

MARINE TIMES

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Wintry scenes at Castletownbere - Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography



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Marine and Coastal Communities**

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Why does Ireland not have a Christmas fish tradition?

While other nations make fish a Christmas dish, Antoin O'Callaghan wonders why Ireland does not and suggests The Feast of The Seven Fishes



Given the season that is upon us ... and given that we are an island nation ... surrounded by some of the best fishing waters in this part of the world, why, I ask myself, do we not have a tradition of eating fish for our Christmas dinner?

Why do so many people crave the white and brown meat of a bird from Mexico rather than the succulence of the fish that share our seascape?

Could it be because Henry VIII put the turkey on his celebratory menu after the exotic bird was first brought to England in the 1520s?

Or because Charles Dickens popularised it for the masses when it played an important part in the plot of his *Christmas Carol*?

Or is it because generations of people were directed to abstain from meat during Lent and other occasions by the Church and so wanting something different at Christmas time?

Not everywhere is the same

Around the globe many different cultures have fish at the centre of their traditional Christmas, whether on the Eve or on the day itself.

In Denmark, smorrebrod – a type of open rye bread sandwich is common. Although there can be a variety of buffet-type foods on the table, there is an unwritten rule that herring is king. If part-taking you must start with the herring before moving on to anything else. The herring is cured in vinegar and sugar with onions, dill pepper and other spices and best on dark rye with a generous amount of butter.

In Portugal the Christmas Eve meal isn't complete without rich and flakey salted cod or bacalhau, often served with potatoes, cabbage and hard boiled eggs, while in

Sweden Frestelse is a creamy potato casserole, enriched with the addition of canned sprats.

Eastern European countries such as Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine - as with Denmark – have their herring dishes as well of course as a main course of Carp.

Further East, in Singapore, Panacit Malabon is a dish of noodles, hard-boiled eggs, pork crackling, a shrimp sauce and topped with squid, mussels and dried fish flakes.

On the other side of the world many Australians have their Christmas outdoors in the summer sun and enjoy a feast of prawns and other seafood often served with salad and spices.

The Feast of The Seven Fishes

One of my favourites however is a tradition that immigrant Italians brought to the United States from their homeland in the late 19th century. It is the Feast of the Seven Fishes. Part of its origin was that fishermen – and in particular lobstermen – sold their catch throughout the year, but at Christmas kept the best for themselves and their own celebrations.

Imagine shrimp, steamed mussels, crab cakes, salmon wellington, haddock chowder, beautiful scallops in a creamy sauce – Coquille Saint Jacques – and, of course, lobster. What a feast!

Now I'm fairly sure that while all of those can be found in your local fishmongers, certainly with some advance ordering, I wonder what would be the best offerings for an Irish version of The Feast of the Seven Fishes at Christmastime?

*** Remember - Support your local fishermen and fishmongers for the freshest and best seafood this island nation has to offer!**

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"It has taken eight years of absolute torture and torment to change what was done to me. What happened to me was wrong. All I ever wanted was for my service to be acknowledged" Exclusive Interview with Seamus Power ... Page 17

#Fight4Fishing

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Inshore fishermen show how they protect lobster stocks

Marine Times Reporter

While it has been a tough marketing year for inshore fishermen, they have shown how they can be leaders in sustainable fishing, despite criticism of the industry by several environmental organisations.

They are lifesavers for lobster stocks, as acknowledged by Bord Iascaigh Mhara, whose figures for the year to date show that 47,000 adult lobsters have been safely returned to the sea – the highest annual number year on record. This is through the V-notching programme which protects female lobsters so that they can breed a number of times.

Commenting on the results, Ian Lawler, Development Manager, BIM said, “Despite a late start in the season the 2024 v-notching programme was extremely successful- some 47,000 lobsters with a weight of over 31 tonnes (5% of total lobster landings) were v-notched and returned to the sea to breed at nearly 80 locations around the coast. These lobsters will produce over 352 million lobster larvae to maintain the population in their first year after v-notching.”

When commercial fishermen catch egg-bearing female lobsters, they must be brought ashore for V-notching by BIM staff. A small V-shaped notch is cut into the tail of the female lobster which is then returned to the sea. This confers legal protection on the lobster which must not be transported or sold and must be returned to the sea if caught again another time. The notch lasts up to three moults. So the lobster can spawn for up to six years.

225 crab fishermen have taken part in the project for the sustainability of the fishery

which is important to the inshore fishing fleet.

At ports around the coast, the programme was developed throughout the 90s and into the Noughties. A total of 190,000 lobsters were V-notched in the six years between 2018 and 2023, weighing more than 140,000 kgs with an estimated 2.8 billion eggs being carried by V-notched lobsters back into the water.

It did not happen without some glitches.

Dunmore East fishermen agreed to co-fund an initial scheme with government, but there was some difficulty achieving licensing and a legal framework. Fishermen wanted to impose penalties on anyone found with V-notched lobsters or trying to sell them. There was concern about leisure water-users fishing lobster and ignoring protection. Eventually a Lobster Advisory Group led to regulations being introduced. Lobster fishermen with a genuine interest in the survival of the species supported the process.

This year the Department of the Marine was slow to provide funding for the project, a delay that was criticised by fishing representative groups.

The V-notching programme is an example of how Irish fishermen can protect stocks.



Inshore vessels at Portmor near Malin Head. Photo: Catherine Turner



(Above): Saint Joseph landing in Kilkeel with 'hern' - Photo: Leslie Campbell
(Below): Skipper of the Aurora Borealis, Liam O'Brien continues discharging his full load of traditional Lough Foyle herrings in Greencastle Harbour on Lough Foyle - Photo: Enda Craig



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the view from **Dingle** Written by Dr. Kevin Flannery

Former Fisheries Officer, Founder of Mara Beo Aquarium in Dingle, Dr. Kevin Flannery contributes his unique and direct comments about the fishing industry and maritime issues in his monthly column for the MARINE TIMES

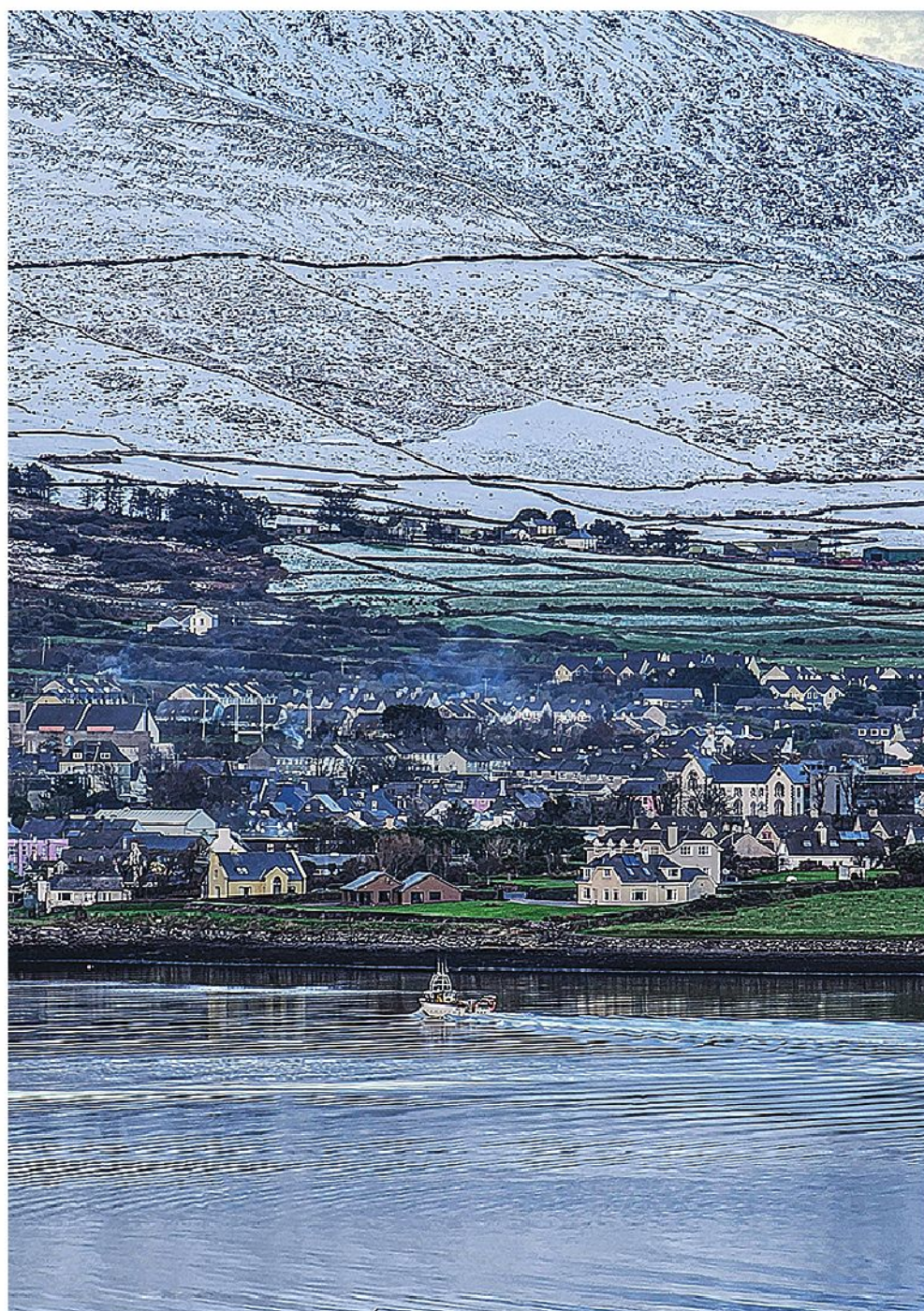


Knowledge Is Power But Why Does the Government Not Sue the European Commission?

I cannot understand the reluctance of any member of government to just simply request the Irish Attorney General, Rossa Fanning to look at the possibility of Ireland suing the Commission for its failure to protect, conserve, defend the mackerel and hake stocks over the past 10 years.

Also, in relation to their failure into taking any action against the Nordic nations and others for its failure to protect and comply with ICES conventions and EU regulations in relation to Relative Stability and various articles in EU Law requiring the Commission to protect its citizens in a fair way and with just equal opportunity.

Or possibly, is it not time for the fishermen's organisations and producers to look for legal advice on the possibility of such a Class Action against the State and EU and look for compensation equal to the quota cuts since Iceland and others took unilateral action contrary to ICES and EU agreements, not unlike the US where these class actions work well.



'Quest' returning to a wintry Dingle. Photo: Donal Healy

Knowledge Is Power but the Media Attitude Is Baffling

Everybody loves visiting the seaside, piers, boats, harbours, fish and chips and that feel good factor that 99% of the people get.

But the question that baffles me is - how come that the Press / Media has the attitude - and one that is getting into the public mindset - that trawling is bad?

There are so many NGO's (non-government organisations) and their personnel opinions out there, in the press and public, giving and stressing the opinion that trawling is bad.

If there is a dead dolphin or a washed-up dead whale, the assumption is always pointing at 'you know who's door'. The problem is that paper never refuses ink and they are winning the battle.

The POs and fishing reps have their hands full, trying to fight for their members survival in relation to quota issues, new regulations, onboard monitoring, national and intentional controls and a host of other issues.

So how do we resolve this one-sided opinion?

I believe, it is through education.

We get up to 20,000 students through the Aquarium in Dingle per year, plus their teachers, and, regretfully I find their knowledge of fishing, processing, etc, is from slim to nil.

And as for the sustainable fishing practices, quotas, controls, minimum sizes, mesh sizes, TACs, they know zero.

I know that the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara now run a Primary School science project, but I do feel that the Second and Third Level students are in urgent need of information, re the what? where? and how? fish are sustainably caught and all aspects of our fishing industry - when you consider that all employees of the Department, SFPA, BIM and MI have to have a Third Level qualification and, without real knowledge and factual knowledge, these employees impale Government and EU policies.

We do need a program to educate and show the sustainable side of fishing, mesh sizes, controls, different gears, skills and knowledge requirements, show our schools what can, has and could be archived; show how up to 80% of our fisheries is sustainable; show fishermen; support school visits to ports fishing vessels and processors.

We show the MSC promotional video called "My Dad the Fisherman" in the

Aquarium. It's quite good.

I would love to have one from our own industry in Ireland and educate the future Civil Servants, control and enforcement personnel and most of all to educate the educators, those Second Level Teachers and Third Level Lecturers, show them that fishing and fishing ports are more than fish and chips and, hopefully someday fishing will be one of the CAO points requirements as a career as it should be.

I SEE

I see that IFI (Inland Fisheries Ireland) are requesting, or should that be informing, fishermen to apply for their dredge license. I presume for oyster fishermen and I presume all of these vessels have a Department fishing license and are Registered by Customs.

I also see the Loughs Agency opening the Foyle Oyster Fisheries. I presume the opening depends on results from the Shellfish Food Safety requirements by the Marine Institute and collected and controlled by the SFPA, as with all other shellfish growing areas that are licensed by the Department and the Aquaculture License Board and, if your oysters are going retail, the Environmental Officers of the HSE inspect your sale premises and your vessel is inspected by the Marine Surveyors office.

Smothering Food Production with Bureaucracy

I do think that one of these days someone in the Department of Finance or the likes of David McWilliams will take a serious look at the cost benefit of the volume of government agencies, State and semi-state that are now smothering this food producing industry with incredible bureaucracy.

The cost to the Irish taxpayer would run a small country if they will add up the budgets of all these agencies and their sub-committees and the number of employees. I can only imagine what will their prognosis.

We may have the cash now to support all, but reality will and must call soon.

Naval Service

On another matter, regarding staffing issues with our Naval Service. A few years ago a good few Naval personnel were taken on board by the SFPA.

Nowadays with such sea-going staff shortages, would it not make sense to have a number of SFPA staff on, as Boarding and Inspection Officers on the ships?

I am sure some SFPA personnel would jump at the opportunity and experience. It would ease the number requirements per ship and increase boardings at sea. After all they are Sea Fisheries Protection Officers.

Ár Scáth a Chéile

This article was written before General Election polling day. 'Ár scáth a chéile' can be translated as - "we stand in each other's shadow or shelter"



Muir Eanna potting off Roberts Cove, Cork. Photo: Cearbhall Ó Donnchú (SubseaSurvey.ie)



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**The Strong Voice for Ireland's Fishing,
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The certainty of uncertainty

By now the dust should have settled on the election and the time for horse bartering has truly begun to form a new government – not that anyone will be the least bit surprised if it turns out 'Fianna Gael' plus a guest will be the ruling force for another five years!

The facts are simple – as a nation of voters we have no regard for our coastal communities as we keep voting the same two political parties into power that are complicit for the destruction of our fishing industry and ethnic cleansing of our harbour towns and villages around the coast.

The surprising thing is that the country constantly complains about our political system but as a nation we are masochistic in nature – if the country keeps voting for the status quo of things what do you expect The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Antoin O'Callaghan makes an interesting point in this issue of the Marine Times (see page 2): 'Why do so many people crave the white and brown meat of a bird from Mexico rather than the succulence of the fish that share our seascape?' I'll slightly paraphrase that to put the question out there to see if there are any glints of hope for our coastal communities 'Why do so many people crave "Fianna Gael" rather than the opportunities an alternative would appreciate our seascape!'

Is there a viable alternative? Sadly, looking at voting trends and what is out there – no. We are looking at the future blending of the two former political enemies morphing into one giant political machine that will forever more be holding the keys of power in this country Now that is scary!

Hopefully when all is settled, we can push the ruling parties for the promises they made especially regarding a Minister of State for the Marine. I would personally go one step further and demand a standalone Ministry to encompass the whole maritime sector. For far too long have we been subservient to the agriculture portfolio and given crumbs of time from that gold crested civil service desk. Time for all issues relating to fishing (all sectors including inland) and offshore matters including planning and licencing to be brought under the umbrella of a dedicated ministry!

Keep the pressure on folks, there may not be a current alternative, but we can try our best to keep the ruling elite on their toes!

Happy Christmas from the Marine Times

We would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and hold out for a better 2025 for our industry and coastal communities.

To all our loyal readers and advertisers, thank you for your continued support with each and every issue of the Marine Times. Without you we would not be in a position to publish this newspaper – thank you.

And to all those who send us your news, views and amazing photos every month – thank you. Your voices and images are what sets this publication apart – we dedicate ourselves to being the voice for the IRISH fishing industry and our coastal communities and we will continue to do so with your valuable opinions each and every month!



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OBSERVATIONS

Tom MacSweeney, Executive Editor

As we prepare each monthly edition of the MARINE TIMES various aspects and issues arise. Drawing together the various threads of comment, opinion and suggestions from the past month's editorial work I wonder:

Does the Irish public realise it lives on an island?

Over my years focusing on maritime affairs, I developed when I presented SEASCAPES on RTE Radio, the use of the description.... "an island nation..."

It has become part of the lexicon of language, often referred to by politicians and business figures. I realised it had made impact when I heard Ryanair's boss Michael O'Leary used it in part of his regular hyperbole. However, I wonder if the Irish public generally, fully appreciate that they live on an island and cannot get off it unless they cross water. When they get aboard a Ryanair flight, or that of any other airline, or avoid the awfulness of crowded airports by sailing away from the island on a ferry, do they then appreciate that they live on, by geographical placement, a relatively small island by international perception, on the western periphery of the Atlantic and the approaches to the European mainland?

Is food production understood?

In the situation of being islanders, does the population understand the realities of food production and the importance of national self-sufficiency in this regard, because of being an island?

Our history shows that an Irish Government did not when World War Two isolated the nation and it had to create a national shipping line to survive? Not that subsequent governments showed much consideration or understanding when they made Irish Shipping the first State company to be liquidated.

During the General Election campaign there was a lot of attention devoted to farming. Rightly so. Much less to fishing, even though political parties did, eventually, include fishing in their portfolios. But I did not see much appreciation that fishermen too, are food producers.

There was a lot of talk about 'economic stability'. What about the 'stability' of the fishing industry in the midst of crisis? "The richest waters in Europe – the poorest return..." encapsulates the problems of the industry, created by political neglect and overbearing focus on foreign investment. Why no such focus and investment in national food production, from the sea and from the land?

Who are marine protected areas for?

I have been asked that question quite a few times and, when I begin to explain what I understand of the process, I realise the old communications adage that, when you cannot easily explain, there may be a problem with the answer.

The concept of protecting the oceans, the seas, the waters around our island, is commendable, particularly with the pressures on the marine space these days.

But, with offshore renewable energy demanding space, with MPAs, as I've tried to point out – the marine spatial pressure is going to become a major issue.

And I'm still wondering about that question – who are MPAs intended for?

Answers welcome.

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Processors will be glad to see the end of 2024 SFPA controls challenged as Ireland is 'blacklisted'

Report by Executive Editor: Tom MacSweeney

The processing sector will be glad to see the end of this year, which has been one of the worst on record for it, according to the Chief Executive of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters' Association.

In an interview with the MARINE TIMES Brendan Byrne said that, following the General Election the new government must recognise that there is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis within the fishing sector and must change the naïve attitude displayed towards fishing.

"There is a naïveté on the part of the policymakers that once Brexit happened, the industry would reconfigure itself at a level where, while it had lost 25% percent of its value and lost quotas. There was a naïveté there that, roll-on two years and everything would stabilise and the industry would be as it was. That was naïveté. The situation was never properly discussed or strategised by Government. Everyone is in a much weaker position."

As they prepare for the annual December Fisheries Council meeting on December 9 and 10, industry representative organisation leaders told the Marine Times that there was "trepidation."

John Lynch, CEO of the Irish South

and East FPO, said Celtic Sea stocks are a particular difficulty, with a proposed 44% reduction in the TAC for haddock a huge concern, as is the advice of minus 28% for Northern hake.

"In fact the only stocks in the Celtic Sea with positive advice for 2025 are whiting 7d and sea bass which is prohibited from being landed by an Irish vessel, while other Member States and the UK can fish sea bass with impunity off the Irish coast."

That example of bass is just one aspect of how unfairly the EU has treated Irish fishing. A new government, if it is composed of political parties who made pre-election promises to help the industry, must surely challenge the EU head-on and achieve changes because, as has been identified by industry leaders, there is not equal treatment of Ireland.

Europe could wipe-out Irish fishing

"If the Government does not do something about it then the country which has the largest and most productive fishing

grounds in Europe will end up with very, very few fishermen, if any fishermen at all. The factories will follow and Europe will have wiped us out through the Common Fisheries Policy," says outspoken critic of EU policy, Patrick Murphy. "This is reality, statistics show this. We are being mistreated."

Some comfort is being taken from recognition of the ten-point joint industry-organisation plan that was accepted by some of the election contending parties and they promises of help that they gave.

"This give us some hope that post-election there may be the basis for sitting down with those parties if they are in Government to incorporate the plan into a programme for Government, with the key focus on the appointment of a designated Minister, Junior Minister if necessary, but with full delegated authority to represent the marine sector," says Aodh O'Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers' Organisation.

There are other aspects concerning the industry at present.

SFPA enforcement level not replicated elsewhere in Europe

IFPEA CEO Brendan Byrne contrasts the rigour of Sea Fisheries Protection Association enforcement with lesser degree in other European Member States: "When we go to the SFPA they say they are compelled, they are forced, to bring in these regimes, be it whatever. They are forced and compelled, they tell us, to do it because of Europe. But if you walk to any other pier or harbour, anywhere across Europe, there are no such rules as compared to what are being applied

here in Ireland."

He also said that processors trying to get landings into Ireland from non-Irish vessels to meet the demand for fish which cannot be met by Irish boats, found that Ireland was 'blacklisted' because of "rules and regulations that make it virtually impossible to land fish into Ireland."

In last month's edition the MARINE TIMES highlighted the disparity between SFPA inspections of Irish vessels compared to non-Irish. The SFPA increased vessel inspections last year, yet only one in every five foreign vessels were inspected in Irish ports.

Brendan Byrne says that the processing sector is "suffering greatly."

An additional concern is advice being given to the EU by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas – ICES. Differences of opinion between scientists and fishermen are nothing new, but increasingly there is criticism of advice which contradicts what fishermen say they experience at sea.

Dominic Rihan, Chief Executive of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, said he would be reluctant to appear critical of scientists, but "when fishermen are seeing fish on the grounds and scientists are saying they are not there, this does cause frustration and is hard to take for fishermen who are being pressured by reduced quotas. There are issues about advice in several species and how it has been drawn up."

• **More in the CEOs columns on Pages 11-13**

Is ICES scientific advice based too much on 'modelling'?

Report: Tom MacSweeney

Differences of opinion between scientists and fishermen are nothing new, but increasingly there is criticism of advice from ICES which contradicts what fishermen say they experience at sea.

Is ICES advice based too much on 'modelling' rather than actual research at sea?

That question is being raised more often as advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea appears to contradict what fishermen see when fishing.

"Their advice often suggests there are no fish around, but that is not what we are seeing in species where they recommend huge cuts and often what the science is based on is not clear," an experienced Skipper told the Marine Times.

Dominic Rihan, Chief Executive of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, said he would be reluctant to appear critical of scientists, because advice and planning for the future was important. But he acknowledged that there is frustration felt by fishermen in particular instances where the advice contradicts what is being observed at sea.

"When fishermen are seeing fish on the grounds and scientists are saying they are not there, this does cause frustration and is hard to take for fishermen who are being pressured by reduced quotas.

"There are issues about advice in several species and how it has been drawn up. It seems a lot of advice is being driven by models of stocks and making that modelling work. There are issues about North Sea herring advice, about Irish Sea herring advice. There are a few issues.

"I don't like to criticise scientists but at times they seem to want to be kingmakers and are giving more than scientific advice.

"Absolutely there is frustration felt by fishermen when they see fish on the grounds and scientists are saying there is no fish anywhere. That is hard to take."



Wishing all our members and everyone involved in the fishing industry a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Nollaig shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaire daoibh.

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Kerry shellfish company recognised at Good Food Awards

Réalt na Mara Shellfish was announced as winner of the BIM Sponsored Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year at the Good Food Ireland Awards 2024 in Dublin.



Margaret Jeffares, Good Food Ireland, Sharon Sugrue, Réalt na Mara with Paul Ward and Cathriona McCarthy from BIM. Réalt na Mara Shellfish was announced as winner of the BIM sponsored Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year at the Good Food Ireland Awards 2024 in Dublin.

Founded in 2015 by Micheál Sugrue and Emmet Casey, the Kerry-based business is the culmination of generations of hard work and experience in the local fishing industry.

The shellfish business was among several seafood enterprises celebrated by the prestigious Good Food Ireland awards for their role in showcasing excellent Irish produce.

"We are thrilled that Réalt na Mara Shellfish has been awarded Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year 2024 at the Good Food Ireland Awards," said Sharon Sugrue, Manager, Réalt na Mara.

"This award, sponsored by Bord Iascaigh Mhara, means so much to us as a family business dedicated to quality, sustainability, and our tradition.

"BIM's support and guidance has been invaluable and has helped us grow as a sustainable aquaculture business and thrive in this industry. Winning this award is a testament of our passion and hard work, and we are honoured to be recognised amongst Ireland's best."

Located in Cromane, just outside Killorglin, Réalt na Mara Shellfish raises shellfish in the waters of Castlemaine Harbour. Their oysters are known for a salty and smooth texture along with plump and succulent meat in the mussels.

The business prides itself on producing top quality shellfish, oysters and mussels, managing the entire process from seed to what consumers enjoy on their plate.

Richard Donnelly, Director of Development and Innovation Services, BIM, congratulated Réalt na Mara on their

achievement. "Réalt na Mara Shellfish is a shining example of an independent business that produces and promotes Irish seafood through the values of quality, nutrition, taste and sustainability.

"BIM is delighted to sponsor Good Food Ireland's Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year award for the first time which showcases excellence in Irish seafood," said Mr. Donnelly.

BIM sponsors the Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year as part of its work to support independent seafood retailers and foodservice operators.

Award criteria are based on premium quality, exceptional achievement, innovation and hospitality, along with a commitment to Irish provenance, community and sustainability. Judging is undertaken by Good Food Ireland through secret shoppers.



the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

Avoiding Constant Car Crashes

While I frequently complain about delays and inconsistencies in the way things are managed believe it or not I do respect the fact that there must be rules and procedures if we are to avoid constant car crashes.

There continues to be inconsistency however in many places and results frequently are based on whose desk the project or application happens to fall.

If there are rules and guidelines, we need them nailed down lads so we know what is expected of us.

For instance, let's take the question of Loan Assessment. When Noah was organizing his loan for the Ark he would have had to satisfy the questions:

How much? What for? How will the loan be repaid? What security is on offer?

The Lenders must be satisfied – as is often forgotten – so must also the Borrower – that the project can generate the free cash to pay for itself, pay the Bank and provide the owner with a decent living.

I have always emphasized that when money is being borrowed – particularly money which is secured – the FIRST person to be convinced is the BORROWER. The second person is the Lender.

The lenders really need to learn about things lads on how the industry works and what the legalities are.

I am finding that with every new case a new lender seems to be appointed with no knowledge of how things work. Training required here big time lads!!!

Even the most straightforward things have become complicated far beyond where they should be.

Everyone is simply scared of making a mistake.

In the Bank years ago one of my more

progressive Managers preached that in the interest of doing business it was "Safe to Fail"

NOT ANY MORE LADS!!

Time to get off the bus and leave things to the young lions who know better ...

--0--

There are major changes in the rules governing Pension Contributions which I strongly advise any of you who are in a position to do so to talk to your Financial Advisor / Pension provider THIS MONTH.

There are big savings to be made lads.

--0--

I was disappointed with the uptake on the Young Fishermen's Grant for which I have two successful candidates at the point where we are actually drawing their Grants and another applicant in sight of the Finishing Line.

To BIM I would say that the process of the Grant Application and the Drawdown is very complicated and is off putting which is a shame because I think it provides suitable lads with a super opportunity.

I know it is EU Money and we can be subject to rigorous Audit but wonder if we are being over careful but the system is not User Friendly as it currently stands.

--0--

As we approach the end of the year our thought will drift towards those friends no longer with us. Not only the friends but the wives of friends and in Donegal we recently lost a Special Wife who supported her Husband on many Piers over the Years.

Rest easy Rosaleen

--0--

Hopefully the Quota cuts in the coming weeks may not be as bad as we have feared, and our Fleet can do what they have always done and "suck it up".

There is a limit on how much they can endure Lads and I hope that an incoming Government and our Regulators can work together to encourage the Industry to survive.



Wishing you all a safe Christmas and New Year ... Stay safe everyone.

BIM New Fishermen Scheme

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How will a new government deal with the pressure on marine space?

Report by Executive Editor: Tom MacSweeney

Differing imperatives require that balance be achieved between marine protection and the utilisation of marine space for fishing, tourism, shipping and ORE.

That is the view of the Chief Executive of the Marine Institute, Dr. Rick Officer. It is an opinion that, it could be expected, would be shared by marine stakeholders.

The development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) generation has been declared by the former government as crucial to national plans to achieve climate targets, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and ensure energy security.

The EU's Marine Strategy Framework and Marine Spatial Planning Directives, as well as Ireland's National Marine Planning Framework and the Maritime Area Planning Act of 2021 have been intended to balance the combination of various marine activities through an integrated approach rather than reserving zones for single uses.

There is a belief in the fishing industry that wind farm developers have been favoured above other sectors and that traditional fishing rights have not been respected.

Marine Spatial Planning is critical in development. The Marine Times has previously highlighted the increasing pressure on marine space.

Designation of areas for ORE development has been an initial priority of government. While the importance of wind energy has been accepted by the public, there is less awareness of what the Irish coastline will look like in the future and of restrictions that may be imposed on marine activities.

MPA BILL fell with dissolution

The Marine Protected Areas Bill, which fell when government was dissolved for the General Election, designated 30 per cent of Ireland's sea area for MPAs, close to one-third of the total area, a big amount.

What impact would the total implementation of that Bill by 2030, as intended,

make on the Irish marine space? What would it look like with wind farms in many locations around the coast? What would be the impact on food production from the sea?

Environmental organisations have been forceful in support of MPAs to achieve biodiversity, climate protection, conservation of marine species and habitats.

The Green Party, in coalition government, favoured them. But there has been less attention given to rights of traditional fishing and coastal communities, or concern about seafood production, important to an island nation on the periphery of the European Continent.

Protection of Irish waters is important. So is the future of coastal communities.

Co-Existence Not Achieved

The National Marine Planning Framework was passed by the Oireachtas in 2021. It included an intention to support existing and future sustainable economic maritime activity and ensure that fishing activities and ORE developments could co-exist sustainably.

It has not, so far, achieved that co-existence, with disagreement continuing about ORE development proposals. The Oireachtas passed Ireland's first Designated Maritime Area Plan in October. There was not much debate about the impact on fishing and coastal communities. Fishing industry organisations have stated that they accept the importance of energy generation for the nation, but question locations, impact on vital fishing grounds and respect for traditional rights.

What is happening in the Celtic Sea may provide answers.

Marine Institute CEO Rick Officer has summarised the necessity to balance the use of marine space in his monthly column in this edition of the MARINE TIMES.



Photo: James Grandfield

"The Marine Institute is currently partnering on the Horizon Europe MarinePlan, eu research project to improve the science needed to deliver ecosystem-based MSP (Marine Spatial Planning) in the Celtic Sea. The Celtic Sea already supports valuable commercial fisheries and shipping industries and is now the location for Ireland's first ORE DMAP. However, with less than 2% of the Celtic Sea under conservation protection (and less than 10% of Ireland's marine areas under protection), Ireland remains well short of targets to protect 30% of marine areas by 2030. These differing imperatives require that balance be achieved between marine protection and the utilisation of marine space for industries such as fishing, tourism, shipping, and ORE."

That highlights what is needed.

Departmental Disagreement

The Marine Times has been told that a version of the Marine Protected Areas Bill, which had been drawn up within the Department of Housing was to be put to the Cabinet for approval last May, but before that happened there were objections to some of its content by the Departments of

Agriculture / Food / Marine and the Department of Environment / Climate / Communications.

Following a government decision in December 2023, responsibility for Ireland's marine planning system was formally transferred in the same month to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

There had seemed to be general agreement about the policy. There has been no government disclosure of the concerns which caused objection.

Marine Spatial Planning should avoid conflicts for the equitable use of marine space.

So far disagreement continues.

What will the new government, to be formed after the General Election, do about this issue? Will political parties, who in their manifestos, promised more positive attention to the marine sector, to fisheries and to designate a Minister for the sector, deliver on those promises?

Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year

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Election promises - but who's actually listening to the industry?

As the dust settles after the general election everyone in the Irish fishing and seafood sectors will by now have discarded the postal flyers from candidates and campaigners, from various political parties, all of whom promised to bring a new era for Irish fishing - but, as the saying goes, "talk is cheap" and the question remains as to which of these parties have actually been listening to the demands of an industry in crisis?



Chairman of the Irish Fishing and Seafood Alliance, Cormac Burke sifted through all the literature and promises made prior to the election. As we await the outcome of the election and the formation of a new government we publish his findings to examine who promised what in case they need reminding!

On Nov 4th, a joint statement was released by several fishing industry representative organisations in which eight points were identified and highlighted as being of urgent requirement for the saving of the Irish fishing industry. Bearing in mind that this statement was made public more than two weeks before any political party produced their manifesto, there was ample time for them to examine and consider if they wanted to support some, all or none of these industry demands.

Here we take a brief look at each of the industry demands and what parties have included them in their manifesto as promises to tackle if they are elected:

STOP THE GIVEAWAY OF IRELAND'S GREATEST RESOURCE - OUR FISH!

- this issue, in one form or another is referenced in the manifestos of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, Independent Ireland, Aontu and Labour;

APPOINT A DEDICATED MINISTER FOR MARINE

- included in the manifestos of Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independent

Ireland;

GIVE OUR FISHERMEN A FAIR SHARE OF FISH IN IRISH WATERS

- referenced in the manifestos of Sinn Féin, Independent Ireland and Aontu;

SEAFARERS ALLOWANCE - INSTIGATE A FAIR TAX SYSTEM FOR FISHERMEN

- mentioned only in the manifesto of Fine Gael;

SECURE THE FUTURE OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

- included only in the manifestos of Sinn Féin and Independent Ireland;

A COMPLETE RENEGOTIATION OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

- this is the only item that is included in the manifestos of all main parties of Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Fine Gael, Independent Ireland and Aontu;

STOP THE CRIMINALISATION OF IRISH FISHERMEN FOR MINOR OFFENCES (i.e. a challenge and review of the SFPA)

- this subject only addressed in the mani-

festos of Sinn Féin, Aontu and Labour;

SUPPORT IRELAND'S FISH PROCESSING SECTOR AND OFFSHORE FACILITIES

- this topic referenced in the manifestos of Sinn Féin, Fine Gael and Aontu.

Although no government ever swept into power purely on election promises as history and track record plays a big part, and it may be overly simplistic to award points to the various parties based on their manifesto efforts in listening to the industry's eight demands (i.e. FF 3/8, FG 5/8, SF 7/8, Ind. Irl 5/8, Aontu 5/8, Lab 2/8), it nonetheless remains a fact that fishing industry and coastal community voters, in this time of absolute crisis, will be looking towards some one, some party, or indeed some coalition of parties who are genuinely willing to tackle the raft of problems, both at home and at EU level, and to support & revive the Irish fishing industry to its rightful place as being recognised and respected as an island nation with the richest waters in Europe, if not the world.

But we've all seen this before - how many elections over the past 30-odd years have seen candidates (who were later elected) stand on our doorsteps and tell us how much they "care" about the economies of the fishing and coastal communities,

and yet look at the state of the Irish fishing industry today...

While those of us of a certain age can talk about the 'good old days' when fishing 40 years ago was a fantastically lucrative industry for everyone that was in it and obviously it was 'too good to last' - but it's hard to believe that the fishermen of just 10 to 15 years ago have experienced such a downturn in quotas and wages that many of them are now gone from the industry, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Scarily, if things are not urgently addressed by this incoming government, this could very well be the last Irish general election that the fishing industry is even a topic on the agenda - with just 16,000 people, an ever-dwindling quota and a fleet of vessels a shadow of the numbers of former years.

Did voters stick to the old tradition of following the parties that they, and their parents, have always supported, or have the fishing industry made a radical strike in a bid for survival in voting for a complete change?

It's going to be an interesting election result

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).

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



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



Courageous at Killybegs after work at Mooney Boats. Photo: Alan Hennigan / Mooney Boats

Fishing industry issues discussed by Chief Executives of the Fish Producer Organisations



IS&EFPO - Working For The Fishermen

Irish South and East Fishermen's Organisation Chief Executive, John Lynch

That time of year again when the fishing industry holds its breath awaiting the outcome of negotiations with the UK and Coastal States, hopefully prior to December Fisheries Council meeting and the discussions on sharing arrangements.

As the Council has been arranged for December 9 and 10, there is a concern here that an agreement with the UK will not be complete in advance as the date set in the TCA for a final agreement is December 10. If an agreement is not reached before the Council sits, then we are looking at the possibility of provisional TACs for January as has happened in the past.

To avoid this the Commission should be encouraged to hold the Council meeting after December 10 to allow the greatest possibility of an agreement being reached, in particular with the UK with whom we share the majority of our whitefish stocks.

The Celtic Sea stocks are a particular difficulty this year, with a proposed 44%

reduction in the TAC for haddock a huge concern, as is the advice of -28% for Northern hake.

In fact the only stocks in the Celtic sea with positive advice for 2025 are whiting 7d and sea bass which is prohibited from being landed by an Irish vessel, while other Member States and the UK can fish sea bass with impunity off the Irish coast.

This is an anomaly and the introduction of a bycatch for sea bass for Irish vessels would avoid the current waste of this fish and help to maintain the viability of our fleet.

We do have a considerable quota for megrim in 7, but landings of both megrim and



Dunmore East. Photo: Colin Hunt

monk are constrained due to the low quota for sole which is a bycatch in this fishery.

The 12% reduction in advice for Ne-phrops will affect Ireland more than other Member States or the UK. An increase in production in the Porcupine will help Irish vessels as the value may help offset the reduction in available quota.

As is the situation every year, the Hague Preferences will be crucial for Ireland for 2025 and are a priority for members of the ISEFPO.

The annual advice from ICES, which again shows an overall downward trend,

now leaves the fishing Industry in the Celtic Sea in an extremely precarious situation.

Initiatives to discuss the management of fisheries and measures to promote the recovery of stocks should be discussed with industry as soon as possible, to try and avoid more stocks being reduced to a zero TAC advice. The implications of more stocks being reduced to zero TAC advice in the Celtic Sea do not just apply to Ireland and both the UK and other Member States will have to be involved in any discussion on alternative measures to protect these stocks. It may well be a long and difficult exercise but an essential one nonetheless.



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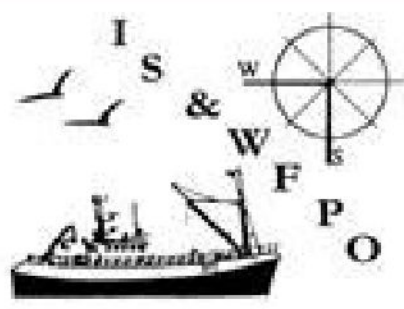
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Fishing industry issues discussed by Chief Executives of the Fish Producer Organisations



Irish South & West Fish Producers' Organisation Chief Executive, Patrick Murphy

There is a lot going on, another evaluation of the CFP. Ireland has got a raw deal in regard to the natural resource of fisheries in our waters. There is nobody who will disagree with that. It has come to the stage now that the entire Irish seafood industry is under threat. All of the organisations came together and put out a call for help to all the political parties and most of them heard it and put into their manifestos for the General Election that they would have a standalone Minister for the Marine and they would look to try and help the industry.

Where we are at is crazy. BIM brought out a report that we were only down 2% on what we had previously. Yet in the same report they say our profitability is down 82%. So if you're on a margin of 20% profitability, then you're now down to less than a fifth. That cannot be sustained with all the expenses of running a boat and that impacts on the factories to which we send our products who do not have the level of products anymore, so their productivity is down. So their survival is also threatened.

That is where we were at now.

If the Government does not do something about it then the country which has the largest and most productive fishing grounds in Europe will end up with very, very few fishermen, if any fishermen at all. The factories will follow and Europe will have wiped us out through the Common Fisheries Policy.

This is reality, the statistics show this. Under the United Nations Law of the Sea we are being mistreated. If anyone wants to see what has been done to our fishing indus-

try, just drive to the areas which were fishing ports and that are no longer such. In the industry we had 400 vessels in 2004, we are now down to 140 and there is not enough for those boats to all survive. Couple that with the massive reduction in the stocks quotas for Ireland - Hake cut again for the fifth successive year, down to a fishery a third of what we had - Celtic Sea haddock has been cut 44%, for the inshore boats - Pollack virtually wiped out as a catch.

That is not sustainable.

The situation has come about because Ireland has been too generous and there is too much fish being taken from our waters by other countries.

It is time for a proper review of the Common Fisheries Policy which should be designed to protect countries whose resource is those fisheries, whose fishermen and whose coastal communities depend on them.

The Irish public needs to be made aware of this.



Irish Fish Producers and Exporters Association Chief Executive, Brendan Byrne

Our processing sector will be glad to see 2024 come to an end. It has been probably the worst year on record and we are hopeful that, after the general election, there will be a new regime that will better respond to the challenges that face us on a daily/weekly basis.

The last four years have been disappointing from the perspective of political support. We felt that, as a sector that is by far the largest employer in the fishing industry, we did not get the support from the outgoing Government that the industry deserved. We flagged at numerous stages over the last three years, in particular post-Brexit, that we were going to go into a phase of decline and appropriate measures should be taken, but unfortunately that fell on deaf ears.

The processing sector is suffering greatly. When quota is lost and vessels are lost to decommissioning, the impact on the processing sector is exponentially bigger because we are depending almost solely on landings by Irish vessels. The amount of foreign landings has fallen terribly. There is a high dependency on landings by Irish vessels.

This has led to a situation that some of our processors have declined by 50 to 66 per cent in some of the sectors. Others are flat-lining. Demand is very high but unfortunately, we don't have the supply to meet the demand. So we have a very deepening crisis. And, as far as I can see, there is no joined-up thinking at all that would give you confidence at this juncture that there is a strategy to get out of it from Government and from the Department.

That being said, there is a resilience in the processing sector, there always has been, we are probably leaders within Europe in some of the sectors of the fish processing that we are engaged in. We have led-out, for example, in blue whiting, in mackerel, in many whitefish products and shellfish. We are European leaders. There is a dynamic element to us, but there is only so much we can do as a sector and therefore we need more support from the incoming government, the realisation from the incoming government that we have a once-in-a-lifetime crisis within the fishing sector.

I think there is a naiveté on the part of the policymakers that thought that once Brexit happened, the industry would reconfigure itself at a level where, while it had lost 25% percent of its value and the loss of quotas and other effects due to Brexit, there was a naiveté there that, roll-on two years and everything would stabilise and the industry would be as it was. That was naiveté.

The situation was never properly discussed or strategised by Government. We are four years on from the TCA Brexit Agreement. We are facing into a possible re-negotiation and our industry has been weakened from the catching sector to the processing sector and all the ancillary and service sectors which support that. Everyone is in a much weaker position. There is a need to put in place support measures, to change the regimes that are there in order to best reflect where we are.

One of the things which I find very hard to understand is the entire method of control enforcement in Ireland when you contrast and compare it to any other European Member State. There is not a level playing

field and yet when we go to the SFPAs they say they are compelled, they are forced, to

bring in these regimes, be it whatever. They are forced and compelled, they tell us, to do it because of Europe.

But if you walk to any other pier or harbour, anywhere across Europe, there are no such rules as compared to what are being applied here in Ireland.

And then when you are in the market, to try to get landings into the processing sector, to compensate for the losses of landings here in Ireland, those we ask say they are not going to come to Ireland because we have rules and regulations that make it virtually impossible for them to land fish into Ireland. So we are blacklisted across Europe as a destination or an entity that is just not friendly to trading in terms of landing fish for processing.

So, there are multi-dimensional problems, which are frightening because as far as I can see, it is actually worse we are getting rather than better.

There seems to be a tendency as a policy towards fishing that is not taken towards any other sector of the economy that might be experiencing difficulty. This is, that if the difficulties are ignored long enough, they might go away. In any other sector of the economy, the challenges would be met head-on to strategise a way around them, but that is not applied to fishing. The attitude towards fishing is - ignore it, fingers crossed, and it might blow over.



Eilean Croine passing Roches Point, inbound to Cork.
Photo: Cearbhall Ó Donnchú (SubseaSurvey.ie)



Irish Fish Producers' Organisation Chief Executive Aodh O'Donnell

From an industry point of view, we are taking some comfort that our ten-point plan as a joint group was taken account of by some of the political parties in the General Election. This gives us some hope that post the election, that there may be the basis for sitting down with these parties if in Government to incorporate it into a programme for Government, with the key focus on the appointment of a designated Minister, Junior Minister if necessary, but with full delegated authority to represent the marine sector.

In the meantime, we are heading into the December Fisheries Council meeting. There is engagement between the EU and Norway, which is going nowhere; there is no commitment by the Norwegians to any comprehensive sharing arrangements. They are taking a very determined line in relation to getting access to Europe. There is the absurd situation that at the same time they expect to have access to the West Coast of Ireland to catch enormous tonnages of blue whiting. It is a contradiction and the other aspect to all of that is the fact that we are looking at major cuts across a number of species but the big one is in mackerel and that is driven by overfishing, particularly by Norway over a number of years and again we have a situation where that is ignored as they look for significant access rights to Irish waters.

The price that Ireland is having to pay is too high. We are a major contributor of value in those negotiations but we have to see a return for Irish fishermen, particularly with the proposed reductions across a range of species.

We are going into a third round of EU/Norway. We don't expect that there will be anything significant developing from that, the Norwegians don't seem to be prepared to enter into any form of meaningful engagement. But from the Irish perspective we don't really care, we would prefer that the Norwegian talks don't advance. Essentially there is very little benefit to Ireland from them. We have to wait and see. We will be going back into Europe next week to meet with the Commission. These are busy times and difficult.



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Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Chief Executive, Dominic Rihan

We are preparing, with some trepidation, for the annual December Fisheries Council meeting and the setting of quotas. There has been engagement with the Department in preparation. There are a number of areas of concern for us.

There is an on-going discussion about North Sea cod. The scientific advice is very strange, splitting the stock into three components. There is a northern stock which includes the area off north Donegal with Scotland and the northern North Sea. There is one for the Skaggerak and the Kattegatt and then the southern stock which covers the southern North Sea and also the Channel. The northern one and the Skaggerak are doing ok, the science is quite good, but the southern stock is weaker and isn't doing as well. It drags down the advice for the other two. The ICES advice doesn't make a lot of sense and is based on very, very weak science. It doesn't hold up to a lot of scrutiny. That is not just the industry saying that, the advice isn't fit for purpose.

The other concern is the Norwegian situation which is going nowhere. The

Norwegians are playing hardball. There has been no progress made in negotiations and meetings. The situation is not good.

There is a lot going on, a lot of meetings and discussion, leading up to the Fisheries Council meeting.

There is concern about mackerel and what we can get.

There is concern in regard to ICES advice. There are a few issues. As well as the North Sea cod there are issues with the North Sea herring advice, issues with the Irish Sea herring advice. It seems a lot is driven on models, rather than what the stock actually is. They seem to almost want to be the kingmakers of everything. There is frustration for a lot of fishermen who are seeing fish on the grounds and the science saying there's no fish anywhere.



Ocean Pearl at Duncannon. Photo: Colin Hunt



Killybegs Fishermen's
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Wishing Everyone In The Fishing Industry
A Very Happy Christmas & Prosperous New Year
From Everyone At
Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation

Chief Executive: Dominic Rihan

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In her monthly column for the Marine Times, the Chief Executive of Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Caroline Bocquel, reflects on the work the agency has carried out over the past year and says coastal communities are at the heart of the sector.

As we approach the end of the year, it's a good time to reflect on the work BIM has undertaken over the past year with industry, to support modernisation and innovation as we look to the future and how technology and the growing demand for seafood can result in higher benefit back to vessels and the seafood sector.

We are continually exploring new ways to support those working in the catching sector, processors and aquaculture operators, engaging with industry on challenges and opportunities. We're also working collaboratively to identify solutions, innovations and efficiencies to make businesses more sustainable which in turn helps support coastal communities who are at the heart of our sector.

Seafood Innovation Network

Earlier this year, we established the Seafood Innovation Network providing an opportunity for fishing and seafood processing business owners to work with BIM on how we can best support them to drive efficiencies and innovation. The network has

provided us with excellent insights into the commercial opportunities and what industry needs to secure their businesses, boost their profitability and create higher value and skilled jobs in coastal communities. BIM's role in this collaborative approach is to provide leadership in new ideas and technologies that can increase margins, lower costs and help meet market demand for high quality, innovative, value-added products.

Our partnership with Teagasc is designed to enhance support for seafood companies, particularly around food innovation and the bioeconomy. We have already hosted two well-attended events for industry at the National Food Research Centre in Dublin which explored robotics and automation, and the use of high-value co-products to

create higher sources of revenue for industry and meet the growing demand for safe, nutritious seafood.

The positive feedback from industry and interest in the first event which explored robotics, automation and digitisation pathways led to a BIM field mission to a cutting-edge seafood processing hub in Urk, The Netherlands, this autumn, which is featured in more detail in this edition. The two-day visit provided practical insights into the benefits of these state-of-the-art capabilities and how they can be applied in Irish facilities, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants.

It was the first field trip supported by the Seafood Capacity Building Scheme, part of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), and we have a number of trips planned for 2025.

Of particular interest and importance was the Seafood Innovation Network event hosted by BIM and Teagasc in November where more than 70 fishing and processing business owners heard about the potential to significantly increase the potential of what would have previously been treated as waste – up to 50% of fish – and is currently typically used for fishmeal, pet food and commercial bait. Companies who are extracting higher value from 100% of their raw material showed an alternative route for our seafood using this material for human consumption, ingredients and nutraceuticals, generating a much higher return for both vessels and processors. Extracting as much value as we can from our limited raw material is critically important as we look to the future, positioning Irish seafood as a premium product to get the highest possible return for it. Very real potential exists for us to create higher sources of revenue for this valuable product leading to higher value and skilled jobs, reduction of waste and the opportunity to reach new markets. We will continue to hold Seafood Innovation Workshops quarterly throughout 2025.

Good Food Ireland awards recognise Kerry shellfish company

It is always rewarding to see the hard work and dedication of the seafood sector being recognised.

Réalt na Mara Shellfish was announced as winner of the Fish and Seafood Producer of the Year at the recent Good Food Ireland awards. The Cromane-based business received the award in recognition of their commitment to quality and sustainability in the production of top quality shellfish, oysters and mussels.

As we prepare our Christmas menus, it's a great time to think about supporting independent seafood producer retailers by buying local seafood to serve at your festive occasions.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a happy Christmas and a healthy and safe New Year.

Staff Shortages Reduce Naval Patrols

According to published statistics, Naval and Air Corps fishery protection patrols have been reduced by almost 50% in the past two years, apparently due to staff shortages and what have been described as "changed priorities."



Latest figures put Naval strength at 574. The designated personnel level should be 1,093. Concern about protection of subsea infrastructure, particularly cabling and what has become regular Russian Naval transiting of waters off Ireland is amongst the "changed priorities" it is understood. Department of Defence Headquarters said that "for operational and security reasons" details would not be given of on-going operations or the operational priorities of the Defence Forces."

Cork Port Development Refused Planning

A plan for the development of new port facilities at Marino Point in Cork Harbour has been rejected by Bord Pleanála. It was proposed by agricultural and chemical firm Goulding Soil Nutrition to construct an agricultural fertiliser facility and develop the existing jetty at Marino Point to facilitate cargo vessels.



This move from the docklands area of Cork City would free-up land for city regeneration under which 1,300 apartments would be built. After two years of consideration the planning board decided road access would not be sufficient to cater to traffic-intensive, port-related use and suggested a railway facility existing at the site should be considered instead.

Positive Findings by Coastwatch

An increase in the number of eels, healthy sea worm, a honeycomb reef and new seagrass beds are encouraging findings in the annual Autumn survey carried out by volunteers for Coastwatch the coastal environment group.

Coastwatch checked 542 sites, finding marine litter in decline, with the lowest average bottle and can count in 25 years. The group's founder Karin Dubsky said there is reason to celebrate progress, but also to be cautious.



(Above): Áine Byrne, Norfish, Michael Gallagher, Innovation Manager, BIM, John Kenny, Atlantis, Frédéric Mens, Upcyclink, Richard Donnelly, Development and Innovation Director, BIM at the Seafood Innovation Network event.

(Below): Representatives from Irish seafood processors on a tour of a fish processing facility in Urk during a BIM-led field mission.





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

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

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

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY ENDORSEMENTS

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

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

RE-VALIDATION OF CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY

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

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

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

Castletownbere College

National Fisheries College of Ireland,
Castletownbere, Co. Cork

Della O'Sullivan, College Administrator

T: + 353 27 7 1230 E: della.osullivan@bim.ie

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In his monthly column for the Marine Times, Dr. Rick Officer, Chief Executive of the Marine Institute discusses Marine Spatial Planning and how various marine uses - fishing, ORE, conservation, aquaculture, shipping and tourism - can co-exist whilst avoiding, mitigating and minimising conflicting interactions.



Foras na Mara
Marine Institute

Supporting Ireland's Marine Spatial Planning process: Evidence-led Decision Making

Ireland has adopted legally-binding national targets to designate marine areas for energy generation and for ecosystem protection.

To do this effectively, the Government has established a new plan-led process for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), consenting of developments and licencing of the usage of marine space.

The Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 established the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) to oversee the consenting process and gave new functions to An Bord Planula and Coastal Planning Authorities. The Marine Institute plays an important role within this new regime of Marine Spatial Planning. By equipping MSP processes with evidence and expertise, we inform Government decision-making and help to ensure transparency and accountability to the public and all stakeholders.

MarinePlan.ie

Ireland's first Marine Spatial Plan (MSP), the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), was passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2021. The Institute has been involved in the MSP process since 2014, providing impartial data and evidence to support its implementation and to inform evaluation and review. Marine data are collected through surveys, seagoing and laboratory work, in-situ monitoring, and ocean modelling. These extensive marine data assets are re-used for MSP.

MarinePlan.ie, Ireland's marine planning portal, makes these data available to the marine planning community and to be re-used to inform many marine planning queries. MarinePlan.ie also provides easy access to data and information on NMPF policies and marine activities. The marine activities map features over 100 layers covering 16 data themes related to MSP.

With decades of accumulated data and knowledge, the Marine Institute plays a crucial role in implementing MSP to the highest standards. The Institute operates under an internationally-accredited Data Management Quality Management Framework. This accreditation, together with best scientific practices and rigorous quality procedures, ensure that users can trust the quality of data produced and shared on our platforms. The on-going collection, processing and re-use of these data deliver the best information available to support MSP.

Fishing and ORE Co-existence

However, re-using data for MSP is not without its challenges. Linking environ-

mental, biodiversity, and socio-economic data requires multidisciplinary teams to evaluate inter-relationships and ensure the data are applied effectively across disciplines.

The transition to renewable energy is a significant element of national ambitions to achieve net-zero emissions in Ireland by 2050. The development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) generation is crucial to national plans to achieve climate targets, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and ensure energy security. A major milestone was achieved last month, when the Oireachtas passed Ireland's first Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP).

The NMPF aims to support existing and future sustainable economic activity and ensure that fishing activities and ORE developments can co-exist sustainably. The Marine Institute participates on the Seafood-ORE Working Group, providing the trustworthy evidence that supports fact-based engagement between fishers, ORE developers, and Government Departments. The spatial configuration of the South Coast DMAP for ORE was informed by analysing publicly available, quality-assured marine data, available on the Marine Institute's data catalogue (data.marine.ie).

Expert knowledge from fisheries scientists helped to quantify the scale of the overlap of fishing activity and the proposed DMAP.

Alongside the economic and social objectives, the MSP process can also inform the achievement of ecological priorities such as protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem resilience. The Marine Institute has contributed to the scientific and data analysis for the ecological sensitivity analyses carried out in the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea. These may inform future processes to safeguard critical habitats, facilitate adaptation to climate change, improve coastal protection, designate Marine Protected Areas, restore natural ecosystems and monitor restoration efforts.

Designation of areas

As the new MSP processes become increasingly operational, continued investment in high-quality data will be crucial to inform decision-making, minimise uncertainty, and optimise the sustainable use of our marine spaces. Existing knowledge of seabed characteristics, gathered primarily from INFOMAR (Ireland's national seabed mapping programme) coupled with new

surveys, will help to inform the location of future DMAPs. Substantial new monitoring and research programmes will need to be sustained to assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of ORE development in Irish waters. The cumulative effects of multiple offshore wind farms and other activities are of particular relevance and will require new approaches to assessment and monitoring.

Whilst designation of areas for ORE development is an initial priority, Ireland's new marine spatial planning processes also provide an opportunity for all maritime industries. For example, MSP processes could be used to designate areas of particular importance to fisheries, nursery habitats, spawning grounds, or for scientific investigation. With the necessary data and expertise to inform it, the new plan-led approach can support long-term balanced, sustainable development, and environmental protection. A current case study in the Celtic Sea provides a good example.

Balancing the utilisation of marine space

The Marine Institute is currently partnering on the Horizon Europe MarinePlan.eu research project to improve the science needed to deliver ecosystem-based MSP (EB-MSP) in the Celtic Sea. The Celtic Sea already supports valuable commercial fisheries and shipping industries and is now the location for Ireland's first ORE DMAP. However, with less than 2% of the Celtic Sea under conservation protection (and less than 10% of Ireland's marine areas under protection), Ireland remains well short of targets to protect 30% of marine areas by 2030. These differing imperatives require that balance be achieved between marine protection and the utilisation of marine space for industries such as fishing, tourism, shipping, and ORE.

The EB-MSP approach is all about finding this balance by planning for a combination of various activities, rather than reserving zones for single uses. This integrated approach aligns with the EU's Marine Strategy Framework (MSFD) and Marine Spatial Planning Directives, as well as Ireland's National Marine Planning Framework and the Maritime Area Planning Act of 2021. At the heart of its implementation, EB-MSP considers ecosystem health, cumulative impacts, governance processes and input from various sectors and stakeholders to manage the use of marine space more effectively.

EB-MSP aims to ensure that various marine uses, like fishing, ORE, conservation, aquaculture, shipping and tourism, can co-exist whilst avoiding, mitigating, and minimising conflicting interactions.

Marine Spatial Planning is designed to minimise potential conflicts by providing science-driven, collaborative processes for the equitable use of marine space. Solid scientific data and evidence, cross-sector dialogue and an inclusive MSP process will help Ireland to achieve national conservation, energy transition and sustainability goals. EB-MSP offers a promising path forward, supporting marine ecosystem health and resilience while balancing Ireland's conservation targets, the EU's Green Deal goals and a thriving marine economy.

Increase funding to boost jobs in Ireland's offshore wind industry

Seán Kelly MEP (Ireland South) has called for significant EU investment to drive job creation in the offshore wind sector, underlining its potential as a cornerstone of Ireland's clean energy future.



Speaking at the T-Shore European Event in the European Parliament recently, Kelly highlighted the vital role of the offshore wind industry in Ireland's transition to a net-zero economy: "Offshore wind is key to Ireland's renewable energy goals. We have some of the best wind resources in Europe, and with the right investment in skills and infrastructure, we can become a global leader in this field."

Kelly stressed the importance of projects like T-Shore, a collaborative initiative bringing together partners from five European countries to develop harmonized training modules and regional Centres of Vocational Excellence. "T-Shore is a fantastic example of how we can bridge the skills gap in offshore wind. This project not only trains the workforce we need but also provides lasting career opportunities for people across Europe."

Kelly also pointed to the need for alignment between educational reform and labour market demands: "The European Skills Agenda is clear—we must invest in skills that will drive the digital and green transitions. Offshore wind ticks both boxes and we need the funding to ensure our workforce is ready to deliver."

Strong financial support from the EU is needed, according to MEP Kelly, particularly as discussions around the 2027-2034 budget intensify. "As we shape the next EU budget, I'll be pushing for increased allocations to Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. These programs are crucial for developing the skills that will underpin our net-zero targets."

The Fine Gael MEP also highlighted the need for clear policy direction and investment in infrastructure to support offshore wind: "We need 2040 renewable energy targets that provide market stability and drive investment."

"Ireland's offshore wind potential is immense, but we must set ambitious goals and invest in the necessary grid upgrades to harness it fully."

"Let's ensure Ireland and Europe are at the forefront of offshore wind. With the right funding, we can create jobs, strengthen our energy security, and make meaningful progress on climate action."

THE MARINE TIMES NEWS INTERVIEW

“It has taken eight years of absolute torture and torment to change what was done to me. What happened to me was wrong. All I ever wanted was for my service to be acknowledged.....”

Seamus Power was dismissed from his post as Officer-in-Charge at Bonmahon Coast Guard Station in County Waterford, which the Marine Times reported in December 2016. It was a time of controversy and difficulty in the service.

“My good name has been taken from me,” he said at the time.

Since then he has sought to have his reputation restored and his service with the Coast Guard formally recognised. In this exclusive interview with Executive Editor, Tom MacSweeney, he says that this has now been achieved and his good name restored.

A letter was delivered by registered post to the home of Seamus Power at Ballyleen, Kill in Bonmahon, after eight years of campaigning to clear his name of what he had seen as damaging his reputation in the Coast Guard and amongst his local community.

“Being dismissed in the way I was, it is not good to be removed from a service like the Coast Guard in your community. It hurt very deeply. It was wrong,” says Seamus.

The letter, from Matthew McLoughlin of the Department of Transport’s Maritime Strategy & Governance Division marked the “valued contribution” of Seamus to Bonmahon Coast Guard Unit. It enclosed a 20-Year Long Service Medal. “I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Irish Coast Guard to express sincere gratitude for your service to marine search and rescue,” the letter said.

It was a vindication of what Seamus had struggled for eight years to achieve.

“The wording of the letter, while it is very vague, it is proof enough. There was never any evidence against me for wrong doing. All I ever wanted was to have that acknowledged and to be vindicated. The Coast Guard has acknowledged my service and what I have done in serving the community. I am satisfied with that. It has taken eight years of absolute torture and torment to change what was done to me.”

Seamus Power had been OIC at Bonmahon, a unit then with a Deputy OIC and 15 volunteers. Coast Guard management at the time were seeking to make operational changes which concerned many volunteer members



prehensible that a voluntary member of the service with such an impeccable track record and longevity of service could have been treated in such an appalling fashion.”

Seamus Power credits Independent Senator Gerard Craughwell for dedicated efforts to help him clear his name: “He never gave up or let it go. He kept on raising the issue and keeping it alive for me. He has done a huge amount of work to help me”

Cormac O Dálaigh of the Communication Workers’ Union and Eugene Brennan, well-known in marine circles, also helped Seamus: “I had good friends, strong supporters, my community was supportive and I needed all the help I could get. The Marine Times accurately reported what was happening in the Coast Guard at the time, highlighting the essential marine service it provided, but challenging what was happening with the dismissal of volunteers.

“It was a very hard time, what happened to me was wrong. There were a lot of issues. I was on an Advisory Group about the protection for volunteers and I would not sign up to what management wanted because I was concerned about how volunteers were being treated. I stood up for what I believed in and I am happy that what I did was right and I can stand over it. When I joined the service it was a brilliant organisation for the community which we served. But senior people had changes they wanted and which and when I stood for what I believed in was best for the service, I was taken out. And many of those changes never happened. There was no question of unsatisfactory behaviour on my part ever in the Coast Guard. I absolutely did what was best for it and for the volunteers.”



Seamus said that times are now different in the Coast Guard. “It was very strange times then, but there was never anything to justify what was done to me. I am now happy that my situation has been acknowledged in the letter and in giving me my long service medal.”



who were not classed as ‘staff’ and who felt the changes proposed were not in the best interests of the service. There were various meetings about the proposals which the Marine Times reported. As disagreement mounted there were dismissals at a number of station units around the coast which volunteers involved felt was without adequate reasoning and explanation,

“I am not the only one who has been treated in this fashion,” Seamus Power said at the time. “Any volunteer who does not roll-over and do what management wants is being taken out. I do not know what they are at, but they have not followed procedures as they should have as far as I am concerned and I feel that my good name has been taken from me.”

Reporting on those issues, when I sought explanation from the Coast Guard, the reply came to me in a statement from the Department of Transport, responsible for the Coast Guard: “The Coast Guard appreciates the responsibility undertaken by the volunteer rescue units and values the commitment and dedication of the Coast Guard volunteers. All HR (Human Resources) associated with Coast Guard Volunteers are dealt with in accordance with Coast Guard practice and procedure and it is not a matter which the Department considers appropriate to comment.”

Waterford T.D. John Halligan was then a Minister of State and raised Mr. Power’s dismissal through what was then the Independent Alliance of a number of Independent TDs., of which he was a member. He took the case to Transport Minister Shane Ross, who had responsibility for the Coast Guard. He also wrote a letter to Coast Guard management in which he stated: “I find it utterly incom-

There must be a focus on seafood production



While welcoming the fishing industry's proposal for a Junior Minister for the Marine, IFA Aquaculture Executive Teresa Morrissey says there would have to be more focus on seafood production. There needs to be a real change of attitude and action towards aquaculture, to recognise its importance.

IFA Aquaculture

There have been a lot of biological and economic challenges on our sector this year. Hopefully, there will be some improvement next year and, with a General Election having just been held, we hope that an incoming Minister will take note of those challenges and work with our sector to gain improvements.

We have taken note of the joint proposal by the major organisations in the fishing industry that there should, at the least, be a Junior Minister for the Marine.

We would welcome such an appointment too, but with the caveat that there could be complications if a Junior Minister had to go with the 'begging bowl' to a senior Minister.

If a Junior Minister for the Marine is part of the Programme for Government we would welcome that. It would be fantastic to put a focus on marine matters, particularly on seafood.

We have not been seeing that focus at present, whether it be on fisheries, inshore or aquaculture. We are certainly not seeing seafood get the attention it should get politically.

It should be getting more attention.

It is sustainable food production, providing a food source. We are not seeing

seafood production get that level of attention.

A Junior Minister must have power.

There needs to be a real change of attitude and action towards aquaculture, to recognise its importance. A Junior Minister would have to have the power to do that.

While, certainly, we would be very welcoming of a Junior Minister, we would be concerned that such an appointment must have strong focus and powers to achieve what is necessary for the seafood sector, to put focus and emphasis on it, because we have not been seeing that.

We would welcome a Junior Minister who would look after seafood production. A lot of marine matters get forefront attention, but we do not see the seafood sector and seafood production getting forefront.

With Christmastime upon us, every good wish to all our members and supporters and we hope for a better year in 2025.

Native oyster fisheries in Murrisk thriving thanks to innovative aquaculture and restoration practices

BIM has extended its thanks to Clew Bay Oyster Co-op for organising their members and TY students from local schools to help work on the native oyster nursery in Murrisk, Clew Bay, Co. Mayo this month. This initiative highlights the importance and benefits of integrating complementary aquaculture and restoration practices in the management of marine ecosystems.

Marine ecosystems, particularly native oyster reefs, play a crucial role in providing essential ecosystem services such as coastal protection, carbon sequestration, water filtration, and supporting fisheries production. By using aquaculture techniques to support restoration efforts, they are not only enhancing the resilience of these ecosystems but also contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Since 2020, BIM, in partnership with the Marine Institute and industry stakeholders, has been actively involved in enhancing European flat oyster populations through the application of complementary aquaculture and restoration practices. The primary goal of this collaborative work is to support the restoration and management of existing native oyster fisheries, using innovative tools to facilitate compliance with the proposed

EU Nature Restoration Regulation.

Through the establishment of spatting ponds and the careful management of environmental parameters, they have successfully reared spat on shell under different nursery scenarios. Last year, they broadcast stock onto protected beds and closely monitored their growth and survival. This year, their focus is on investigating the potential advantages of bottom culture systems in combating the parasitic rhizarian *Bonamia ostreae*, which poses a threat to oysters above 60mm in size.

This ongoing work is made possible through the support of the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the Government of Ireland. BIM are committed to leading the restoration and sustainability of native oyster fisheries.



Greencastle Golf Club raise €6,000 for Lough Swilly RNLI: Greencastle Ladies RNLI Committee raised €2,500. Kathleen Morris is retiring as treasurer of Greencastle Ladies RNLI Committee after over forty years fundraising for the RNLI; Greencastle RNLI branch, represented on the night by John McClenaghan, contributed €1,500 raised by branch. Paddy Gillen and Niall P. O'Doherty, members at Greencastle Golf Club, raised €2,000 for RNLI by organizing and sponsoring a mid-summer barbecue and raffle at the club. Many thanks to everyone involved for their support. (Back l-r): Paddy Gillen; Gareth Evans, Lough Swilly RNLI; Niall P. O'Doherty; (Middle l-r): Rosie Browne; Margaret Canavan; Kathleen Morris; Mary Brennan; John McClenaghan. (Front): Tara McLaughlin; Kay Doherty.

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NIFA National Inshore Fishermen's Association

The latest news from the RNLI in her monthly column by RNLI Media Manager in Ireland, Niamh Stephenson



As 2024 draws to a close, it's been a fantastic year and I want to look back on it but if anyone is planning to keep it going into next year, have at it, I'll be there.

November saw a special event to mark the RNLI's 200th years of lifesaving which was held in the Commissioners of Irish Lights stunning headquarters in Dun Laoghaire. Chief Executive Yvonne Shields O'Connor and British Ambassador to Ireland Paul Johnston welcomed people from across a wide range of sectors in Irish society, including search-and-rescue, community organisations, business, entertainment and hospitality.

RNLI volunteers from around the island of Ireland attended as well as colleagues from the Irish Coast Guard and Water Safety Ireland. The great craic I get from these occasions is seeing people I know in completely different areas chatting with people they would not have come across before and hitting it off. We had chefs talking with influencers and swimmers with historians.

RNLI Chief Executive Peter Sparkes

The CEO spoke about the RNLI and its proud history in Ireland: "For a charity to have survived 200 years based on the time and commitment of volunteers – and on the sheer generosity of the public who provide kind donations – is truly remarkable. It is thanks to their dedication that the RNLI has survived the test of time, including tragic losses, funding challenges, two World Wars and, more recently, a global pandemic.

"Whilst we reflect on those who have gone before, let us also celebrate the achievements of today's crew, volunteers, communities, and supporters. They provide a world-class lifesaving service, based on 200 years of learning, expertise and innovation. They are people of all ages, active all around and across our nations, from diverse backgrounds, united by the RNLI's vision: to save everyone we can. This is a vision which depends on the lifesavers and supporters who will take the RNLI into its next century and beyond.

"It is our sincere hope that their achievements inspire a new generation of courageous, generous and selfless people who will continue to help save lives at sea."

200th Celebration Memories

I can't really do justice to the year in a few words but maybe I'll just say, what a year, to see the RNLI on Irish stamps and bringing an All-Weather lifeboat on the Liffey to launch them, (thank you Dun Laoghaire lifeboat station), to have a scroll travel the length-and-breadth of the island to be signed by hundreds of volunteers, joining their colleagues across two countries, to gathering on the 1/8/24 to take a photograph to mark 200 years saving lives, to have our volunteers unfold a giant lifeboat flag on the pitch in Croke Park to promote water safety and also have a presence in Cork Port, Cork Airport and soon Shannon.... To welcome a new Shannon Class boat to our oldest RNLI station and to serve a fish supper cooked by a Michelin chef in Kilmore Quay, (thanks Derry and Sallyanne Clarke)..... To have RNLI volunteers invited to 200th events in Westminster, Buckingham Palace and the President's garden party in Áras an Uachtarán.... an incredible calendar of events.

My personal highlight was to work with a lovely team to get an RNLI in Ireland exhibition up and running and on display in Dublin, Belfast and Arklow. North, South, East and West, it's a been a wonderful year.

Bundoran

It may be 200 years but rescues are still happening and where we can give a bit of advice and a warning, we will. This one happened in Bundoran, where the station rescued a swimmer who got caught in a rip current off Bundoran Pier.

The volunteer crew launched the lifeboat when a member of the public raised the

alarm after witnessing the swimmer being carried out to sea. Despite the challenging conditions including a south-westerly force 7 to 8 wind and a 3 metre swell, the crew responded swiftly. Helm Brian Gillespie, along with crew members James Cassidy, Oisín Cassidy, and Finn Mullen, launched the lifeboat within eight minutes of the pagers being activated and arrived on the scene in less than a minute and carried out the rescue.

Rips are strong currents running out to sea and can be difficult to spot. They are sometimes identified by a channel of churning, choppy water on the sea's surface and they are especially powerful in larger surf.

If you do get caught in a rip, don't try to swim against it or you'll get exhausted. If you can - stand, wade don't swim. If you can - swim parallel to the shore until free of the rip and then head for shore. Always raise your hand and shout for help.

Spike Milligan, Boots and Six Pounds

Finally, I spotted this recently. Going through old correspondence to the RNLI, one donation came from a famous comedian. On April 26, 1988, Spike Milligan typed a letter to the RNLI in response to an advertisement at the time that said: "£6 will buy him a pair of boots." He also wrote by hand "welly helpful" at the top of the letter.

Dear Friends,

I can't see your boys going out to sea any longer without boots. Here-with £6 - please buy a pair of boots.

Warm regards

Spike Milligan

'Welly welly' appreciated dear Spike!

Happy Christmas to everyone.....



(Above): RNLI Trustee John Killeen, British Ambassador to Ireland Paul Johnston, RNLI Chief Executive Peter Sparkes and RNLI Trustee Paddy McLaughlin at the RNLI's 200th year of lifesaving celebration.

(Below): Bundoran RNLI rescues a swimmer who got caught in a rip current off Bundoran Pier. Photo: Bundoran RNLI / Grzegorz Radzik



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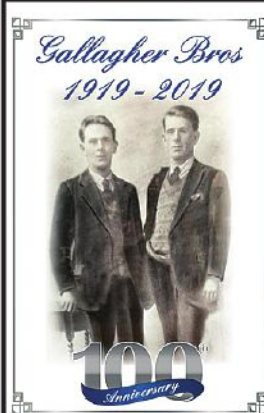
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Achill Island Duo

Husband-and-wife Francis and Or-lagh Blake Dillon are enthusiastic about the maritime sector and decided that they could get more involved, so they joined Achill RNLI.



They were following the 'Train One Save Many' project of the lifeboat organisation when they went through the Crew Emergency Procedures training sessions at the National Maritime College in Ringaskiddy, Cork Harbour. Having successfully completed this course, nearing the end of RNLI training procedures, they were on the way to going 'on service.'

Buying a Lifeboat While Driving a Porsche

The married couple from London who drove a Porsche 911 to visit every RNLI station around the coast of Ireland and Britain succeeded in their task of raising enough money to buy a lifeboat.



Belinda and James Richardson visited all 238 lifeboat stations and raised more than stg£130,000 – Euros €156,000 – enough to buy the lifeboat, contribute towards its maintenance and train and kit out three crew members.

The D class inshore lifeboat they have successfully fundraised will be called RNLI 911 Challenge and will be part of the RNLI's relief fleet, meaning it could be used anywhere around Ireland and Great Britain.

Wind Skills Academy

Skillnet Ireland, the development agency for businesses, in partnership with Wind Energy Ireland, the renewable energy representative body, have launched a Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy.

It is intended to support professionals through a career-switching model to create skilled workers for businesses operating in offshore wind services. The Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy will focus on mid-career professionals interested in a career within the industry.

The year 1724 was three centuries ago, yet the RNLI was founded in 1824; two centuries ago.

A group of former RNLI volunteers gathered for a chat on Saturday November 9th. The combined RNLI volunteer service total for these six volunteers comes to three centuries. Yes, 300 years.

Jamie Ryan, Rosslare Harbour Lifeboat Operations Manager remarked that these volunteers are the embodiment of the RNLI mission to save lives at sea. A mission that celebrates 200 years in 2024.

Bere Island Leather Workers

Developing skills amongst the residents of Bere Island off Castletownbere in West Cork, the Men's Shed had "fantastic evenings" during the past month we are told – at leather workshop development sessions.



But it hasn't been for men only. We spotted a lady busy with a hammer! The Shed was founded last year. Steven Carter has been leading the tutorials.

Freefalling

A 'freefall' in a ship's lifeboat is a very challenging experience which first-year Marine Engineering and Marine Electrotechnology students at the National Maritime College experienced as part of their Introduction to Leadership training with NMCI Training Services.



It is part of "equipping the next generation of maritime leaders with the skills, experience, and confidence they need to excel," says the NMCI. It is the only place in Ireland where students can experience freefall lifeboat training.

Mainly About People

by 'Roving Scribe'

Three Centuries of Service



(l-r): Fergus Wickham: former Coxswain and Launch Authority, Rosslare Harbour RNLI; Dave Maloney: former Lifeboat Operations Manager, Launch Authority, Chairman and crew member, Rosslare Harbour RNLI; Stephen Wynne: former Honorary Secretary and Launch Authority, Dún Laoghaire RNLI; Buddy Miller: former Honorary Secretary, Rosslare Harbour RNLI; Captain Michael Doyle: former Honorary Secretary and Lifeboat Operations Manager, Rosslare Harbour RNLI; Jimmy Tyrrell: former Lifeboat Operations Manager, Arklow RNLI. Jimmy, a member of the Arklow boat building family, was instrumental in having the Shannon Class Lifeboat to be so named after the majestic River Shannon.

Congratulations to Tides and Tales

The Tides & Tales Maritime Community Project has been selected as County Winner in the National Heritage Week Awards 2024 for their event Cheekpoint – A community of the Tides for the Waterford County Council local authority area. To say they are thrilled is an understatement. The event this year was called Cheekpoint, a Community of the Tides. It focused on the influence of the rivers and their tidal dynamics on the community of Cheekpoint.



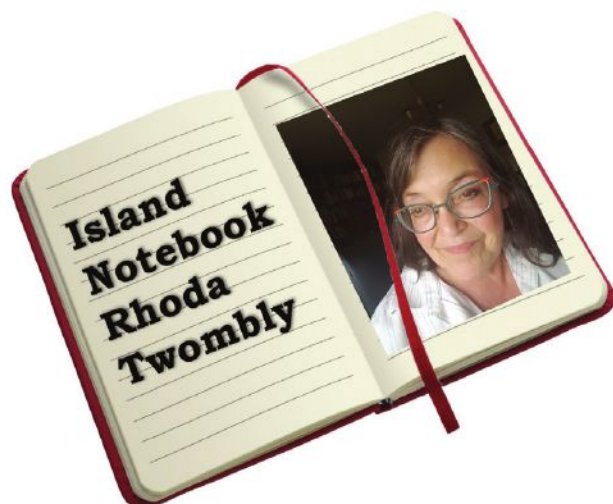
The Tides and Tales Maritime Community Project, organised and coordinated by Andrew Doherty, presented an afternoon of historical and craft items related to making a living in a fishing village, a Community of Tides, where the Suir meets the Barrow and flows out to the Celtic Sea.

Cheekpoint is a traditional fishing community at the meeting of the Three Sister rivers; Barrow, Nore & Suir. Below Cheekpoint the rivers spread out into a board coastal estuary. For generations, the daily flow of the tides governed the way of life of fishermen, sailors, pilots, boatmen and locals alike. It was a vital employer, a means of transport and of leisure. This event showcased this connection and of-

fered an insight into the importance of the tidal rhythm to the community and how it shaped and created a unique identity, not just in Cheekpoint but throughout the estuary and river based communities.

Following a grant from the The Heritage Council a new website has now been completed by the project. This follows a long process of consultation, discussion, drafts and redraft, but the site is now up and running. The crucial elements were to keep the content free to access, try raise some funds to sustain the project and to ensure the long term access to the research and stories. You can read an excellent blog of the event that won the National Heritage Award at tidesandtales.ie

All the news and comment from the offshore islands, by Rhoda Twombly, Secretary Comhdháil Oileáin na hEireann, in her monthly column



**Comhdháil
Oileáin
na
hÉireann**
Irish Islands Federation

One of Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann's main functions is to inform politicians of the challenges faced by the offshore islands and work with them to find solutions.

Before the General Election was held, a document outlining the major issues facing islands was sent to all candidates. There was a favourable response from candidates on the issues important to our islands. These included housing needs, necessary changes to the planning regulations, the need to be included in the multi-annual Rural Water Programme and the need for an island-specific retrofitting program. Additionally, the benefits for islands being treated as a distinct, stand-alone sub-regional area were pointed out.

The necessity to upgrade and/or repair or extend existing piers and slipways was highlighted.

The issue of access is paramount to all the offshore islands. Islanders and visitors need to be confident in their safety during their travels. While the extensive work (a 135-metre extension to make the pier more secure) to the Inis Oírr pier has been discussed and planned, now provisionally awarded, but it shouldn't take decades to get such vital work approved.

Pier Improvements

Two phases of the works on Caladh Mór pier on Inis Meáin were completed before the downturn of 2008. Consultants have now been appointed to see how the project should proceed.

The residents of Clare Island and

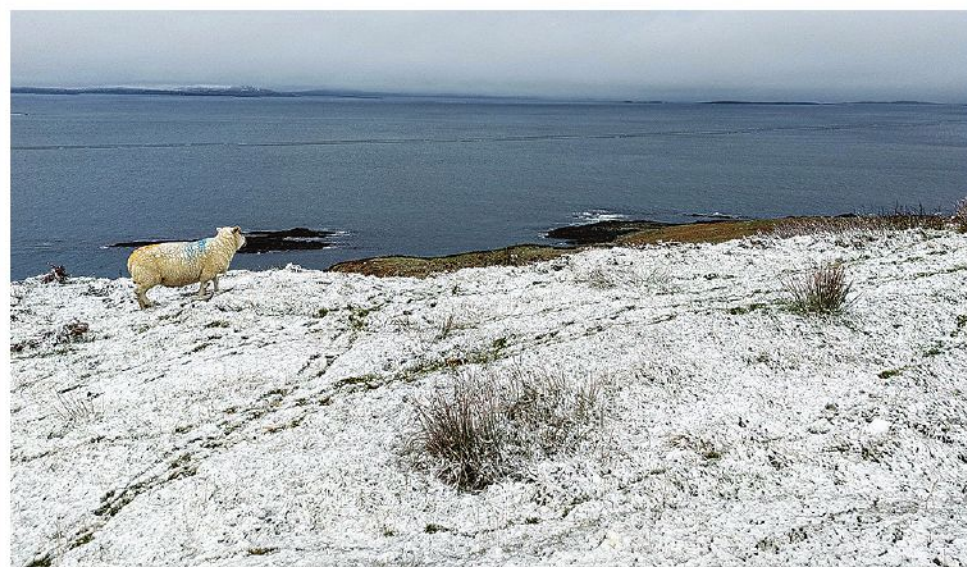
Inishturk, Mayo, are asking that badly-needed improvements to the mainland pier at Roonagh be brought forward and there have been positive steps in the collaboration with Mayo County Council.

The people of Tory Island, Donegal, are frustrated that 5 years on there's still no progress to works on the Magheraroarty Pier which is vital to their access. It was pointed out that all piers serving the offshore islands need to be kept up to safety standard and that pontoons, railings, steps and slips need inspection on a regular basis.

Like all of Ireland, islanders do not know yet what this election will bring but are hoping for a stand-alone Department of the Marine; that Islands be specifically named in a relevant Department and that the action plan of the *Our Living Islands* be adhered to and followed by all Departments.

Inishbofin Repository

Inishbofin, Galway, residents and their diaspora were thrilled to hear that their library is now a repository for copies of archival documents. This massive collection is the result of the work led by Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies, Meredith Chesson, generously gifted to the Inishbofin Library for public viewing. The collection includes hard and digital copies of the 1901 & 1911 Censuses, Parish Records from 1867 and 1919, two 20th century



Doesn't happen very often but most of our offshore islands were blanketed in snow in November - quite a sight to behold. Snow on Inishturk photo by Sinead Cahalan.

Boat Registries plus valuation records beginning in 1842. All information concerns Inishbofin, Inishark and Inishturk South – a real treasure trove of island history.

Inis Oírr Winner

Congratulations to Siobhán Ni Dhoncha of Inis Oírr who won a Prestigious GRADAIM Gnó na hÉireann Award for her photography business on the island. Siobhán started her postcard sales in 2016 and added calendars in 2020. She says, "I like to do them in Irish as I think it promotes the Irish language as I send them all over the world."



The award will help to increase business and fund the setting up of a website.

Inis Meáin

Well done to Inis Meáin who also received two awards from the Glór na nGael competitions this year for promotion of the Irish Language. "Inis Meáin Development Company managed to win first place in the Gaeltacht Section and second place in the National Glór na nGael competition this year for its efforts to promote, preserve and protect the Irish language."

Bravo to all involved!

Inishturk

Inishturk is delighted to announce that they were runner-up in the Community Tourism Category at the All Island Pride of Place 2024 competition. This honours the island's vibrant community and commitment to sustainable tourism, highlighting Inishturk's unique charm, cultural heritage and welcoming spirit.



Inishturk represents an inspiring model of community-driven tourism. Pride of Place awards are a huge "pat on the back" so this is a stellar achievement for the island.

Happy Christmas

Hard to believe that Christmas is right around the corner. Plans are in place for festive parties, dinners and ceilis – not to mention a visit from the big man himself! Will it be a white Christmas? We'll see! There will be photos in the next issue but, until then, a very Happy Christmas to all.

SFPA Publishes New Fishery Information Notice on Labelling on Board Freezer Vessels

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) recently published a new Fishery Information Notice (FIN) titled 'Labelling On Board Freezer Vessels.' The FIN sets out the various Fisheries Control and Food Safety Regulatory requirements that apply. It is a matter for each operator to examine and evaluate how their work practices conform with the regulatory requirements and how they should be applied onboard their vessels.

To ensure maximum compliance with all the regulatory requirements it is advisable that all containers/boxes be labelled, for example, for frozen products stored in 3kg and 9kg cartons/boxes, the 3kg and 9kg containers must both be labelled. Such an approach should give operators maximum comfort in terms of compliance with food safety, traceability, and fisheries control requirements.

REGULATION (EU) 2024/2594 requires that all boxes or blocks of frozen product caught within the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Convention Area – which includes all waters surrounding Ireland – shall be physically labelled on board at the time of stowage.

Labels must include an identification mark with the vessel's approval number, the name of the vessel, the three-letter Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) species code, the production date, and the catch area (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) sub-area and division). Where frozen products are stored in 3kg and 9kg cartons or boxes, both the 3kg and 9kg containers shall be labelled with this information.

Further detail must be provided either on the label or accompanying commercial documentation once the products are grouped into lots. Operators of freezer vessels pre-packing products for the final consumer must ensure their labels include the mandatory information to the final consumer, as detailed in the FIN. At all stages, operators must provide sufficient information on labels or commercial documents to enable retailers to pass on the mandatory information to final consumers.

Operators of freezer vessels and food businesses handling frozen fishery products should familiarise themselves with the FIN and the requirements for labelling. Example labels and further guidance can be found in the FIN.

The SFPA is committed to supporting compliance with both new and existing legislation and are available to provide guidance. For assistance or further details on the FIN, please contact: sfpa-food&fisheriessupport@sfpa.ie

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

RNLI 200 EXHIBITION Now on at the Arklow Maritime Museum

Arklow Maritime Museum hosts major RNLI exhibition in celebration of charity's 200 years saving lives at sea.

The Arklow Maritime Museum is delighted to be hosting a major exhibition on the RNLI as part of the charity's 200th anniversary which will be running from now until January. Its arrival is coinciding with Arklow lifeboat station welcoming a new state of the art Shannon class lifeboat to the town. The charity has created an immersive and exciting family friendly exhibition that looks at the Institution's history through the years, while encouraging a new generation of lifesavers to get involved.

Arklow lifeboat station is the oldest established RNLI station on the island of Ireland, dating back to 1826. The RNLI now operates 46 lifeboat stations in Ireland today. Since records began, the charity's volunteer lifeboat crews in Ireland have estimated to have launched over 34,000 times, saved 8,357 lives and brought over 35,000 people to safety.

The exhibition has been built using sustainable materials, historical images and virtual reality technology. Visitors are invited to step into the yellow wellies of a RNLI volunteer and learn what it takes to launch a lifeboat in all weathers. They can listen to interviews from the RNLI's 200 voices podcast, sit on a seat, taken from an existing lifeboat and wear a special VR headset that puts them in the centre of the action on the high seas. The exhibition also includes fascinating accounts of some of the most famous callouts carried out by lifeboat crews on the island of Ireland.

RNLI Marketing and Visitor Experience Lead Louise Canty Dinan RNLI added: "We are delighted that the exhibition is being hosted in Arklow. It was always our hope to bring it to the location of the very first RNLI lifeboat station in Ireland and for that to coincide with the arrival of a new lifeboat for Arklow makes it a perfect choice. As a charity with a 200-year history, we have a rich archive of images and stories from which to curate an exhibition, but we also wanted to look to the future and explore innovations in technology that have influenced lifesaving. I'd urge people to visit it and I hope some may even be inspired to get involved and save lives with us."

Arklow Maritime Museum is open seven days a week from 10am to 5.00pm. Entrance into the exhibition is free of charge and is accessed by the museum's entrance on the North Quay, Ferrybank beside the Bridgewater Shopping Centre. The free RNLI 200 exhibition runs 7-days-a-week in Arklow Museum until after Christmas

Valentia RNLI spend 16 hours at sea following Mayday to help crew of 33m fishing trawler on fire

Valentia RNLI's volunteers spent 16 hours at sea on Wednesday 7th November after they responded to a Mayday call to rescue the 11 crew of a 33m fishing trawler that went on fire. It was the second call out in 24 hours for the station's crew who earlier on Tuesday rescued a paddleboarder who got into difficulty.

The crew were first requested by the Irish Coast Guard to launch their all-weather lifeboat at 1.29pm on Tuesday (5 November) following a report of a paddleboarder drifting north of Cuas Crom Harbour. The alarm was raised by walkers who spotted the casualty drifting.

Weather conditions at the time were fair with a force five wind and 1.5m swell.

The lifeboat launched under Coxswain Richard Quigley and with five crew onboard and made its way to the scene where on arrival they located the casualty who was wearing a wetsuit but was very cold. The crew proceeded to bring the casualty onboard the lifeboat where they carried out an assessment and administered casualty care as they made their way back to Cahirciveen marina. The paddleboarder was then passed into the care of Iveragh Coast Guard and the National Ambulance Service.

Later in the early hours of Wednesday morning, the crew were requested once again by the Irish Coast Guard, and this time launched the lifeboat at 1.56am following a Mayday call from the crew of a Spanish fishing vessel who had stated a fire onboard 40 miles northwest of Valentia. The Irish Coast Guard helicopter, Rescue 115 from Shannon was also tasked and vessels that were in the area at the time also responded.

The lifeboat launched under Coxswain Richard Quigley, made its way to the scene, a journey that took an hour and 45 minutes. Conditions were dark with the early hours of morning. There was moderate to poor visibility, a force 5 southeasterly wind and a 2m swell.

Arriving on scene, the crew assessed the situation and observing the fire onboard, began to work with the trawler's crew to distinguish the fire. The fire was brought under control but as the vessel was disabled, the lifeboat was requested to standby until the arrival of a tug to carry out a tow. The Irish Navy vessel, the *LÉ James Joyce* arrived on scene at 1.45pm to relieve the lifeboat of its standing by duties. The lifeboat crew returned to Valentia at approximately 6pm.

Speaking following the call out, Valentia



The RNLI Teddy Bears from Achill Island RNLI recently visited Paddington Bear at his bench in Westport for a Teddy Bears Picnic and, of course, a Marmalade sandwich! The famous Browne Bear was introduced to his Aunt Lucy for the first time after accidentally falling into the water and becoming swept down river in Peru as a very young cub. Sitting above the Carrowbeg River in Westport, the RNLI Teddy Bears used the opportunity to give Paddington some important water safety advice. If you see someone in difficulty on or near the water, call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard, and remember to wear a serviced lifejacket or buoyancy aid while participating in water based activities.



RNLI Coxswain Richard Quigley said: "It was a busy couple of days for the crew who were tired but happy to have played their part in two successful rescues. We would like to commend the walkers who spotted the paddleboarder in difficulty on Tuesday and raised the alarm, that is always the right thing to do. And we would like to commend the fishermen for putting out a Mayday when they knew they were in immediate danger in the early hours of Wednesday morning. Our crew are highly trained and skilled, and they prepare regularly for scenarios such as these, but it is not often that two come in quick succession. The call out

to the fishing trawler required our volunteers to leave their beds and launch into the darkness of the night and spend almost 16 hours at sea and they deserve great credit for their selfless dedication.

"We would encourage anyone planning a trip to sea to go prepared ensuring they have lifejackets or a suitable flotation device for their activity and carry a suitable means of communication should they get into difficulty. If you get into trouble or see someone else in difficulty, call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard."

International Fishing and Maritime News

EU Spending €2m to Develop Non-Fish Salmon!

Salmon is a fish species, but the European Union is trying to discover a non-fish imitation version!



A project to find what has been described as “an acceptable non-fish version of salmon,” driven by a team of 40 people from 16 nationalities, including 11 scientists, was begun last August, with a prediction that it could be underway for two years.

The Austrian food-tech company, Revo and the biotech company Paleo, both founded in Belgium in 2020, are working on the project to develop an imitation salmon-style fillet using proteins derived from yeast. Paleo has previously focused on changing public taste for meat to plant-based foods.

The project has been given a €2.2m. boost by European Union funding. The money will be used to help fund the development of myoglobin for vegan salmon alternatives, using Paleo’s precision fermentation technology and Revo Foods 3D structuring capability. Myoglobin is a protein found in muscles that stores and transports oxygen and gives muscle its red colour.

The aim is to make the appearance of the vegan fillet more similar to conventional salmon, the taste more authentic and with improved nutritional value. Paleo produces myoglobin which is incorporated into the Revo Foods’ recipe. With 3D Structuring Technology, multiple materials can be integrated into each other, including fats into a protein component.

“The world is facing major environmental challenges. Our mission offers new food solutions based on sustainable technology,” says Revo.

Bluefin Havoc In Norway

Bluefin Tuna have been reported as seen in several parts of the Irish coast this year and there have been demands for Irish fishermen to be allowed catch them, though prevented at present by EU restrictions.



Large bluefin tuna are causing problems in Norway where they have broken into salmon cages causing serious disruption at a number of Norwegian fish farms during October and previous months. This problem is not on the same scale or the same severity as jellyfish attacks from which aquaculture has been suffering. But the tuna, also known in Norway as “mackerel sturgeon,” have done damage. Mowi and Sulefisk were amongst companies affected.

“Some of these fish are particularly large and powerful, often the size of a small shark. They can cause a lot of damage as they try to break into cages. The attacks appear to come mainly from the species known as eastern mackerel sturgeon which spawn in the Mediterranean,” according to reports.

There has been an increase in the number of tuna moving into Norwegian waters during the late summer and early autumn months, which seem to gather intensively hunting for food in coastal areas where farms are located.

Sea Warming Hits Mussels in Greece

Record sea temperatures increase this Summer hit aquaculture badly in Northern Greece, particularly mussel-growing. Farmers are seeking Government support as a result, because of what is being described as a 90% fall in the harvest and “a wipe out.”



Predictions for next year are not good because seed for the new season has also been damaged. Greece is classified by the Hellenic Aquaculture Producers’ Organisation as the third largest mussel producer in Europe after France and Spain. Production had been estimated as worth around €500m for 20,000 tonnes exported.

Faeroes Want to Stay Friendly with Russia

Faeroese fishermen want to keep friendly with Russia, their national association has made clear, seeking what it described as “a co-operative relationship to protect our fishermen rather than accepting the attitude of elites from the Continent.”



The Faeroes Fishermen’s Association was concerned that fishing rights in the Barents Sea and access to the Russian market would be lost. “The Western world collaborates with Russia, we should do the same,” stated the Chairman, Jan Hojgaard.

A new vessel has recently been added to the Faeroes fleet.

Noise Affects Farmed Salmon

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences has published results of a study focused on how farmed fish behave when under stress.

It suggests that noise can be harmful to farmed salmon. It says that farmed fish can hear people walking on the edge of a cage, as well as pumps and boats nearby. “Low-frequency sound is particularly stressful for fish since it is an important factor in predator-prey interactions,” the study says.

Alaskan Pollock Improvement?

There are reports that the Alaska pollock fishery could improve. Fishery managers have been reviewing data for next season’s TAC.

“The fishery harvest possible under total allowable catches is receiving positive signs for the 2025 harvest,” according to latest reports. The data will inform next season’s catch levels.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has been reviewing a number of recommendations from a stock assessment and fishery evaluation carried out by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Norwegian Pessimism

By contrast, in Norway, there is concern that whitefish catches could be cut by 30 per cent next year, which would cause job losses in the country’s seafood sector.

“Catching and processing sectors are facing into another challenging year,” according to industry information.

Late in November there were statements from the Norwegian government and the EU about the long-running dispute over cod quotas and management of the protected fishing zone around the Svalbard Archipelago, suggesting that agreement had been reached. The EU has disagreed over the size of the Northeast Arctic Cod quota granted by Norway since the United Kingdom’s left the EU after Brexit.

It is understood that Norway will set quota for EU catches in the area, based on catch levels prior to Brexit.

Estonia Joins Europeche

The Estonian Long Distance Fisheries Association has become a member of the EU’s fishing representative group, Europeche.

ELDFA is headquartered in Tallinn and represents a range of fishing interests and firms which operate in international waters governed by the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) and the Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). It is one of Estonia’s largest fishing organisations, with member companies spanning multiple fisheries, including northern shrimp, Atlantic cod, and Greenland halibut.

“This strengthens our commitment to representing EU fishers’ interests across local and international waters, promoting sustainable and balanced fisheries management,” said a statement from Europeche which claims to represent 45,000 vessels and 80,000 fishers from 16 member organisations in 10 European nations.

Freezers For Falklands

Two new freezer trawlers designed to fish in Falkland Island’s waters for squid have been built in Spain.

The 85-metre, Stanley/Falkland Islands-registered Argós Berbés was built at the Nodosa shipyard at Marín for the Orion Fishing Company, a joint venture between Vigo fishing company, Armadora Pereira and the Argos Group in the Falklands. The Prion has been built for the Petrel Fishing Company. Both are expected to fish the early season next year off the Falklands.

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Canadian Crab Legal Battles

Crab Fishermen in Canada won around €2m from the country's processors in a battle over snow crab landed last year. Relations between processing and catching sectors in Canada are not great.

Canada's Fish, Food and Allied Workers' Union, representing crab fishermen, took legal action against processors over a contract breach where they were refused payment by the processors on a 20 per cent limit of crabs under 4 inches. Fishermen claimed they had a contract to land the smaller crab, as legally permitted. Processors did not want to accept them, claiming fishermen were "gaming the system".

In another legal action the Canadian Association of Seafood Producers started legal proceedings against the Union claiming losses when fishermen staged a strike over prices for crab.

South Korea Acts on Illegal Fisheries

South Korea has a new Distant Water Fisheries Development Act intended to control illegal fishing.

The country's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries announced that a revised version of the Act had been adopted by Government to "demonstrate strong commitment to sustainable fisheries and transparent seafood supplies."

Jellyfish Effects Are Long-Lasting

The scientific journal 'Aquaculture Environment Interactions' has published research indicating that the economic consequences of jellyfish attacks on fish farms can be long-lasting. Over the past year there has been an increase in jellyfish incidents causing fish kills and economic losses to aquaculture. Norway has been particularly affected.



An article in the journal states that damage done can continue after jellyfish are reported to have left an area: "Although precautions against jellyfish blooms are increasingly used, the effects of jellyfish tentacles, which can easily break off and float around, have not been taken into account. Stingers in jellyfish tentacles can injure and even kill fish in pens."

Experiments were carried out at the Icelandic University of Science and Technology's experimental station in Sandgerði, producing what is claimed to be the first scientific evidence showing how long

sting cells in jellyfish tentacles are active. The study assessed how long tentacles of a lion's mane jellyfish can continue to injure fish in pens after they are released from the jellyfish themselves and after a swarm of jellyfish have left an area.

In mid-November the Norwegian Food Safety Authority warned that the jellyfish menace, which killed more than three million salmon and trout in Norway last winter, has returned. The news hit salmon company share prices in Oslo. The most dangerous variety is the string jellyfish which travel in large groups, several metres long and then split up into small units, making it easier for them to get into farming cages. They usually make an appearance when winter approaches. Jellyfish attack with poison, leaving salmon and trout with burns on their skin.

There were also jellyfish attacks on Scottish salmon farms.

Previous Climate Wipe-Out Evidence Found in Italian Alps

A tropical lakeside ecosystem that predates dinosaurs has been discovered in the Italian Alps. It came through a woman who was hiking there and who discovered a fragment of the 280 million-year-old ecosystem, complete with footprints, plant fossils and even imprints of raindrops.

According to LiveScience website, Claudia Steffensen was walking behind her husband in the Valtellina Orobic Mountains Park in Lombardy in 2023 when she stepped on a rock that looked like a slab of cement: "I then noticed these strange circular designs with wavy lines. I took a closer look and realised they were footprints."

Scientists analysed the rock and found that the footprints belonged to a prehistoric reptile, raising questions about what other clues beyond Steffensen's were in the Alpine heights. A search of the area found evidence of an entire ecosystem dating back to the Permian Period (299 million to 252 million years ago) dominated by a fast-warming climate that culminated in an extinction event known as the "Great Dying," which wiped out 90% of Earth's species!

MSC Certification for Alaskan Salmon

Despite objections from Canadian environmental organisations, the Marine Stewardship Council has re-certified Alaska's salmon fisheries as of 'sustainable seafood standard.' The environmental organisations had complained that non-selective net fisheries in South-East Alaska were "negatively impacting salmon and steelhead populations along the Pacific coastline."

At the same time, fishermen have been experiencing a reduction in salmon prices due to market conditions. The Alaskan Department of Fish and Game said that the salmon harvest so far this year has been 101 million. This is a decrease of over 55 per cent from the 2023 harvest.

Promoting Shrimp in Ecuador

"What do you think of Shrimp? Would you eat it?"

These are questions people in Ecuador are being asked in pursuit of helping dietitians to better understand the health benefits of shrimp, "debunk myths about its consumption and highlight its various preparation methods," according to two national organisations, the Sustainable Shrimp Partnership and the National Chamber of Aquaculture, who have launched a new "Shrimp Nutritional Guide."

Peru became the world's largest producer and exporter of farmed shrimp in 2022, supplanting China and India. A small domestic market size contributed to the development of an export-oriented sector.

Salmon Return in UK

Atlantic salmon have returned to spawning grounds in the upper river waters of the Derwent in Derbyshire, UK, for the first time in 100 years.

According to the National History Museum website, industrialisation and intensive river management drove the fish out. Routes that the salmon historically used to return to the river were blocked by dams and weirs. When these were removed, the river became healthier and so, the fish have returned.

Largest Piece of Coral

Filmmakers and researchers have claimed to finding the world's largest individual coral colony in the Solomon Islands, an island chain in the South Pacific.

A species known as Pavona clavus, it is 34 metres wide and 32 long and looks like a lumpy brown mound, with bits of yellow, green, and purple. "Given its size and the slow speed at which corals grow, it is likely several centuries old," according to the research team.

Huge Seabed Find of EV Materials Off Japanese Coast

The Nippon Foundation and the University of Tokyo found an area of manganese nodules on the seabed near Minami-Tori-shima Island, about 1,200 miles south-east of Tokyo.



Located 5,700 metres below sea level, they are reported to be rich in cobalt and nickel which are two essential components in the production of electric vehicle (EV) batteries. The discovery has been valued at 26 billion US dollars. The financial gains are considerable, but significant environmental concerns have been raised because of the effects of deep-sea mining on marine ecosystems.

Oyster Reefs Decline

In the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries there were 1,196 oyster reefs in European waters, according to historical records. A UK scientific study examined journals and charts, customs documents and newspapers and located these reefs in Ireland, the UK, France, Denmark Spain, Germany and Holland. They were surprised by that number of reefs.

"Oysters still exist in these waters, but they are scattered," the scientists concluded. "The reefs are gone and they had created a habitat for almost 200 fish and crustacean species. They also played a vital role in stabilising shorelines."

The researchers, whose report is titled 'The World was Our Oyster,' say that "restoration projects need to be scaled up." It is available online.



Gennesaret at Kilkeel. Photo: Leslie Campbell

Cetacean Sightings Strandings 2024

Report by Pádraig Whooley and Stephanie Levesque

At the time of writing, we can probably draw a line under the 2024 whale season. In the last week alone, we've seen flooding, snow and just for good measure Storm Bert and its enormous Atlantic swells.

So the season has a feeling of "closure" about it, especially for those involved in the boat-based side of marine tourism, as most operators have either taken their boats out of the water or brought them upriver and out of harm's way from the string of winter storms that are likely to visit us over the coming months. So what sort of a season did we have relative to previous years?

Biggest-Ever Seasonal Sightings

Well, during the eight-month season April 1 to November 30, IWDG validated 2,225 sighting records, 332 of which are derived from 252 land-based watches, the remainder opportunistic sightings. These sightings

comprised one of our biggest ever-season tallies with no fewer than 11 species of cetacea, as well as basking sharks and the leatherback turtle, taking the list to 13. The most frequently recorded rank as follows: bottlenose dolphin (n=432), common dolphin (348), basking shark (334), harbour porpoise (360), minke whale (306), humpback whale (114), fin whale (67), Risso's dolphin (26), killer whale/Orca (8), pilot whale (2), with a single record each for sperm whale, Northern right whale and leatherback turtle.

Donegal Most Notable

Without question the most noteworthy record was our first validated northern right whale, with photographic evidence, from Donegal Bay, certainly since the IWDG has existed and probably much longer. Other stand-out records include two deep-diving species, sperm and pilot whales, both of whom were recorded during an IWDG/NPWS offshore whale survey to Mayo's Continental Shelf from the Erris Peninsula in September. See photo. Although both these species are considered fairly abundant in offshore waters, due to their near absence in coastal waters, IWDG receive very few records of either.

Mayo Killer Whales

Staying in Mayo, there has been an interesting flurry of killer whale sightings since April, with Mayo producing 50% of the records of the ocean's top predator. Noteworthy is the fact that none of these sightings comprise John Coe or Aquarius of the Scottish West Coast Community Group who regularly visit Irish waters. It seems likely they are of the same group which ranges from between 4-6 individuals. So far nothing is known of their provenance, but in time better images will surely tell us more.

West Cork Sidelined – Kerry and Donegal For Humpbacks

In terms of baleen whales, yet again it looks like West Cork has been largely sidelined by all three of our rorquals, in increasingly sprat-less waters. Despite a quiet start to the season. Kerry has enjoyed the most consistent humpback activity between the Skelligs and Smerwick Harbour. But it was all eyes on the North/West as yet again by October, Donegal Bay was attracting numbers of humpbacks, many of whom were animals previously documented in the Irish southwest.

To give this summary a little more geographic balance, one East Coast record of c.150 common dolphins on the Lambay Deep off Co. Dublin on September 18 serves to remind us that interesting cetacean activity can occur in any Irish coastal waters and indeed at any time of year. There is a sense that these pelagic dolphins, like their larger rorqual relatives are on the move north.

Whales Want To Fill Their Stomachs

Just because the boats are tied up, shouldn't prevent you from trying a little land-based whale watching over the winter months, especially if you live along the Copper Coast area, where Waterford's vantage points can provide great viewing of the planet's second largest whale, the mighty fin whale. For as many years as we can recall and presumably many before that, these Leviathans tracked east towards the traditional herring spawning ground towards the mouth of Waterford Harbour. As long as there are still nutritious Celtic Sea herring and sprat full of roe looking to spawn, the fin

whales will never be too far away. But the madness we've seen in Cork out west to Bantry and Dingle Bay this autumn is incompatible with a healthy and thriving marine ecosystem; so don't take large whales for granted, as their only loyalty is to their stomachs. By removing industrial quantities of forage fish for processing into meal, that will almost all be eaten by farmed fish, while wild fish species, seabirds and marine mammals go hungry, is at best poor practice, even if no laws are being broken.

Strandings

The IWDG Stranding Scheme validated a total of 142 records of stranded cetaceans and basking sharks on the island of Ireland up till the end of September. This represents a 23% decrease compared to last year (n=185). These figures include 11 species: basking shark (n=9), bottlenose dolphin (n=2), common dolphin (n=51), striped dolphin (n=3), Risso's dolphin (n=7), harbour porpoise (n=30), long finned pilot whale (n=8), minke whale (n=5), humpback whale (n=1), sperm whale (n=1), and True's beaked whale (n=1).

During this period, there were a total of 17 known live-stranding events reported. Ten of these events involved common dolphins, one striped dolphin, two Risso's dolphins and four unknown species - this is down from 29 events during this timeframe last year.

The number of common dolphin strandings has been on the rise since 2011, as well as harbour porpoises. Harbour porpoise records have risen from an average of 28.6 per year between 2000 and 2010, to an average of 44.4 per year between 2011 and 2022. The year 2023 was a peak year for harbour porpoise strandings, with 70 animals recorded primarily along the east and southeast coasts. Thankfully, stranding records for this species have dropped from 40 this time last year, to 30.

The year 2024 has already become a peak year for basking shark strandings (n=9). The previous peak was only four animals back in 2022. However, this is not too surprising, due to the significant increase of inshore basking shark sightings this year. This has also been a peak year for Risso's dolphins, which have matched the previous peak of seven animals back in 2003.

Please report all whale, dolphin and porpoise strandings to IWDG, alive or dead. IWDG, with support from the NPWS and the National Biodiversity Data Centre, maintain the official database of stranded cetaceans and sea turtles in Ireland. This is one of the longest-running stranding schemes in Europe which allows us to monitor and highlight any unusual events or trends among species.



Sperm whale on the Mayo shelf edge.
Photo by Siún ní Cheallaigh

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Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography

Michael Martin Sullivan RIP

Castletownbere RNLI Lifeboat station have extended their sympathy to the family of Michael Martin-Sullivan, one of the station's original crew to join when the station was established in 1997. Michael passed away on November 15th.

A spokesperson from the lifeboat station commented, "it was with great sadness that we learned of the unexpected passing of our former crewman and friend, Michael Martin-Sullivan. He was one of the original crew to join when the lifeboat was established in 1997 and gave 24 years of committed and invaluable service to the station. He served as crew for four years, second coxswain for ten years and deputy launching authority for ten years. A fisherman, he generously brought a wealth of experience, seamanship and skills to all the roles he filled. Michael served on 101 call-outs, and, during his time at the station, 36 lives were saved. He received a letter of commendation from the RNLI Chairperson for his role as coxswain during the long and arduous rescue of the sailing ship Saint Gothard in February 2007."

Michael was one of five crew who collected the new Severn-class lifeboat, Annette Hutton, at RNLI headquarters in Poole in 2004. During that visit, the Castletownbere lifeboat brought the late Queen Elizabeth II for a short trip around Poole Harbour, where Michael spoke to the Queen on the challenges facing fishermen.

Michael served as launching authority from 2011 to 2021, and it was his swift action in launching the lifeboat, with just five crew, for the dramatic rescue of the Clodagh-O in mountainous seas in October 2018. For his decisive decision-making, which was key in saving six lives, he received a framed letter of thanks from the chairman of the RNLI and crewmembers were awarded bronze

medals for the rescue.

Following his retirement, Michael was still a regular visitor to the station. The crew commented, "we will fondly remember his significant commitment to our lifeboat, his modesty about his achievements, his interesting chat and good humour, and of course, his superb culinary expertise in producing his legendary enormous paella dish to feed all in attendance at lifeboat barbeques."

The lifeboat extended their sincere sympathies to Michael's family. His wife Mary, his daughters Aisling and Rachel, his sons Micheál and Killian (both former lifeboat crew), the extended Martin-Sullivan and Holland families and all his friends and neighbours.

Thomas Archer RIP

Recently, founder members of Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-Op, in conjunction with the Co-Op manager erected a headstone on the grave of Thomas Archer, formerly of Finchley, London and who was an experienced fish merchant.

Mr Archer was appointed by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) to travel to Castletownbere and demonstrate his knowledge and skills of salting summer herring, a fishery that was just developing. He arrived on July 1st 1967 and spent two seasons advising and becoming friends with the Castletownbere fishermen and merchants. He died in 1969 while residing in Castletownbere and he is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Castletownbere. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

Christmas in Castletownbere

Castletownbere Development Association are organising a number of events in the town in the run up to Christmas. On Saturday December 7th, the Christmas lights will be switched on in

Castletownbere at 7.30pm with mulled wine, hot chocolate, and mince pies. The Castletownbere Newsletter will also be on sale on the night.

Sunday December 8th a Christmas market will be held at Castletownbere National School from 11.00am to 2.00pm. Later that afternoon, Santa will be in the grounds of St Peter's Church for drive-through visits. Booking is essential by texting the child's name, age, gender and car reg to 083 1154115. The cost is €10 per child which includes a gift. Santa will hold a quiet, sensory friendly session from 4.00pm to 4.30pm. On Thursday December 26th the annual St Stephen's challenge will take place.

Book launch

Michael Hall will launch his new book The Untold Story of the O'Sullivan Beare on Saturday December 7th at 5.00pm at the Sarah Walker Gallery, Castletownbere.

The book, which is published by the Beara Historical Society will be launched by the author and documentary maker Christy Kenneally, all are welcome to attend.

Tidy Towns Results

The Beara Peninsula had reason to celebrate following the recent announcement of winners of the 2024 Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition which saw Eyeries win a silver medal and Bere Island winning the national island award.

Castletownbere also fared well, Castletownbere scoring 350 points, up 10 from 2023. Their Tidy Towns group were praised for the streetscape "very well presented with many vibrant eye catching buildings and shopfronts." The group also received praise for the flower baskets throughout the town.



Storm Bert has passed and the fleets prepare to head back out to the fishing grounds. Photo: Anne Marie Cronin Photography

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Comparing history and modernity

The Mission to Seafarers which is a charity with mission stations in many ports around the world, supporting merchant ship's crews, has a base in Dublin at Alexandra Road in the port complex.



The Mission has published on its website a size comparison between the Titanic and modern cruise ships. Quite amazing to see, when compared with the passenger and crew number of 2,240 aboard Titanic and double and almost treble on the biggest of modern cruise ships.

Remembering Dockers

Ports have changed considerably, with modern technology and machinery increasingly replacing traditional dock labour. But dockers remain part of the maritime history of Ireland, with their particular culture which has been remembered by Cork Dockers in a poem on their group Facebook Page, composed by Jim Cotter

They toiled where sea and city met

Hands rough, backs bent, skin slick with sweat

Voices called through mist and clatter

Among the crates, ropes and salty chatter

They left their mark, a fleeting trace

The tides would rise, the ships would go,

But dockers stayed, strong and slow

Now silence hums where hammers rang

Where stories swapped and echoes sang

But deep in Cork their spirits bide

Stalwart souls by the River Lee's side.

Ireland's Maritime History & Culture

The only cannon of its kind

Barry Hayes is a sail designer and sailmaker who, for over 30 years, sailed all over the globe. He has worked in sail lofts in America and Hong Kong and has raced yachts from small ones to big Maxis all over the world.

He now has what is, he believes, the only signal cannon of its kind in Ireland.



Barry has spent two years and "a six figure sum" on doing something that is not allowed in Ireland, but which is a contribution to maritime culture – building a cannon.

They were much in use in the time of sailing ships and at historic naval battles at sea.

With so much interest in and knowledge of the sea, he thought about building one, which is a rather unusual project, but found that: "You are not allowed to build a cannon in this country. You can't build cannons, so I decided to get around that by building a signal cannon, which is slightly different."

That became his two-year project.

"To do it I had to cast the cannon, I had to come up with the size and the area of the cannon to be cast. That took a bit of research. I went around to museums and I checked different cannons and cannon sizes, what they looked like, how big they were and made a plan from there, basically working out the weight of the cannon that I would build and the size. After the first casting was made, in Athy, the size and the weight was pretty ok, but the Navy were a little worried about the structure and integrity of the cannon. So we recast it a bit heavier, with a bit more weight in it and the alignment of the barrel was also changed."

The Naval involvement came because his intention is to donate the cannon to the Naval Service for use as a signal cannon.

"I'm donating it to the Navy because they don't really have a signal cannon that they can move around, aboardship, as needed and it will be a resource. I got advice and they were really helpful with the project. The cannon was cast in Athy by a bell-maker, a guy who does a lot of castings. The flow of how a cannon is cast is very critical to its use. It has to be cast in a certain way. There can't be any glitches or anomalies. The completed cannon is a complete brass casting."

It had to be registered with the Garda Síochána and as a civilian, to fire it, he had obtain a licence. It fires blank rounds.



(Above): Barry Hayes working on the signal cannon.

(Below): Naval Officer Lt. Cdr. Brian Mathews test fires the signal cannon at the naval base opposite Cobh.



"It took me about a year to get that permission to get a licence to fire the signal cannon into which there are built a number of safety features, all of which were checked by the Navy. They will use it for events such as in sailing the inter-Service Beaufort Cup at Cork Week and the Cork Harbour Naval Race which is a popular annual event in Cork. They were very helpful and interested and it is my intention that they will have it."

How much did the project actually cost?

"A lot, you would be talking six figures."

So what satisfaction does he get from the two-year project?

"There's not many people in Ireland who have a working signal cannon that they can fire. I have a licence to fire it myself. I got a wooden carriage built in Cork by Tadgh Lynch which was also a bit of a complex job because it had to be built to take the recoil load of the cannon and firing. The angle of the carriage and how the wheels work on

it are very critical."

The cannon's muzzle is 75mm. It weighs 36kg, the barrel is 0.8 metres long and 0.1m wide.

"It is the only one of its kind, a firing signal cannon, that I know of in this country," said Barry.

He and his wife, Claire Morgan, have also made a major change in the Cork Harbourside village of Crosshaven, a fishing port for many years and a dominant Irish sailing centre. They took over the long-established McWilliams Sailmakers business where Barry had previously worked and opened a new loft at Carrigaline, a few kilometres away and the first sailing shop in the village of Crosshaven itself.

Intriguingly, Barry Hayes did not start his working life as a sailmaker - he was making chocolate when Des McWilliam convinced him to switch careers!

Now he has also made a cannon!

Explorers Education Programme launches first-ever Seashore Workshop in Irish at Marino Institute of Education

The Marine Institute's Explorers Education Programme delivered its first-ever "Explorers Seashore Studies" workshop as Gaeilge at Marino Institute of Education (MIE), Dublin. Delivered as part of the Explorers pre-service training programme, the marine science workshops engaged over thirty student teachers completing their 4th Year science module at MIE. The immersive marine science learning experience conducted entirely in Irish included both classroom learning and a practical field trip to Bull Island's seashore.



Ms Sarah Murray, Assistant Lecturer in Gaeilge and Social Environmental and Scientific Education at MIE, praised the Explorers Programme for its practical approach, and highlighted "the resources being provided as Gaeilge are invaluable for both teachers and children in the classroom and on the shore." Ms Murray added: "teachers play a crucial role in providing children with the opportunity to develop their competencies and skills, particularly as part of the new Primary School Curriculum Framework (2023). Ireland's rich marine heritage, marine life, and biodiversity are ideal themes for primary schools to use in shaping their educational experience."

During the workshop, the Explorers team integrated key competencies including communication and language, enriching students' understanding of marine science through Irish. "The workshop introduced the specific terminology used on the seashore, explaining habitats, the marine environment, and the names of species as Gaeilge. It also demonstrated ways for student teachers to help children communicate their understanding of these concepts, making the workshop both practical and impactful for future classrooms," Ms Murray added.

The Explorers workshops use thematic learning to inspire student teachers, equipping them with applied lesson plans and ideas to encourage engagement with marine topics. The workshops promote active learning through hands-on activities on the shore, as well as fostering environmental citizenship by discussing our roles in marine conservation.

Ms Tara Noonan, Explorers Outreach Officer, and Dr Nóirín Burke, Explorers Outreach Team Manager, have been collaborating with the Marino Institute of Education and working with MIE lecturers Karin Bacon and Sandra Austin to deliver the "Wild About Wildlife on the Seashore" workshop for several years. "By introducing marine themes, in English and as Gaeilge, early in the student teachers training, we are helping to mainstream ocean literacy into classroom content and across the curriculum throughout their teaching careers," said Ms Noonan.

The team have worked with the student teachers using cross-curricular content and providing an inquiry-based approach in the workshop this year. "This approach is important in creating positive attitudes and enhancing our values towards environmental care and protecting and using our marine resources sustainably. Learning more about our local shores helps inspire and motivate us all to take an active role in environmental conservation" Ms Noonan further explained.

The Explorers Education "Wild about Wildlife Seashore" resources are freely available to download from www.explorers.ie. Materials include species information sheets, presentations, films, posters, workbooks, and art templates, designed to enhance classroom learning and engagement with marine topics.

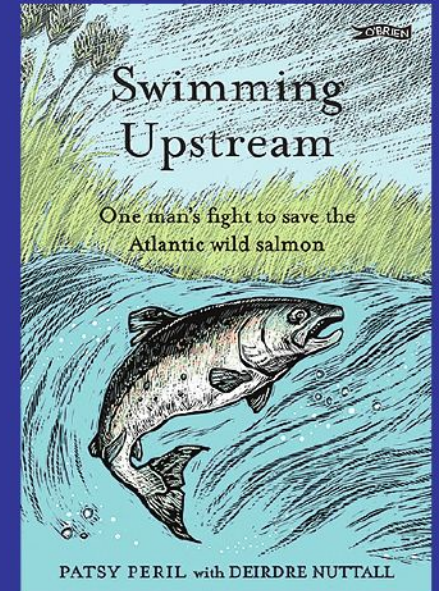
The Explorers Education Programme is funded by the Marine Institute, Ireland's State agency for marine research and development, and managed by Camden Education and Galway Atlantiquaria.

Swimming Upstream

One man's fight to save the Atlantic wild salmon

By Patsy Peril and Deirdre Nuttall

'Unlike me, the Atlantic wild salmon does not have a voice, so it cannot tell the story of why and how it has been driven to the point of extinction.'



Once, the River Shannon was teeming with wild salmon swimming upstream. But when the enormous hydro-electric station at Ard-nacrusha was built in 1929, what began as the Free State's crowning achievement would have a devastating impact on the environment.

In this evocative and thought-provoking memoir, Patsy Peril recalls a life deeply entwined with Irish wildlife and embedded in the history of modern Ireland. From a childhood spent on the water to a national conservation campaign, Patsy has a lifetime of knowledge to share about the wild Atlantic salmon – and a plan to save it.

Patsy Peril grew up in the fishing community of Coonagh, on the outskirts of Limerick City. Involved in inland fisheries all his life, he is also an experienced light aircraft pilot. He has been deeply concerned with environmental matters since childhood, in particular concerning the health and future of Irish rivers. For decades, he has been involved in organisations involved with the oversight, protection, reclamation and sustainability of our natural environment, as well as both local and national salmon net fishers' associations. Patsy continues his activism, striving for a time when our natural waterways are respected and cared for, and for a healthy and sustainable balance between the uses of our environment and its wellbeing. A frequent contributor to meetings, conferences and congresses, Patsy is now ready to bring his crucial message to a general readership.

Deirdre Nuttall has over twenty years' experience of interview-led collaborative writing projects in the areas of memoir, biography, academic writing and popular non-fiction. Deirdre holds a PhD in ethnology and a master's degree in Social Anthropology, with expertise in narrative, oral history and the ethnology of symbolic thought and practice.

Swimming Upstream is published by The O'Brien Press and is available in all good bookshops or online at obrien.ie

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