensures food security for our people," asks Patrick Murphy, Chief Executive of the Irish South and West Fish Producers' Organisation.



Iwish the readers a Happy New year, once again with the dawning reality that the changes for Irish fishermen following last month's December Council of Ministers held every December in Brussels has ended up as the usual damp squid for Irish fishermen.

The failure to reach agreement in UK and EU Bilateral talks once again ties our hands for 2022, what was in the past an annual meeting in Brussels where Industry aided our Minister and his Officials to trash out the Total Allowable Catch figures for the year ahead is now waste of time and money for all involved.

The Minister's frustration that there is no agreement reached between the UK and EU, dictates fishermen are once again forced to plan for the year ahead on three months of Quota of provisional scientific quotas until such time as the Egos of our respective negotiators are massaged enough to allow them reach an agreement for both sides that will last until the end of December 2022.

If this does not show how the European Commission view Ireland's fishing Industry then their robbing of our natural resource should.

There is clear and irrefutable evidence in our Marine Institute's own 2021 Stock Book showing many stocks in Ireland's EEZ could clearly allow for far higher Total Allowable Catches and sustainable Quota's for Irish fishermen many of whom will be forced to leave the Industry if the Common

fishery policy remains in favour of our visiting fleets.

Each year, the Irish South and West attend meetings with those in our Marine Institute. We point out to them what is evident in the ICES advice following this. We put forward credible, fair and sustainable requests for justifiable Increases in a few key white fish stocks - Hake, Haddock, Monk and Sole in the Celtic Sea - to the 'Minister of the Day' and his Department Officials/team. They themselves, working close on thirty years in the Department of Marine, must see what we see and should have the ability to negotiate with their European counterparts up-and-down the corridors of Brussels through the long hours of the night to get our fishermen equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for hard pressed Irish fishermen not allowed enough fish in our own seas to earn enough to stay going.

I will give one example of this: Blue whiting, a stock that breeds and spawns in our EEZ with a TAC of 1,157,604 tons in 2021 and our share was 35,373 tons that's right these figures were provided by the Marine Institute, we read a lot about the outrage where the Norwegians and Icelandic fishermen unilaterally increased the amount of Mackerel they caught in 2021. So instead of arguing with them, why not follow their example and do the same with Blue Whiting.

Our 'Show and Tell' events both in Cork and Dublin explained to the Irish public for those two days some of the issues foisted on our Industry and surely catching fish that originate in our waters is right and just for our people who depend on it to survive in our rural coastal communities.

Despite the work of the Irish South and

West in trying to build on these events little attention is given to us by our country's media.

So, instead of people shouting block the ports why not support our fishermen and help them to fight for more of the fish that originate in our waters.

Ireland now has a seat on the United Nations so why are we not using our influence to raising the wrongful destruction of one of our oldest Industries, so others can enter our waters and take for themselves our most renewable resource that currently ensures food security for our people and also by its abundance provide a valuable export commodity which is sought by populations all across the Globe.

Taking from REGULATION (EU) No 1380/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 Paragraph 5

The Union is a contracting party to UNCLOS (6) and, pursuant to Council Decision 98/414/EC (7), to the United Nations Agreement on the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks of 4 December 1995 (8) (UN Fish Stocks Agreement) and, pursuant to Council Decision 96/428/EC (9), to the Agreement to promote compliance with international conservation and management measures by fishing vessels on the high seas (01) Agreement to promote compliance with international conservation and management measures by fishing vessels on the high seas (OJ L 177, 16.7.1996, p. 26). f 24 November 1993 of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (1).

Despite this being the start of a new calendar year when most people begin it with optimism it will be a better year than last year, sadly already those who fish the seas know the future of our Industry remains bleak with a decommissioning scheme proposed worsened by scientific advice which is not conforming with the reality of what our fishermen witness, which is the abundance of fish witnessed by our fishermen every day on our Irish fishing grounds.

To balance out these blows to our fishermen, all we ask for is that no more than equal rights and equal opportunities would be afforded to Irish Fishermen in Irish waters, by those who are taking so much they are building new boats while we flounder with so little.

Following this December Council meeting, we in the Irish South and West do advocate credit and praise must go to the current Minister Charlie McConalogue for stepping up to the plate and finally we see our Minister battling for Ireland in Europe.

Minister Charlie McConalogue did announce his request for a return to Ireland of Mackerel quota of 12,000 Tonnes granted to Denmark by the EU some 40 years ago. This was from the Mackerel Stock that spawns and breeds in our waters at a time when the North Sea Mackerel Stock had

collapsed as a result of overfishing by fleets bordering the North Sea. This figure represents some 10% of Denmark's Mackerel Quota to be taken back from Danish fisherman in the North Sea and returned to Irish fishermen fishing in Irish Waters.

The Minister's request for return of 12,000 tonnes of Mackerel to Ireland after such a long period away is surely welcomed by all, but the question must be asked why the same advisors to successive Irish Governments have failed for 30 years or more to seek the return of this fish to all Irish Fishermen before now.

To be fair this request coming at this moment in our history, when we are about to lose 60 Whitefish Vessels from a fleet of 180 vessels falling foul of a third decommissioning scheme all due to a lack of Quota. This taken from us under the unfair Trade and Cooperation agreement between the UK and EU should provide some hope to our starved whitefish fleet.

The Irish South and West are asking our Minister McConalogue not to continue with the current unfair Mackerel Policy and only give the vast majority of the requested 12,000 tons of Mackerel to the 23 Pelagic Boats if we get it. We say this, not to divide our Industry, but since none of the RSW pelagic fleet needed to participate in the decommissioning schemes, then they must have enough fish allocated to remain viable and profitable which is not the case for their fellow fishermen in the polyvalent sector.

We are aware under the Common Fishery Policy 1380/2013 Article 7 c) measures to adapt the fishing capacity of fishing vessels to available fishing opportunities; the Minister must follow European legislation on balancing the opportunities for the entire fleet; justice must dictate a more equitable sharing arrangement be introduced by the Minister in allocating this return of our Mackerel to those within all sectors of our fleet this to include a fisherman in the smallest punt, all our fisherman identified by the Task force as being those in the greatest need.

The demersal sector has already seen their number slashed in previous decommissioning schemes implemented since 2006 and they now ready themselves to lose another 60 boats from the 180 left fishing.

The Irish South and West FPO have been consistent in what we have been predicting what would be the result of our strategy in response to the fallout of Brexit, it is this simple we paid the price of Europe agreeing a deal for a tariff free trade agreement.

25% of our fish was taken from us. As a result our Government are told our offshore whitefish fleet is now destined to be thrown on the scrapheap where Irish fishermen fishing in our Celtic Sea will be forced to leave the fishing grounds so foreign EU fleets can come to reap the benefits of Ireland's third decommissioning scheme.

The members of the Producer Organisation I have the privilege to represent – the Irish South and West FPO – are asking for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities to share our resource - fish only those found in our waters.

This message must be one of unity if we as an Industry are to remain intact and viable now and into the future.



Atlantic Fisher - Photo courtesy Fintan Harrington

New addition to the fleet - MFV Leila for the Atlantic Dawn Group pictured arriving on its maiden voyage home to Killybegs - Photo courtesy Alan Hennigan / Mooney Boats



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Marine Institute Launches 2021 Stock Book

The Marine Institute has launched the 2021 Stock Book, the annual publication which provides the latest impartial scientific advice on the status of 74 key fish stocks of interest to Ireland. It is available for download or through an interactive online application (www.marine.ie).

In 2020, Irish vessels landed approximately 190,000 tonnes of wild caught fish worth more than €250 million at first sale. This, in turn, supports a valuable processing industry and other activities in our coastal communities.

Ensuring long term sustainability is a key objective of the Common Fisheries Policy and all stakeholders. To that end, every year, the Marine Institute undertakes an extensive data collection programme - multiple scientific surveys cover approximately 327,000 square nautical miles over 263 days, equating to 1,545 scientist days-at-sea.

Onshore and at sea sampling programmes measure over half a million fish and estimate age for a further 50,000 individuals across all commercial species. Irish data is compiled with that from other countries through the intergovernmental organisation ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Seas). Marine Institute scientists play a key role in carrying out the assessments and developing the scientific evidence and advice at ICES. The Stock Book integrates the latest scientific

advice from ICES with relevant information on Irish fisheries.

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD said, "I am impressed by the quantity and quality of data collected by our marine scientists in the Marine Institute. This work must inform all aspects of fisheries management and support the effective protection of our marine ecosystem in the seas around our coast and for the fisheries on which our fleet are reliant. It is important that the results of all the work is made accessible to industry and other stakeholders and I very much welcome the Stock Book for 2021 which I have now received."

Michael Gillooly, Interim CEO of the Marine Institute, said, "The seas around Ireland are among the most productive and biologically sensitive areas in EU waters. The Marine Institute conducts comprehensive and broad science programmes in order to sustainably monitor and develop this valuable resource.

"The scientific advice and services provided by our scientists to stakeholders are essential to supporting a sustainable ocean economy, protecting and managing our marine ecosystems and meeting EU obligations. As part of the services provided, our scientists also participate in, and lead, international working groups that assess fish stocks and provide scientific advice on how many fish can be safely removed from this renewable resource. This is essential in sustaining our ocean economy for our

coastal communities."

Dr Ciaran Kelly, Director of Fisheries Ecosystem Advisory Services at the Marine Institute, said, "The interactive app developed by the Marine Institute is shaping thinking on how independent scientific advice can be delivered to fisheries managers and other stakeholders in the future ensuring that the best available scientific evidence for decision making is easy to access and transparent to all."

The gradual increase in the number of stocks that are sustainably fished, in line with Common Fisheries Policy objectives, has continued. Stocks of haddock, anglerfish (or monkfish), megrim, tuna, and some of the Nephrops (Dublin Bay Prawns), have increased in recent years and continue to be sustainably fished. Work also continues on stocks such as cod, herring and whiting.

Most of the scientific work that delivers the Marine Institute's Stock Book is funded under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).



This wonderful Christmas Tree was built by the Carty family in Bundoran (Daithi and Donnacha pictured) with the hope of raising €200 for the charity LAST - as of going to press the fund raising has topped €4000 and continues to rise. You can donate via the link on the LAST Facebook page. LAST is the first point of contact for those in the Irish fishing industry who have lost a family member to sea. They provide immediate financial assistance for families of commercial fishermen affected by loss of life at sea.

MARINE TIMES

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

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Be Fair to Ireland Commissioner Sinkevičius

It is time for the European Union to be fair to Ireland and to our fishing industry.

The European Commission continues to avoid a direct imposition of 'burden sharing' equally on all EU fishing fleets.

It is abdicating its responsibility to be fair to Ireland in the outcome of the Brexit agreement.

It has applied the outcome of this deal in a manner which discriminates against the Irish fishing industry.

Additionally, it has arrogantly refused to disclose to the Irish industry the control audit report which allegedly makes a range of damaging allegations against the sector.

'Arrogance' is an offensive, overbearing attitude of superiority, which the EU has displayed towards the Irish fishing industry by denying access to this report for several years.

That arrogance is also displayed in its failure to apply "burden sharing" of the EU/Brexit Agreement deal outcome affecting fisheries, fairly and equitably across the European Union's fishing fleet.

The Commission is subject to and must meet an obligation of fairness.

But that obligation has not been met.

Ireland has suffered the most.

The EU Commission has failed to discharge the obligation of fairness in the way it has treated the Irish fishing industry, the most heavily penalised and suffering the most from the outcome of Brexit.

It has not done enough in the year since the Brexit

Agreement was reached to correct this discrimination against Ireland.

Natural justice assumes an absence of bias, but that is not applied by the EU towards Ireland's fishing industry.

So, at the start of a New Year, this newspaper calls directly on the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, who has direct responsibility for fisheries within the Commission, to be fair to Ireland.

His visit to Killybegs in September was crafted by the EU and the Irish government to avoid as much as possible the issue fairness, equity and 'burden sharing' in the Brexit outcome.

Though industry representatives made clear to him the damage the EU/UK Brexit Agreement had done to Ireland, he showed no indication of applying the concept of fairness into reversing the EU Commission's discriminatory attitude to Ireland.

He has not acted since to alleviate this unfair burden placed on Ireland's fishing industry, thus perpetuating the unfairness to Ireland and bias allowed by the Commission in favour of other EU fishing nations.

It is time for this form of what is a type of 'colonial exploitation of Ireland's fishing waters to cease.

Ireland has been wronged,

Commissioner Sinkevičius and his fellow EU Commissioners should discharge the obligation of fairness placed on the Commission.

It must stop the abuse of Ireland's fishing industry.

Editor: Mark Mc Carthy ---- Deputy Editor: Tom MacSweeney



Kristel Patrick on the Porcupine - photo courtesy Donal Healy

Letters to the Editor

Heritage Gone

Dear Editor,

You might consider an item on the traditional fisheries come the New Year.

It's hard to compare my boyhood when we had herring, bass, salmon, mussels, eel and codling fisheries. Within 20 years of formation of Inland Fisheries Ireland and 40 years of EU membership all gone.

Gone too is the ancient heritage of boat building, the fish weirs, the way of life.

There is no account on the social impact, particularly when decisions to close fisheries were not EU Directives, but opportunist Department of Marine officials seeing the opportunity to take out a way of life.

If there is no change we will lose our traditional ways that's more serious than the individual losing his rights.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Doherty,
Checkpoint,
Co. Waterford.

No Courage

Dear Editor,

There seems to be no courage on the part of our Government. The Taoiseach and Minister for the Marine talk much but do little. They don't challenge the EU. They just talk and talk and do nothing.

Yours sincerely,

John Sheehan,
Waterford.

Photo of Wexford Fishermen



Dear Editor,

Here is an old photo of some Wexford fishermen taken in 1948 if you wish to publish in the Marine Times. The photo was taken on a trip to the Tuskar Rock in 1948 with a load of coal. Pictured l-r: John Lett, John Lawlor, Michael Doran, Tomas Walsh, Philly Byrne, Fintan Kehoe, George Lett and in the ring Richard Lett all aboard the Vervine Blossom..

Yours sincerely,

George Lett,
Wexford.

Please do send us your News, Views and Photos

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WhatsApp: 087 7989582

Doolin Coast Guard to Be Reconstituted

Problems Continue With Moves Against New Volunteer Representative Association

Report: Tom MacSweeney, Deputy Editor

The decision to reconstitute the Doolin Coast Guard is unlikely to resolve all the issues which caused the suspension of operations and training activities in the County Clare Unit after six volunteers resigned.

Following a recommendation by Kieran Mulvey, former Chief Executive of the Labour Relations Commission and Director General of the Workplace Relations Commission, who had been called in as an independent mediator, the Minister of State in the Department of Transport, Hildegard Naughton, asked the Irish Coast Guard to begin the process of reconstituting the unit. This would be on an interim basis “to ensure rescue services are available to the local community and visitors.”

After the resignations the whole unit was stood down.

Catriona Lucas, who lost her life in 2016, during a search for a missing man in Kilkee, was a member of the unit. One of the issues understood to have caused issues in the Unit was volunteer perception of Coast Guard management reaction to this tragedy.

The Mulvey Report concluded that some relationships within the Unit had irretrievably broken down. Mutual trust, respect and confidence required to effectively operate a Coast Guard unit no longer existed and could not be resolved through mediation.

The Coast Guard, it is understood, will reconstitute the unit in response to the Minister’s decision. This will, most likely, be a short-term resolution, re-appointing volunteers who satisfy management that they can operate satisfactorily together. Following that a longer-term appointment process will be carried out for a permanent unit restoration.

The Department of Transport said that “Minister Naughton understands that this is a difficult decision and outcome for all concerned.”

The priority is provision of a fully operational unit.

A number of other recommendations in the report refer to the need for more engagement with volunteers and a review of procedures affecting the unit around training, operations, equipment and activities.

The Marine Times has been told that not all those who met the independent mediator are satisfied with the outcome. “Not enough time was given to facilitate team resolution. More meetings were promised than were held,” the paper was told. It will take many years for the Doolin team to rebuild. Divisions remain.

In addition to the Doolin situation, other issues continue within the Coast Guard.

The Coastal Unit Advisory Group (CUAG) is regarded by Coast Guard management as the volunteers’ representative body. It is not seen in this way by all volunteers.

Eugene Clonan, Acting Director of the Irish Coast Guard, told the Oireachtas Transport Committee that it consists of nine members who are voted in by volunteers and they are involved in decisions about management, equipment, training and safety.

It has two Coast Guard staff members.

There has been criticism of how it

operates. “It may have contributed to some governance or equipment selection but has never engaged in satisfactory volunteer’s representation,” a volunteer involved in a dismissal issue with management said.

“Management wants teams that obey its instructions to the letter and doesn’t want to listen to the reality of what volunteers tell them and suggestions made about operational procedures. That is regarded as disruptive behaviour and dismissal can follow. There is a fear of management by any volunteer who becomes the focus of attention because of even the slightest disagreement with policies.”

TDs on the Oireachtas Transport Committee told representatives from the Coast Guard that they had been approached by volunteers across the country, who expressed concerns about bullying and grievances. It was stated that there is a disconnect between Irish Coast Guard volunteers and senior management and that bullying claims and other grievances were not being adequately addressed.

Eugene Clonan said that volunteers were the backbone of the operation and were “highly trained and highly valued.”

He said the CUAG group could represent volunteers who have grievances, but appeared to accept that this was rare. There is also an internal complaints and grievance procedure, but Coast Guard volunteers

cannot go to the Labour Court to appeal the outcome of these proceedings as they are not paid employees of the Department. Attempts have been made by volunteers to get trade union representation.

Since the formation of the Irish Coast Guard Volunteers’ Representative Association, (reported in the Marine Times in November), led by former volunteers, there has been a move by some Officers in Charge of Units to gather together opposition to it. Emails have been circulated requesting letters to be written by OICs to TDs criticising the new Association and disassociating themselves and their Units from it.

The Oireachtas Committee had been expected to meet representatives of the ICGVRA but this was deferred during the Doolin Unit investigation. It may be rearranged, it is understood.

The Association acknowledged that it was aware of “an organised effort against us.”

Clare T.D. Cathal Crowe told the Committee that he had been contacted by the Association. “It was set up because Coast Guard members are afraid to raise issues in Units, or with management, for fear of retribution by way of disciplinary action. I am hearing there are not just problems in Doolin, but in many stations.”



Fishing Risks Highlighted by MCIB Report

Chairperson says greater maritime safety can be achieved through safety investigation

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board has highlighted fishing industry risks in its annual report for last year. The MCIB was established 18 years ago and to the end of December 2020 had published a total of 242 accident reports. Twelve final investigation reports were completed during 2020 of which eight involved what were described as “fishing vessels.” Of those, the MCIB Report classes six as “commercial fishing vessels.”

“The range of circumstances reported illustrates the risks that exist in maritime activity with incidents ranging from safety issues over access to vessels, to fires and collisions,” the MCIB says. “In two investigations that involved fires the vessels were equipped with EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and VHF radios and as a result the crew in each case survived relatively unscathed - the value of the EPIRB being particularly relevant in one case where the VHF distress call went unanswered.”

The MCIB commenced investigations into eight marine casualties in 2020. A total of four people lost their lives in three of the casualty investigations involving fishing vessels.

The MCIB Report makes particular reference to “so many incidents involving sailing, rowing, canoeing and kayaking in the last few years which highlights the dangers associated with activities which people participate in at many levels including recreational and sporting.

“This is a trend also reported by the marine casualty investigation entities of our European neighbours. Safety in this sector is a particular concern with the increase in recreational and holiday activities arising from the Covid 19 pandemic. The MCIB has strongly encouraged all organisations, especially clubs and commercial entities associated with watersports and water-recreational activities to audit their safety systems and to have regard to the Code of Practice and all guidelines or recommendations issued by governing sports bodies.

“The absence of effective communication methods and PFDs featured in a number of the investigations as a contributory factor.”

In July 2020 the EU Court of Justice held that Ireland had not correctly implemented Article 8.1 of Directive 2009/18/EC of 23 April 2009 which established additional

principles governing the investigation of certain categories of serious marine incidents in the maritime transport sector.

Referring to this decision, the MCIB Chairperson, Claire Callanan, says that “to support the continued independence of the MCIB, irrespective of the category of investigation, the two Ministerial appointees resigned from the Board and legislation is on its passage through Dáil Éireann to enable new appointments to the Board.”

The European Commission also initiated a review of EU legislation and a new Directive is expected within the next twelve months.

Ms. Callanan also refers to another review, the one initiated last April by the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan, to assess current organisational structures for marine casualty investigation in Ireland.

“This is a welcome development in potentially contributing to achieving greater maritime safety through safety investigation in what is a relatively small sector by comparison with some of our larger coastal European neighbours,” she comments in an introduction to the MCIB Report.

There has been some controversy over the Ministerial review and disagreement politically about the legislation in the Dáil to enable new appointments to the MCIB.

The Ghost of Christmas Past...



Cormac Burke, Chairman, Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance considers the fact that we are allowing the 'management' of the fishing industry be controlled by two bodies with a dreadful history in their administration of this industry.



As the Irish fishing and processing industry stands like a dazed and bruised boxer in the corner of the ring as a result of the 2021 battering, the EU has dealt yet another, and almost fatal, body blow by more or less thwarting any small attempt for Ireland to get a crumb of whitefish or pelagic quota back for its suffering fishermen.

Not content on slamming the door shut on the merest suggestion of Ireland getting returned a single kilo of the quota lost during the corrupt 'negotiations' of the BREXIT deal where everyone else caught a cough but Ireland was administered the flu, the knife is now being twisted even further with deserved and justified quota increases, and based on solid, positive ICES stock advice, again being manipulated to ensure no benefit goes to Ireland.

For the Irish demersal fleet, the example of the haddock quota alone epitomises the irony of the EU Commission using the words 'level playing field' — with a scientifically-recommended 110% increase in the pipeline, this was combated against by inclusion of a recommended 60% reduction in the haddock quota in 'shared' waters of

U.K. and Ireland.

Ok, one might think, plus 110% and minus 60% and we should still see a 50% increase - and what did the EU finally allow Ireland? A 5% increase....

This one example alone represents Ireland's struggle with EU management of the fishing sector - basically, we can't win.

We already know that we're never going to see any sympathy from the EU over the injustices of the BREXIT outcome, but worse still is that there is no scenario where the EU Commission is ever going to give Ireland significant quota increases for any species, regardless of positive scientific advice.

Meanwhile Ireland's pelagic sector equally had the rug pulled out from under them when it transpired that Denmark was in possession of 12,000 tonnes of Irish mackerel quota that was swapped to them decades ago and was simply forgotten about.

When research was done into this, it was discovered that the Danish pelagic fleet haven't even been utilising this quota every year and it was only when they approached the EU Commission for permission to catch this quota in Irish waters that investigations began as to where this quota actually originated.

Naturally Ireland, whose pelagic sector has already suffered a 30% loss during

2021, were demanding the return of this quota and even the Commissioner himself indicated that he favoured Ireland's claim.

Such was the excitement at what was seen by our Minister as a great victory (ie getting back something that was ours in the first place) that he pre-empted the outcome of the meeting to phone certain people with the 'big' announcement.

He would have been wise to have waited before doing so because that particular horse fell at the last hurdle and, before the meeting had ended, Denmark rallied and put in a case for a review of the situation next March - with the likely outcome now being that the pelagic vultures across the EU will all pick at this carcass and Ireland will be lucky to get 40% of a 12,000-tonne quota that they originally owned 100% of...

It is obvious that Ireland's joining of the EEC has been a poisoned chalice from day one but it is in the past 25 years in particular that the EU strategy for the Irish fishing industry has become clear:

- * Keep reducing quotas, using negative scientific advice when possible but ignore these same advisors when they have positive recommendations;
- * Talk about the need to reach MSY status for each stock and use that as another reason to cut quotas - but then ignore the facts when that same stock actually achieves MSY;
- * Annual cuts in quotas results in the regular occurrence of there being too many vessels for not enough fish, so introduce a reduction in the size of the fleet - an ever-decreasing circle;

This has been an 'all stick and no carrot' approach to handling Ireland - all the pain and never any of the gain.

While IFSA supporters will be well aware that I am quick to point the finger of blame at our fisheries minister when it is merited but in this case one must look to the only two constants throughout the past 25 years of downward spiral - Ireland's Department of Marine (under different titles over the years) and the EU Commission itself.

Over the past few decades Irish governments have changed (although always weak in terms of standing up for Ireland's rights against EU oppression), ministers have changed, and even some of the Irish fishing and processing industry representatives have changed, but throughout all of this the structure that is the EC Fisheries Commission has remained the same and the Irish marine civil servants, and their secret allies within the industry, who rule the national fishing sector remain in place.

One is an abuser of power and the other a willing 'enabler' - more than happy to play a part in the abuse of the rights of Irish fishermen under an almost federal regime.

Even the least militant person in the Irish fishing industry must consider the fact that we are allowing the 'management' of this industry be controlled by two bodies with a dreadful history in their administration of this industry.

How is it that the EU Commission, who pride themselves with 'sustainable' management of the fishing industry have a track record that, more than 40 years on, in Ireland's case at least, is still cutting quotas even after slashing the size of Ireland's fleet by more than one-third?

Where is the 'management'?

Where is the right for Irish coastal communities to be allowed to survive on its vital fishing industry?

And where is the right of Irish fishermen to question 'the system' both at national and EU level?

YOUR INDUSTRY NEEDS YOU!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Kilmore Quay - Photo courtesy Richard Guildea

A man in a red shirt is holding a large fish, likely a salmon, in a processing plant. The fish is hanging from a hook, and the man is looking at it. The background is dark and industrial, with other fish hanging from hooks. The text "Supporting the industry" is overlaid on the image.

Supporting the industry



www.bim.ie



Did Ireland Kick a Few EU Doors at Fisheries Talks? ... time will tell



The Chief Executive of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association, Brendan Byrne, says that 2021 is done with but 2022 needs to be a fresh start for the industry.



As I prepare to type up my last article of the year, or when it is published it will be the first of the New Year. I am reminiscent of the Killybegs of my youth some 30 or 35 years ago when on the run up to the Christmas holidays it would be chock a block with fishing activity - vessels landing and factories working around the clock - the toing and froing of a port with fisheries as its purpose. Nowadays, that is a faded image only and one which is long gone sadly.

In reality Killybegs was the same as any other harbour or pier in Ireland in the late 1970's or early 1980's it had purpose, it had life and spirit and boy didn't they have a buzz and activity about them. How did we lose all that, where did all the boats go? How did we allow ourselves to go this far down? Yes, Christmas does that to individuals - it gives you time to take stock of the dreadful mistakes or lost opportunities you have witnessed in your lifetime and fishing is one of Ireland's greatest failures in the past 20 years or more.

The past cannot directly shape the future but we cannot continue to make the mistakes of the past over and over again, and I feel that is what we are doing in fishing time and time again? Ordinality, if one fails one changes tack and tries another or new approach but, in my view, that is not the

case in the fishing industry either at political level or a senior level within the various make ups of departments in which fisheries and marine matters has been part of since 1973. I read in the last week the Coastal Atlas of Ireland, and former Taoiseach the Late Garret Fitzgerald focusing on a similar vein of thought. In 1983, when the Common Fisheries Policy was being formed the former leader lamented how grossly ill prepared Ireland was for those talks, and in particular the Department were totally lost at the fisheries talks and as a consequence Ireland paid an extremely high price - has anything changed, we are still paying the high price, and look at what happened in December 2020 with the Brexit talks. We did the same in 1972/73 with the accession talks when we prematurely sent home our fishery representatives from BIM, not appreciating the value of fishing.

The recent December Fisheries Council talks gave me some degree of hope, that after all my criticism I had correctly levied on Minister Mc Conalogue, I have to admire that for the first time in recent times we had a Minister that was willing to kick a few doors in Europe. Ok, perhaps we did not succeed but credit where credit is due, the lad tried and what is more important has shown himself willing to at least fight for the industry. I cannot say the same about his immediate predecessors either Minister Creed or Coveney, truth be told as they say in some parts; Coveney would "give away an old grandmothers last pair of knitting needles" just to be a good kiss

ass European, so in terms of the recent past Charlie is beginning to stand out for the right reasons. The reality though is that as a member state of the EU, we historically have created no political space for ourselves and we are seen as the soft touch - the road back is going to be long and there is no way around that hard slog ahead. The first steps nevertheless are steps such as those which Minister Mc Conalogue took and that was to tackle head on and make the mark of Ireland around the table.

What is now required, is an "all of Government approach" starting with An Taoiseach and other senior Ministers. The aftermath and consequences of the Trade and Co operation Agreement (TCA) are still unfinished - the legacy of loss must be dealt with. Burden sharing has had a full 12 months to prove itself as a concept and unfortunately it has materialised zero return. Ireland needs to put fishing front and centre here, and lead out on it with the Taoiseach's Office as opposed to the insular department approach, this certainly would be the approach if this were a French problem. I have stated previously on numerous occasions we need to get our own house in order before we tackle the Europeans, and in order to do that it may require fresh thinking and fresh legs. It's time to put the best team and effort forward to fight for us.

I had written in the last edition of the Marine Times regarding the principle of "levelling up", to push that idea further or to better explain the theory, it would involve for example at the last talks Ireland pushing for the increased quota for blue whiting based on zonal attachment as opposed to giving a bulk transfer to the Norwegian fleet, it would involve making a bid for the Danish mackerel and across all other quota species it would involve Ireland stating its case for correction of the historical injustices.

The proposal would involve an incremental increase in order to restore the imbalances created by the disproportionate losses enforced by the TCA deal of 2020, treating all quota cuts equally and fairly because there never is such a thing as a good cut you know. This would equally apply to whitefish pelagic and or any other quota species, and what is critical in pushing this concept - we must guarantee that levelling up rises all boats, we cannot leave any segment behind.

What levelling up is in fact as opposed to the broader burden sharing concept, it based on the principle that historically Ireland has been the nett contributor to the CFP, and further added to this is historical unfairness is the loss through the TCA. So, in typical years where scientific advice is either cutting or increasing quota, there would be a nett gain for Ireland when an increase is proposing a dividend would be provided for us, when cuts are being suggested a lesser cut would be borne for Ireland until the levelling up process is completed. So over time an increment would continue to accrue to Ireland. It is in many ways a nuance approach of the old system of Hague Preferences, ideally this should be based

over 2 or 3 years at the very outer most and the ambition would be to restore the TCA disproportionate losses by 2023 - bearing in mind that TCA round two starts in early 2025 and that could spell further losses for us.

It is regrettable that after 12 months since the TCA deal we still have not got one ounce of fish back. We have a critical decision to make as a country and as an industry, what do we do now between New Year and mid-2022, unless we adopt a clear approach to our bid to get fish back for our industry we will fail, and the next 90 days are especially important. We certainly should not have left 2021 empty handed, that is a failure on all our parts but one which we must not repeat in 2022 - so a few choice words need to be exchanged and new approaches adopted at all levels moving into our next stage.

I attended my first European processors gathering in Brussels just last week, and it only confirmed what I knew well - we are the poor cousins in European terms. The occasion gave us opportunity to meet representatives of the various Marine and Fisheries bodies of the EU and Commission, I was pleasantly surprised of the directness of their approach, and like all Europeans they are up front. One of the discussions I had at these gatherings was simple, how can we give you additional fish for you have not specifically asked for fish quota, Ireland needs to put its case in real terms - what do you want. That is why, as I stated previously heading to Brussels in a kin fashion to how our grandfathers went to a fair day is just not going to work - prepare well or prepare to fail. A case well presented and supported with background work across the member states will succeed, now let's set about that task for 2022.

The Brexit Adjustment Reserve and EMFAF funding opportunities for the processing industry, these will be of critical importance for the next 2 or 3 years. It is regrettable that still none of these schemes are yet open to the industry. Perhaps, it is a carryover from our days of being part of an empire or being a colony but we seem to be last minute dot com when it comes to the procedures we use when approving schemes and fault is levied more so here with the financial departments as opposed to our own Marine section. Recently this came to light when I attended a virtual meeting with European representatives and industry.

Nevertheless, delays cost opportunity foregone and that leads to construction issues and deadlines that simply cannot be met. The Government need to address this in the new year; a proactive and practical approach will be required by Government as whole otherwise we will only waste opportunity as opposed to maximising its potential.

I wish to extend my best wishes to you all for the New Year and we all hope that 2022 will be the start to our road to the full restoration of the Irish Fishing industry.



Jodie Hurley's MATRIX returning to Kinsale harbour
Photo courtesy Carroll O'Donoghue (www.KinsaleAngling.com)



More Time For An Independent Voice – For You ... And Me!

This month my radio programme – The MARITIME IRELAND RADIO SHOW - is changing

From a half-hour each fortnight, broadcast on 18 stations and several Podcast services, it is changing to a monthly hour-long programme.

The change follows analysis of audience patterns, listening habits, surveying listeners' opinions. As well as broadcasting to listeners, it is important to listen to what they say! That I have learned over many years!

The maritime sector does not get sufficient media attention from either national broadcast or print media. That is one reason why newspapers like the MARINE TIMES are vital. It is also the reason I present the MARITIME IRELAND RADIO SHOW which is compiled, recorded, produced, presented at my own cost, without sponsorship or financial support from any source and, therefore, is an independent voice.

The hour-long programme will be available, as has the fortnightly edition been, on Apple, Spotify, Mixcloud and other Podcast services and on the community radio service around Ireland, as well as on the Marine Times website. Coverage will be widened, the reportage reach increased, more opportunities for maritime organisations to contribute, an archives section added and, hopefully, listenership reach extended.

Please do tune in to the MARITIME IRELAND MONTHLY RADIO SHOW, keeping you in touch with Ireland's maritime sector, because the sea around our coastline, 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. Ireland's connection with the sea is as old as time itself. It is our channel to the world.

Impressed By Variety of Seafood But ...

I'm impressed by the variety of seafood which I see increasingly on supermarket shelves and in various shops and

stores. It is good to see. Many more producers appear to be providing a variety of seafood, including using recipes from other countries mixed with pre-prepared Irish fish as ingredients. Salmon Tagliatelle was one of the more unusual which I came across in the past few weeks.

I have noted, however, what has been drawn to my attention of some produce bearing apparent indications that it is 'Irish' when it is not Irish fish when the package is examined more closely, but has qualifications of where it came from and how it 'became Irish' from an Irish perspective. There will always be imports of produce but consumers, trying to be faithful to 'local produce' can be deceived and get quite annoyed about that when they discover, at home, after purchase, that the product is not 'truly Irish.'

Nice Way from Slí

A copy of SLÍ arrived in my Email, "the newsletter to inform and report on matters which are relevant to island residents around our coast." It is published by Comhar na nOileán, "serving the communities of the Islands, the Gaeltacht and Peripheral Communities."

I am supportive of the offshore island communities and this is an information publication, recording quite a lot of positive developments.

The article about the setting-up of the Farmers' Market on Cape Clear in 2020 when thirteen markets were held between July and September and it continued this year is particularly interesting.

As a tourist island this is an innovative approach and, in more normal times than have been experienced for the past two years, the market "has played an important role, both socially and economically for the community on Cape Clear," according to Slí. As well as local farm produce, a variety of local crafts were sold from the market stalls, including pottery and knitwear. Knitwear sold was produced from wool sourced from island sheep.

"This local craftwork has been particularly popular with visiting tourists who wish to purchase an authentic memento of their time on the island."

Comharchumann Chléire Teo., was one of the main sponsors and is now in a position to assist other islands in setting-up a Farmers' Market.



Cape Clear Farmers' Market - Photo courtesy Slí

Wonders of the Celtic Deep Around Wales and Ireland

More and more connections are being highlighted which link the Irish and Welsh coastlines.

In the MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW last month we recorded how Bord Iascaigh Mhara's diving barge development at Castletownbere is being used in the STREAM project linking both (MT December edition). Now TG4 whose productions have a lot of innovative approaches, ahead in several ways of RTE and Virgin Media, has used film-makers involved in the Blue Planet natural history series to, it says: "Explore the spectacular Celtic coasts of Ireland and Wales, exploring the extraordinary hidden wildlife around our shores - from our shallows to the deep, in a corner of these islands which has never previously been explored in such sumptuous detail."

An adulatory eulogy, perhaps, but then the series has taken two years to film in Ultra High Definition.



"*Iontais Na Bhfarraigi Ceilteacha*" starts on January 12 at 9.30 p.m. when naturalist Eoin Warner (pictured above) takes viewers on a journey of discovery around the coasts of Ireland and Wales, exploring the hidden wildlife from shallows to the

deep. 'Wonders of the Celtic Deep' is an Irish/Welsh co-production by Tua Films & One Tribe TV.

"The camera team has captured an incredible array of species including blue sharks, basking sharks and Fin whales – all swimming and hunting off our Celtic shores. From Wexford's Saltee Islands, Eoin observes the guillemots - seabirds that can 'fly' underwater. There is also an encounter with the humble blenny fish getting washed-up, but the blenny can breathe on land," Linda Ní Ghríofa, Communications Editor at TG4 tells me.

"Our team has captured some remarkable and exciting new behaviours that have never been filmed in Celtic waters before: such as the courtship rituals of bottle-nosed dolphins as well as astonishing footage of basking sharks congregating off the Irish coast.

"Our dive team also filmed the wonders of the Celtic deep where we discover sex-shifting cuckoo wrasse, huge sea urchins, ancient lobsters and a giant conger eel, all hiding in a wreck."

Director Paddy Hayes said: "Getting close to nature – especially given recent lockdown events, provides such a great escape for the soul. The team captured some really breath-taking footage of our undiscovered coasts and some eye-opening behaviour of our best-known marine animals. It is such a joy to know that all this occurs just off our shores."

Even underwater sex thrown into the mix! This seems like a series that will attract a lot of attention. What will TG4 do next?

**TOM
MACSWEENEY'S**

**MARITIME
IRELAND**



Good News for Fisheries Sustainability

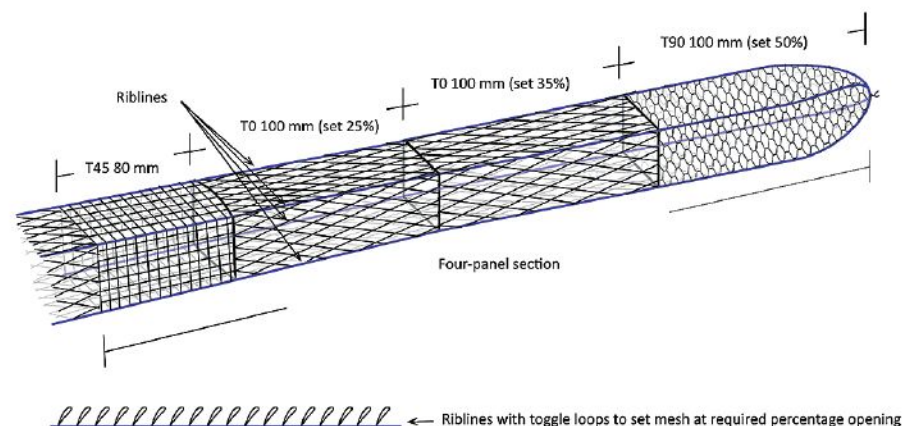
Dr Ronán Cosgrove, Fisheries Conservation Manager, BIM

Recent reports point to substantial improvements in global fish and marine life sustainability. Two papers published under the Nature portfolio of scientific journals demonstrate the benefits of steady increases in the levels of fisheries management and marine conservation interventions since the 1980s. These measures have helped reduce overfishing and boosted recovery to the point where two thirds of large-scale commercial stocks are exploited at sustainable rates. The number of marine species at risk of extinction has decreased while populations of marine mammals such as humpback whales and several seal species have significantly increased.

While it's a case of much done and much more to do on the latter, climate change is the "critical backdrop against which all future rebuilding efforts will play out". Threats such as increased ocean warming, acidification, sea level rises, and ancillary impacts will need to be dealt with through effective mitigation of greenhouse gases and development of carbon capture and removal technologies. If successful, "substantial recovery of the abundance, structure and function of marine life could be achieved by 2050".

turned 90° compared to standard diamond (T0) mesh. Due to increased mesh openings, T90 consistently reduces catches of small fish. Thanks to increased water flow through the open meshes, greater quantities of larger market sized fish are swept into and retained in the codend.

Led by BIM's Daragh Browne and teaming up with an Irish seiner and Cathal Boyle and colleagues at Swan Net Gundry (SNG), a new four-panel 100 mm T90 codend design with shortened Dyneema® ropes fixed along each of



Drawing of the modified T90 codend by Dr Matthew McHugh

Closer to home, the latest edition of the Marine Institute (MI) Stock book includes a positive assessment of Irish fisheries. The number of sustainably fished stocks rose from 33 in 2020 to 35 in 2021 with gradual progress towards long-term sustainable utilisation of the resource base since 2012. A variety of management measures are likely behind this progress, with increasingly high-quality scientific advice from the MI no doubt playing its part.



Hauling the modified T90 codend

Gear selectivity also helps develop sustainable fisheries. As outlined in the stock book, increases in mesh size and introduction of large square-mesh panels are likely to have contributed to observed reductions in fishing mortality in some fisheries.

BIMs latest gear collaboration with Industry has further boosted the performance of the highly selective T90 codend, a key gear measure in the Celtic and Irish Seas. Previous BIM trials have demonstrated the benefits of T90 or mesh

the selvages was tested. Known as riblines or lastridge ropes, this gear modification has been trialled in Canadian and Icelandic fisheries and was successfully tailored to the Irish seine net fishery with extensive design input from SNG. The ropes are shorter than the stretched mesh length and aim to optimise mesh openings and water flow along a series of sections with different mesh sizes and orientations.

Haddock is a key target species for seiners with additional monthly quotas allocated to this fleet. Conducted on a self-sampling basis due to Covid restrictions, a comparison of the new T90 codend compared with a standard two-panel T90 codend demonstrated a 70% reduction in small grade haddock, and 157% and 133% increases in medium and large-grade haddock. Very few undersize fish occurred in either gear as expected with 100 mm T90 codends.

While price data have yet to be analysed, large haddock are worth substantially more than small haddock meaning the new gear greatly assists in maximising the value of available quota. Major reductions in small fish also reduces fishing mortality likely leading to improved sustainability of the haddock stock. Additional benefits include improved fish quality due to the stable four-panel codend shape and smaller quantities of fish lifted aboard; reduced fuel use and carbon emissions through increased catch efficiency; greater gear durability as the riblines relieve pressure on the codend meshes. It is hoped that these developments will drive further uptake of T90 codends in Irish fisheries.



All hands on deck at Swan Net Gundry

The Nature papers are entitled "Identifying management actions that promote sustainable fisheries" and "Rebuilding marine life". The MI stock book is available at www.marine.ie. BIM would like to thank the skipper and crew of the trial vessel and the team at SNG for a successful collaboration. The vessel name is excluded due to use of economic data. A full report on this work will be published on www.bim.ie/publications/fisheries in January. This work is supported by the European Maritime and Fisheries Funding.

An Island Prison with A Crime Focus

Spike Island in Cork Harbour, the country's former offshore prison which is now a major tourist attraction has announced a festival to take place there next year with an appropriate focus – crime.



"We have been promoting culture and the arts for several years - now we turn to crime," says John Crotty, General Manager of the island attraction. "It's a perfectly fitting setting given its historic past."

The island was used as an island prison on four separate occasions over the last 400 years, with the last prison incarnation, under Irish government jurisdiction, that opened in 1985 closing its doors in 2004. As well as a chance to attend author led talks and workshops, attendees will be brought on a very special tour of the island's former prisons, that will detail the stories of the former inmates. So, attendees might leave with inspiration for a novel of their own! Details of tickets and events are set to be launched in early 2022.

The new 'literary festival' to take place next year is to be dedicated to the theme of crime writing and is planned for the second half of 2022.

"The 'Spike Island Literary Festival' will hone in on the popular genre," said Mr. Crotty, "providing a series of author talks and workshops, agent meetings and publisher advice. Attendees will have the chance to sit in on speaking events where authors share their experience and advice, helping budding authors. Agents and publishers from the industry will also be on hand, giving advice on how to navigate the writing and publishing world."

The event is going through a funding process with the Irish Arts Council and Cork County Council.

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Rockall – “Why are we allowing this to continue a year on?”



Photo by Alan O'Shea

It's a year now since British authorities blocked fishermen from Ireland from accessing their traditional fishing grounds around Rockall. Fishing that was worth almost €8m a year has been lost to fishermen from Greencastle up in Inishowen, North Donegal and to other fishing communities around the coast.

In a recent Dail debate Padraig Mac Lochlainn who hails from Inishowen asked Minister McConalogue (another Inishowen native) if he would clarify his understanding of the full financial loss to the Irish fishing fleet in 2021 arising from the blocking of access to the fleet to its traditional fishing grounds around Rockall; the status of the negotiations with the British Government to resolve this dispute. Asking the Minister if he will make a statement on the matter as it is now almost a year since the British authorities blocked fishermen from Ireland from accessing their traditional fishing grounds around Rockall. “It is absolutely outrageous that, after almost a year, this has not been resolved. Will the Minister clarify the financial loss to our fleets, including in Greencastle, Killybegs and Castletownbere, from the outrageous ongoing action taken by the British Government?”

Responding, Minister McConalogue says that his recent seafood task force, Navigating Change, estimated that the total squid fishery around Rockall is valued at about €6.6 million based on 2019 landings, and the total impact of the loss of that squid and other fisheries at €7.7 million.

Confirming the Governments ‘stance’ on Rockall, the Minister reiterated that “Ireland has never made any claims to Rockall, nor has it ever recognised British sovereignty claims to Rockall. Accordingly, we have not recognised a 12 nautical mile territorial sea around it either. This remains the position of the Government.

“The Government has been in contact with the relevant Scottish and UK authorities on Rockall in recent years and intensively so since the beginning of the year. Through this engagement, the Government is seeking to address the issues involved, reflecting the long-standing fisheries tradition we have in this area. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, Deputy Coveney, as well as our respective officials, continue to consider all options for further engagement on the issues involved and are working closely together. While engagement continues, there remains an increased risk of enforcement action being taken by Scottish fisheries control authorities against Irish vessels operating in waters around Rockall at present.”

Deputy MacLochlainn stated that there was profound injustice that was delivered

on our fleet arising from the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Brexit agreement and worries about the empathy from the Government regarding the financial and traditional fishing ground loss felt by Irish fishermen. “For the British authorities to block fishermen from the North and South of this island from accessing their traditional fishery grounds at the loss of millions of euro is an absolute outrage. I just do not feel the anger from the Government. If this happened to Macron and the French fishermen, there would be serious high-level engagements, threats of sanctions and so on.

“This must be escalated a year on. I have received repeated responses from the Minister for Foreign Affairs around dialogue and discussions. When the Maritime Jurisdiction Act went through the House earlier this year, I said to the Minister, Deputy McConalogue, that we were again conceding Rockall to the British authorities. The fact that this issue has not been resolved is evidence that we have conceded British control over Rockall. Until I see decisive action from the Government, I will not be convinced otherwise.

“Here are the facts: the British have control of more than 75% of the fish in their waters now. We have been given access to 15% of fish in Irish waters, under the Common Fisheries Policy. The British now have 75% of the fish in their waters. How

in the hell can it be justified that they would also keep us out of Rockall, an area with traditional fishing grounds for Donegal fishermen and, indeed, fishermen from Castletownbere? It is sickening that we have allowed this to happen for a year. They have control of 75% of the fish in British waters, while we have 15% of the fish in our waters. How can it be that this continues to be allowed to happen? Why is the Taoiseach not bringing this matter to the level of Boris Johnson? I asked if this would happen with Macron. It would never have happened with France. Why are we allowing this to continue a year on?”

Minister McConalogue asserted in the debate that his commitment to this is absolute. “I am working with the Minister, Deputy Coveney, in every way possible to ensure we resolve this issue diplomatically.

“There is obviously a particular challenge around Rockall. It continues to be a point of disagreement between us, about which we hold very fast to our traditional rights. We assert those rights strongly and are determined to ensure we maintain them. We are taking every action and intervention possible to ensure the matter is addressed.”

One year later the coastal community of Greencastle and indeed beyond remain at arm's length from Rockall and remain to be convinced of the Government's commitment to fight for their traditional fishing grounds.

SFPA Announces New 3-Year Strategy

How Will It Deliver On “Collaboration With Stakeholders”

What Does It Really Mean?

Report by Tom MacSweeney, Deputy Editor

The Sea Fisheries Authority has given an undertaking, contained in its new three-year strategy, launched last month, to “work as collaboratively as possible with key stakeholders.”

The SFPA says that its plan is “cognisant of the environment as well as delivering on the significant organisational change programme that is currently under way.”

What does “work as collaboratively as possible with key stakeholders” mean? This is the main question raised by those ‘stakeholders’ – the fishing industry – with the Marine Times when seeking responses to the new strategy. “All very well to state this in a glossy presentation, but what does it really mean?”

The Authority has been the subject of considerable criticism from the fishing industry during the past year.

“The recent organisational review highlighted challenges that must be addressed to make the SFPA a higher performing organisation,” say two of the Authority’s board members, Andrew Kinneen and Timothy Donovan, writing in an introduction to the strategy where they list five goals to be achieved by the SFPA:

One of the immediate ways in which it could improve relationships with the industry has been pointed out to the MARINE TIMES by leading representative bodies of the industry: “The SFPA should deal with the serious allegations stemming from the EU Audit, the details of which neither it nor the EU will reveal.”

This is a running sore for the industry. The SFPA is the authority dealing with the allegations made, yet the evidence has not been – and according to the SFPA and the EU, will not be – disclosed.

The Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation Chief Executive, Sean O’Donoghue, said: “The fundamental thing here is if you’re being accused of something you have the right under the Charter of Human Rights and under the EU Treaties to be given the information upon which those allegations are based.”

Strengthening partnerships and re-defining relationships with stakeholders” would

seem to require dealing with this issue.

At ‘Virtual Townhall’ meetings with the fishing industry during the past year Marine Minister Charlie McConalogue heard a lot of criticism of the SFPA and was challenged over his defence of it.

Also during the past year:

- The Chief Executive of the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation, described the Authority as “not fit for purpose.”
- Inspections by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) on weighing equipment used by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) were reported to have found that it was “non-compliant” and “not fit for purpose.”
- A High Court ruling found against the Authority for failure to approve a new state-of-the-art conveyor belt fish weighing system. The judicial review was taken jointly by the KFO in Donegal and Pelagic Weighing Services Ltd (PWS) in response to the SFPA’s refusal to consider and determine the application for approval of the ‘Flowscales’ built on the pier in Killybegs at a cost of €409,000.

The PWC Report commissioned into the SFPA said: “The overall conclusion of this review is that the SFPA is not working effectively and requires urgent attention. Relationships and trust have been impacted by a range of issues, including some long-standing industrial relations issues which have not been resolved. Relationships with various stakeholders, to lesser or greater degrees, are challenging. These issues are impacting performance and the organisation is not operating as a cohesive unit.”

Politicians have called, including during Dáil discussions, for issues involving the SFPA to be dealt with by Government.

In its strategy document, the SFPA says that its “primary functions have not altered since the organisation was established in 2007. However, the SFPA’s environment has changed significantly. The regulatory environment continues to evolve, requiring further adaption by the SFPA. The expected introduction of a new EU Fisheries Control regulation, once finalised and adopted, will bring both challenges and opportunities to be addressed during the lifetime of this strategic plan. The new regulation is expected to modernise controls further, ensuring better quality and sharing of fisheries data and information - this includes modernising controls for the small-scale fleet. It will reduce the administrative burden while strengthening the enforcement provisions as well as supporting the implementation of the Landing Obligation and the important fight against illegal, unreported and unregu-

lated (IUU) fishing.

“The SFPA’s role in food trade compliance has grown significantly since its previous strategy was published, both in its technical reach and the percentage of overall official control activity involved in the areas of fisheries conservation and food safety. The UK’s recent departure from the European Union is having a significant impact, particularly in relation to catch and health certification of Irish fish exports as well as import controls. This has resulted in an increased workload and an ongoing requirement for significant resourcing within the organisation. This is set to increase further with the advent from October 2021 of the requirement to provide export health certification for trade to the UK and over the landbridge to Continental Europe.”

“The ‘just in time’ trade and certification model that often applies to international movements of consignments of fish and consequently to which industry expect a regulatory response from the SFPA presents a substantial ongoing challenge to the organisation. Additionally, the development and launch of the Marine Planning Framework and the introduction of Marine Protected Areas in the near future are expected to draw further on the resources of the SFPA.”

“What the fishing industry needs most is a fair system and equitable treatment, but as you have been told many times, there is a reluctance in the industry to be marked down as a critic of the SFPA, because then they can focus on you and we have instances of that happening,” I was told by a fisherman at a high level of industry representation. “What we most need is an attitude that is not anti-fishing and policing in nature and much more constructive than it is at present.”

The SFPA says that a “significant change programme is underway” and acknowledged, in announcing its new strategy, that “there is much work still to be achieved during the strategy period from 2021 to 2023.”

The SFPA’s remit includes all fishing vessels operating within Ireland’s 200-mile limit, wherever they operate and all seafood produced in Ireland’s seafood-processing companies.

Significantly, it has no defined role in controlling the operations of non-Irish vessels.

The new strategy, the SFPA says, its “commitment to work as collaboratively as possible with key stakeholders.”

Delivering on that undertaking will be interesting to see.



Hannah Lily II at Kilmore Quay - Photo courtesy Richard Guildea



THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

“In a seafaring town remembrance is important”

Marine Times Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney hears those words at a memorial ceremony in the historic maritime town of Cobh on the edge of Cork Harbour where the National President of O.N.E., the Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen and Women, Diarmuid Higgins, raises the issue of how former Defence Forces personnel are looked after when they need help.

“Everyone relies in emergencies on the Defence Forces, such as when there are floods, severe weather, other emergencies, then the defence forces are very much needed and called on. But when people leave the defence forces, when they walk out the gates, they are gone, they are not needed any more and people forget about them.”

When Diarmuid Higgins, National President of O.N.E. – the national Organisation of Ex-Servicemen and Women – said those words to me I was standing at a memorial in Cobh where the members of the organisation had gathered for the 79th year of a pre-Christmas remembrance service.

Seventy-nine years is a long time to be remembering, I had been thinking during the ceremony on a cold, windswept Saturday morning at the monument on East Beach in Cobh, the historic maritime town on the edge of Cork Harbour. Members of the National Organisation of O.N.E., prominent in uniform, stood to attention facing the memorial on its red base, topped by a white navigational mark, as five names were called out - Frank Powell, William Duggan, Patrick Wilshaw, Frank Lloyd, John Higgins. Every December O.N.E. members gather to remember those five men, who died on the very stormy night of Saturday, December 12, 1942, in the middle of World War Two.

Under wartime regulations every ship entering the harbour had to be inspected.

Irish Shipping's Irish Poplar arrived, bound for Cork Dockyard at Rushbrooke for an annual refit and hove-to at the Dog Nose Buoy inspection area, South East of Spike Island. The Cork Harbour Commissioners' launch left its Pilot station at Cobh to put a harbour pilot aboard. One of the crew was John Higgins. He would not return to the station that night. The Marine Service launch departed Haulbowline Island, the Naval Base, with an inspection team. Frank Powell, William Duggan, Patrick Wilshaw, Frank Lloyd were on the crew. They would never return.

In stormy weather conditions, Harbour Pilot Patrick Lynch and Marine Service Chief Petty Officer Frank Barry were assisted by the ships' crew to get aboard Irish Poplar. Having completed inspection, Officer Barry prepared to disembark, but there was no sign of either the Marine Service or Commissioners' launches. It was assumed that, because of the severity of the weather, the vessels had put back to their bases.

Unbeknownst to the Irish Poplar ship's crew, both launches had collided in the severe conditions, lost power and drifted towards the ship's stern where part of its propeller was above sea level, because the ship, without cargo, was high in the water.

The launches were trashed by the propeller and six people thrown into the water. Pilot launch Coxswain, James Hogan, a strong swimmer, managed to swim to Spike Island and raise the alarm. Search lights on three harbour forts were used to light up the water as another Marine Service boat, Wyndham, searched for the missing men. Ballycotton Lifeboat battled around the coast to help. Following days of searching three bodies were found.

Those of Frank Powell and John Higgins were never recovered.

Representatives from several maritime organisations



Diarmuid Higgins National President Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen and Women at the Cobh Memorial (Picture below): Members of O.N.E. at the Memorial Ceremony as Church of Ireland Rector Rev. Paul Arbuthnot leads the prayers.

laid commemorative wreaths at the memorial as did family members of those who died.

“It is important to remember,” said Diarmuid Higgins. “Cobh is a very seafaring town.”

He told me a lot about O.N.E. which I had not known: “O.N.E. helps and supports service personnel who, for whatever reason, have fallen on hard times. We also focus on remembrance. Four of the men who died were of the Marine Service, the forerunner of the Naval Service where we all came from. We must remember them and their colleague from the harbour pilot launch. We have a five-bed home in Cobh and others in Athlone, Letterkenny and Dublin, for those who need support.

“We also provide counselling services for former service personnel who have found life difficult outside of the service. During their service their needs were taken care of. When they went out they fell by the wayside and we are picking up the pieces. The public may not be aware of what O.N.E. does or what is needed to be done. We

must remember and offer support for those men who have served the country at home and abroad.”

Remembrance, as Diarmuid Higgins said, is important.



• A broadcast of the ceremony can be heard on the Maritime Ireland Radio Show on the Marine Times website

We Are Only Looking For Our Own Fish In Our Own Waters!

Brexit Hangover Erodes Fisheries Council to Role of Farcical Circus

With Christmas on the horizon, the farce that is the annual December Council of Ministers or as we call it the 'Brussels Quota Circus' left the Irish Fishing Industry once again with the dawning reality that nothing changes for Irish fishermen.

As Patrick Murphy says, "Let's be clear: The fish we are asking for are only those found in our waters but once again we are informed this is too much to ask for in Brussels at this year's December Council!"

This year's 'Circus' was complicated by the fact that the EU Council on Fisheries was taking place in tandem with the negotiations between the EU and the UK! This has to change in the future and it makes no sense to have an EU Council on Fisheries while talks with the UK are taking place in tandem. John Ward of the IFPO says, "It renders the EU Council largely a non event and this has to change."

So complicated indeed that upon the conclusion of the 'Circus' - Post Brexit negotiations between the EU and UK on fishing quotas for shared fish stocks, which commenced in early November were still deadlocked. In light of that situation, Fisheries Ministers decided to set provisional fish quotas for EU fishers for the first quarter of 2022 in the event that an agreement is not reached before the end of the year. More uncertainty in the industry.

Minister for the Marine Charlie McConalogue said, "It is regrettable that the negotiations with the UK on fish quotas for shared stocks, which started on 11 November, could not be concluded ahead of the Council. These negotiations with the UK have proved to be very difficult and it is in Ireland's interest that the EU is not rushed into an unacceptable deal. To avoid any disruption to our fleets, we have agreed provisional fish quotas for the first quarter of 2022."

Sean O'Donoghue, CEO of the KFO, "Ahead of this Council, I had warned that the new system which sees Britain negotiate directly with the EU on fisheries quotas, means that the Council is now being held in a vacuum bereft of critical information regarding key stocks. A fundamental overhaul of the current system is urgently needed with fishermen entitled to some sort of certainty in order to manage their businesses for the year ahead."

And then miraculously on Wednesday 22nd December as everyone was bedding down for the festive period prior to trying to figure out how to fish in the New Year an announcement comes in from the Minister's office welcoming an EU-UK agreement on fish quotas for 2022 - "Agreement on Fish Quotas gives certainty to Irish fishers for the coming year"

Minister McConalogue welcomed the agreement between the EU and the UK on Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for shared stocks in 2022 (see table on page 18). This agreement covers all our whitefish

stocks including Haddock, Cod, Whiting, Monkfish, Prawns, Sole and Plaice and other stocks including Horse Mackerel and Herring.

The Minister said: "Negotiations with the UK on the fishing quotas began in early November and have proven very difficult, particularly in relation to stocks in the Celtic Sea. The negotiations commenced on the basis of the scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) but there were significant differences between the parties on how the scientific advice should be applied in mixed fisheries. Throughout this process, I worked closely with Commissioner Sinkevičius to protect Ireland's key interests in these negotiations. I thank the Commissioner and his negotiating team for their hard work over the last number of weeks."

The Minister added that: "I had sought that the quotas should be set following the scientific advice and had pressed this point in relation to certain key stocks where the UK took a different position. However, taking account of the need for fishers to have certainty for the coming year, and in the context of what were very difficult and prolonged negotiations and widely diverging views on some stocks, I am satisfied that the Commissioner delivered a balanced overall agreement. Like all agreements, it involved compromises. This agreement will support the sustainable management of our shared stocks and enable fishermen to plan their activities for the year ahead. The agreement sets sustainable quotas for the stocks of interest to Ireland and by-catch only quotas for vulnerable stocks in mixed fisheries."

"The EU/UK Agreement determines the overall level of the EU share for the coming year and there is then a further internal EU step required to determine the detailed national quotas for each stock. That work is under way but will take more time."

It was important that the Minister should return from the December Fisheries Council in Brussels with a good news headline and this year is no exception according to John Ward of the IFPO. "This year it's the declaration by the Council of Ministers aimed at resolving the Mackerel dispute between Ireland and Denmark which may see Ireland benefit from an increased Mackerel quota share in 2022 but I would suggest we don't get over excited as we have received nothing yet and

recent dealings with the EU Commission do not foster optimism. However, it is good to see our Minister is not afraid to make waves.

"In the pre-council meetings held with Minister McConalogue we impressed upon him the seasonality of our Pelagic fisheries in particular and the necessity for us to have adequate quotas available for our fleet in the first quarter and he has largely delivered on this point with the exception of Boarfish.

"On the Demersal sector we experienced tremendous difficulties earlier this year operating the 3-month temporary quotas and 2022 will be the same. We are extremely disappointed that our European partners and the Commission have ignored the situation for Haddock in 6a where ICES recommended a large increase but because it is aligned with Haddock in the North Sea we will only see a token increase. We do not accept the ICES advice for Monkfish, Haddock in 7a or Hake and this Council will bring no change and to make matters worse, the word on the grapevine is that the UK is proposing lower catches in mixed fisheries than ICES during the bi-lateral discussions with the EU.

"The timeline for the negotiations between the EU and the UK has to change in the future and it makes no sense to have an EU Council on Fisheries while talks with the UK are taking place in tandem. It renders the EU Council largely a non event and this has to change."

A lack of agreement with the UK would have made managing our demersal fisheries more difficult in particular in mixed fisheries where Cod 7b to k, Whiting 7a and Cod 6a stocks are on bi catch quota because of zero TAC advice.

John Lynch, CEO of the ISEFPO explains, "Ireland shares all bar three stocks with the UK and this leaves us particularly vulnerable in TAC setting under the Trade and Co-Operation Agreement (TCA). When TACs are not agreed between the EU and the UK by the 10th December the parties under the terms of the TCA are to redouble their efforts to reach agreement by the 20th December, however we consider that the system needs a reset in this area and that the dialogue with the UK and the opportunity for stakeholder involvement should commence earlier in the year given the difficulty in attaining any agreement with the UK.



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"We acknowledge the achievement of the Minister and his team in securing a commitment from the commission to examine the EU mackerel transfer to Denmark under a historical agreement with Norway. However we do not understand the Commissions willingness to accept overfishing of mackerel by Norway and the Faroe Islands. The commission have had no issue in withdrawing Ireland's control plan and forcing every fisherman in Ireland to weigh fish on the piers and harbours around our coast without warning or evidence of wrongdoing, while turning a blind eye to the massive overfishing of mackerel by Norway and the Faroe Islands. We the ISEFPO support the Minister in insisting that the EU must be prepared to take all appropriate measures if this behaviour reoccurs in 2022."

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) CEO, Seán O'Donoghue has welcomed a declaration issued by the Council of EU Fisheries Ministers aimed at resolving the mackerel dispute between Denmark and Ireland. However, he conceded that this agreement aside, it was a case of "little done, lots left to do" at the annual meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers.

Mr O'Donoghue said that this outcome provided an injection of confidence on the critical wider issue of burden-sharing whereby the industry here is seeking an equitable solution to the outrageous scenario which sees Irish fishermen saddled with 40% of the EU's fisheries loss to Britain, post-Brexit.

"We are confident that when all the facts are fully examined rather than the rhetoric, it will be shown that the incorrect methodology had been used by the Commission in setting the Danish mackerel quota in Norwegian waters, which will now be rectified for 2022. The declaration provides a roadmap to achieving this. This issue was a key priority for us and we are pleased that we have managed to eke out a fairly strong resolution thereon.

"Ahead of this Council, I had warned that the new system which sees Britain negotiate directly with the EU on fisheries quotas, means that the Council is now being held in a vacuum bereft of critical information regarding key stocks. A fundamental overhaul of the current system is urgently needed with fishermen entitled to some sort of certainty in order to manage their businesses for the year ahead.

"Unfortunately, the Council did not address massive mackerel over-fishing by Norway and the Faroe Islands during 2021 which is jeopardising the sustainable management of the stock. However Minister McConalogue did reiterate his supportive position on this issue at Council, calling



A busy Killybegs harbour for the inshore fleet between Christmas and New Year with some calm weather and good local catches of Herring to be had out in the bay - Pictured above is the Cadno and Abigail courtesy of Ronan Cunningham.

for a range of appropriate measures against Norway and the Faroes, if they continue to set inflated, unilateral mackerel quotas," concluded Mr O'Donoghue.

The December Council proved once again the EU's lack of understanding of Irish fishing industry – according to Brendan Byrne of the IFPEA

"As we enter the second year after the disastrous Trade and Co operation agreement (TCA) Ireland still has not secured one ounce of additional fish through the process of burden sharing, this proves once again that our EU colleagues simply do not understand the pressures the Irish Fishing industry is under at present.

"There is little to be festively cheerful about regarding the fisheries council talks, but in reality, was it going to be any different? Had we really asked for any substantial burden sharing proposals in advance? The IFPEA concerns in advance of these talks was always, that with the complete lack of broad support in real terms for the burden sharing principle within our EU colleagues, that we could leave these talks in a worse position than entering them and unless we made creditable alternative proposals based on the principles of levelling up, so that over time we claw back that what we have unfairly lost then in these talks we could end up with nothing additional. Regrettably that seems to be the situation and all the time - time itself moves on.

"The plight of the white fish sector still remains unresolved, and more than any other segment it requires additional quota and opportunity, and yet the talks outcome has very little for them. At present we have a crisis in the processing industry with scarcity of supply particularly in the white fish sector, and some operators having to ration their order books- so as to provide each customer with something as opposed to failing completely to supply the entire customer base. This is the hard realities facing some processors at present and the backdrop in which we are operating as a fish processing industry. The same is the reality in the shellfish and nephrops sectors and yet we are failing to get active engagement from our EU colleagues on these matters. We cannot no longer stand idly by in a stupor and do nothing for these families and communities and that is not a singular political charge, this is a charge against us as a nation state.

"It's no longer a case of moral support that we require from our EU colleagues, these are the same coastal members states that annually reap the benefits from the seas that surround our Island. It is time for us to get additional actual quota rights and increased fishing rights in the waters that surround our own island for the entire Irish fishing industry across the board. Zonal attachment has to mean something in terms of our rights, and it must be the basis of the way forward for dealing with the historical unfairness of the CFP since 1983 in addition to addressing the actual disproportionate losses of the Brexit deal 2020."

As Christmas approached, that usual sense of "Déjà vu" experienced annually by the Irish Fishing Industry disappears only to be replaced, once again with the dawning reality that nothing changes for Irish fishermen as we reach the conclusion of the December Council of Ministers according to Patrick Murphy, CEO of the ISWFPO.

"Each year, we put forward credible, fair and sustainable requests for justifiable

Increases in a few key white fish stocks, Hake, Haddock, Monk and Sole in the Celtic Sea to the Minister of the day and his Department Officials team who are working close on thirty years in the Department of Marine, who negotiate with their European counterparts up and down the corridors of Brussels through the long hours of the night.

"As in previous years, no tooth nor nail was spared in these negotiations but despite this Trojan effort, the usual disappointment is related back to us - only this year it comes to us online as Europe goes Digital in the age of Covid.

"Sarcasm aside, the future of our Industry remains bleak with scientific advice not conforming with the reality of what our fishermen witness, which is the abundance of fish witnessed by our fishermen every day on our Irish fishing grounds.

"There is clear and irrefutable evidence showing many stocks in Ireland's EEZ could clearly allow for far higher Total Allowable Catches and sustainable Quota's for Irish fishermen many of whom will be forced to leave the Industry if the Common fishery policy remains in favour of our visiting fleets."

"We ask for no more that equal rights and equal opportunities for Irish Fishermen in Irish waters.

"Let's be clear: The fish we are asking for are only those found in our waters but once again we are informed this is too much to ask for in Brussels at this year's December Council.

"We share the Minister's frustration that there was no agreement reached between the UK and EU, our fishermen were once again forced to plan for the year ahead on three months of Quota until such time as the Egos of our respective negotiators are massaged enough to allow them reach an agreement for both sides that will last until the end of December 2022."



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Preliminary Analysis of 2022 TACs for EU stocks shared with UK

SPECIES	AREA	Overall TAC	2021 IE Quota	Overall TAC	2022 IE Quota
Tusk (Western)	5,6,7	4,294	238	4,294	238
Greater silver smelt	3 and 4	809	5	809	5
Greater silver smelt	5, 6 and 7	3,729	262	11,626	821
Boarfish	(all waters)	19,152	13,234	22,791	15,749
Herring	5b and 6b; 6aN (1)	3,480	478	3,480	470
Herring	7bc ; 6aS (1)	1,360	1,236	1,360	1,236
Herring	7a (1)	7,341	808	8,455	719
Herring	7g, 7h, 7j and 7k (1)	869	750	869	750
Cod	6b 5b 12 and 14	74	16	74	14
Cod	6a 5b	1,279	243	1,279	220
Cod	7a	206	104	206	104
Cod	7b-c,e-k, 8, 9 & 10; & 34.1.1	805	422	644	338
Megrim	6; 5b; 12 and 14	5,225	600	5,581	627
Megrim	7	18,365	2,844	18,916	2,827
Monkfish	6; 5b; 12 and 14	6,377	562	5,102	439
Monkfish	7	38,123	2,775	41,173	2,977
Haddock	6b; 12 and 14	8,375	570	5,825	386
Haddock	5b and 6a	4,767	648	5,006	682
Haddock	7b-k, 8, 9 and 10; 34.1.1	15,000	2,959	15,000	2,920
Haddock	7a	3,371	1,322	3,038	1,171
Whiting	6; 5b; 12 and 14	937	299	1,800	561
Whiting	7a	721	280	721	274
Whiting	7b - 7k	10,259	3,916	10,273	3,972



Kilmore Quay - Photo courtesy Richard Guildea

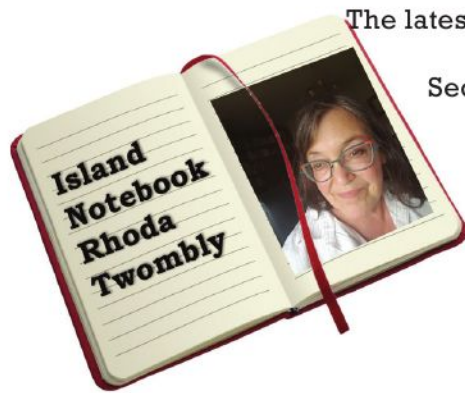
SPECIES	AREA	Overall TAC	2021 IE Quota	Overall TAC	2022 IE Quota
Hake	6 and 7; 5b; 12 and 14	55,335	2,989	44,268	2,383
Blue Ling	5b, 6, 7	11,522	32	10,859	30
Blue Ling	2 and 4	27	2	27	2
Ling	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	18,356	1,301	15,052	1,059
Norway lobster	6; 5b	14,592	202	11,862	160
Norway lobster	7	18,026	6,102	17,038	5,682
Norway lobster	FU16	3,290	1,194	2,804	1,016
Plaice	6, 5b ; 12 and 14	658	248	658	248
Plaice	7a	2,846	1,069	2,747	1,031
Plaice	7f and 7g	1,911	240	1,735	237
Plaice	7h, 7j and 7k	67	28	114	47
Pollack	6; 5b; 12 and 14	184	26	156	22
Pollack	7	9,426	680	8,012	572
Saithe	6; 5b; 12 and 14	6,175	369	4,664	353
Saithe	7, 8, 9 and 10; 34.1.1	3,176	1,493	2,541	1,404
Skates/Rays	6a, 6b, 7a-c 7e-k	9,675	1,210	9,482	1,177
Small-eyed Ray	7f and 7g	123	12	123	12
Undulate Ray	7d and 7e	234	25	234	25
Greenland Halibut	6;4;2a;5b	2,571	29	2,571	29
Common sole	6; 5b ; 12 and 14	57	46	57	46
Common sole	7a	768	104	787	105
Common sole	7f and 7g	1,413	42	1,337	39
Common sole	7h, 7j, and 7k	280	126	213	95
Horse mackerel	4b, 4c, 7d	14,014	330	8,969	202
Horse mackerel	2a, 4a, 6, 7a-c, 7e-k, 8a,b,d,e ,5b, 12, 14	70,254	17,561	61,416	15,737
Spurdog+	1,5,6,7,8,12,14	270	48	270	47

+ only as part of an approved by-catch avoidance scheme

Note: The quotas above have not been formally adopted by the Commission yet and are based on Department's analysis only of IE's quota for 2022 for stocks shared with the UK.

Hague Preferences have been included for the relevant stocks – Hague Preferences must be agreed and adopted by Council.

The tables above only includes the stocks shared with the UK only.



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

Offshore Island Farms Are Integral to Life

As farming has always been an integral part of island life, Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann felt it important to contribute to the Department of Agriculture's Public Consultation on the Environmental Assessment of the draft CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Noting that offshore island farms are some of the best examples of sustaining and protecting our environment and biodiversity while also crucial to maintaining the landscapes of the islands, Comhdháil's submission presented several points that would benefit offshore island farmers and their land.

Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann proposes that where co-operation projects are developed that 'Offshore Islands' are specified as well as any proposed mainland hinterland projects. Bearing in mind that co-management and partnership with other stakeholders is an important theme for islands, Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann proposed that islands deserve a specific mention under the several sections in the CAP Strategic Plan to ensure that the special circumstances of offshore islands are recognised and that the future sustainability of island farming, the environment and biodiversity is to the forefront to meet the challenges ahead. For example, offshore islands should be a priority objective in the co-operation measure article 77, that the phrase "including the offshore islands" be added to sections referring to high priority areas as well as sections referring to farming in coastal areas.

Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann made the request for additional funding in the past and thankfully were successful with the island increase under the ANC/ASC and TAMS categories. This led to the Island Farming Scheme with the new designation of Areas of Specific Constraints (Island Farming). This was a very welcome development for the islands and the extra financial support that is currently available must be maintained and strengthened. Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann are requesting additional financial support through the establishment of an offshore island category across all available agriculture funding

schemes under the next CAP Strategic Plan, as listed under the table of indicative allocation per intervention, to ensure the viability of our offshore farms.

Comhdháil's submission also emphasised the need for measures to promote remote working on the islands to increase sustainability and address declining populations. The LEADER program, which has been successful on islands, badly needs to be administered by an island-based company familiar with the needs of the communities involved working for all of the islands. In the next call for submissions for Local Development Strategies it is vital for a separate, distinct call for a national islands strategy. This strategy must have a dedicated ring-fenced budget recognising the additional difficulties with islands and acknowledge this through funding that addresses the diverse nature of the additional costs associated with rural island life.

NBI Project Team to Survey Islands for Broadband

Essential to sustainability and growth on the islands is reliable high-speed broadband. The remit of National Broadband Ireland is serving areas of Ireland that are not being covered by commercial broadband providers. As offshore islands fall into this category, NBI has created a separate project team to survey the infrastructural and engineering needs of the islands and design the high-speed implementation.

According to NBI, the network will offer a high-speed broadband service with a minimum download speed of 500Mbps from the outset, with the option to avail of a 1Gbps service.

NBI is currently developing the high-speed infrastructure to Eadarinis / Inishcoo, Eighter Island, Rutland Island and Inishfree Island off the coast of Donegal, as well as Inishlyre and Collanmore Island in Clew Bay, Co. Mayo.

Islands Video to Be Launched

The new edition of Slí, the e-newsletter from Comhar na nOileán CTR, highlights several programs, funding oppor-

tunities and projects of interest across the off-shore islands. It is available through the Comhar Facebook page.

The unique and beneficial feature of the Community Activities Fund, which is directed towards community groups in disadvantaged areas, is that it grants funds for non-pay organisation running costs. This is welcome, vital funding for community groups, so they are urged to apply. The Department states that only operating/running costs related to the period 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022 are eligible. Comhar na nOileán will be posting the relevant closing dates on our social media pages. Slí and relevant closing dates are on www.facebook.com/comharnanoilean

Included in the e-magazine are articles on the impact of LEADER and SICAP funding on islands, and the work of IIMRO. Due to be launched is a video promoting the islands - "Escape overseas to the Islands." With stunning photography, the video highlights many aspects of getting away from it all on the islands - outdoor sport, culture, walks, birdwatching and holistic retreats to name a few. Film maker Helena Gallagher, originally from Arranmore, captures the spirit of the islands, the ease of shrugging off the worries and stress of everyday life (especially these days!) and the unique

beauty of our Atlantic gems. The video will be available on the Comhar na nOileán Facebook page.

As we step into 2022, the Board of Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann wishes all Islanders health and happiness and hopes that the darkness of recent times recedes so we can face our challenges with the determination and innovation islanders are known for.

Until we meet again, it's slán from the islands.



Grandson of Donegal Coxswain Awarded RNLI Gold Medal for Gallantry During World War II Returns from Boston to Join Arranmore Island's Lifesaving Crew - See page 26 for full story



Muireann Kavanagh is the youngest girl fishing in the fleet. She is helping on her father Neily's 50ft boat fishing Herring and landing in Killybegs. The Kavanaghs and Gallaghers from Arranmore Island, Co Donegal caught the first Wild Irish Sardines last year (MFV Ros Ard and MFV Cadno) for Shines Seafoods. Do you know who catches the Sardines you eat? Buy Irish caught fish when possible. Fishing communities all around the Irish coast will appreciate your support. This is the future of the Irish fishing industry, make sure more young people like Muireann has one. Photo courtesy www.shinesseafood.ie



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V-Notching & Maximum Size Regulations Contributing to An Apparent Increase in Colour-Morphs and Leviathan Lobsters (*Homarus Gammarus*) in Irish Waters?

Declan Quigley Reports

During the first week of October 2021, the *MFV Chaser* (WD329) [Skipper: Alan Hinchy, Kilmore Quay] captured a vivid electric blue European Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) while potting out of Kilmore Quay, Co Wexford, off SE Ireland (Fig. 1). Alan remarked: 'another fisherman captured three more blue lobsters in the same area during the same week'.



Figure 1. Blue Lobster colour-morph from Co Wexford (Alan Hinchy, October 2021). Figure 2. Orange Lobster colour-morph from Co Wexford (Alan Hinchy, '20). Figure 3. Ovigerous female White lobster colour-morph from Co Wexford (Alan Hinchy, October '21)

Alan noted: 'up until about two years ago no one had seen any blue lobsters

around here, but all of a sudden they are everywhere and 99% of them are over the legal size to land (127 mm CL), so they are put back in the water'. On 17 September 2020, Alan captured and released a very large female blue lobster, and five more blues the following month during a single trip. Indeed, over the last two years Alan stated that he had V-notched and released 40-50 ovigerous female blue lobsters. Over the last few years Alan also captured several other types of lobster colour-morphs in the same area, including white and orange, individuals (Figs. 2-3). Elsewhere around the coast, a range of other aberrantly coloured lobsters have been noted (Figs. 4-6).

Although the historical incidence of reported lobster colour-morphs in Irish

waters appears to be very low, ranging from 1/1million for reds and 1/2 million for blues, to 1/10 million for bi-colours, they are relatively high compared with data on colour-morphs of American Lobsters (*Homarus americanus*). Is it possible that V-notching of colour-morphs might be increasing the Irish odds?



V-notching of lobsters is a voluntary conservation tool – its primary intention is to protect female lobsters, giving them the opportunity to spawn and replenish the stock while they are V-notched. The process is simple and involves manually removing a V-shaped notch from one of the flaps (uropods) either side of the central part of the animal's tail (telson) when it is first caught. If caught again, V-notched lobsters cannot be retained or offered for

sale but must be returned to the sea where they and their offspring contribute to future

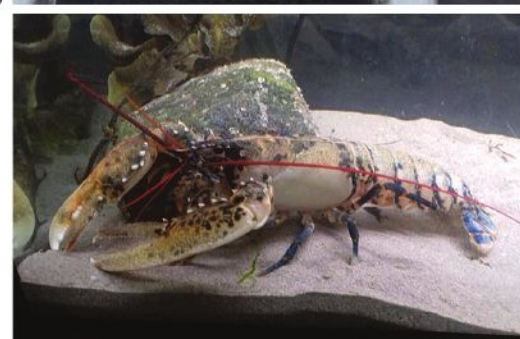
recruitment (S.I. No. 591 of 2014). The V-notch is not permanent and lasts for about 4 to 6 years, depending on moult frequency, affording them the opportunity to spawn two or three times in that period before it is repaired during repeated moulting.

According to the latest *Marine Institute* review (*Implementation and monitoring of the lobster v-notch programme in Ireland*, July 2021), V-notched lobsters have been released annually around the coast of Ireland for over 20 years. Numbers released increased significantly during 2014-2019 to over 32000 lobsters representing up to 8% of the officially reported landings. Approximately 300 vessel owners have participated in the scheme in recent years.

This compares to approximately 600 vessels registered as selling lobsters in sales note data. Grant aid costs were €50,000 to €90,000 during 2002-2013 but increased in 2014-2019 to between €250,000 and €375,000. The introduction of V-notching for >127mm CL lobsters between 2015 and 2018 further increased the level of V-notching over and above those seen in 2014 but returned to 2014 levels when this derogation ended. Considering the relatively limited distance over which lobsters migrate, the report predicted the development of local hotspots in areas where relatively high numbers of lobsters are V-notched.

Studies have shown that blue and red colour-morphs of American Lobsters are genetically reproducible, so it seems reasonable to speculate that the same

genetically inheritable traits would also apply to European Lobsters. If increasing



numbers of lobster colour-morphs are V-notched and released, the chances of them mating with other colour-morphs will also increase, leading to a higher incidence of colour-morphs within local populations. Compared with normally coloured conspecifics, is it possible that lobster colour-morphs are maladapted to their environment; perhaps more conspicuous to both predators and prey? Although potential consumer reaction to colour-morph lobsters is any one's guess, irrespective of their aberrant phenotypic colouration, all lobsters eventually turn red in the pot!

Similarly, the mandatory release of all lobsters >127mm CL (S.I. No. 591 of 2019) is likely to result in an increasing abundance of exceptionally large lobsters, some of which will also contribute to the increasing incidence of colour-morphs. Is it possible that increasing numbers of exceptionally large lobsters might have a negative effect on local populations due to cannibalism of smaller conspecifics as well as competition for food and available habitat?

Declan is always interested in receiving reports about unusual and

rarely recorded species captured in Irish waters (declanquigley2021@gmail.com; WhatsApp: 087-6458485).

Figure 4. Yellow European Lobster (NW Mayo, July 2018, Ciara O'Donnell via Dingle Oceanworld). Figure 5. Calico coloured European Lobster (Achill Aquarium, Co Mayo). Figure 6. Bi-coloured European Lobster (Dunmore Head, Dingle, July 2007, Dingle Oceanworld, Co Kerry)



IRISH WHALE AND DOLPHIN GROUP IWDG NEWS

Most people's favourite whale is the humpback, writes Padraig Whooley Sightings Officer of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, reviewing the year past

People's Favourite Whale

During 2021 the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) received and validated around 2,500 cetacean and basking shark sighting records. This represents a 28% increase on 2020 and the highest level of reporting ever achieved by IWDG. The two most likely contributing factors in this are our new Reporting App which was launched in early 2021, which introduced biological recording to a whole new audience of Citizen Scientists, but it's difficult to rule out the influence of a good summer and a rather benign Autumn, all of which resulted in calmer seas and better viewing conditions, which means more sighting reports from the public.

As expected, sightings ramped up fast during spring, peaking in July and August and slowly tapered off in Autumn. Over the 12 months IWDG confirmed 13 species, 11 of which were cetaceans (whales, dolphins & porpoises) but as always there was a strong showing of the planet's 2nd largest fish, the planktivorous basking shark, with 138 sighting reports, which represented a 45% increase in sightings and a 31% increase in numbers counted on the previous year.

Who could forget the mesmerising footage captured by colleague Dr Simon Berrow of large aggregations of basking sharks off West Clare throughout August and September, culminating in some staggering estimates of 60-80 sharks off the Kilkee area. During the year we also documented marine reptiles such as the giant leatherback turtle and of course our wayward Walrus, who intrigued everyone with his travel arrangements that took him as far South as Bilbao in Spain and as far north as South eastern Iceland. We wonder where he is now, but hope he is back in his familiar Arctic habitat.

Among the cetaceans in this year's roundup, we have everything from our smallest, the Harbour porpoise, seen in big numbers along the east coast, to the planet's largest animal, the mighty blue whale, photographed by Declan Horan of the Marine Institute, off the West Coast some 330 km off Slyne Head. There were deep divers such as long-finned pilot whales in the canyon systems off the shelf edge and of course the "usual suspects" who frequent our shallow shelf waters and quite often come within binocular and scoping range of our headlands.

Our most frequently reported species was the bottlenose dolphin, which is unusual as 1st place is almost always claimed by harbour porpoises. The big increase in bottlenose sighting records from the North Antrim coast was likely to be a factor in their top ranking in 2021, so a big call out to all the boat operators on the North Coast Boating "What's App" Group, for sharing

their regular encounters with us from around Ballycastle and Rathlin Island.

Most people's favourite whale, the humpback appeared very early, with our first record on St. Patrick's Day from Ardmore Bay, Co. Waterford. But they started to appear regularly in West Kerry from mid April and in West Cork a few weeks later. 2021 saw the Irish Humpback whale catalogue grow to 116 animals and of the 34 animals photo identified 6 were new and previously undocumented in Irish waters.

Perhaps our most significant international humpback match came courtesy of Happy Whale, a collective of researchers and Citizen Scientists who solicit images globally of all whale species, using advanced recognition software for matching. They informed us of an exciting match of our #HBIRL43, on August 21st to Storfjorden, Svalbard in Norway's far northern territory. This is our first international match of this individual, who was also the first humpback identified this season off the Stag Rocks in West Cork. We documented it on four occasions between April 27th and June 7th. This match suggests it travelled a minimum distance of 3,800 km over a 75 day period, a daily average of 50 km. This sighting puts it c. 900 km north of our previous highest latitude match and is our only humpback to be recorded in what we'd term the High Arctic.

At time of writing there are areas along the south coast enjoying almost daily fin whale sightings as well as some late season humpback activity, so if you can make the most of the often elusive weather windows over the coming winter months, there are still plenty of opportunities for whale watchers and wildlife enthusiasts to head to the coast and view some really good large whale activity....Yes, even in the depths of an Irish winter!

Enjoy your sightings and please do remember to report them to us on www.iwdg.ie or on our IWDG Reporting App.

Wishing you all a Peaceful and blubber rich 2022

Irish Whale
and Dolphin Group



www.iwdg.ie



BirdWatchIreland
protecting birds and biodiversity

BirdWatch Ireland is asking members of the public who regularly visit coastal harbours and beaches and who take to the seas for help in spotting outbreaks of 'Avian influenza – Bird flu.' Niall Hatch reports the details of what has been hitting Ireland since November.

Public Assistance Needed in Spotting Bird Flu

Over the past two years, all of us have learned more about disease pandemics than we would ever have believed possible. Highly contagious and destructive viral outbreaks are not confined to humans, of course, and, over the past few months, avian influenza – or bird 'flu' – has come back into the spotlight. There have been several confirmed outbreaks, both in domestic poultry flocks and amongst wild birds.

There are numerous strains and subtypes of the avian influenza virus that each vary in severity. The strain that has recently been detected in some wild birds in Ireland is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1, which spreads easily between birds and causes illness, with a high death rate. This strain had been detected in a number of European countries, before arriving into Ireland in November, as wild birds migrated southwards and westwards for the winter. BirdWatch Ireland is part of an early warning system with regard to surveillance for signs of disease in wild birds, together with colleagues in the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the National Association of Regional Game Councils.

It is important to stress that there have been no confirmed cases of animal-to-human transmission during the current outbreak, and there are no known risks to human health. The impacts on both wild birds and on poultry producers could be extremely serious, however, and it is vital that the situation is monitored and that outbreaks are rapidly identified.

Wetland birds appear to be disproportionately affected by avian influenza, perhaps because they tend to gather in relatively large flocks and to move greater distances than other birds. BirdWatch Ireland monitors Ireland's waterbird and seabirds on an ongoing basis, particularly through our Irish Wetland Bird Survey, and this provides both the State and conservationists with a wealth of data on bird populations and movements.

Members of the Public Please Help

We are also asking members of the public to be vigilant, and people who regularly visit coastal harbours and beaches and who take to the seas have a particularly important role to play. Dead seabirds often go unnoticed and unrecorded. If you happen to come across dead or obviously sick birds, please do not touch them, and please report them immediately to the Department of Agriculture via its website.

On-going monitoring of wild bird populations is a very important part of Bird-

Watch Ireland's work, and we rely heavily on public assistance. If you are looking for another way to help, over the next few weeks you might like to participate in our Irish Garden Bird Survey, which this winter is sponsored for us by Ballymaloe and which will run until the end of February. Taking part is easy: using our special survey form, each week you simply note down the highest number of each bird species that you see in your garden at any one time. Full details are available at www.birdwatchireland.ie.

Starling Murmurations In Marine Areas Are Under-Recorded

We are also tracking Starlings this winter, and in particular the locations of the phenomenon known as a murmuration: when huge numbers of these small, dark birds flock together on winter evenings and perform amazing aerobatic displays around dusk. It is one of the most breathtaking sights in nature, and there are several well-known sites across the country where it can be seen.

However, we know that Starling murmurations in marine areas, and especially over offshore islands, coastal wetlands and the sea itself, are under-recorded. In other European countries, it is known that harbours and piers often host large Starling murmurations and night-time roosts, and we need more data on this from Ireland.

So, this winter, please keep an eye out for Starling murmurations and report them to our Starling Murmuration Survey. Once again, you will find full details at www.birdwatchireland.ie. Also, keep an eye on our Facebook page and our Twitter feed for news of murmurations near you: it's a spectacle not to be missed.

If you are looking for a New Year resolution that will help our environment, will greatly aid efforts to conserve our most threatened flora and fauna and will benefit your own physical and mental health, may I suggest becoming a member of BirdWatch Ireland? As a conservation charity, your support would mean a great deal to us. Please visit www.birdwatchireland.ie for more information and to sign up.

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news from Castletownbere

Helen Riddell

Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-op Donate House to CoAction

A new purpose built house in Castletownbere for service users of CoAction in Beara which was funded by a €250,000 donation from Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-operative Society has been officially opened for use.

In 2018, the Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-operative celebrated its fiftieth anniversary and decided to mark the occasion by investing in a new respite house for CoAction West Cork. John Nolan, the co-operative's managing director explained that the organisation wanted to mark the anniversary but by doing something which would give back to the local community. "To honour all our fishermen, managers, crews and staff when we met as a board and discussed how to celebrate fifty years it was never about the glitz and glamour of a big party, it was always about the community and so we decided to purchase a house for CoAction."

John stated that all felt it would honour all those who started the co-operative and the memory of those who have lost loved ones. "We as the co-operative and our community have faced great tragedies over the last fifty years. I think almost all families on the peninsula have had to face the loss of a loved one at sea, and sometimes with no body recovered to allow these families to grieve. From the Sea Flower and the St Gervais with all hands lost, to many individual drownings, there were people who gave their lives working for our community. To honour them all we felt to purchase a house for Co-Action would be a fitting tribute to them."

Wayne O'Sullivan from CoAction West Cork, thanked the Fishermen's Co-operative for their generosity. "On behalf of everyone in the committee we give huge thanks to

the fishermen and fishing families of Castletownbere. They are the cornerstone of our community and this huge act of charity and this gift is a testament of their generosity and this donation of a house is a first in Co Action West Cork."

Fundraising Calendar

The 'This is Beara' calendar 2022 in memory of the late John Eagle is now on sale in local shops throughout Beara. Priced €15, all proceeds will go to St Joseph's Community Hospital, Castletownbere and Cancer Connect.

Beara Further Education

The Beara Further Education and Training Centre has a number of courses starting in January 2022 which will include computer courses for all levels, an introduction to ceramics, English language classes, office skills, gardening, Irish classes, bookkeeping and accounts and wellness courses. For further details and to book contact Noreen on 086 8239147.

Castletownbere Coast Guard

In mid December the Castletownbere Coast Guard team undertook their individual cliff rescue assessments. The team were evaluated for their proficiency in various aspects of the technical rope rescue system which is used by the Irish Coast Guard. The assessments take place every three years and include a written exam, knots, rigs, anchors, climbing, stretcher rescue, hauling and other essential skills

which are required in order to carry out a safe and successful cliff rescue. Each team member is assessed individually, and a number of recent recruits to the Castletownbere Coast Guard team successfully passed their assessment and are now full members of the cliff crew.

Beara Groups to Benefit from Council Funding

Cork County Council has allocated over €700,000 to community groups from across the county under Phase 2 of a €3.5 million fund. With €500,000 allocated every year over the last 7 years, Cork County Council established the Community Development Initiative to fund local community development projects, with supports ranging from €1,000 to €25,000 per initiative.

The council received 241 applications with 132 successful community groups approved for funding. The projects approved range from the refurbishment of community halls, the upgrading of walkways, equipment purchases such as tables, chairs and mowers, plus many more vital items which will improve the quality of amenities for all residents of Cork County. Two groups in Beara which have received funding include Allihies Parish Co-operative who will receive €10,000 for a new building, and Bere Island Projects Group who will receive €10,000 for sailing dinghies.

Charity Head Shave

Christina O'Shea, Carmel Lehan and Martin Murphy from Castletownbere have taken part in a charity head shave in a bid to raise funds for Cancer Connect, Make-A-Wish Ireland and Pieta House. The head shave took place last Friday outside O'Shea's bar in Castletownbere, with local hairdresser Lisa O'Driscoll doing the honours. Funds can be donated via iDonate at www.idonate.ie/fundraise/11421988_christina--carmel--amp--martin.html



(Above): Paddy O'Sullivan, John D O'Sullivan members of the Castletownbere Fisherman's Co-op; Barry Power, who is supported by Co Action Beara; John Nolan, General Manager of Castletownbere Fisherman's Co-op; Catherine O'Sullivan, who is supported by Co Action Beara; Jason Sheehan, Chairman of Castletownbere Fisherman's Co-op and Paul D O'Sullivan, Castletownbere Fisherman's Co-op.

(Below): Members of Castletownbere Fisherman's Co op with members of Co Action Beara at the official handing over of the house in Castletownbere Paddy O'Sullivan, John D O'Sullivan, Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-op; Mary O'Neill, Ber Power, Nula McCarthy, Beara Co Action; Jason Sheehan, Chairman, John Nolan, General Manager of Castletownbere Fisherman's Co-op; Wayne O'Sullivan, Anette Brennan, Beara Co Action and Paul D O'Sullivan, Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-op. Pictures: Anne Marie Cronin Photography



Dawn Ross heading for the shelter of Castletownbere during Storm Barra - Photo courtesy Jason Reynolds

International Fishing and Maritime News

U.S. Fishermen Making Stand Against Offshore Wind Projects

Opposition by the fishing industry to proposed offshore wind projects in the United States includes a lawsuit filed by fishing interest against several U.S. government agencies and moves by the Administration of President Joe Biden to compensate the fishing industry for any losses it incurs from planned expansion of offshore wind power in the Atlantic.



Commercial fishing fleets have vehemently opposed offshore wind projects, labelling them a significant threat to catches of crucial stocks including scallops, clams, squid and lobsters, by interfering with navigation and altering ecosystems.

Delays in permitting commercial-scale projects are blamed on fishing industry opposition as one of the reasons the U.S. is lagging behind Europe in offshore wind development. The Biden Administration wants to add 30 gigawatts of offshore wind power to the nation's resource.

According to State and Federal officials, the Biden Administration is "considering ways" to ensure the U.S. commercial fishing industry is paid for any losses it incurs from expansion of offshore wind power in the Atlantic Ocean. President Biden's efforts to grow offshore wind are

a centrepiece of his clean energy agenda to counteract climate change.

The 'Vineyard Wind' project is intended to be the first commercial-scale offshore wind farm in the United States, generating 800 megawatts of power, enough to power about 400,000 homes. The Port of New Bedford in South East Massachusetts is to be used for this offshore development. Dozens of other offshore wind projects are being developed for America's East Coast. Many New Bedford fishermen, are concerned that the turbines will destroy their way of life. Sixty-two of what are described as "the world's largest turbines" are to be built in a 100-square mile area of fishing grounds.

A coalition of fishing industry associations and companies, including 50 New Bedford fishing boats, have filed a lawsuit

against several U.S. agencies, including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management which approved the Vineyard Wind project last May. They allege that Federal Law has been violated in allowing the project to go proceed.

"This is a matter of survival, a last-ditch effort to slow down banks, technocrats and global energy companies with multi-billion dollar profits in mind, that could devastate our livelihoods," according to the opposition coalition.

Backers of the Vineyard Wind project include Bank of America and J.P. Morgan. Funding of US\$2.3 billion dollars has been pledged in funding.

Jellyfish Sea Monster Found in California

Scientists piloting a remote submarine off California have filmed what they describe as a "giant phantom jellyfish" that traps its prey in 33 feet-long mouth-arms. "It's a giant sea monster in the deep waters of Monterey Bay, California," according to the marine biologists from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute. "It has long, velvety what look like 'mouth-arms' trailing around it."

The filming was at a depth of 3,200 feet (975 metres) but it has been seen before, though rarely. After checking records, MBARI scientists noted that the elusive creature was first noted in 1989, is among the largest jellyfish on the planet and has been spotted in the deepest parts of all the world's oceans except for the Arctic. Even so, MBARI says that sightings of the creature are still rare, as it usually lives too far down for humans or remote submarines to access. "The mouth-arms of the phantom jellyfish trail behind it like scarves in the wind."

Not much is known about phantom jellyfish. The creature propels itself through the pitch-black depths of the ocean with periodic pulses from its faintly-glowing orange head, according to MBARI. Jellyfish are some of the most common creatures to be found in the deep sea, but much about what are described as 'brainless creatures' remains to be discovered. It was once assumed they were largely unimportant in deep-sea ecology, but a 2017 study by MBARI researchers showed them amongst predators in the dark depths.

Chile's Salmon Farmers Face an Uncertain Future

Chile's newly-elected President, Gabriel Boric, a 35-year-old former student protest leader declared himself hostile to fish farming during the election campaign, warning companies they have to "rein in" their activities.

Salmon is Chile's second-largest export and the sector is one of the country's principal rural employers. Boric was brought up in a fish farming district, but his warnings about aquaculture have worried fish farming companies. During the campaign he accused salmon companies of polluting the environment with chemicals and fish waste, leaving the clean-up bill to be paid by taxpayers. He has suggested part-nationalisation, saying salmon businesses should

be "properly regulated and decentralised." More of the revenues from aquaculture should stay in those areas where the industry is based. "It is not just about breeding and exports. Fish farming should be an affiliated industry and while jobs are important they should not be at the expense of the environment."

Norway Targeting Several Countries for Salmon Exports

The Norwegian Seafood Council has unveiled a marketing budget of €25m. to promote all types of the country's seafood overseas. The largest amount, £12m., will be devoted to promoting farmed salmon through PR and advertising campaigns.

Spain and South Korea will be the main targets next year. Whitefish, cod and haddock, much of which goes to the UK, will get £5.8m. for promotion; £2.8m. will be spent on mackerel and herring and £1.6m. on shellfish. The Seafood Council announced that 30 countries would be targeted with the 'Buy Norwegian'. It said that cod would be "pushed hard in Spain" and salmon will be the focus in Korea, where demand has been rising. £1.9m. will be spent in France, £1.7m. in Japan and £1.48m. in China.

In another development in Norway, production of Arctic Charr, currently a niche-farmed species production is to be stepped up by Norwegian Fish Farms. The project is being developed in conjunction with the seafood producer Babord Group.

Ten 'Supers' to Join the Russian Fleet

Russian President Vladimir Putin attended the launching ceremony of the latest new vessel for the country's fishing fleet, the refrigerating trawler **Mechanic Sizov**, built at the Admiralty Shipyard in St. Petersburg. It is named after a Senior Mechanic, Vladimir Sizov (1936-2013), who had worked for over 30 years in the Russian fishing fleet. It has been described by the Kremlin's Press Office as "the third in the world's largest series of ten super trawlers" and is undergoing sea trials in the Baltic.

Building of the ten 'super trawlers' is at the Admiralty Shipyard in Russia's northwest. The building programme is to be completed by late 2025. Each vessel is 108 metres long and has a fishing capacity of 60,000 tonnes of pollock a year. They are described as "environmentally friendly, safe and efficient" and as offering "worthy labour conditions."

Optimism For Cod in Newfoundland

According to the latest assessment by the Canadian Fisheries and Oceans Department, the condition of cod stocks off the coast of Newfoundland is improving. "This is a cause for optimism from the latest science assessment for the cod stock," according to the Department. Quota limits for the 2022/23 season are to be reviewed.



Screengrab taken from MBARI video of the giant phantom jellyfish

Paschal Hayes Appointed Executive Chairperson of the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)

The Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue has announced the appointment of Mr Paschal Hayes as Executive Chairperson and member of the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). The appointment follows the the recent Public Appointments Service (PAS) open recruitment process.

The Executive Chair of the independent Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) will lead and guide the SFPA organisation over the coming years and will be responsible for securing efficient and effective enforcement of sea fisheries and food safety law; promoting compliance while detecting and deterring contraventions.

Paschal Hayes has most recently worked as Principal Officer in the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and led the Irish Managing Authority for the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In this role he has facilitated the sustainable development of the Irish seafood sector through delivery of Ireland's European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Operational Programme and management of sustainable inshore fisheries in compliance with the Common Fisheries Policy and environmental law. He also led the successful multiannual project to remediate Haulbowline Island. His previous responsibilities included licensing and registration of Ireland's Fishing Fleet and management of the six-state owned Fishery Harbour Centres (FHCs) at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, Dingle, Killybegs and Ros an Mhíl. Paschal holds a BSc and a Diploma in Information Technology from Dublin City University and a Master's degree in Government and Public Policy from University College Cork.

Announcing the appointment, the Minister stated, "I am pleased to appoint Paschal Hayes as Executive Chairperson of the SFPA. I am confident that Paschal will meet the exacting standards of public sector leadership required for this complex and evolving regulatory sector and that he will manage and lead the SFPA over the coming years to ensure a sustainable and compliant industry that supports coastal communities dependant on fishing and secures our fish stocks for future generations of fishers."

Mr Hayes will take up his new post on 14th January.

Mowi Ireland's Jan Feenstra Announces Departure

After 40 years working in salmon aquaculture, Jan Feenstra, Managing Director at Mowi Ireland, announces his retirement from Mowi on the first of July, 2022.

Jan first joined the Irish operation in 1982 when it was called Fanad Fisheries which at that time had a 50/50 joint venture with Mowi. Jan took over the leadership helm in 1997 and participated in several ownership and name changes over subsequent years.

Ivan Vindheim, Mowi CEO, comments on this announcement: "I am most grateful for Jan's long tenure with our company, during a period that has seen our Irish business unit grow into a world-leading supplier of premium organic salmon. Jan's vast experience raising organic salmon and his ability to lead a highly effective and motivated team will be difficult to replace, so we are pleased that Jan will continue to support Mowi throughout 2022 in order to share his knowledge."

Reflecting on his four decades of working in salmon aquaculture, Jan says: "This business is never boring and certainly not for the faint of heart when working in the wild and natural environment! Our company's success over these years comes down to the commitment and efforts from our staff and my colleagues – they made it easy for me and I am most grateful to them over the 40 years that I have been here."

Jan adds that he is looking forward to "spending more time on outdoor pursuits and personal projects".

Mowi will begin a leadership recruitment process early next year.

New Ten-year Sceilg Mhichíl Management Plan

A new 10-year management plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Property of Sceilg Mhichíl has been launched and aims to strengthen commitments to protect, conserve and promote the UNESCO World Heritage Island.

This second ten-year management plan is an important milestone in the story of Sceilg Mhichíl, which began when monks first colonised the island off the County Kerry coast, perhaps as early as the sixth century. The island is an iconic site, as recognised in its 1996 UNESCO inscription.

The plan reaffirms the shared mission of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Office of Public Works to protect, conserve and promote an appreciation of the early monastic site and its island setting by having in place a management framework to ensure that it is preserved for present and future generations. It balances the challenges of managing sustainable visitor numbers to the very popular location with protection of the island's fragile cultural and natural heritage.

The overall management framework detailed in the new Management Plan to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of Sceilg Mhichíl is framed around specific objectives and 90+ actions, including:

Preservation of Sceilg's Mhichíl's heritage. Publication of all conservation and archaeological works undertaken on the island as well as a conservation-led approach to enhancement and restoration of the former lighthouse buildings.

Natural heritage conservation. Continuation of the seabird-monitoring programme, with particular attention to burrow-nesting seabirds. On an annual basis, a census will be carried out of cliff-nesting seabird species.

Monitoring the impacts of climate change. A framework for monitoring climate change on the island will be created, for example by monitoring changes such as erosion, major weather events and through ecological surveys, as well as carrying out a Climate Vulnerability Assessment.

Sustainable management of tourism and visits to Sceilg Mhichíl. Maintenance of a strictly defined annual

season (at present mid-May to end of September). Visitor impacts will be monitored and numbers will be reviewed annually with particular attention to the sustainability of the 180 visitors per day limit. The plan also commits to preventing unauthorised drone and helicopter flights.

Outreach and research. Creation of an education outreach programme within the context of facilities being contemplated at the Skellig Experience plan's Visitor Centre in Portmagee, linking to schools and other educational institutions. An overall research framework will be established to support ongoing research and encourage research among third level institutions.

Local engagement and stakeholder dialogue. Establishment of a Sceilg Mhichíl stakeholder forum to support the ongoing management of

the site and ensure dialogue with key stakeholders. The plan supports local initiatives in the broader region and the Iveragh Peninsula, such as organised tours of areas of historical or biodiversity interest.

Minister of State with Responsibility for the Office of Public Works Patrick O'Donovan TD said: "Sceilg Mhichíl is perhaps our most challenging national monument in terms of maintenance and visitor access. The dedicated OPW workforce of architects, masons and guides, working alongside colleagues from the Department, carry out incredible work, year in, year out, to ensure safe access to the island for the many whose dream it is to visit this spectacular place, while also safeguarding its future."

"As we look to the next ten years, we will focus on bringing back to life the two beautiful nineteenth-century lighthouse complexes, in order to shine a light on that fascinating maritime heritage and the lives of the keepers and their families who left their own mark on the island many centuries after the monks."

White Rose off Sceilg Mhichíl photo Richard Guildea



On Thursday the 9th of December, a devastating fire in Pulaheeny, Sligo destroyed all of the fishing gear belonging to Eugene and Gary Kelly (MFV Gannet). The boys have lost their entire life's work in one evening.

Since the season has ended, everything they own was packed up together to be stored for the winter, but the fire burned through everything.

They are now left without any pots, nets, ropes, buoys, store cages, bait or fish boxes – everything was turned to ash. Any donation would be greatly appreciated to help rebuild their business and get back fishing.

Can You Help?



**You can donate at <https://gofund.me/1970d771>
We have also posted a link on our Facebook and Twitter feeds.**

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

From The Thames to Baltimore the Volunteer Purpose Is the Same – Saving Lives

From the Thames flowing through London to the offshore waters of Baltimore Harbour in West Cork is quite a change of life.



James Kitt was on the RNLI crew at Chiswick, on the north bank of the Thames at Corney Reach in West London. It is one of four lifeboat stations on the river. Manned continuously by full-time staff and a pool of volunteers, it has been the second busiest in the UK. This year it has logged 205 incidents - "73 people rescued and 1 car."

James joined the West Cork lifeboat crew after relocating to Baltimore with his Irish girlfriend Emma, who he met at a sailing event in the States. Born in Poole, where RNLI headquarters are located, he had worked for the organisation.

"I'm one of a number of new joiners in Baltimore. The maritime experience and expertise here is incredible. It's not surprising when you see the love of the sailing here. I'm getting into the West Cork way of life. Emma and I love it here and feel very much at home. Baltimore lifeboat is embedded in the community, something that's a little harder to achieve at a busy London station."

When there is a call-out here everyone is aware of it. The whole place gets behind the crew, it's fantastic."

Baltimore is one of eight lifeboat stations in Cork, along with Castletownbere, Courtmacsherry, Union Hall, Kinsale, Crosshaven, Ballycotton and Youghal.

Dun Laoghaire RNLI Christmas Eve Ceremony Marks 200th Anniversary of Four Crew Members Lost at Sea

The annual Dun Laoghaire RNLI Christmas Eve ceremony was held to honour the memory of 15 lifeboat volunteers who died on service 126 years ago. This year's ceremony also marked the 200th anniversary of the death of four crew members who died on a call out at Christmas time in 1821.

The short service at the end of the East Pier commemorated all lives lost around our coasts and on inland waters in 2021.

Dun Laoghaire RNLI's volunteer crew traditionally hold this annual ceremony at the East Pier lighthouse as part of a long-standing local custom to acknowledge the sacrifice of their colleagues in carrying out their duty.

The lifeboat service on Dublin Bay is one of the oldest in the world, dating back to 1803 and a lifeboat was based at nearby Sandycove as one of several local stations.

During a service to the brig *Ellen* in an easterly gale on 28 December 1821, the lifeboat with 14 crew members onboard, was swamped and the crew were washed out of the lifeboat with four people losing their lives; Hugh Byrne, Thomas Fitzsimons, John Archbold and Thomas Grimes.

On Christmas Eve in 1895, the number

two lifeboat was capsized in gale force winds while proceeding to the assistance of the *SS Palme* of Finland that had run aground off Blackrock. All 15 crew members onboard, drowned.

During the ceremony, wreaths were placed by the lifeboat crew at sea off the East Pier in memory of all lives lost at sea.

The Covid-19 compliant ceremony beside the lighthouse, featured musician William Byrne performing The Ballad of the *Palme* and Sports broadcaster Des Cahill who reading a newspaper account of the disaster, which was published at the time. An ecumenical blessing was given by Reverends Bruce Hayes and Fr. Padraig Gleeson before a lament was played by piper Paul McNally.

There was a joint guard of honour provided by representatives from the Dun Laoghaire Coast Guard Unit and Civil Defence.

Grandson of Donegal Coxswain Awarded RNLI Gold Medal for Gallantry During World War II Returns from Boston to Join Island's Lifesaving Crew

The grandson of a distinguished Donegal Coxswain who was awarded the RNLI's gold medal for gallantry for his role in the rescue of 18 crew on a Dutch steamer in 1940, has returned home from Boston to become the third generation in his family to join Arranmore Island's lifesaving crew.



Mark Boyle was born and raised on Arranmore, but this was his first Christmas on call for the RNLI after he was quickly recruited on his family's return to the island from America last April. Mark follows in the footsteps of his late father Charlie, a former station mechanic spanning three decades, and his grandfather Jack, who was awarded the charity's gold medal for gallantry.

81 years ago, Jack and his crew rescued 18 people on the Dutch steamer *Stolwijk* of Rotterdam on the 7 December 1940. The *Stolwijk* was one of a convoy of ships from America which had come through three days of a rising north-westerly gale and was making for the passage between Scotland and Ulster, in a hurricane of wind and snow. The rescue of the vessel that was forced onto rocks at Inishbeg, was carried out in mountainous seas and a north to north westerly hurricane force wind accompanied by snow and sleet. The rescue by Arranmore RNLI's crew was later recognised as one of great daring gallantry and endurance carried out in weather of exceptional severity.

While Mark is delighted to be carrying on the family's lifesaving tradition, he says his reasons for joining the lifeboat crew run deeper than just that. And now as the RNLI launched its Christmas appeal, Mark is urging people across Donegal - home to three lifeboat stations at Lough Swilly, Arranmore and Bundoran - to help his fellow crew and the thousands of other volunteer crews carrying a pager over the festivities, to continue their lifesaving work at sea.

"I was born and raised on the island and spent my early years fishing lobsters, salmon and working on local white fishing boats," Mark said. "I then went to college and worked in Galway for 20 years before I moved to Boston for seven years. I returned home to the island with my wife and two of my three children in April and while it was always my intention to join the lifeboat crew when I came home, Tony Ward, the Lifesaving Operations Manager beat me to it and asked me to join before I got the chance to make the ask myself, which was lovely."

Mark who works in engineering as a Head of Operations for Irish Pressings, travels from the island to Bunbeg daily but when he is not working away, he is carrying his pager.

The family connections are important but for me becoming a crew member runs deeper than that. It is about the sense of community and that is what the RNLI is all about. I spent the first three months on my return fishing which for many here is how they make their livelihoods, on the water. The lifeboat provides the vital service to those in distress at sea and that is always acutely felt by those living on the island. It is an added benefit for me that as a new crew member I am continuing in the family tradition."

Like volunteers around Ireland and the UK, Mark is one of many RNLI crew members who signs up to save every one from drowning - it has been the charity's mission since 1824.

This Christmas Mark was prepared to leave his loved ones behind to answer the call, each time hoping to reunite another family, and see those in trouble at sea safely returned. Over the past decade, RNLI lifeboats have launched over 1,200 times during the festive period.

But these rescues would not be possible without donations from the RNLI's generous supporters, helping to fund the essential kit, training and equipment needed by lifeboat crews all year round.

"This is my first Christmas as a crew member with the RNLI," Mark continued. "I know there will be thousands of volunteers like me wearing pagers and ready to drop everything at a moment's notice and rush to the aid of someone in trouble on the water. At this time of year, the weather is at its worst and lives are on the line."

"We know that every time our crews go out to sea, they hope for a good outcome, but sadly this sometimes isn't the case. We hope that this year's Christmas appeal will show people just how tough it can be, but also that with their help we can get so much closer to our goal of saving everyone."



Wreath bearers at the Dun Laoghaire RNLI annual Christmas Eve commemoration.
Photo courtesy Dun Laoghaire RNLI / Conrad Jones



WATER SAFETY IRELAND REPORT

Annual Awards Ceremony

John Leech, CEO of Water Safety Ireland introduces us to the recipients of this years WSI Awards; "Due to Covid restrictions the Annual Water Safety Ireland Awards ceremony was a recorded one, which is available on our website at www.watersafety.ie We had some very deserving recipients!"

Two Posthumous Rescue Appreciation Awards were:

Declan Reid – Kildare: February 2021, Declan was on the bank of the River Barrow. His son, Arron was on his Kayak. Declan had a rope tied to the kayak which suddenly overturned.

Without thinking he jumped in to rescue his son, fully clothed in work attire that weighed him down. Declan held Arron up in the water until other family members and members of the public were able to bring him to shore, but Declan was lost to the river.

Stephen Clarke – Dublin (Posthumous): November 2012. River Liffey, Stephen, doorman at a hotel along the quays heard cries for help from the boardwalk. A woman was in difficulty in the water. He immediately entered the water, reached the woman, but realised there was no way out of the water on the side of the river he was on. He made his way to the other side where his work colleagues had thrown out a safety device, during which a young homeless man sitting on O'Connell Bridge as the incident unfolded jumped in to help him.. They got up a ladder and were successfully pulled to safety. Stephen has passed away since that rescue. We are pleased to remember him.

There were 15 SEIKO Just-in-Time Rescue Awards made and one other Rescue Appreciation Award as follows:

Ruairi Brennan – Laois: July 2021, Teenager Ruairi Brennan and friends on the River Nore at Castletown, Laois. Ruairi was swimming, noticed a woman enter the water and became aware she was unable to swim. He tried to assist her, realised that he needed to take her in tow and managed to get her to the bank. One of the woman's friends entered the water and the woman, almost secure at the bank jumped on her friend and both were then difficulty in the water. Ruairi advised the friend to save herself and took the other woman down the river to safety.

Tina Kavanagh – Kilkenny: Summer 1985, Tina, then a teenager swimming at Graiguenamanagh, Kilkenny noticed a young boy in distress in the water. He had got into difficulty when he received an accidental knock to his head by a friend while swimming. He subsequently swallowed water and began to panic. He kept

going under the water. Tina swam to him and tilted his head back, while reassuring him at the same time and took him to safety.

Gary Heelan – Cork: November 6, 2020, Gary was out for a late walk on the north banks of River Blackwater, Mallow, Co Cork, noticed a young woman in the river on the opposite side of the bank, holding on to a tree and in difficulty. The water was flowing very quickly due to recent heavy rain. Gary ran across the bridge and down the opposite bank of the river, while contacting the emergency services, made his way to the casualty, entered the water and against the strong flow managed to hold onto her. He was up to his chest in the cold fast flowing water and managed to keep her calm as he helped her to safety.

Patrick Mungovan – Clare: July 2021, Quilty Pier, Clare, a young girl had fallen into the water. Patrick became alerted to the situation and without hesitation jumped into the water and brought her back to safety. Aware of the area he was able to identify the slipway to bring the young girl to safety.

Zoe Lally – Sligo: March 2021, Easkey pier in Sligo, a group of male youths were playing on the pier watching the large waves intermittently crash over the top of the pier. They were unaware of the building high seas, when a large wave broke over the breakwater washing them off the pier and into the sea. Emergency services were alerted by onlookers. Zoe, an experienced surfer, with the aid of ringbuoys pulled two of the teenagers to safety. She then swam out to the third boy and though not able to return to the pier due to the wave height brought him to safety further along the coast.

Daragh Flynn – Wicklow: July 2021, Clara Funpark, Laragh, Co. Wicklow, Daragh noticed a small child in the water. He jumped into the water and scooped her up into his arms, observing that her lips had turned blue. Removing her from the water he was assisted by an off-duty paramedic until emergency services arrived.

Ger Daly – Galway: September 2019, Salthill, Galway, Ger was swimming with a group when one of the members got into difficulty who, he realised, was unwell and brought him safely to shore where emergency services arrived. The man recovered.

Philip Owens – Louth: July 2021, at

Whitestown, Co. Louth, Philip was alerted to a person in difficulty in the water. He located a kayak, paddled out to the person in difficulty and, attempted to paddle back with the person holding on, but the person was unable to keep hold of the kayak. He gripped onto the man's lifejacket and stayed in position until a rescue boat arrived at the scene.

Michael Carrig (Just in Time Award) and Marguerite Carrig (Rescue Appreciation Award) – Clare: July 2005, on the Shannon estuary in Co. Clare, they observed a family on a 14ft boat at the mouth of the Shannon. Making them aware of a change in conditions. Michael and Marguerite realised that they were in jeopardy of being overturned. They took the woman and children on board Michel's boat. The man remained on the small boat and they escorted him to his destination.

Nikkola Wan – Dublin: October 2021, Ms Wan was walking her dogs along the Grand Canal, at Harold's Cross Bridge, noticed a pair of men's trainers submerged underwater, immediately contacted emergency services, proceeded to reach out towards the male, grabbed hold of him by his hood and managed to bring him to safety. She remained with him until emergency services arrived.

Tommy Moyna – Monaghan: July 25, 2021, Tommy was working on a farm when his attention was drawn to a loud scream from the vicinity of an adjoining lake where a man and a woman were in difficulty. He entered the water and swam towards the couple. The woman had submerged. Tom-

my dived underwater, pulling her up. She was being dragged under by waterlogged clothing. A difficult rescue which Tommy made, with the man holding onto him as he towed both to safety.

Mark Kavanagh – Wexford: July 2021, Wexford Bridge. Mark became aware of a woman in distress in the water. The RNLI had been alerted. Mark lifting the woman out of the water and into his boat, conveyed her to Wexford Quay where emergency services were waiting.

Joseph McNulty, Kristin McNulty and Sean McNulty – Donegal: September 2021 Bundoran beach, the McNulty family on an afternoon walk on the sea front noticed three girls on a sandbank which was surrounded by water. The three girls got into difficulty, two trying to swim to safety, the other further out and stranded up at chest level in the water. Joseph and Sean entered the water up to their waist and Kristin deployed a ring-buoy was deployed and two girls were brought to safety. Sean also entered the water with the ringbuoy, reached the third girl and successfully brought her to safety where emergency services took over.

Twenty-three of our members from Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Dublin, Kerry, Kildare, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo were awarded Long Service Medals for their dedicated and committed work in promoting water safety and drowning prevention.

Two Members of the Ballybunion Community Rescue Boats were honoured for their loyal service at the Station.



'All In A Row 2021' was held Saturday 11th December on the capital's River Liffey with a challenge for the teams to smash a 1,000km target in eight hours. Forty skiffs, kayaks, canoes and currachs were on the water to raise funds for the RNLI and the Irish Underwater Search and Recovery Unit. The event started from St. Patrick's Rowing Club at the Tom Clarke Bridge (formerly the East Link Bridge) and rowers turned at the Ha'penny Bridge, before rowing back down river to the Tom Clarke Bridge. This annual challenge is undertaken with the aim of showcasing the River Liffey as one of Dublin's best amenities, while raising funds for the water related charities, RNLI Lifeboats and the Irish Underwater Search and Recovery Unit. The event raised in excess of €12,000. At 1pm all the boats gathered on the Liffey at the Sean O'Casey footbridge where a wreath laying ceremony, attended by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alison Gilliland, took place to commemorate all those who have lost their lives through drowning. Pictured is the Lord Mayor of Dublin with the Sea Scouts from 5th Wicklow (Bray) Sea Scout Group.

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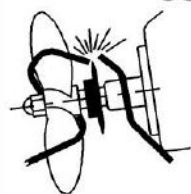
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White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*) in Irish Waters – Endangered or Elusive?

Declan Quigley reports

A Whiter Shade of Pale



Figure 1. White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*) [MNHN 2004-0817_BPS-0228] (Photo Samuel Iglesias)

The White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*) [RJA] as its colour epitaph would suggest, is greyish blue on the dorsal surface of adults (albeit reddish brown in juveniles), with a distinct pattern of numerous pale spots. The ventral surface is white with dark margins on the disc – hence one its alternative common names: Bordered Skate. It is also colloquially known as the Bottled Skate due to its characteristically long and pointed snout (Fig. 1).



Figure 2. White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*) egg case (Scattery Island, Shannon Estuary, Co Clare, NMI 32.1975) Photo Declan Quigley



Figure 3. Juvenile White Skate (right) Dingle Bay (24.01.1973)

The species ranges throughout the Eastern Atlantic from Scotland southwards via the Mediterranean Sea to South Africa and along the east African coast as far north as Mozambique in the western Indian Ocean.

R. alba is one of the largest species of Skates & Rays (Bathoidae) known to occur in NW European waters. Specimens measuring up to c.240 cm total length (TL) and weighing up to 227 kg have been recorded. In the NE Atlantic, males and females mature at TLs of c.120 cm and c.130 cm respectively. Females are thought to reach maturity at a minimum age of 17 years and can live for up to 35 years. The egg cases measure c.15-20 cm long (Fig. 2) and newly hatched juveniles measure c.30 cm TL (Fig. 3).

Conservation Concerns

Due to their large size (including egg cases and newly hatched juveniles), late maturity, low fecundity and apparently strong site fidelity, White Skate are particularly vulnerable to capture and potential over-exploitation at all stages of their life cycle. Indeed, the species is currently classified as critically endangered by the IUCN (*International Union for the Conservation of Nature*).

Although there are historical 19th century reports which suggest that White Skate were once common and commercially exploited in the English Channel and off

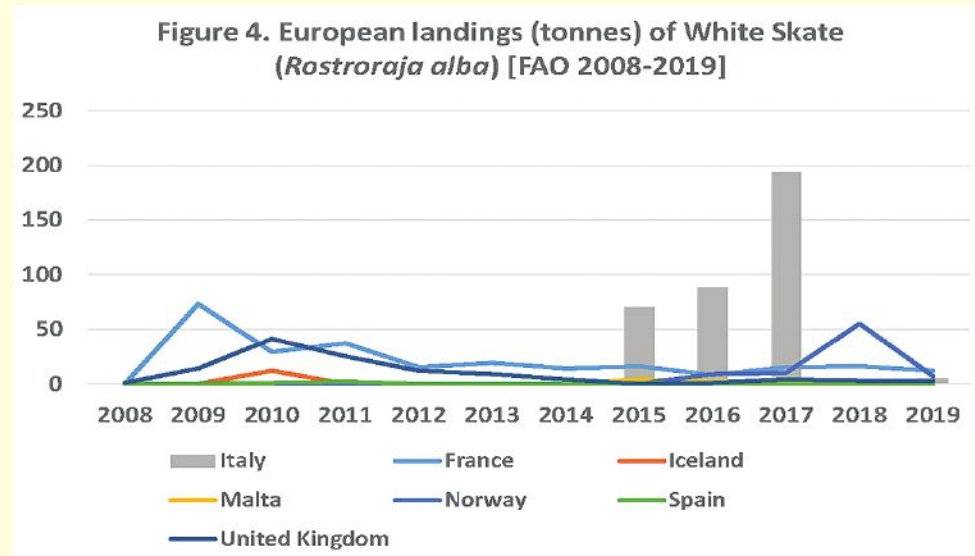
the Isle of Man (Central Irish Sea), the species dramatic decline over the last 150 years appears to have gone largely unnoticed.

White Skate would appear to be near the northern limit of their European distribution in Irish waters. Indeed, between 1958 and 1996, only 31 specimens including 24 adults and 5 juveniles were confirmed from isolated inshore areas along the west coast (Dingle Bay, Tralee Bay, Liscannor Bay, Galway Bay, Clew Bay, Killala Bay, and Sligo Bay). Since 1996, only one (dead) adult-size specimen of White Skate has been recorded from Irish waters (Tralee Bay, 2018).

Since 2009, commercial targeting and retention of *R. alba* by EU vessels has been prohibited, and all specimens are required to be released unharmed. Since 2019, all captures are also required to be logged as discards. However, despite the introduction of EU prohibition, a total of 832 tonnes was landed between 2008 and 2019, mainly by Italy (43%), France (30%), UK (14%), and Norway (10%) [Fig. 4]. However, it is possible that in some cases the species involved may have been misidentified?

Chicken & Egg Situation

For many years it was unclear whether or not White Skate reproduced in Irish waters until the first hatched egg case was



found stranded on Scatterry Island in the outer Shannon Estuary, Co Clare during March 1975 (see Fig. 3).

During 2003, a live White Skate egg case was retrieved by a fisherman from Galway Bay and transferred to *Galway Atlantaquaria* (<https://www.nationalaquarium.ie/>) where a juvenile female emerged on Valentine's Day 2004. Valentine survived for almost 13 years in the aquarium and produced several non-viable egg cases before she eventually died on 12.02.2017. In contrast to previous research which estimated that the minimum age at maturity was 17 years, it is interesting that this captive-reared female reached maturity at <13 years of age, and produced several egg cases in the absence of a male suitor.

Between 2007 and 2019, several hatched egg cases were collected by volunteer citizen scientists working with *Purse Search Ireland* (<https://marinedimensions.ie/purse-search-ireland/>) from Tralee Bay, West Clare, Galway Bay and Sligo Bay. Another hatched egg case was recently found stranded at Spiddal in Galway Bay during July 2021 (Fig. 5: White Skate (*Rostroraja alba*) egg case from Spiddle, Co Galway (111mm TL, 99mm width, 14.07.2021) Photo Alan Pyne).

The discovery of several egg cases over the last two decades indicates that this elusive species is still reproducing in Irish waters. However, little is known about its overall status or abundance.

Rod & line caught specimens

All of the 24 adult specimens recorded from Irish waters were captured by anglers. Between 1972 and 1981, a total of 21 specimens were tagged and released by anglers, but so far none of them have been recaptured. The largest White Skate taken on rod & line in Irish waters, weighing 75 kg, was captured in Clew Bay during August 1966. Although the last recorded specimen was taken during 1976, it was 40 years later (in 2016) before the ISFC (*Irish Specimen Fish Committee*) replaced their original minimum qualifying specimen weight (54.5 kg) with a length based rule of ≥ 180 cm TL, supported by photographic evidence. The UK rod & line record, weighing 34.471 kg, was captured off The

Needles (Isle of Wight, English Channel) during 1970.

Absence of Evidence is not necessarily Evidence of Absence

One of the main difficulties in assessing the on-going conservation status of threatened skates & rays is the previous lack of reliable species-specific data and historical taxonomic confusion. Indeed, up until 2009, all Irish (and other EU) commercial landings were reported as a mixed category "skates & rays" (*Rajidae*) which most likely included species currently classified as "threatened" as well as those presently considered to be of "least concern".

Based on FAO statistics, it would appear that there has been a significant decline in landings of skates & rays from Irish waters since 2004, albeit the data is not effort-related and is subject to available annual TAC & Quota regulations (Fig. 6).

During 2019, four species of rays accounted for 96% of 1098 tonnes of Bathoids logged by Irish vessels: Blonde Ray (*Raja brachyura*; 45%), Thornback Ray (*Raja clavata*; 34%), Cuckoo Ray (*Leucoraja naevus*; 10%), and Homelyn Ray (*Raja montagui*; 7%).

While bans on commercial landings and rod & line rules based on catch & release are necessary in order to minimise the impact on threatened species, alternative co-ordinated recording mechanisms,

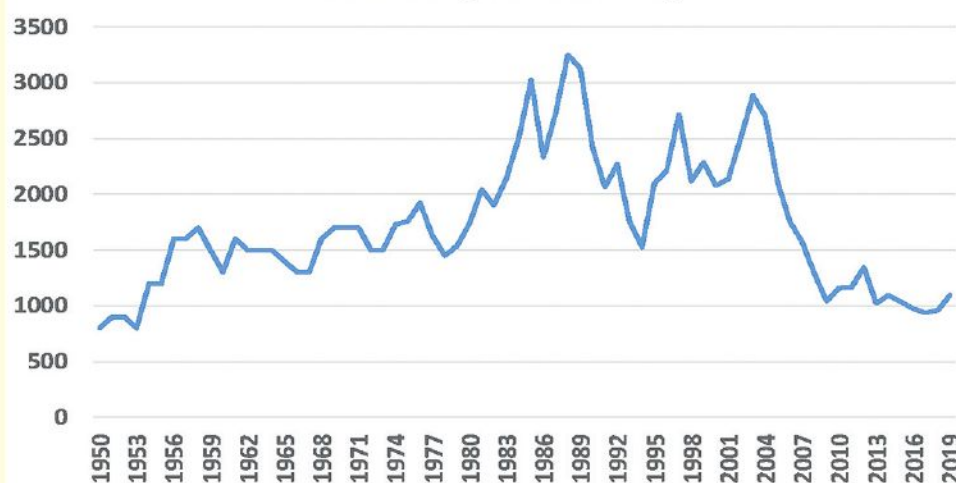
perhaps supported by DNA techniques, are required in order to provide on-going informed data about their long-term conservation status.

Commercial fishers, recreational anglers, citizen scientists, and public aquaria have a very important role to play in contributing to the conservation of threatened skates & rays in Irish waters. By logging details on captured specimens and releasing them unharmed, and where possible contributing to the tagging effort, they can help fill the current knowledge gaps on the distribution, abundance and biology of these iconic albeit cryptic mega-Bathoids.

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



Figure 6. Annual landings (tonnes) of Skates & Rays from Irish waters (FAO 1950-2019)



Angling for Science: Sea Anglers' Experiences Harnessed to Develop New Scientific Data Collection Method

New tool could have international appeal and help signal 'early warning' of directional change when it comes to marine fish stocks

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the state agency responsible for the conservation and protection of freshwater fish, habitats and sea angling resources, has developed an important new tool that captures anglers' knowledge and hands-on experience to help track changes in stocks of marine fish.

The new method is called 'FLEKSI' and crucially, it taps into the local ecological knowledge of Irish sea anglers as a way of complementing scientific knowledge. Over 650 recreational anglers who fish along the Irish Sea, Celtic Sea and West Coast of Ireland have contributed to the development of the tool, which was highlighted in the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) Journal of Marine Science.

FLEKSI, which stands for 'Fisher's Local Ecological Knowledge Surveillance Indicators', can track how fisheries change over time. According to Inland Fisheries Ireland, it could also have a much broader application in helping to conserve or manage fisheries internationally, as all EU Member States are obliged to develop data collection programmes for marine recreational fisheries.

William Roche, Senior Research Officer with Inland Fisheries Ireland explained: "Ireland is known throughout the world for its iconic sea angling resources, attracting up to 185,000 anglers annually. A long and proud tradition of sea angling in this country means that many individuals and groups have accumulated hands-on knowledge of sea angling over the years, from catching tope sharks in the Irish Sea to fishing for bass on the beaches of the Dingle peninsula.

"We wanted to create a standardised framework that could capture these anglers' observations and perceptions, to help us better understand long-term changes in recreational fisheries and to act as an early warning signal for long-term changes in the future. Tools such as FLEKSI can help us meet the challenge of monitoring fisheries. It can also provide important new information that supports science, policy and management in Ireland and potentially

throughout the European Union."

657 sea anglers, some of whom had more than forty years' experience, took part in Inland Fisheries Ireland's study in April this year. They were asked how sea angling 'now' compared with how they remember sea angling 'then', when they first started. Based on their perceptions and observations, the results suggest that stocks of cod, whiting and bass, have declined around Ireland over the last forty years. Importantly, this perception matches with stock assessments from ICES, which is the organisation tasked with determining stock status for all sea fish species in European waters.

"The study results clearly demonstrate that anglers' knowledge can provide an accurate picture of changing marine fish stocks," said Samuel Shephard, a Senior Research Officer with Inland Fisheries Ireland. "Anglers have a leading role to play in conservation. They spend many hours outside, observing nature and the fish they catch. They may recall how different species have come and gone, and how average catches and sizes may have changed. Over an angling career, this experience can become a unique insight into the status of the fisheries. Inland Fisheries Ireland's policy of collaborating, where possible, with angling citizen scientists and of harnessing their experiences can help us better understand long-term changes and how to protect these wonderful resources for the future."

The FLEKSI tool paper is available to download from the ICES Journal of Marine Science website. The report is authored by Samuel Shephard (lead author), Diarmuid Ryan, Paul O'Reilly and Willie Roche of Inland Fisheries Ireland.



Pictured on its way to Bere Island is 'Saoirse' - Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography



Dusk at Killybegs harbour - Photo courtesy Alan Hennigan Photography

Guilty Until Proven Innocent, The Lot of Irish Fishermen

EU Commission Refuses Fishermen Sight of Contentious Report

Fishermen are demanding sight of a control audit report which allegedly makes a range of damaging allegations against the sector but to which they have been denied access for more than three years.

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) CEO, Seán O'Donoghue said the Commission is playing the role of judge and jury, with the fishing industry being refused the basic right to establish what it might stand accused of; "Natural justice assumes an absence of bias and the right to a fair hearing but for Irish fishermen, it would appear that this is a bridge too far. This is borne out in the European Commission's sustained refusals to release findings of an audit around fishing practices which concluded in 2018 and subsequently formed the basis of a new investigation into the sector.

"Since we've never seen the actual audit report nor the investigation's findings, we've only learned anecdotally that it found Ireland lacked a weighing system fit for purpose and permission for all fish to be weighed in factories was duly removed earlier this year. The only information fishermen have is coming from media reports and political utterances which hint at all sorts of horrific punishments coming down the track in the form of slashed quotas and massive fines.

"Our inability to be able to defend ourselves is already having a huge impact. The removal of the weighing permits in the factories last April was, according to the Commission, based on the findings of these reports. Fish must now be weighed

at the point of landing which is wholly unworkable and having a detrimental effect on product quality, markets and operational efficiency.

"We met with the Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius in Killybegs in September. To the fore on our agenda was to formally establish what both the audit and the three-year inquiry have uncovered to date. Mr Sinkevičius claimed the inquiry was ongoing with the Irish authorities and much to our amazement, he said he wasn't aware that industry has been refused access to the information," said Mr O'Donoghue.

"The old adage 'innocent until proven guilty' is being applied in reverse here. It's high time for the Commission to play fair with Irish fishermen and give our much-maligned industry a chance to defend itself in order to work together to ensure fairness, sustainability, transparency and a seascape which gives those employed therein an opportunity to make a viable living in a post-Brexit world. This Kafkaesque charade in which we find ourselves, belies the very Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which states clearly that the presumption of innocence should be respected. Unfortunately the experience of Irish fishermen has been a very different one," he concluded.



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