

# MARINE TIMES

IRELAND'S LEADING MARITIME NEWSPAPER - MARCH 2020 - PRICE €3.00



Carmona punching her way through the waves - Photo by John Roberts



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## The State Needs to Wake Up to the Potential of Irish Fishing

The Chief Executive of one of the country's leading fish processing companies has urged the Government to "wake up" and realise the potential of the Irish fishing and seafood industry.

In an interview with the MARINE TIMES Denis Good, Founder and Chairman of the Good Fish Company, says that "the CFP is dead following Brexit" and that this "provides an opportunity to correct the mistake made when Irish fishing rights were given away."

He also refers to the lack of inspection and monitoring of "thousands of lorries leaving Ireland every year for the Continent" with fish caught in Irish waters that bring no benefit to Ireland or the country's economy.

Mr. Good says that the State must fight harder in Europe to get better quotas for Irish fishermen.

This follows a similar point made by the Chief Executive of the Castletownbere

Fishermen's Co-op, John Nolan, in last month's MARINE TIMES interview, who said that he found it hard to accept the failure of the Irish government to fight hard for Ireland in European negotiations.

There has been a strong, supportive response to Mr. Nolan's interview.

Denis Good has urged the State "especially the Department of the Marine, through BIM and the SFPA – and the SFPA needs to stand up a bit more in this -- to realise the potential there is in the fishing industry. The worry I have is that, if the State continues the policy of not fighting strongly on behalf of the Irish industry in Europe, then it will go backwards."

Read the interview with  
Denis Good on Page 16

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## the fine Art of Marine Finance

by Art Kavanagh

### Maybe It's Time to Reset the Compass??

Since our last edition we have had an Election which may or may not give us a 'New Minister' who I suspect will approach the job with a mistaken confidence that he can make things better. They all do but when we look back at our last 4 or 5 Ministers can we say that things have improved? All the new Ministers thought they were in Charge - God help them!

We have more restrictive rules governing the Industry. We certainly have more regulation and "Policing".

Despite everything - the industry keeps its head up without any real financial or moral support from the Government despite not having marched on Kildare Street, blocked the city or prevented tax paying workers from going to work.

Are we missing something here lads?

I have previously suggested that all of those TDs new and old claiming to represent coastal and fishing communities should at least form an 'Informal

Grouping' to at least examine the operational difficulties being experienced by the industry with a view to making some suggestions as to how things might be improved.

I am not suggesting that all regulation should be abandoned or that we should promote the equivalent of abandoning the Drink Driving Laws - but we are looking at an industry which in recent years has been self propagating and which does positively contribute to the State Coffers without constant financial support or subsidy. Lads - if this was a private industry being managed in the way the fishing sector is

someone would have been fired!!!

It is the only industry in the country effectively being managed by the State who have very little stake in it apart from ruling the roost.

The 'Tail Wagging the Dog' might be a suitable anecdote.

Oh how we wish that just once a Statutory Instrument from the Department would be greeted with a "hurrah" rather than the dismay which accompanies most pronouncements.

I really believe that it might be easier to be a Drug Dealer than a Fisherman in Ireland. Certainly there would be less attention by the State on you!!!

**I don't fully understand the Certification requirements for fishermen but I hear that some certification is now being requested which is directed more at Seafarers (Commercial Seafarers) than at Fishermen.**

That is fine if other rules applicable to seafarers can apply to fishermen - like the Seafarers Tax Allowance.

A "Seafarer" based on spending 161 days at sea has a Tax Allowance of €6350 against his or her income for Seafaring. A Fisherman spending 161 days at sea qualifies for €1270. Maybe we should all claim to be Seafarers???

Check with your accountants when having your Tax Returns done this year to make sure you are missing nothing. Your wages are hard earned hold on to as much of them as you can.

**I have been watching with interest the excellent BBC Documentary about the Cornish Fishing Industry which culminated on 18th February.**

So much in common with us lads up to and including the disadvantages we bring upon ourselves due to lack of unity. From that documentary we were reminded on the ancillary industries which feed off the fishing industry:- We have Netmakers, Ship Builders, Fuel Suppliers, Transport Companies and Processing Workers and Factories, and of course Fisheries Officers.

A huge overall pool but nobody mentioned that there is only one group of people

risking their asses to collect the Raw Material for all of these Ancillary Industries .... **the brave men who go to sea!**

As we sit behind our various warm and safe desks let's remember that - especially those of us who are sitting waiting to challenge the Skippers as they arrive back from up to 21 days at sea. Before you go to the piers maybe you should have a look in the mirror and think about what you are about to do !!!!! in the knowledge that your salary will be safely lodged in your account one way or another.

One group of us occupying desks are in the Banks who are making life very difficult and I have come across a couple of instances in the past few months which have been terrifying in the lack of knowledge and understanding of our industry which they displayed.

I am forced to believe that they maybe should not be claiming any interest in doing business with the sector on any realistic basis..... **I don't want to go into that because it annoys me too much.**

I believe that the Brexit situation will be OK- if not at least because of the combined efforts of the European Fleet but from the Cornish Programme I can see the opportunity they believe would arise by exiting the CFP.

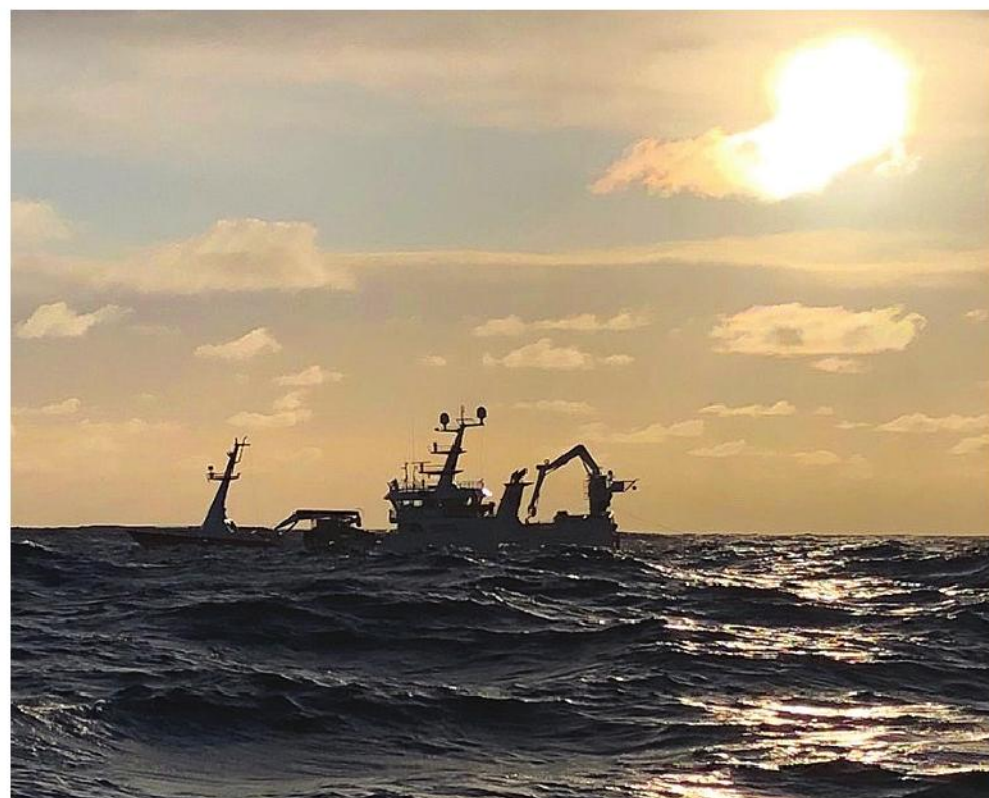
If the Fishing Rights are pooled within the overall Trade Deal we will be fine.

We need an overall review or examination of the industry like the Cawley Report in 2006 which was titled "Charting a New Course."

I think implementation of the many excellent suggestions in that Report may not have been fully completed and I suggest that we need to establish why?

"Charting a New Course" was an excellent title and maybe we should set the Compass again and have another look at doing whatever is necessary to exploit the advantages we have and to best use all of the improvements which have been made in the past 14 years in the catching and processing sectors.

Stay safe everyone and we might meet up in Limerick. I will not have a stand but will be there



Western Chieftain towing for Scad. Photo by Tommy Dirrane

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Ocean Venture II and Fiona K III fishing west of the Skelligs - Photo by Alan O'Shea

## National Fisheries College of Ireland Schedule March 2020



### Skipper Full

- 14 April-17 June, NFC Castletownbere
- 14 April-12 June, NFC Greencastle

### Navigation Control Courses (Fishing)

- 22 June-03 July, NFC Castletownbere
- 22 June-03 July, NFC Greencastle

### Marine Engineering Processes (3 weeks)

- 11-29 May, NFC Castletownbere

### Enhanced Safety Training (Under 15m)

- 03 March, NFC Greencastle
- 18 March, NFC Castletownbere
- 08 April, NFC Castletownbere
- 05 May, NFC Greencastle

### Basic Safety Training

- 03-05 March, CTU1, contact 087-683 7134, Inismor
- 09-11 March, NFC Greencastle
- 10-12 March, NFC Castletownbere
- 10-12 March, CTU1, contact 087-683 7134, Galway
- 24-26 March CTU1, contact 087-683 7134, Kilrush

- 14-16 April, NFC Castletownbere
- 20-22 April, NFC Greencastle
- 12-14 May, NFC Castletownbere
- 18-20 May, NFC Greencastle
- 09-11 June, NFC Castletownbere
- 29 June-01 July, NFC Greencastle
- 07-09 July, NFC Castletownbere
- 13-15 July, NFC Greencastle

### Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting (3-day)

- 01-03 April, NFC Castletownbere
- 06-08 April, NFC Greencastle
- 02-04 June, NFC Castletownbere

### Advanced Fire Fighting (5-day)

- 18-22 May, NFC Castletownbere
- 06-10 July, NFC Greencastle

### Medical First Aid Aboard Ship

- 01-03 April, NFC Greencastle
- 06-08 April, NFC Castletownbere

### GMDSS General Operators Certificate

- 09-24 April, NFC Castletownbere
- 14-28 April, NFC Greencastle

### GMDSS Short Range Radio Proficiency (Modules 1 & 2)

- 04-06 March, NFC Greencastle
- 30 March-02 April, CTU1, Killybegs Co. Donegal, contact 087 6837134
- 06-08 April, CTU1, Kilrush Co. Clare, contact 087 6837134
- 16-18 June, NFC Greencastle

### QQI Level 6 Commercial Scuba Diver

- 24 February-20 March, (pre-week medical course 17-21 February), NFC Castletownbere

### Surface Supplied Diver (3 weeks)

- 30 March-24 April, NFC Castletownbere

### Passenger Boat Proficiency

- 20-24 April, NFC Castletownbere
- 22-26 June, NFC Castletownbere

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To confirm the mobile training schedule on the west coast please contact 087 6837134 and on the east coast call 087 2334620. Funding for the course fee may be available through BIM's Seafood Training Scheme.



# Prawn Case Seems Set for European Court

The Supreme Court heard further legal submissions in February about the ongoing Porcupine Bank Dublin Bay Prawn fishery case. These concerned aspects and information sought by the Court Judges in relation to making a decision about whether the case will be referred to the European Court of Justice.

As this issue of the MARINE TIMES went to print it was understood that further submissions were being prepared to be made by both sides in the case in response to requests by the Supreme Court.

This paper was told by a fishing industry source close to the case that no definite decision had been made.

"There is nothing definite and nothing can be taken for granted, but it is likely that the case will be referred to the European Court."

The Supreme Court had previously allowed an appeal against a High Court decision in favour of the Authority over its introduction of "time spent" methodology to assess catches made in the area when fishing, rejecting logbook returns.

The dispute at the Porcupine Bank Dublin Bay Prawn fishery dates back to 2017 when the SFPA told the Minister for the Marine that they could no longer rely on Log Books to certify catches. The Authority maintained that considerably more catches

had been made than recorded. With resultant closure of the area, prawn boat losses were claimed to be up to €6m.

Fishermen Pat Fitzpatrick and Michael Flannery were agreed applicants in the High Court case after fish producer organisations decided that legal action would have to be taken to determine the matter.

When the High Court held with the SFPA and its advice to the Minister, the fishing industry response was to seek a "leapfrog" from the judgement to a Supreme Court hearing of the issues.

This opened up the issue again.

The case raises several legal issues.

The appeal to the Supreme Court was lodged on behalf of the two Irish fishermen who lost the case they had taken against the Minister for Agriculture Food and Marine and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) in the High Court. This involved the description of the SFPA changes as a new, obscure system used by the SFPA to determine how much prawns any particular vessel had caught in a specific location. The fishermen challenged the methodology used by the SFPA to assess the catches of prawns from the Porcupine Bank, but lost their case. In that High Court case, the fishermen were accused of under-reporting, in their electronic fishing logs, the amount of prawns actually caught in Functional Unit Area 16. The SFPA said that this was

a serious problem. After receiving advice from the SFPA that, according to their new method of calculation, that section of the Porcupine Bank was being over-fished, Minister Michael Creed issued a closure order in November 2017 to Area 16. Fishermen maintained that this resulted in the loss of some six hundred tonnes of catch to Irish fishing vessels, estimated to be worth in excess of €6 million Euros. The High Court found in favour of the State.

Subsequent to the loss of the case in the High Court the fishing industry's claim was that the SFPA and the Minister failed to point out where in law and in particular under the control regulation they were allowed to do what was described as 'make up the data and alter fishermen's log books.'

The Supreme Court accepted the fishing industry's appeal from the High Court decisions as a matter of public importance and sought further submissions in relation to whether to make a referral to the European Court of Justice.

The case was raised again at the Supreme Court last month when further submissions were made by both sides. These will be considered further, it is understood and other points that were also mentioned are to be addressed.

There is no final decision on a referral to Europe, but indications are that a referral appears the most likely outcome.



A picture of the crew of the Girl Stephanie taken during a trip fishing blue whiting on the Porcupine Banks featuring Mike Dillane, Tomas Conneely, Conal "Carrots" McBrearty, Martin "Elvis" Murrin, John Paul Flaherty. Photo by Thomas Dirrane.

## Help for Scotland's Exporters of Live Brown Crab

In stark contrast to the apathy shown by the Irish government, a support package for Scotland's crab export market has been unveiled after the sector lost its market access the Chinese markets.

The Chinese Government increased control measures for the import of live brown crab due to on-going concerns about the levels of cadmium, a widely occurring heavy metal which is found in many everyday foodstuffs.

Chinese standards and testing regime differ from the EU regulations. EU regulations only cover 'white meat' which is the main edible element for consumers – however the law in China covers all edible parts including brown meat which contains higher levels of cadmium. In common with other crustacean species, brown crab undergoes a process of moulting - they cast their outer shell to allow an increase in body size followed by the hardening of a new shell. Many chemicals such as calcium, magnesium and silicates, the essential components of shell building, occur naturally in all seawater, as does cadmium which crustaceans do not require. The superfluous cadmium is "stored" in an inert chemical format by the hepato-pancreas, the so called "brown meat" found in the crab back.

The UK accounts for 90% of live brown crab imports to China and 50% of these are from Scotland – totalling £16 million a year.


In a statement, fisheries secretary Fergus Ewing said, "With the Chinese Government increasing its control measures around the import of live brown crab, the sector is reaching a critical situation. We are working


closely with the UK Government to find a resolution with the Chinese Government, but it is a complex situation that is taking time to resolve. Following consultation with key stakeholders and our enterprise agencies, I am unveiling a package of measures to support this vital coastal industry to seek alternative markets. This includes providing funding for businesses to attend key international trade shows, access to a bespoke 'showcasing Scotland' space at these shows, and the facilitation of meet the buyer events, including supporting an inward mission to Scotland for international buyers. The aim is to create more export opportunities to more countries.

"Many of the affected businesses diversified into the Chinese market due to the uncertainties around Brexit and future access to the EU market. It is only right therefore that we seek to support them through this very challenging time, as we continue to work to find a resolution."

Irish crab exporters are also suffering the same fate as their Scottish neighbours and are unable to gain access to the Chinese markets. Ireland's exports of brown crab to China have grown exponentially in recent years and were worth almost €16.5 million in 2018. An estimated 700+ vessels are involved in catching brown crab all around the Irish coast.

To date, no support package has been announced to assist Irish crab exporters.


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# Tuna CHART 2020 - Bluefin Tuna Scientific Catch-Tag-and-Release Angling Fishery 2020

## Successful data collection in 2020 fishery will underpin potential for future years

Atlantic bluefin tuna, the largest tuna in the world, frequent Irish coastal waters to feed during its annual migration through North Atlantic waters. The bluefin tuna is prized by sea anglers for its power and fighting ability and is a very valuable commercial species.

Building on the success of the Tuna CHART (Catch And Release Tagging) pilot programme of 2019, a bluefin tuna scientific catch and release fishery for Ireland will operate in 2020. Depending on the successful operation and review of this year's fishery, it is intended that a scientific catch and release fishery may also operate in 2021 and 2022.

In 2020 a maximum of 25 authorisations may be granted to qualifying angling charter vessel skippers around the Irish coast. This scientific catch and release fishery will open on the 1<sup>st</sup> July and close on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, without exception.

The Tuna CHART programme is a collaborative scientific programme between Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Marine Institute in partnership with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the

Marine (DAFM) and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE).

In 2019, the Tuna CHART pilot programme authorised 15 charter skippers to operate a scientific fishery, in which anglers participated fully, to catch, tag and release bluefin tuna. These professional skippers were trained to tag, measure and record bluefin data and over the course of the 2019 three month season, 219 bluefin tuna were caught, tagged and released. As many as eight bluefin were tagged on one fishing trip. All tuna were carefully handled subject to strict guidelines set by the Tuna CHART programme and all were released alive. Data from the tagging programme are being collated by the partnership for reporting to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT).

A call for applications for the 2020 fishing season was announced on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and the last date for the receipt of a completed application will be 13:00 on the 6<sup>th</sup> March. Applications can be made at [www.fisheriesireland.ie/bluefin](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/bluefin)

The core aspect of the Tuna CHART programme is the welfare and successful release of the bluefin tuna. Authorised skippers will be required to have high specification rods, reels and line in advance of the open season in order to bring the fish alongside in a timely manner. Data collection for scientific research is the

primary purpose of this fishery and will continue to be a key requirement for skipper participation in this scientific catch-and-release fishery. Skippers will be required to collect data on every bluefin trip undertaken and each bluefin tuna they catch, tag and release.

Anglers will have an opportunity to participate in this fishery and contribute to this important scientific study by chartering and fishing from authorised vessels only. Unauthorised vessels are not permitted to target or catch bluefin tuna and any unauthorised person found to be targeting bluefin tuna will be prosecuted.



Tagged Bluefin Tuna in Donegal Bay 2019. Photo courtesy Adrian Molloy

A large advertisement for D&amp;D Insurances Limited. The background is a photograph of a fishing boat at sea during sunset or sunrise, with many seagulls flying in the sky. The company logo, 'D&amp;D Insurances Limited', is prominently displayed in the center. Below the logo, there is a line of text: 'Please visit us at stand no 93 at the Irish Skipper Expo on 13th &amp; 14th March, UL Arena, Limerick'.

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# MARINE TIMES

NEWSPAPER FOR IRELAND'S FISHING, MARINE AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES



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## Change and Reality

Two words have dominated post-General Election discussion, in public, political and media circles – ‘change’ and ‘reality’.

Though with different meanings they can be enjoined with each other, as in – The ‘Reality’ of ‘Change’.

To make changes and reform what already applies requires serious, new ways of thinking and leadership to break established moulds.

There has been little discussion about applying this approach to the Irish fishing industry. That is not surprising when none of the Irish political parties gave the marine or fishing industries or the coastal communities priority in their election manifestos.

That again underlined what this newspaper has highlighted several times – the fishing industry does not make its case strongly in public. The lack of a single, focussed voice for the industry has always been a major drawback. The MARINE TIMES provides such a voice, from opinion garnered through extensive contacts in the industry.

Brexit did not feature as an issue of major concern amongst the electorate, but now that the UK's break with the EU has become reality, what is left are negotiations about subsequent changes in the former relationship that will be caused by this separation. The electorate's disinterest in Brexit will find a difficult reality when its effects impact the Irish economy.

For the fishing industry this is a vitally important issue. So far the Irish Government has placed dependency for a positive result on the outcome of trade negotiations, indicating that fisheries would be a major component. While increasing acceptance in the UK industry is becoming apparent that some degree of fishing access will have to be conceded to its waters, there is another aspect that the Irish government should be advancing.

The Common Fisheries Policy, which has not been good to Ireland, should now be open to review. Originally introduced by the then Common Market in 1970, before Ireland became a member, Irish Government Ministers and officials failed Ireland. They gave away vast fishing rights of huge economic value. As a result Ireland has contributed billions of Euros to EU funds through catches of fish taken from its waters by non-Irish vessels. This has not been properly acknowledged either by the Irish State or the EU.

The Irish government again failed to get the CFP revised in favour of Irish fishermen in 2014.

The EU describes the policy as “decentralising decision-making” but in reality, it is a centralisation made to the benefit of the bigger, more powerful nations.

In Ireland's situation the EU claim that the policy “gives all European fishing fleets equal access to EU waters and fishing grounds and allows fishermen to compete fairly,” is not correct.

The policy discriminates against Irish fishermen in their own waters, as is repeatedly complained of by the Irish industry.

There is an onus on the Irish government, of whatever hue is finally decided in the political talks which are still on-going, to achieve a better deal for Irish fishermen. Following Brexit there should be revision of the basics of the policy.

As outlined in this paper last month by a leading figure in the catching sector of the industry, there is now an opportunity to do so. The Managing Director of the Irish South and West Fishermen's Organisation, John Nolan, called for “thinking outside the box” to achieve a better EU fisheries deal for Ireland. He pointed out that if the EU is really a ‘community’ of nations, then the wrongs done to Ireland when it joined the EU should be righted.

In this month's edition another major industry figure, this time from the processing sector, Denis Good, Founder and Chairman of The Good Fish Company, says that the “State needs to wake up to the fact that the CFP is dead following Brexit, which provides an opportunity to correct the mistake made when Irish fishing rights were given away.”

These are just two of many voices in the industry calling for the Government to ensure a change in the discrimination of the EU against the Irish fishing industry has been subjected at EU level.

We urge the Government to act positively and strongly in support of the fishing industry. Achieving change would result in considerable economic benefit for Ireland.



**Show Respect! Yet another stunning photo from John Roberts of the environment in which our fishermen work in!**

## Noel Mc Donagh RIP

We here at Lost at Sea Tragedies are deeply saddened by the passing of our dear friend and founder Noel Mc Donagh. Noel from Coxtown, Dunmore East passed away on Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>. He was the beloved husband of Phyllis and much loved father of Shane, Gary, Gavin, Ronan, Cian and Róisín.

Having started his career as a fisherman Noel was well aware of the perils of the fishing industry, highlighting the wrongs within, with no hesitation. In 2013 he founded the charity Lost At Sea Tragedies (LAST) after the tragic loss of the Bolger brothers from Passage East. His aim was to support families emotionally and financially and also to promote safety at sea, something he came to realise was missing throughout the Fishing Industry.

Noel became a Lifetime Honorary President when he handed the charity over to new trustees from the fishing community in 2017. He worked very hard for the fishing community and for everything to do with the sea and for people connected with the sea, but also numerous other ventures, local groups, organisations, clubs and societies.

There is no doubt Noel was inspirational and very passionate about all his work but also encouraging while educating and sharing his wisdom and skills.

We must pay tribute to the incredible legacy left behind by the passing of Noel who single handedly developed a care and support structure for the fishing families affected by the deaths of their loved ones through LAST.



Dear Editor,

**I would be grateful if you would kindly allow our few lines on the death of our colleague and friend, on the untimely passing of Noel McDonagh.**

I am writing on behalf of the Chairpersons of Fisheries Local Action Groups of Ireland and all flag board members around Ireland, whom got to know Noel over the past number of years where Noel played a passionate and dedicated part as Chairman of FLAG South East, and on the national committee of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund, where he left no stone unturned in his drive to improve funding and resources from both state and EU for fishing communities not only in the South East but around the coast.

We would like to offer our sincere condolences to his wife Phyllis and his five sons Shane, Gary, Gavin, Ronan & Cian and daughter Roisin, and his grandchildren, to his many friends in Dunmore East and around the coast we say slán to a true gentleman and son of the sea.

Noel may you have a pleasant rolling sea and a gentle breeze until you drop anchor in the harbour of dreams.

**Slán a Chara! Kevin Flannery, Dingle.**



## Joint NIFA / NIFO Statement on Seal Related Protests, February 1st, 2020, Dingle, Co. Kerry

February 1st saw two separate protests in Dingle, Co. Kerry. The first we understand, was organised by the Party for Animal Welfare, in response to local calls for a seal cull. A second counter protest organised by local Fishers, (Including some of our members) was held to highlight the impact of seal fisheries interactions have on their livelihoods. These protests demonstrate one thing clearly, when society must resort to protest, the State and the democratic process has failed society.

These protests, demonstrate a failure on the state in terms of dealing with the issue of seal fishery interactions. In particular Inshore fishing communities have been failed on this issue, repeated calls by Fishers (borne mostly out of frustration) for seal culls, for approximately two decades now, demonstrate that. In that time the state and the various elected representatives responsible, have failed on this issue.

There is no doubt that seal fisheries interactions have fundamentally changed Irelands Inshore fishing sector over the last number of decades. Anyone that is objective and familiar with these communities will attest to this. Those involved in the sector would agree that this change has been negative. Traditional, low impact fishing methods, such as fishing with small static nets and hooks and lines are no longer economically viable to many operators. This isn't because of Super trawlers, or lack of quota, or EU membership, it's because of the damage seals do to fish already caught in these nets or lines. Many operators have diversified out of these fisheries into other fisheries such as potting and dredging, which may indeed be unsustainable, from an economic and environmental perspective, at its current scale. Some have diversified out of fishing completely, which in many instances has required them to leave our coastal communities, where year-round employment opportunities are limited. Despite what some may say, diversification is not a sustainable option for the entire Inshore Fishing sector or the communities it supports.

Seal/Fisheries interactions and various opinions on them have featured regularly in the media this year. Fishers threatening illegal culls have been widely reported by the media. It is unfortunate that it took these threats to get mainstream media attention. While we certainly do not condone these threats, (or any illegal activity for that matter), we do empathise with the frustration behind them. This frustration is bourn out of decades of failure, failure to look at the issue in an open and pragmatic manner. Typical with many issues at election time, various interests have tried to dominate the issue to further their own agenda. From aspiring politicians from within the conservation movement, who draw, populist, connections to "Super-trawlers" to aspiring politicians from the right who cite EU membership as the driver behind these issues. These interests are also failing both the seals and fishing communities. They do nothing but distract from the real issues regarding Seal Fisheries Interactions. Seal Fisheries interactions are complex. Credit is due to the handful

of politicians that have tried to highlight the issue, a "taboo" one politically, in a pragmatic manner. Many issues involved are separate, with some interconnected. They include the impact an increasing seal population is having on fish stocks and bio diversity, but separately, and more importantly to our members, the direct impact seal depredation on fish already caught in nets and on lines, is having on the economic viability of our members. These issues need to be considered separately and pragmatically if the failure described above is to end.

In 2015, the state developed "Deer Management in Ireland, A framework for Action" and have been implementing the same since. Our members ask why similar can't be done for Seals? If the protected status of Seals prohibits this, why can't that protected status be reviewed? It was granted under conditions that have long since changed. To those that would oppose such a review, we would ask what have you to fear? If protected status is still warranted then any review will demonstrate that. If it is because the seal population is migratory, and does not respect terrestrial borders, then why can't the State seek a transnational management approach? We understand from our fellow small scale Fishers around Europe, indeed even around the North Atlantic, that they now find themselves in a similar situation, to that which our members do. The state has a responsibility to its citizens and the environment, a responsibility towards both fishing communities and seals. If we are to end this failure described above, we need to look at the issues that led to these protests openly and pragmatically. Despite doing so for years previous, it seems seals and Inshore fishing communities, can no longer co-exist. We feel management might correct that. We feel it's the only way of achieving a balance that might allow that co-existence. If the state can't entertain that idea then it has a responsibility to our fishing communities to explain why, and offer a solution to those in that sector that can no longer sustain a livelihood.

With the formation of a new government imminent we call on whoever will be involved to end this failure and put a process in place to allow these issues be addressed. Live up to your responsibilities and have the decency to allow them be addressed in a manner that doesn't frustrate hard working people to an extent that they must openly threaten to take the law into their own hands.

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# Letters to the Editor

## This Fishing Life

Dear Editor

In recent weeks I've been watching the BBC-2 programme *Cornwall: This Fishing Life*. What a wonderful insight it has portrayed into the many aspects of life that is coastal fishing and all it entails where boat owners, skippers, crewmen and respective families are concerned. Newlyn, the largest fishing port on the Cornish coast figured heavily in the programme and is indeed comparable with some ports on the Irish coast.

For the uninitiated, and indeed those well informed, the photographic imagery and accompanying skipper vocal explanations of the various types of fishing engaged in are excellent throughout. However by far the most striking aspect of the programme is the optimism portrayed by skippers and crew members in the face of whatever adversities came their way. How typical of fishermen that is! They just want to get the job done - go to sea and catch fish. The seeking of handouts in form of government grants and other means that is prevalent by those who work the land is not in the nature of fishermen.

The injustices experienced by our own fishermen bear similarities with those on the south coast of England. The common belief is that limitations imposed through E.U. legislations are unreasonable. Those limitations such as inequitable quotas etc. have been well documented by *Marine Times Newspaper* columnists and others over many years, yet nothing of significance has changed. It's little wonder that over 90% of British fishermen jumped at the opportunity of voting in favour of Brexit. They voted as such because they believe that regardless of the outcome whatever the future holds for their industry has to be better than the present situation. That elements of uncertainty exist as to what the outcome will bring is understood. It's an outcome that may well too have repercussions for our own fishing industry!

If given the opportunity in what I'll call a 'Irexit scenario', I wonder how fishermen in this country would vote?

Yours faithfully  
**Pat Nolan**  
**Ballycastle**  
**Co Antrim**

## This Is My Life - The Eel Fishery

*This letter is an edited version of an open letter by email sent to IFI - Inland Fisheries Ireland - by well-known Seán Doherty from Waterford, about the eel fishery.*

The decision to close the eel fishery in Ireland on foot of a 40% reduction in eel mortality across the board was very unjust. IFI took out eel fisheries as factors such as dairy expansion, river walls. water extraction and turbines continued unhindered. In the Waterford Estuary the baited pot fishery was tiny compared to industrial issues and the massive siltation of miles of foreshore due to river works and dredging.

Had eel fishing been treated fairly its impact on the 40% reduction would have been easy to meet for fishermen. For years the excuse of no property rights were connected to the fishery. It ignored the fact that the Waterford fishery was tied to property rights, the ownership of sprat weirs, this is on the record.

The recent eel hardship payment that has just been paid is again raising questions of a serious nature.

Having spoken to fellow eel fishermen in Holland, I have decided to return to eel fishing. I have applied for my baited eel pot licence. I believe it's fair that I surrender my fyke net licence in lieu of payment. This I contacted IFI about in Galway prior to taking up package.

I did contact IFI about setting up a catch-and-release heritage eel fishery, but got no reply.

The decision of yourselves to go 60% beyond an EU Directive is going to result in me losing my family's cultural heritage by 100 per cent. That can't happen.

This is my life. It always has been and will be. I would welcome discussions on this issue and I hope you don't find this Email any other way than a fisherman prepared to fight for his right to do in his country what others are allowed to do in theirs.

Regards,  
**Sean Doherty.**

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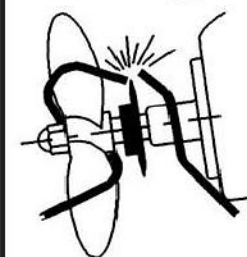


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# 'Summing-It Up' For Easier Navigation!

## Fishing and Navigation Organisations Unite to Improve Fish Farm Safety

To help simplify and improve local navigation markings for the safety of all marine users, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency, in association with the Commissioners of Irish Lights (CIL) has launched a new 'standard operating procedure.'

BIM has been working with the aquaculture industry around the coast to install simplified navigation marking systems to provide an effective visual guide for navigating a bay or harbour. Reducing the overall visual impact of the markers and simplifying the boundaries for other users is the aim of the 'Special Unified Marking Schemes' (SUMS) by getting all aquaculture producers in an area to incorporate their sites boundary marks into one marking scheme.

Previously, each farm in a bay or harbour had its own marks indicating the boundaries of the site. This often resulted in a large amount of markings, making navigation more difficult, according to the two organisations.

"Unifying the sites under one scheme has the dual advantage of improving navigation of the harbour and providing efficiencies for the fish farmers. In addition, the marks deployed are of a much higher standard, have a longer lifespan and work

in all types of weather," they maintain.

The 'standard operating procedure' for the unified marking systems outlines the steps local producers need to take to engage with the Scheme.

"Getting aquaculture producers to work together locally with schemes such as the Special Unified Marking Systems pays dividends for all concerned," according to the Chief Executive of BIM, Jim O'Toole. "It highlights their commitment to working together in harmony with the local environment and other marine users, putting safety at the centre of what they do. An example of where SUMS has made a remarkable difference is Dungarvan Harbour. Working together we have reduced the number of markers to 10 poles and 11 small buoys, as opposed to the original proposed 160 poles, drastically reducing the visual impact and simplifying things for everyone."

Irish Lights, CEO, Yvonne Shields O'Connor, said: "The launch of the Scheme with BIM marks a positive change in de-



To help simplify and improve local navigation markings for the safety of all marine users, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency, in association with the Commissioners of Irish Lights (CIL) have launched a new standard operating procedure for implementing Special Unified Marking Schemes (SUMS) in areas of aquaculture, to reduce the overall visual impact of markers and to simplify boundaries. Pictured at the launch are (l-r): Joanne Gaffney, Regional Environmental Officer, BIM, Yvonne Shields O'Connor, CEO, Irish Lights, Jim O'Toole, CEO, BIM and Captain Catriona Dowling, Navigation Services Manager, Irish Lights.

living improved navigation and safety in areas of aquaculture activity. Irish Lights is delighted to support this initiative, which ensures the safe and efficient marking of zones to international standards, resulting in a positive impact on the local environment."

To get involved in the scheme, aquaculture producers should contact their local BIM Officer who will work with them to survey the production area. Consultation then takes place with the Commissioners of Irish Lights and the Marine Survey Office to determine the location and specification of markers.

Once approved, BIM will work with local fish farmers to ensure that the new markers will be produced and installed at the approved locations.

The project is co-funded by the Government and the European Union under Ireland's European Maritime & Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for the seafood sector. For more details or to download a copy of the full Special Unified Marking Systems standard operating procedure, please go to [www.bim.ie/our-publications/aquaculture/](http://www.bim.ie/our-publications/aquaculture/)

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A rare break from the constant storms last month as the sunset shines on beautiful Cill Chiaran in Co. Galway - Photo by Michael O Ceallachain

If any of our readers have a photo that you think would look good in our pages please send them on to us at [editor@marinetimes.ie](mailto:editor@marinetimes.ie)



## The South - West View



Patrick Murphy, Chief Executive of the Irish South and West Fishermen's Organisation, discusses "ever-increasing legislation" on the fishing industry and says that the fishing industry should be given the credit and respect it does providing food, but is concerned about the effects that Coronavirus could have on trade.

### Coronavirus - the most mentioned word around the world in recent weeks.

What has this to do with fishing you may wonder but for me a lot, the shutting down of society and locking of doors will surely interrupt trade, all trade.

What provisions are made for this oncoming fallout, quarantine may prevent the spread and help us avoid the virus, but will we see food shortages instead?

Already we see the devastating effect it is having on the Chinese economy. We sell

a lot of fish in this developing market.

It has reached Europe and Italy, another important market, which has seen areas in lock-down. In one interview I heard of whole towns under quarantine.



Velvet Chord II - Photo by Alan O'Shea

## 'Wellness' in Seafarers and Fishermen to Be Discussed at National Maritime College

Over 1.5 million seafarers play a vital part in the supply chain which keeps national and international economies operational.

Food, fuel, and everyday goods are transported in thousands of ships worldwide, around the clock. There is little room for error which could result in loss of life, injury, pollution, and delays. The maritime industry is safety critical and depends on professional people to minimize incidents, including human error.

A Seafarer Wellness Conference to address human factors in the maritime industry will be held in the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), Ringaskiddy, Cork, on Thursday, March 26.

The conference will also deal with 'wellness' training for sea and shore staff in the fishing industry.

Organised by the Department of Maritime Studies NMCI/CIT, the Irish Institute of Master Mariners and the Nautical Institute, the conference will be the first of its kind to be held in Ireland.

National and international speakers will include Dr Joanne McVeigh who will talk about psychosocial well-being amongst merchant seafarers - well-being, resilience, job satisfaction and stress;

Prof. Mac MacLachlan, Editor of Maritime Psychology, Professor of Psychology and Social Inclusion and Director of the ALL (Assisting Living & Learning Institute) at Maynooth and previously Chair in Global Health at Trinity; Dr Chris Haughton, Master Mariner, who will talk about the development of a standard for mental health awareness and wellness training for sea and shore staff in the Merchant Navy and Fishing Industry; Dr Rudi Stolz, Consultant Occupational Medicine at Shell Health and Dr Fiona O'Halloran who will address issues around diet and nutrition.

Leading experts in the area, including medical professionals, psychologists, researchers, and professional seafarers will generate discussion, debate and suggest solutions to address the human factors that influence life on board ships.

Maritime stakeholders, medical professionals and anyone interested in human factors will find the conference informative.

Tickets may be reserved at Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/seafarer-wellness-are-the-signals-being-read-tickets-90925080363](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/seafarer-wellness-are-the-signals-being-read-tickets-90925080363)

This Industry, after suffering from severe storms in the first two months of 2020, resulting in huge losses from no access to fishing, will face this increasing threat. But not a word of a plan for these effects. We see recent restrictions that only worsen the fear by stifling travel for our sports enthusiasts through the calling-off of the rugby game between Ireland and Italy.

Should we not ask the relevant question, what travel will be restricted next? Will it be for those who drive the lorries? But I ask what do these lorries carry?

I do not want to add to any hysteria, but I do wish to see recognition to what is the absent response we are witnessing to date and we need to start preparing.

This Industry is facing ever-increasing legislation and the recent but relevant topic we are addressing is the 'Single Use Plastic Directive' which has set eyes on plastics used in our Industry.

Bubbling below the surface is this emerging concern of the microplastics and again not wanting to link the two but there is some hysteria about plastics in our oceans. Do not get me wrong certainly the issue needs immediate addressing.

In some countries the first three hauls are to get the plastic out the way before you get the fish and we are shown the pictures of the young man swimming through the sea of plastics. This is not the case here yet, thank God.

Food for me is the most important commodity on our planet, the air we breathe, the water we drink, but also food we eat nurtures and sustains the bod. Add heat and shelter and we survive quite well.

So why are the hard working people in our Industry the first expected to respond?

I will leave that to the reader to answer for themselves.

I will say this, thankfully we have proven time and time again we are ready to act, no matter what adversities we face, they are taken head on.

I know, like the weather beaten rock hit over-and-over again by the stormy sea, the damage is visible but like the rock we are worn smooth but not broken, for this serves a purpose adding oxygen to the water.

Society need the brave men and women who risk their lives to catch the healthy tasty nutritious food to feed them. Fishermen are showing that they have no problem to do more when challenged, by picking up and bringing ashore the hundreds of tonnes of plastic garbage that make it into our seas annually.

I say, however, do not penalise us in only taxing the gear, the nets we use to do this voluntary work and take a moment to see what is being done and as my Grandmother used to say regularly

**"Give credit when credit is due".**

### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### APPLICATION FOR A FORESHORE LICENCE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 19 of the Foreshore Act, 1933 that Energia Renewables ROI Ltd., The Liberty Centre, Blanchardstown Retail Park, Dublin D15 YT2H has applied to the Minister of Housing, Planning and Local Government for a licence under Section 3 of the said Act for site investigation survey works in the South Irish Sea off the Co. Wexford/Wicklow coastline.

A copy of the application, and the relevant maps, plans, and drawings, are available for inspection for the next 30 days, free of charge, at **Wexford Garda Station**, Mulgannon, Wexford Town, Co. Wexford; **Gorey Garda Station**, Main Street, Gorey, Co. Wexford and **Arklow Garda Station**, Abbey Street, Arklow, Co. Wicklow.

The documentation is available on the Department's website

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/energia-site-investigation-wexford-coast>

Any person who wishes to make an objection to, or a representation in respect of the grant of the licence sought should do so in writing, giving reasons, between the dates of 4<sup>th</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> April (quoting ref: FS 007048), to the Marine Planning Policy and Development Section, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Newtown Road, Wexford, Co. Wexford or [foreshore@housing.gov.ie](mailto:foreshore@housing.gov.ie). The closing date for submissions is close of business on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

All objections and representations received will be forwarded to the applicant for comment prior to any decision being made in the matter. Material upon which the Minister shall determine this application may be published on the Department's website. In this regard the Department wishes to draw attention to its policy on defamatory material that may be contained in submissions it receives, which may be found at: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/public-participation-foreshore-consent-process>

Dated this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020

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## Councillors Call for Management of Seals in Killala Bay

A letter has been sent to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine calling for a management plan to be put in place to deal with the increasing numbers of seals in Killala Bay on the west coast of Ireland. Ballina councillors agreed to send the letter following a number of complaints to the council about the declining numbers of salmon on the river Moy which is driving down fishing tourism in the area.

According to a recent news report, during a Ballina Municipal District council meeting Cathaoirleach (Chair) Michael Lof-tus 'called for a cull of the mammals, which he believes are contributing to the loss of wild Atlantic salmon in the River Moy.

"These seals would kill salmon or sea trout sometimes just for fun, other times to eat it," he said, adding that they are "killing all that is good about the River Moy."

He said the loss of salmon in the Moy is affecting fishing tourism, which in turn harms the local economy.

"A lot of people are complaining that you cannot get Moy salmon in a restaurant and that it is all farmed salmon," he added.

Councillor Jarlath Munnely seconded the call for a cull, saying many fishermen

agree the seals are an issue.

He said there is no doubt that the species is at the "top of the food chain" in the area, and an "orderly" cull would protect the dwindling fish stock.

"We won't eliminate the seals - no chance of that - but it is about re-balancing the ecosystem, and wild salmon are under threat," he added.

Inshore fishermen on the Cork, Kerry and Donegal coasts are also calling for urgent management of the seal populations which have increased exponentially in recent years. Thousands of grey seals have taken up residence in numerous bays and estuaries where some of the best salmon rivers in Europe run in to the ocean.

**"These protests demonstrate one thing clearly, when society must resort to protest, the State and the democratic process has failed society."**

**Joint NIFA / NIFO Statement on Seal Related Protests - See page 7**

## Islanders Deafened by Department's Silence What has become of salmon farming licence application one year on?

**Fishermen on Cape Clear Island have blasted Government inaction wondering what has happened to an application to grow fish and thereby provide the island with an economic lifeline.**

The aquaculture licence application was submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 with an accompanying extensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which cost in excess of €100,000 to commission and draft. The EIS alone, represented more than three years' work and was partially funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta.

"Cumann Iascairí Chléire applied to the Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division of the Department and received an acknowledgment a short time afterwards. In recent weeks, we raised it with election canvassers and duly received a similar sort of worthless acknowledgement from Minister Michael Creed.

"This really isn't good enough. We've invested a lot of money, time and energy not to mention hope and genuine belief that there is something of potential real value which could save our island. We look enviously at Clare Island off the Mayo coast which has reaped huge dividends from an organic salmon farm which keeps young people on the island to work and thereby preventing population decline. That project has been a massive success and transformed the island's fortunes.

"The reality is that economic opportunities are very limited on Cape Clear and seasonal tourism aside, our options are very limited. Why not make use of the wonderful sea resource which we have, grow protein-rich food in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner to safeguard our future. I've no doubt the benefits could be shared with our fellow-islanders on Sherkin and Hare too," said secretary of Cumann Iascairí Chléire and islander, Duncan Harper.

Mr Harper concluded saying it might not be the easiest place to live but he could not imagine any place better. "The people who live on the island do not believe that they are disadvantaged but they do recognise that they face challenges unknown to those living on the mainland. If the population of a tiny island in the North Atlantic can't get approval to grow fish, just what do the powers-that-be expect them to do," he asked.

Cumann Iascairí Chléire was established to improve the lot of fishermen operating and living on the island. It has pursued many avenues to sustain the economic viability of life of Cape Clear and is extremely active in lobbying and representing local fishermen.



# Fire Detection System Did Not Work on Suzanne II

**Good Weather Helped Crew Survive: Marine Times Reporter**

Three crew members were fortunate to survive when the fire detection system on their trawler failed, according to an investigation report by the MCIB.



The 'Suzanne II' sank off the Wicklow coast last May.

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) inquiry records that the three crew had set out from Arklow, Co Wicklow, in the early hours of May 2 and were working about 30 nautical miles east of the port. The 17-metre French-built timber vessel with aluminium shelter deck was built as a trawler but fitted with a pot hauler in 2018. The vessel had been surveyed and certified for fishing in July 2018.

Weather conditions were good and the three crew had taken a break when one of the crew noticed smoke coming from the engine room. The Skipper went to investigate the source of the smoke and "soon realised that there was a serious fire in the engine room," according to the MCIB. "He made an attempt to fight the fire but the level of smoke hampered any effort. The smoke and fire very quickly engulfed the vessel's accommodation and wheelhouse."

The crew retrieved the vessel's EPIRB and abandoned into a liferaft. Activating the EPIRB alerted the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Dublin. The Skipper had tried unsuccessfully to seek assistance via VHF radio.

The liferaft was spotted by an angling boat, the 'Highlander' en route from Wales to Ireland. Two of the crew were transferred to the RNLI Arklow lifeboat when it arrived on the scene. The skipper, suffering from smoke inhalation, was airlifted to hospital in Waterford by Coast Guard Rescue 117 helicopter for treatment.

This was "a very serious marine casualty resulting in a major fire, an abandoned ship and the subsequent sinking..." the investigators state. "Had the incident occurred at night or in more adverse weather conditions, the outcome may have been very different."

The MCIB investigation found that the fire detection system did not work.

"Had it done so, the fire would have been detected earlier," the investigators concluded. "Whether the fire detection system did sound but was not heard or whether it failed to alert the crew is unknown. Most likely the fire detection did not sound as it is improbable that it would not have been heard. Not sounding could have been due to a recent defect or a longer standing one."

The cause of the fire remains undetermined.

Sometime after it began a tugboat with firefighting capabilities arrived and attempted to put out the fire, but the boat continued to burn and sank after three hours.

According to the MCIB report the fire detection system had been inspected and tested in July 2018 although it was not known when it was last tested prior to the fire and the vessel's Logbooks were lost in the fire. Other precautionary equipment was also noted as failing to work. The engine room was fitted with an automatic fire extinguishing system. The investigators report says that "either failed to activate or more likely activated, but due to the fact the engine room space was bit sealed would have had little effect on a fire of this magnitude." A fixed sprinkler system was not utilised due to the speed at which the trawler became engulfed in smoke, according to the investigation.

There are, obviously, lessons to be learned from this incident and the MCIB has asked that a Marine Notice be issued "reminding of the requirement for all crew to have basic safety training and the requirement to ensure fire alarms are regularly tested and maintained."

It says this marine notice should include "guidance on the inspection and testing of fire detection systems onboard fishing vessels of 15-24 metres in length".

Under existing regulations, testing of fire systems should take place monthly.

## Monkfish and Megrin Survey Underway

The first and second leg of the annual Irish Anglerfish and Megrin Survey (IAMS2020) is currently being carried out by the Marine Institute from 23rd February to 18th March 2020 to the west, southwest and south coast of Ireland. Marine Notice No. 07 of 2020 has been issued to notify all shipowners, fishing vessel owners, skippers, fishers, yachtsmen and seafarers, of the survey's locations and dates.

The 65m research vessel Celtic Explorer will carry out the IAMS demersal trawl survey using a Jackson trawl which will consist of approximately 110 otter trawls (60 minutes) in ICES area 7b, 7c, 7g, 7h, 7j and 7k.

In Marine Notice No. 07 of 2020, the Marine Institute requests that commercial fishing and other marine operators keep a 3 nautical mile radius area around the tow points clear of any gear or apparatus during the survey period outlined above.

While there is no statutory provision for the loss of gear at sea, the Marine Institute will make every effort to avoid gear adequately marked according to legislation that may be encountered in the notified areas.

In the event that an operator has static gear or other obstructions within 3 nautical mile radius of the points listed, it is the responsibility of the owner to notify the survey managers or vessel directly. This should be communicated by identifying specifically which "station" is of concern using Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and contact details provided. It is not required to provide positional details of commercial operations beyond 4 nautical mile radius of the survey points provided.



Specifics of any fishing gear or other obstructions that are known and cannot be kept clear of these survey haul locations can be notified using the contact details below:

Aodhan Fitzgerald, Marine Institute: 087-2488765. Eoghan Kelly, Marine Institute: 087-9935128

Full details of Marine Notice No. 07 of 2020 including the coordinates of the IAMS 2020 survey stations can be found on the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) website under Marine Notices.

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# Closure of Markets Bring Razor Clam Fishery to a Virtual Standstill

**The Coronavirus epidemic is causing chaos to many sectors of the Irish seafood export trade through the closure of the valuable Chinese markets. One particular fishery which is extremely affected by the outbreak is the Razor clam fishery.**

Each year, in excess of 50 vessels actively fish for Razor clams between Howth and Dundalk. And the Chinese New Year markets in January, is a welcome boost to the prices paid for Irish Razors, this year as much as €17.00 a kg for extra-large, €13.00 a kg for large, €8.50 a kg for mediums and €3.50 a kg for smalls was paid for the clams. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus outbreak brought the Razor clam fishery to an abrupt halt as access to the Chinese and Hong Kong markets were closed due to enforced restrictions on the movement of goods.

At the end of January, fishermen were told that customers in Hong Kong and China could no longer take Razor clams from Ireland. Many of the buyers in the North east stopped taking Razor clams altogether and others said they could continue to sell to European markets for €2.50 per kilo - a drop of over €14,000 per tonne on the largest grade and around an 80% drop in prices across the board.

A number of owners reluctantly tied their boats up in the hope that markets would reopen quickly, but the situation is unlikely to improve anytime soon with some airlines now cancelling flights to the affected areas until at least the end of March. As time goes

by, some owners and crews are already beginning to feel the pinch, it's inevitable that buyers will push Razor clams onto existing low value European markets where there's a good chance that oversupply will further reduce first sale prices to fishermen.

A spokesperson for NIFO (National

Inshore Fishermen's Organisation) told Marine Times, "The effects of the Corona virus and restricted market access have not just been limited to our crab operators. We don't have many razor clam operators in our membership, but some have reported its effects as probably even more stark than what's facing our crab operators. This is because the Chinese New Year traditionally signalled the peak of the Razor clam operators' season in terms of profitability. Our members in the North east inform us than many first sale prices on average have

dropped by 80% since January.

"Similar to the Brown crab fishery, the Razor clam fishery was not without its underlying issues before market access to China ended. Some of our members say that currently without any adequate social protection or EMFF supports they are now in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. That effectively in economic terms, a 'perfect storm' has hit their fishery. Without some form of emergency intervention, they are having serious doubts over their future viability."



Elsie Louise, Skippered by Matthew Dunne in the Irish Sea - Photo by Richard Guildea

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news from the **RNLI**  
[editor@marinetimes.ie](mailto:editor@marinetimes.ie)

## Million-Pound Training Fund Helps Carrybridge RNLI

Two volunteer crew members at Carrybridge RNLI lifeboat station in County Fermanagh have had a vital part of their crew training funded by Lloyd's Register Foundation. This is a charitable foundation which helps to protect life and property by supporting engineering-related education, public engagement and the application of research.



Shani Spence from Lisbellaw and Joe Donnelly from Enniskillen travelled to the RNLI College in Poole, Dorset, to complete the Crew Emergency Procedures course which trains volunteer lifeboat crews in a variety of crucial subjects such as how to deal with fires aboard lifeboats, how to 'abandon ship' in the event of an emergency (with a 4 metre jump into water), team survival swimming, coping in a life-raft in simulated darkness, how to right a capsized inshore lifeboat, and the importance of lifejackets. It also includes sessions on the correct use of flares, fire extinguishers and throw bags.

Shani, who volunteers as a crew member, said the course "definitely helped with my confidence in an actual emergency as I got to have a hands on approach and see how it all feels in real life, meaning it will be a little less scary if anything went wrong." Joe, who also volunteers as a crew member, said: 'It was a very good and intriguing course which I enjoyed very much.'

Shani and Joe's training took place in the Sea Survival Centre at the RNLI College, where they were joined by other RNLI volunteer crew members from around the UK and Ireland.

Lloyd's Register Foundation has committed to funding the RNLI's Crew Emergency Procedures course for a second 5-year period until December of this year. This additional funding of stg£1.06M brings their total support for RNLI crew training to just over stg £2.46M since 2008. More than 3,000 RNLI volunteer crew members have now received the training thanks to Lloyd's Register Foundation's

funding.

Alex Evans, Lifesaving Training Manager at the RNLI said: "Their support is very important to us and it's fantastic how, so far, over 3,000 of our crew members have benefitted from Lloyd's Register Foundation funding this part of their training. We are very grateful to Lloyd's Register Foundation for funding this vital part of our volunteer crews' training."

"As only one in ten of our volunteer crew members comes from a professional maritime background, the Crew Emergency Procedures course is crucial in giving our volunteers the training they need and helping keep them as safe as possible while carrying out rescues. It gives volunteers the confidence to save lives even in the most challenging conditions."

**RNLI Fishing Safety expert and rescued Skipper call for crews to avail of training and check safety equipment after dramatic Isle of Man rescue**

RNLI Fishing Safety Manager Frankie Horne has urged the fishing community to avail of safety training that is on offer for their crews and to ensure that their safety equipment is up to date. It comes after the skipper of a fishing vessel that sank late last year off the Isle of Man has attributed their rescue to the safety training the crew had undertaken previously and to their lifejackets, which were fitted with personal locator beacons.

On the evening of 23 November last year, the fishing vessel *Polaris* suffered a

catastrophic hull failure off the west coast of the Isle of Man. The vessel sank so rapidly that the skipper only had time to send out a Mayday to the coastguard and other surrounding fishing boats before the vessel became submerged.

The coastguard immediately launched two RNLI lifeboats from Port St Mary and Port Erin and a Rescue Helicopter. However, it was a local fishing vessel, *Lynn Marie*, which arrived first on scene. The skipper and a crewmember from *Polaris* had been in the water for at least 15-20 mins before help arrived.

The skipper of the fishing boat that rescued them, the *Lynn Marie*, feared the worst on arriving at the scene as the *Polaris* had already gone below the water. The skipper stopped his engine to listen for the crew of the *Polaris* which proved a wise decision as he heard two men in the water shouting. The *Lynn Marie* crew located them with a search light and recovered them from the water.

Commenting on the rescue RNLI Fishing Safety Manager Frankie Horne said, 'After speaking with Gordon Mills, the skipper of the *Polaris*, and the crew of *Lynn Marie* on their arrival at Peel, it was quite clear that this could have been a very different story had the crew of both vessels not acted so professionally. The crew had attended safety training and wore lifejackets fitted

with Personal Locator Beacons which had increased their chances of survival.'

Gordon Mills, Skipper of *Polaris* added, 'At no time did I feel our lives were in danger due to our training and equipment. We had a policy of wearing lifejackets on the working deck since attending refresher training, where I was shown a film involving fishermen wearing their normal working clothes, being put through their paces in the RNLI Survival Centre Environmental Pool, both with and without lifejackets in cold water with wave movement whilst attempting to recover themselves.'

Speaking about the training they had undertaken, Gordon continued, "To see fishermen struggling in a controlled environment and only lasting a few minutes or in some cases a few seconds without the lifejacket makes you think about your own safety. I can tell you that there is no doubt that the lifejackets saved our lives. We wouldn't have even been afloat for the crew of Fishing Vessel *Lynn Marie* to recover us from the water had we not been wearing them. I would encourage all fishermen to start wearing their lifejackets while on deck, you just never know when you might need it."

For advice on training contact <http://www.bim.ie/training/> in Ireland or RNLI Fishing Safety <https://rnli.org/safety/choose-your-activity/commercial-fishing>



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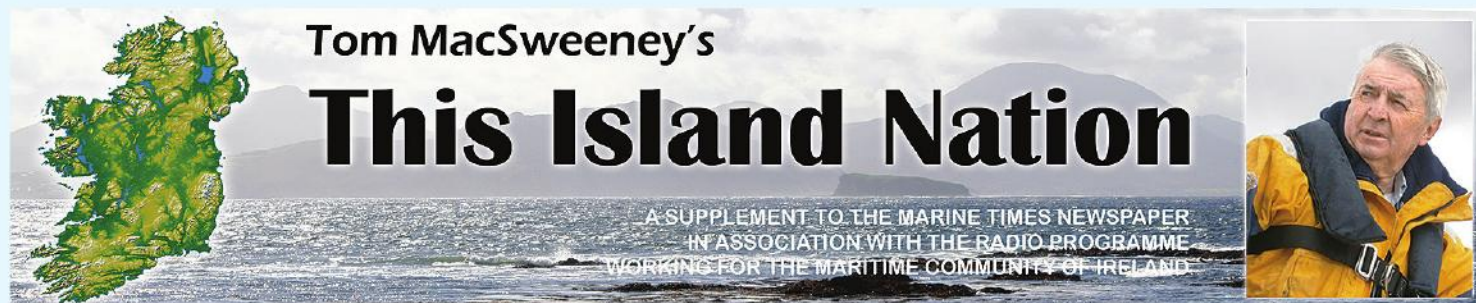
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I'm always interested to hear your stories, comments.

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Tom MacSweeney's

# This Island Nation

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE MARINE TIMES NEWSPAPER  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE RADIO PROGRAMME  
WORKING FOR THE MARITIME COMMUNITY OF IRELAND

## A Marine Scribe's Diary

### About the culture, history, tradition and developments in MARITIME IRELAND

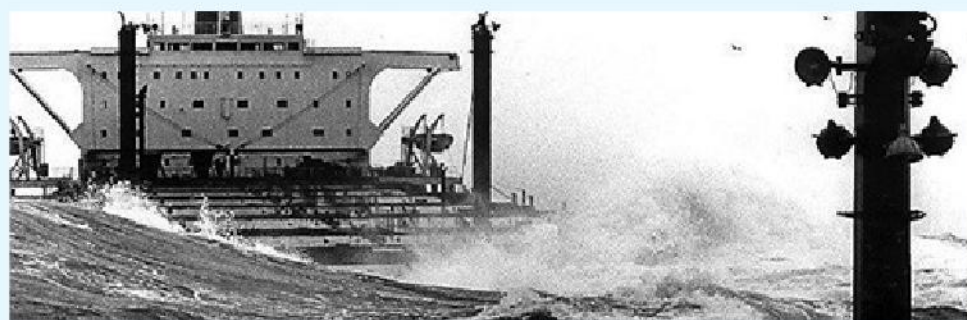
# Haunting the Shores of Ireland

The national media, which doesn't usually give a lot of coverage to the maritime sphere, got very excited about what it described as "the ghost ship, ALTA," which went aground near Ballycotton on the East Cork shoreline and still rests there as I write these notes. Its 'grounding' recalled for me other shipwrecks I reported.

I remember standing at the Beacon on the edge of Baltimore Harbour in West Cork on the wild stormy night of November 24, 1986, from where I could see the crewless 900-foot long *Kowloon Bridge* seemingly heading towards the harbour entrance. I was amongst reporters, photographers and local people. There was concern that the ship would wind up blocking the harbour, but it was pushed away by the strong winds and big seas down the coastline to the Stags Rocks where it went aground, causing massive pollution. Then with RTE News, I got very seasick and broke an ankle bone aboard a small inshore boat which I had hired to take me and the camera crew out to film the massive ship, as we were tossed around in the conditions. The *Kowloon Bridge*, like *Alta*, had been abandoned by its crew. It was damaged in a storm with winds of 70 knots and waves reported as high as 50 feet. They were rescued by two Royal Naval helicopters from Culdrose in Cornwall, then providing cover in Irish waters. The wreck was bought by an English scrap merchant for one British pound, after salvage efforts failed to get it off the Rocks. The vessel was insured for stg£8.7m. and the cargo for stg£2.7m. Cork County Council said that the clean-up operation cost it £500,000 Irish punts, then a lot of money. There was huge damage to fishing, wildlife and the coastal environment. Government statements proclaimed that the owners would be made to pay, but there was controversy as to how much, if anything, was eventually paid.

The following year, 1987, *Samson* took me to Ardmore when what was called by the media "the crane ship" went aground. It was a 'crane barge' lost on tow from Liverpool, where it had been operated by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board according to records, to Valetta in Malta. The tow line broke in a Force 7 and couldn't be reconnected. Two crew aboard were rescued by an RAF Sea King helicopter from Brawdy in Wales. The 54-foot vessel wound up on Rams Head from where it was never removed. The crane's jib later collapsed into the sea. The remains can still be seen from the cliff walk. A local man, Jim Rooney, boarded it and claimed salvage, without success apparently.

Six years ago, in 2014, there were media stories about 'cannibal rats' running wild aboard a Soviet cruise liner, *Lyubov Orlova*,



900ft Kowloon Bridge off the Stags and the remains of Samson at Ardmore.



a 4,200 tonne ship described as "the pride of rich Russians touring the Arctic and Antarctic." Over 300 feet long it had been sold for scrap and was under tow from Newfoundland to the Dominican Republic when the tow broke and the ship drifted away. It was later reported in the North Atlantic "heading for the Irish coastline" – where, thankfully, it has not arrived. It may still be afloat, or have sunk – nobody really knows. How the media knew there were 'cannibal rats' aboard is also unclear!

In November 2016 an unmanned 20-foot 'houseboat,' the construction of which included driftwood, polystyrene and solar panels, washed up on Drum Beach near Belmullet in County Mayo. It was removed by the County Council and was discovered to have been built by 62-year-old Rick Small in Newfoundland. He was found by the media in Vancouver, Canada, to whom he described himself as an environmentalist. In one of several statements, he said he had planned to sail it to the Arctic to raise awareness of climate change and vanishing ice. But he couldn't get "an appropriate motor" and left it on a mooring with a note donating it to any homeless person who

wanted it. I am told it was put on display in Mayo and Small was invited to see it, but no visit has taken place. Nor has much been heard from him since and it seems the cost of removal fell to the Council.

These are just a few of my memories of vessels going aground. There are others and, according to maritime experts, could be quite a few of what the media calls "ghost ships" of various types and sizes drifting about the seas. Many people and the general media seem to lack understanding of what is meant by the vastness of the oceans when they ask why these vessels cannot be found, even with modern technology. Much of the media reportage of the ALTA failed to refer to the coincidence of another 'ghost' ship which went aground quite close to where ALTA has wound-up. This was the Swedish timber sailing ship of the time, *Saga*, derelict, without even a rudder and no one aboard. It wound up at Kelly's Cove in February 1895.

As we say, quite regularly, on THIS ISLAND NATION radio programme – "there is always something unusual in and about the sea."



# THE MARINE TIMES INTERVIEW

## “The State Needs to Wake Up to the Potential of Fishing”



**Denis Good is Founder and Chairman of the Good Fish Company, which is based at Carrigaline in County Cork. It was established in 1988 and is now one of the largest fish processors in Ireland. As well as its processing factory it has a retail shop and seafood café at its Carrigaline base and retail outlets in Cork. Denis Good began his working life as a shipwright and became a fishmonger before starting his successful company. He gives Marine Times Deputy Editor, Tom MacSweeney, a fish processor's view of the fishing industry, refers to “thousands of lorries” carrying fish caught off Ireland to the Continent every year, doing nothing for the country or the Irish economy and without enough inspection of this. The State, he says, needs to “wake up to the fact that the CFP is dead following Brexit” and says this provides an opportunity to correct the mistake made when Irish fishing rights were given away.**

We are sitting in the offices of the Good Fish Company's headquarters above their busy processing factory. Outside lorries are being readied for deliveries to various locations in Cork and further afield.

Denis Good tells me that, at the age of 68, he has had a varied working career, all of it associated with the sea. Currabinny in Cork Harbour, alongside the Owenabue River which we can see from the office window, is his home base. His father once ran a ferry service between there and the village of Crosshaven across the river. Denis was a shipwright and built fishing boats at the old Maritem yard in Carrigaloe. He also built yachts and worked in the Naval dockyard before changing career in the 80s when that work became scarcer.

“I decided to open a fish shop in Carrigaline. It went well, so I opened another in Cork City. That didn't go so well.” But that didn't stop him, as he supplied hotels and restaurants in Cork and factory canteens in the developing industrial estate in Ringaskiddy on the edge of the harbour, as well as the then Southern Health Board.

“The business grew and I moved to a premises in Middleton for wholesale and processing, then around 22 years ago, built the first ‘ground-up’ fish factory built in the State for a long time, here in Carrigaline.”

The South-East Cork town is now a major urban centre and from the industrial estate on its outskirts he started supplying supermarkets, packaging seafood, employing more people, bringing in staff with special abilities and experience. “We employ 90/100 people full-time between five shops in Cork and fish processing here in Carrigaline,” he says recalling that being in business for 33 years has not always been easy. “A tough

business at times but enjoyable, with good friends made amongst great people.”

We are talking just after Storm Denis has battered the Irish coastline.

“At present we are practically without Irish fish in this company, as a result, even though we are maintaining our staff. This is not the fault of fishermen, no one can control the weather. Catching fish is a tough and dangerous business, but even when the weather is good we can still be short of fish because Irish fishermen are not allowed catch enough fish. So there is a lot of fish imported into this country.

“I have the highest respect for fishermen, the quota situation is not good enough, despite so much of the best European waters being off Ireland, but the biggest quotas are given to non-Irish boats by the EU. I have great sympathy for the catching sector. Irish fishermen have minute quotas by comparison with other nations fishing in Irish waters.

“The sad thing is that within seven or eight miles of this factory there are over 2,000 lorries going onto the Continent every year full of fish that never benefits Ireland. As processors if we were given an opportunity to purchase some of that, we have the market, we would add value in processing and filleting and packaging, which would be good for the country.”

I remark that I thought I had heard a Minister for the Marine once suggest this.

Nothing further happened, Denis points out: “No fault of the industry. The catching sector are not allowed to catch this fish that are in our waters which are being caught by other nations and that fish is going straight out of the country. There is no added value to this country.”

He makes this point a number of times - that there is considerable potential for the processing sector to create more jobs, “but the potential is not being recognised

or developed by the relevant government departments.”

He doesn't put all the blame on Government Ministers.

“They come and go and mostly are Ministers for Agriculture with marine stuck in the back pocket, a forgotten portfolio. A lot of them didn't and don't understand the sea. The marine department is probably the poorest performing department in the State. There is billions in potential off our shores.”

I ask what changes he has noted in public attitudes to eating fish and he recalls that when he started as a fishmonger, “fish was only seen as for Friday, now we see Thursdays Fridays and Saturdays, because people are cooking fish at home, especially at weekends.

“Younger customers want ready-meals because of pressures on them, two parents working and there is health-consciousness about the positive aspects of eating fish. There is a good market for fish in Ireland and all over Europe and fish from Irish waters is particularly good.”

What species are most popular?

“There's a good general interest. The market for hake has grown, it's now very popular and an alternative to cod because there is no quota for cod - half-a-ton-a-month for most boats - ridiculous. Most of the cod here is imported. Haddock has taken off too, seen as a cheaper fish, but I think it is nicer than cod. Cheaper Asian prawn imports are big sellers. Irish prawns are better quality. Farmed salmon are 50 per cent of the sales of seafood now but unfortunately, it's all imported, bar organic salmon of which Ireland only produces 12/14,000 tonnes.”

On the way into the company's offices I had called into their fish shop, in a different part of the industrial estate and saw that there was also a seafood café.

“We were the first factory shop in the State at any fish processing plant, back in the early 2000s. It was very successful. As we developed the factory we moved the shop to a nearby premises and decided to have a seafood café which is developing nicely.”

I ask what are his concerns about the future of the fishing industry and seafood business?

“The State needs to wake up to the fact that it is leaving an awful lot of money and solid employment behind by not realising the value and potential of the fishing industry. It has done some good work, but should do much more. It should zone-in on the whitefish sector, look at the amount of it, hake, haddock, monk, leaving the country in trucks without ever benefiting Ireland and which is not monitored enough or inspected.

“Until that is corrected and the Department of the Marine and government wake up and now accept that the CFP is dead after Brexit and there is an opportunity to correct the mistake made fifty years ago and go and fight for a proper quota for our fishermen who are well capable and well-equipped now at long last to catch more fish and put it into the market in Ireland. This would give the opportunity to increase jobs in the industry, in the processing sector by thousands of people. There is a lot to be earned for Ireland.

“I urge the State, especially the Department of the Marine, through BIM and the SFPA - and the SFPA needs to stand up a bit more in this -- to realise the potential there is in the fishing industry. The worry I have is that, if the State continues the policy of not fighting strongly on behalf of the Irish industry in Europe, then it will go backwards.”



# NEWSMAKERS of the Month



The biggest marine NEWSMAKER in Ireland this past month. Ballycotton RNLI volunteer member, Barry McDonald, was the first to see the m.v. ALTA aground on rocks near the East Cork fishing village, while on his afternoon exercise run along the coastline. "It just came into view as I ran along. I couldn't understand how it was there." How the 77 metre (250 feet) cargo vessel got there is still a bit of a mystery. The Tanzanian-flagged ship had been abandoned by its crew of 10 who were rescued by the US Coast Guard 1,380 nautical miles South East of Bermuda on October 7, 2018 after it had drifted powerless for 20 days during which the crew couldn't repair engine problems. The last time it was seen was when the British Royal Navy's HMS Protector, an ice and research vessel boarded and found it deserted in the Autumn of 2019 about 700 miles South West of Ireland. Somewhat surprisingly, it was reported that its owners had made contact with Irish authorities responsible for dealing with the wreck which still remains close to Ballycotton. There is an usual twist in the story. See Page 15's THIS ISLAND NATION. Photo by Brian Motyer.



Ireland's first accredited fishmonger qualification which was launched in the fishing port of Howth, Co Dublin is putting it's first participants through their paces. Pictured in Howth is Mark Molloy – Buckley's SuperValu, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, Mateusz Kwiecien – SuperValu Castletroy, Castletroy, Co Limerick, Kian Clancy – Wrights of Howth, Howth, Co Dublin, Paul Durnin – Feeney's Fish, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, Dylan Sharkey – Fenelon's, Stillorgan, Co Dublin, Aisling McKenna – SuperValu Fairways, Dundalk, Co Louth, Aaron Moore – George's Fish Shop, Monkstown Farm, Monkstown, Co Dublin. Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's seafood development agency, has developed the Certificate in Fishmonger Skills in partnership with nationally and internationally recognised Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The new training combines practical and classroom learning and includes modules on seafood labelling, sustainable practices and seafood nutrition. The programme also includes hands-on demonstrations in fish filleting and culinary skills and is aimed at existing staff in seafood retailing or those interested in pursuing a career in the industry.



# Galway Hooker Racing Returns to TG4

## Local and Intense Rivalry on 'Bádóirí'



In this 2nd series of Bádóirí, we once again hoist sails with eight families, sailing Ireland's oldest and most native boats, in the Galway Hooker Association racing league.



(Above) The Truelight. (Below) Jimmy Mac Donncha, An Cheathrú Rua.



With a new boat joining the fleet the rivalry is local and intense, the competition fierce, and the waters treacherous.

On the western edge of Europe, lies an unique culture that depended and fought with the Atlantic Ocean for thousands of years. It is the native sailboat, the Galway Hooker, that sustained this poorest of communities, and the new generation of these same families of sailors still sail the coast of Connemara, now racing to be champions. The rocky inlets west of Galway Bay host the Galway Hooker boat racing series each year.

Once the workhorses of the West coast, the distinctive rust-red calico sails of the Galway Hookers now race for glory throughout the Summer months. In series 1 we saw the family owned boats battle one another for the coveted prize of All-Ireland champions. In this new series we introduce a new boat and a new family to the fleet. Young and eager to impress this new crew from 'The Truelight' boat become a racing force to be reckoned as all the crews push themselves and their boats to their limit. The rocky inlets west of Galway Bay host the Galway Hooker boat racing series each year.

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> series we also delve deeper into sailing families lives and histories. An illness to one of the skippers bring the boatmen together where they share their personal stories as well as their hopes and fears from their sailing culture. Towards the end of the series the racing and rivalry becomes more intense and the waters become treacherous.

Producer and Director of Bádóirí Donncha Mac Con Iomaire says, 'There are few societies in the world where a 200 year

old boat is the epicentre of the same family for 2 centuries. The maritime community of Connemara never underestimates the Atlantic, and the unity of their families cannot afford to succumb to failure at sea. This ancient world that works hard and plays hard is what is still most genuine culture of Ireland.'

**Episode 1:** The Hookers awaken from the long Connemara winter, only to find new contenders aboard for this seasons regattas. The preparations have started in earnest, and we follow the sailors as they race each other in the first of the Summers races.

**Episode 2:** With the racing season under full sail, the skipper of the **Truelight** is finishing a new home for his family, Tommy Kelly inspires the local minor football team, and a new generation of mariners are developing their skills with the local sailing clubs.

**Episode 3:** It's mid-Summer and as the competition heats-up in the races, the **Naomh Cáilín** crew hit the rocks both in cars and boats, Peadar Bailey of the **Capall** receives bad news regarding his health, refereeing the regatta is an unforgiving job, and Pat Mhicheal returns home to the island where he grew-up.

**Episode 4:** As the **Truelight** makes her intent clear for next season, boatman and renowned singer-songwriter, John Beag, tells of the huge repertoire of songs composed about the Galway Hookers and their owners, exotic musical sailors arrive in Inis Meáin, and the **Tonaí** is once again crowned champions of the Galway Hookers Association league.

**Bádóirí begins on Thursday March 5<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 8pm on TG4**



# news from the North West

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## UK Fisheries Bill Confirms 'Worst Fears' of Irish Fishermen KFO Lauds Barnier Commitment to Fisheries as Draft Mandate Sets Out Support Required by Irish Industry

The Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) has expressed its bemusement at the UK Fisheries Bill published. The bill, which proposes denying Irish fishermen automatic access to UK waters, would have catastrophic ramifications for the Irish fishing industry but in reality, is "a poor man's Trojan horse" in the greater scheme of EU/UK negotiations according to the KFO CEO, Seán O'Donoghue.

However, the KFO remains optimistic that the linkage between trade and fisheries as set out in the EU's Political Declaration will be not merely endorsed but strengthened. The KFO has welcomed the EU's draft negotiating blueprint for Brexit trade talks stating that insofar as fisheries is concerned, it offers tangible hope to the Irish industry and provides a timely boost after a bruising, exhausting period of negotiation.

Mr O'Donoghue said: "I cannot over-emphasise how important it is that the work invested in the political declaration by Michel Barnier, Phil Hogan and others is fully supported by the EU27. This UK bill is little more than posturing and its timing is hardly a surprise, but the real negotiations are entering an absolutely crucial phase.

"The UK bill will be null and void once the EU27 remain united and retain the linkage between fisheries and trade. The political declaration by the EU and UK on the next round of Brexit negotiations sets July 1<sup>st</sup> as the target date for agreeing a new fisheries deal between the EU and UK.

"We have done and will continue to do everything in our power to fight for the future viability of Irish fisheries and that means being a part of overall trade negotiations. The stakes have never been higher and we will not be found wanting in fighting our corner and not allowing Brexit be the death knell for our proud industry," stated the KFO CEO.

Seán O'Donoghue sounded a note of caution stating that while Mr Barnier had endorsed the European Fisheries Alliance position which the KFO forms an intrinsic part of, there is a long way to go and the UK Government hasn't shown itself to a model of consistency in what are unprecedented discussions.

The text of the blueprint states: "the objective of the provisions on fisheries should be to uphold Union fishing activities. In particular, it should aim to avoid economic dislocation for Union fishermen that have traditionally fished in the United Kingdom waters. To reach this objective, the provisions on fisheries should build on existing reciprocal access conditions, quota shares and the traditional activity of the Union fleet.

"The terms on access to waters and quota shares shall guide the conditions set out in regard of other aspects of the economic part of the envisaged partnership, in particular

of access conditions under the free trade area as provided for in Point B of Section 2 of this Part."

Having been at the heart of negotiations from day one, Mr O'Donoghue said, "Mr Barnier stated clearly today and I quote, 'agreement on fisheries will be intrinsically linked to the trade agreement.' That is what we have implored from the get-go. As long as our negotiators stick tight to this position, there remains light at the end of the tunnel.

"Any other outcome is too ghastly to countenance and the EU27 must now remain united and strong to retain that crucial linkage between fisheries and trade."

He reiterated his assertion that the one industry which is completely and uniquely exposed to anything other than an orderly transition, is the Irish fisheries sector. Last year, our seafood industry was valued at €1.25 billion employing more than 14,300 people with this economic footprint predominantly in rural, coastal locations. A no-deal Brexit would be the death knell for many coastal fishing communities, with projected job losses of between 30% and 40% in the Irish industry. Currently, almost a third of Irish catch is caught in UK waters mostly notably 60% of mackerel and 40% of nephrops (prawns).

## Almaco Amberjack Caught Off the Donegal Coast

An Almaco Amberjack was caught off Tory Island on the Donegal coast, this is one of only a very small number of Almaco Amberjack ever caught in Irish waters and the most northerly record from the Northeast Atlantic to date. The Amberjack was caught on rod and line approximately 1.6 km south of the island, it was released alive after being photographed.

The first ever recorded specimen of an Almaco Amberjack in Irish waters was caught in 2001 at Frenchman's Rock, Rosguill Peninsula, Co Donegal and weighed 681g. The second specimen was caught in 2006 in a trammel net at a depth of 10 m off Carrigabullog Rocks, Little Killary Bay, Co Galway, it measured 38 cm and weighed 925 g gutted, and was donated to the Natu-

ral History Museum in Dublin.

In 2007, a third specimen was filmed underwater off Sleah Head, Co Kerry. And in 2010, a fourth specimen, measuring approximately 50 cm, was caught at a depth of 12m from the shore near Castle-townbere, Co Cork. Prior to its capture, it was observed along with other Amberjacks amongst a shoal of Trigger fish.

Declan Quigley, who is a recognised authority on rare and unusual fish and shellfish in Irish waters told Marine Times, "The Almaco Amberjack (*S. rivoliana*) has a circum-tropical distribution in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The species attains a maximum weight of about 60 kg. *S. rivoliana* was first reported from European Atlantic waters during August 1984 when a specimen, measuring 27.5 cm, was captured in a trammel net in Elbery Cove, near Torquay, south Devon, UK.

Over the last 35 years, the species has been recorded with increasing frequency from the western Mediterranean Sea, and progressively northwards via Northwest Spain, Bay of Biscay, to the Channel Islands."

He added, "At least nine species of Amberjacks (*Seriola spp.*) are recognised worldwide. Although they are generally found in tropical and sub-tropical wa-

ters, four species have occasionally been recorded from temperate European Atlantic waters: Greater Amberjack (*S. dumerili*), Almaco Amberjack (*S. rivoliana*), Guinean Amberjack (*S. carpenteri*), and Lesser Amberjack (*S. fasciata*), including two from Irish waters (*S. dumerili* and *S. rivoliana*).

"The Greater Amberjack has a similar worldwide circum-tropical distribution as the Almaco Amberjack. *S. dumerili* attains a maximum weight of about 80.6 kg. *S. dumerili* was first reported from European Atlantic waters

during September 1951 when a specimen, measuring 45.2 cm, was captured in the Salcombe Estuary, south Devon, UK.

"Since then, several more specimens have been recorded from European Atlantic waters, including Northwest Spain, Bay of Biscay, and Channel Islands. During October 1990, a Greater Amberjack weighing 900 g, was captured at Kilkee, Co Clare, and represents the most northerly record from the NE Atlantic to date.

"Since the early 1950s, *S. dumerili*, *S. rivoliana*, *S. carpenteri* and *S. fasciata* have significantly extended their range in the Northeast Atlantic from the Mediterranean and northwards into temperate European Atlantic waters, possibly in response to increasing sea water temperatures," he concluded.



New slipway and hardstanding extension at Lehardan Harbour, Lough Swilly, completed by Donegal County Council. Photo courtesy Dugald Macfarlane



Some notable retirements in Killybegs as Conal 'Seagull' Breslin has washed out his last tank on the Atlantic Challenge and Steve Mc Sharry skipper of the Atlantic Challenge has also retired after returning from his last fishing trip on 27th February. A few good years of fishing experience between these two sea dogs and an odd good story. Enjoy your retirement. Many thanks to [www.killybegsonline.org](http://www.killybegsonline.org) for the photo.



## news from Castletownbere

### Helen Riddell



**Castletownbere full to the brim during storm Ciara**  
Photo courtesy Anne Marie Cronin Photography

#### Naval Commemoration

The Naval Service held a special commemoration on Thursday January 30th to mark the 30th anniversary of one of their former comrades, Leading Seaman Michael Quinn who died while helping to save the crew of a Spanish trawler during a storm in Berehaven.

On the night of January 30th, 1990, a Spanish trawler with 17 crew onboard was blown on to rocks near Roanacarrig Lighthouse in a force 8 gale. The naval vessel LE Deirdre, which was anchored off Bere Island, deployed an inflatable boat with Leading Seaman Michael Quinn (27) and Able Seaman Paul Kellet (31) onboard. However, in treacherous sea conditions their boat capsized. Paul Kellet managed to reach the shoreline, and flag down a passing Garda car. Michael Quinn tragically drowned in the incident.

An RAF Sea King helicopter, and some nearby merchant vessels, along with lifeboats from Baltimore and Valentia joined in the search for Michael Quinn and rescued the crew of the Spanish fishing boat. The following morning, an Air Corps

Dauphin helicopter recovered the body of Leading Seaman Quinn.

The then King of Spain, Juan Carlos posthumously awarded the Spanish Cross of Naval Merit to Leading Seaman Quinn. The Irish government awarded him a posthumous DSM (Distinguished Service Medal) 'in recognition of his unselfish bravery and devotion to duty.'

To mark the anniversary the crew of LÉ James Joyce laid a wreath at the spot where the tragedy occurred near Roanacarrig. At the same time a commemoration was held at Haulbowline Naval base where wreaths were laid by Defence Forces Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett, and one of Mr Quinn's three sisters, Angela Dunne. A representative of the Spanish embassy was also in attendance.

#### Fisherman Medevaced from Beara

A fisherman from the Faroe Islands was medevaced from a trawler 10km off Dursey Island late in late February, following an accident. The incident happened approximately 400km off the Cork coast in

heavy seas. The 70-metre trawler Aortic Voyager which is registered in the Faroe Islands steamed closer to the coastline to come within helicopter range. The Irish Coast Guard Waterford based helicopter Rescue 117 successfully winched the man off the trawler and transported him to Cork University Hospital for treatment.

#### Ardgroom Men's Group

A men's group in Ardgroom on the Beara Peninsula have spent the past few months building a traditional currach from scratch, with help from a former prop builder on the award winning television series Game of Thrones.

The Ardgroom Men's Group, undertook the project to take them through the winter months, enlisting the help of craftsman and boat builder Dave Nolan from Macroom who had previously worked as a resident boat builder on the Game of Thrones production team, constructing boats used in key battle scenes in the series. The group plan to launch the currach this summer.

The Ardgroom Men's Group was formed four years ago as a means to combat rural isolation, and currently have around 20 members. The group meet every Thursday at 8pm in the Caha Centre, Ardgroom. The group are hosting a fundraising Come Dine With Us evening on Friday March 27th in the Caha Centre, Ardgroom. Enjoy a three course meal, cooked and served by the men's group for only €20 per person. Money raised will go towards funding the currach project. Places are limited, to book contact Sean on 087 2033699.

#### St Patrick's Day

The organisers of the Castletownbere St Patrick's Day Parade are busy planning this year's event which will take place on Tuesday March 17th. All businesses, voluntary groups, schools and individuals are encouraged to take part in what is always a highlight of the town's year. Anyone who is interested in being part of the parade is asked to contact Anne Marie Cronin on 087 2386068.

#### Beara Community School Time Capsule

In 1995 to mark the end of European Nature Conservation year, Transition Year students at Scoil Phobail Bhéara, participated in a joint Ireland/UK project called 20/20 Vision. The project involved researching topics including; landscape and environment, farming, fishing, education, teenage lifestyle and environmental awareness in Beara. Students recorded how these topics were in the past in the 1970s, how they were at that time in 1995 and their predictions as to how they might be in 2020.

The material they put together included audiotapes, video tapes, written reports and photographs and stored in a time capsule that was registered with the Council of Europe Offices in Strasbourg and the National Library of Ireland.

The school will now be opening the time capsule on Friday March 13th at 7.30pm at the school, and hope as many of those from the class involved will be able to attend.

## Anger as Rubble is Dumped in Beara Historic Lobster Ponds

**IFA call for dumping crackdown highlighted as Castletownbere Harbour Master prepares Report**

To support the IFA's recent call for greater controls on illegal dumping, an environmental group has published on its website ([friendsoftheirishenvironment.org](http://friendsoftheirishenvironment.org)) photographs of thousands of tons of illegally dumped demolition and construction waste which have destroyed historic Lobster Ponds on the Beara peninsula.

The Lobster Ponds, located just outside Castletownbere, were large concrete tidal enclosures built in the last century to hold lobsters during the year for the lucrative Christmas French market. Photographs published in a Site Report on the website of Friends of the Irish Environment show the structure now almost entirely filled with rubble, including construction materials dumped beyond the Ponds into Berehaven Bay itself.

The IFA is calling this week for 'urgent action' to address the increase of dumping, citing 'builders' rubble' as a particular cause for concern. They are meeting with the Department of Environment in the coming weeks seeking changes in the waste management laws to stop 'reckless' behaviour.

Tony Lowes, one of the Directors of the locally based Friends of the Irish Environment, told the Southern Star this week that the 'scale of dumping at the Lobster Ponds is widespread in Beara with no enforcement and a scoff law attitude – with residents too scared to speak out publicly'.

He explained that the group was alerted to the dumping by an anonymous letter, whose author said the activities and the operator were well known locally but that no one would speak out for fear of social ostracization. Mr. Lowes said that they had reported the matter to the Council, who had passed it on to the Area Planner, and to the Harbourmaster, under whose jurisdiction the Foreshore there lies with the Castletownbere Harbour Authority.

'The Harbour Master responded more quickly than any other agency we have ever approached', Mr. Lowes said, 'with Harbourmaster Cormac McGinley and an officer from the Marine Engineering Division in Tralee making a site inspection within 24 hours'.

Mr. McGinley told the Southern Star that 'The Lobster Ponds are now private property and we are investigating what seems to be large amounts of building rubble dumped into the Ponds'. A spokesman for Cork County Council also confirmed to the Southern Star that a report is being prepared.

'We would support the IFA in their efforts to put an end to what is widespread illegal dumping of this kind of waste in particular, and have forwarded our Report on to them', Mr. Lowes added.



**Ardgroom Men's Shed with their traditional currach which they have been building (l-r): John Weston, John Joe Hartnett, Sean Sullivan, David Nolan, Donie Murphy, Mick Brennan, John Joe Sullivan. Photo courtesy Anne Marie Cronin Photography**



## Will the UK Deliver on its Post-Brexit Fishing Promises?

The Pew Charitable Trusts is an independent non-profit, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1948. It has been described as having over US\$6 billion in assets and its stated mission is to serve the public interest by “improving public policy, informing the public and invigorating civic life using evidence-based, non-partisan analysis to solve today’s challenges.” It has published this article analysing the draft UK Fisheries Bill and the British fishing industry situation post-Brexit. It is written by Andrew Clayton who directs what the Trusts’ describe as their “efforts to end overfishing in North-Western Europe.”

**In our International News pages this month (pages 22 and 23) we report that ‘UK FISHERMEN DON’T TRUST THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT’. What happens in UK waters is of vital importance to the Irish fishing industry. At the Marine Times we felt this article reflects another opinion about this issue in which our readers would be interested.**

The UK government has long said it wants to become a “world leader” in fisheries management and, following the publication of the draft UK Fisheries Bill, decision makers have a chance to achieve that. But doing so will require firm commitments. The Bill presents an opportunity for the UK to show it has learned lessons from good and bad fisheries management around the globe and will move toward sustainable stewardship of its fish stocks, many of which are still being overfished.

UK leaders already had opportunities to learn from their unsuccessful attempts over the past two years to agree this legislation. The first draft of the Bill, proposed in October 2018, was pre-empted by a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs press release praising the legislation for its sustainability provisions and inviting journalists to write about this element of the story before they’d seen the text.

Unfortunately, the text did not match that rhetoric: the Bill would have created a flexible “framework” for fisheries decisions but few binding requirements and would have left much of the UK’s fishing policies to be determined later at the discretion of future Secretaries of State.

The new Bill, published on 30 January—and promoted with the same advance press release tactic—includes improvements in some areas but also repeats many of the same flaws. It strengthens objectives and mechanisms to achieve sustainability fishery by fishery or stock by stock and maintains the objective to restore stocks to productive levels—mirroring the goals of the European Union’s Common Fisheries Policy. But the legislation also has a worrying lack of clarity on the annual controls on fishing pressure needed to achieve this. Rather than stating a clear requirement to fish sustainably each year, the Bill includes a complex structure of sometimes optional “management plans” that may or may not achieve the objective stock by stock.

The message from Ministers still seems to be that the UK government might need flexibility to fish some stocks unsustainably in some years, so this is a critical area in which the wording needs to be tightened. After all, ending overfishing will benefit people—including the fishing industry—and fish stocks in the long term. And, in fact, continued overfishing will end up hurting the industry more than any other stakeholder, so it is in fishing and seafood

companies’ best interests to support policies that lead to sustainability.

As decades of fisheries management confirm, an official policy of “trust us” doesn’t work. Successful fisheries managers, including in the US, drove down overfishing, restored stocks, and restored high-yield fisheries by setting binding limits into law and sticking to them. Elsewhere, broad intentions to recover stocks at some point in future decades, in the absence of limits on fishing pressure, deliver the opposite outcomes with decades-long recovery timelines.

And the “trust us” approach has led to EU policymakers publicly agreeing to bold stock recovery objectives while meeting behind closed doors each December to set unsustainably high catch limits for the next 12 months.

This failure to safeguard fish populations and the fisheries that rely on them is not because Ministers are uniquely ineffective or because unregulated, unreported, or illegal fishing is happening over the horizon. It’s not even because of climate or chemistry changes in the water, although none of these things help. It’s because Ministers are under huge political pressure to reject cuts to fishing limits and secure increases in catches the following year. Worsening overfishing becomes a very real risk if the UK and EU also disagree on their relative shares of each fishery during their talks in the coming year(s).

It’s not too late for parliamentarians in the UK to improve the Bill by inserting a requirement to limit fishing pressure each year to the scientifically determined maximum sustainable level, itself an unambitious safeguard. Or require genuine ecosystem-based management that would address the looming productivity decreases and changing distribution of stocks that scientists anticipate as climate change affects fisheries around the UK. At the very least, the Bill should emulate other successful fisheries management regimes, such as the US system, by requiring recovery of depleted stocks in a specific time frame.

The UK will still share management of many stocks with the EU and Norway. To deliver the “world leading” fisheries management it has promised, the UK will need to demonstrate leadership in its own waters and among its local partners first.

*Changing policy is a long and often slow process, but is essential to ensure the survival of dependent island communities, says Seamus Bonner, Secretary of the Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, writing this month’s column where he makes the point that fishing and seafaring is a central facet of life on the offshore islands*



## It Is Important for All Sectors of the Irish Industry to Pull Together

**Fishing and seafaring is a central facet of life on our offshore islands. For as long as people have lived on our islands, islanders have worked on and travelled over the oceans that surround us. Seafaring is a skillset that is highly valued by islanders even in today’s time of changes where not as many make their living directly from, or on, the sea.**

The Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, or IIMRO for short, was founded as a national organisation in 2014 to organise and provide a united voice for islanders in matters relating to the marine. The IIMRO organisation has its origins in a group founded in 2006 by Donegal islanders who worked to secure a future for island fishermen and now represents small scale island fishers from Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork. Many years were spent working at an EU and national level and resulted in islands being afforded special recognition in the 2012 EU Common Fisheries Policy and the 2014 publication of a Joint Oireachtas report on sustaining island and coastal communities.

Changing policy is a long and often slow process, but is essential to ensure the survival of dependent island communities where other employment opportunities can be limited and the rich marine heritage embedded in all aspects of island life needs to be preserved and protected.

Following the launch of the Joint Oireachtas report on island and coastal fisheries on Inis Oírr in 2014 a number of recommendations were identified and prioritised by island fishermen. These recommendations developed by the cross-party Dáil committee covered topics such as social welfare reform for share fishermen, access to quota and representative structures by the small scale fleet, as well as managed areas for fishery enhancement.

The priorities are not the easiest to deliver but are central to many of the issues that face the island small scale fishing fleets day-to-day and will ensure the long term survival of island fishing communities. Work has continued for the last number of years in conjunction with other small scale fishery representative organisations across Europe such as the LIFE platform and their member organisations. IIMRO have

representation on the EU North Western Waters Advisory Council and works with various MEPs to highlight issues relevant to small scale fishers in the EU parliament. Work continues at a national level to deliver the priorities identified in the joint Oireachtas report required for full participation, in restoring stocks, establishing local management of the fishery resource and the routes to market for such a seasonal fleet.

IIMRO works with all political parties and continues to make constructive contributions to many national consultations

on areas such as the upcoming EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Marine Spatial Planning process, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and meeting elected representatives at all levels to ensure island fisher voices are heard.

IIMRO are working with other partners such as Trinity College Dublin, on the EU funded COSUSTAIN project which is looking at innovative governance models for fisheries on the islands

with a focus on co-management and community initiatives. One such initiative was the recent recognition of navigation landmarks used on the islands, and elsewhere, in the UNESCO catalogue of intangible cultural heritage.

Recognition is a vital first step and work continues to record and preserve our precious cultural heritage for future generations. As we enter the uncharted waters of the Brexit negotiations it is important for all sectors of the Irish Industry to pull together for the sake of all our fishers. As active members of national and European networks IIMRO represents our members interests in challenging times, indeed nothing new to Irish Islanders.

**Further info:** [www.iimro.org](http://www.iimro.org); [www.life-platform.eu](http://www.life-platform.eu); [www.belongingtothesea.com](http://www.belongingtothesea.com); [www.nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/marcanna-na-talamh/](http://www.nationalinventoryich.chg.gov.ie/marcanna-na-talamh/)





# International Fishing and Maritime News

## UK Fishermen Don't Trust the British Government

The introduction of legislation to the House of Commons giving the UK Government the power to declare itself an independent coastal state and manage its stocks outside of EU control has not convinced the British fishing industry that it will get what it wants – total control of fishing in UK waters. There is a fear that fishing will be used in the bargaining of a deal with the EU, even though Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that his government has no fear of leaving the EU without a trade deal. The Scottish Government has made clear that it is determined to “protect and advance Scotland’s fishing interests” while the National Federation of Fishermen, based in York, England, has said the promise to ‘take back’ control of British fisheries must mean a complete break from “current unfair” EU regulations.



What is apparent is that there is more distrust than trust placed in the UK government delivering fully on what it has promised to fishermen.

The Scottish Fishermen’s Federation and the NFFO organised a meeting at Westminster which was attended by 100 Parliamentarians “to enable the UK to secure maximum benefit from its new status as an independent coastal state.”

Chief Executives Barrie Deas of the NFFO and Elspeth Macdonald of SFF made a joint statement which said: “With control of access to UK waters we can ensure that UK fishermen get a fair deal on quotas, revive coastal communities across the country and grow our industry’s role as a world leader in sustainable fishermen management. The UK government has made promises to the fishing industry that they will act to realise the opportunities of Brexit for the industry. As an independent coastal state we can break free of the current unfair arrangements that see EU vessels catch more than 60 per cent of the fish that are caught in UK waters.”

The Scottish Fisheries Secretary, Fergus Ewing, pointed out that fisheries “is a devolved power,” extended to Scotland.

“It is disappointing that the Fisheries Bill still allows the UK government to set quotas for stocks in Scottish waters, despite assurances that this is not their intention. The UK government has failed to adopt the amendments that we provided to ensure that Scottish fisheries are managed by Scottish Ministers.

“As with much of Brexit it appears that once again the UK government is ignoring the devolved process. We are seriously

concerned that Scotland still does not have its own place at international fisheries negotiations as a matter of right. We still have no clarity or certainty over funding to support future investment in our fishing industry.”

The Scottish Fishermen’s Federation added a clarification of its views, which would be of interest to Irish fishermen: “We have never said that we wanted to deny EU vessels the opportunity to fish in UK waters post-Brexit. Our consistent position has been that we want unfettered control over access. Then, as a coastal state, we can negotiate with the EU and others on an annual basis in international forums. This is what Norway, Iceland and Faroes do. Over time this will allow the UK to obtain a much fairer share of the quota in its own waters than the 40 per cent it is entitled to under the CFP.”

“The Scottish fishing industry is not a bargaining chip, but a sector that has been subjected to a historic wrong that needs to be put right,” warned the SFF Chief Executive McDonald on the day when the UK formally exited from the EU.

The strong message she gave was that “failure by the government” to gain full control of access to UK waters in the next phase of Brexit negotiations would be a “colossal betrayal of the fishing industry.”

That appears to be the core of what may yet be a major internal battle in the UK about fisheries, which could be particularly important in regard to the financial sector, a major part of London and Britain’s economy.

Two contradictory viewpoints centre around the British financial sector which is pressing its concern on the UK government

to be prioritised in negotiations with the EU, as essential to economic stability. *The Financial Times* newspaper and Reuters reported that sources in three international banks has expressed concern that access to EU markets would depend on a broader trade-off, such as Britain allowing continued access, the same as at present, to fishing in its waters and they would not be happy with the government if it would not do so.

The UK fishing industry is valued at 160 times less than financial services. There are 8,000 employed in fishing compared with more than a million in finance. The EU is Britain’s biggest financial services export market, worth stg26 billion according to reports.

*The Scotsman* reported that Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, had told MPs of the Scottish Parliament that a senior UK government official in Whitehall had told him that Boris Johnson’s government was prepared to bargain fishing for a deal on financial services.

There is no certainty about what will happen.

### ABERDEEN Discard Problem Caused by EU Quotas Based on 50-year-old Data

Another example of how the EU should respond to the UK has been shown in a study revealing that EU-decided quotas are based out-of-date information that is 50 years old!

“It is no wonder that the UK fleet has such a massive discard problem in the North Sea. The population of hake increased five-fold in the last decade, and much of it is now in the North Sea.” This was the view expressed by Professor Paul Fernandes, a Fisheries Scientist at the University of Aberdeen’s School of Biological Sciences in Scotland who led research into stock populations in European waters which has shown that catch share is significantly out of kilter relative to actual fish distributions.

Fish quotas are based on data from almost 50 years ago and have failed to keep up with moving populations as a result of warming oceans and recovery from overfishing. In the North Sea, for example, the UK is allocated less than 1% of the total hake catch, yet more than 28% of the population are in UK waters.

Professor Paul Fernandes said that there are similar, though less severe, discrepancies for other species such as cod, haddock, whiting, saithe, plaice, herring and monkfish.

The study has been published in the journal ‘Conservation Letters’ and advocates a system where quota shares are allocated based on the actual distributions of fish rather than historical data. Professor Fernandes has proposed a new formula of zonal attachment, taking into account adult and juvenile fish and the movement of fish between areas.

“The European Union would not reconsider quota allocations, in spite of the overwhelming evidence of changing fish patterns, because it’s very contentious. However, with the UK becoming an independent coastal state, there is an opportunity to do something more sensible,” he said.

### SCOTLAND Salmon An Extraordinary Success

Underlining the importance of exports to the EU for the UK seafood industry, the EU accounted for 56 per cent of the volume of global Scottish salmon exports and 52 per cent of the value last year. Those figures were revealed when Scottish farmed salmon exports rose to a record value of stg £618 million in 2019. That is an increase of 22 per cent on 2018. Tonnage exported increased by 26 per cent to more than 94,000 tonnes. Exports grew in 17 of the top 20 markets, with France, the US and China remaining the biggest destinations. A total of 54 countries imported Scottish salmon. For the third year running, France emerged as the largest market, with sales worth stg£221 million, followed by the US (stg£179 million), and China (stg£59 million). Exports to the US grew in volume of 28 per cent year, with exports of 25,000 tonnes. A decline in exports to China of 11 per cent was offset by growth elsewhere in Asia, to countries including Taiwan and Japan, resulting in almost stg £97 million worth of Scottish salmon exported to the region.



The CEO of the Scottish Salmon Producers’ Organisation, Julie Hesketh-Laird (pictured above with Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing), said: “Scottish salmon is an extraordinary success. Such record-breaking performance is hugely encouraging and reflects the excellent reputation which Scottish salmon has in international markets. It is also a good environmental story, with its small carbon footprint and low water use, plus global recognition of its taste, quality and provenance is clearly understood in almost every corner of the globe.

‘Salmon’s continued export success sustains more than 2,300 jobs in Scotland, mostly in sparsely populated rural areas. This has led to substantial sums being re-invested into local communities, providing much-needed employment and economic support.’

She added: ‘These latest export successes represent a trail blazer for other Scottish food overseas and provide a further reminder of the importance of salmon, both to the Scottish economy and to the food and drink sector.’

### UNITED NATIONS Making Fish Less Harmful to Marine Species

Fifty million US dollars has been spent on a five-year programme by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation to protect international waters’ biodiversity by rendering fishing in these waters less harmful to several marine species, including sea turtles and tuna. The



Common Oceans Program was on “international waters” – those beyond national jurisdiction which account for over 90 per cent of the oceans and 40% of the Earth’s area, according to the FAO.

“Keeping international waters healthy and preserving their rich biodiversity have long been a challenge for marine areas that do not fall under the responsibility of any one country,” said Maria Helena Semedo, the FAO’s Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources.

“The Program has brought together a broad and unique partnership to tackle this challenge by promoting the sustainable management of fishery resources and ecosystem-based practices, with some outstanding results. We hope to expand this initiative which has ensured that eight out of thirteen major commercial tuna stocks no longer experience fishing, reducing bycatch and marine pollution, establishing eighteen new vulnerable marine ecosystems and raising awareness on ocean issues to strengthen decision-making.

Consideration is being given to extending the programme with the aim of continuing to strengthen governance in international waters and reinforce measures to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

## INDIA Foreign Investment Sought



The 22nd India International Seafood Show was dominated by a call for more foreign investment to boost the country’s seafood industry. The Marine Products Export Development Authority, which is the agency of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Seafood Export Association of India, outlined a strategy to promote the sector comprising an increase in productivity, expansion of aquaculture, diversification of species, improvement in infrastructure, brand promotion, increasing added value to seafood products and increasing the number of trade promotion offices. At present the industry only contributes 1 per cent to the gross domestic product of India.

## AUSTRALIA Fish Stocks in Good Condition

Australian fish stocks have been reported as being “in good condition” in an assessment of the biological status of fish stocks across twenty-two fisheries.

The Fishery Status Report by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences said that the government’s Fisheries Management Authority effectively manages fisheries on behalf of the Australian community.

“All fish stocks solely managed by AFMA maintained their status as not

subject to overfishing and not overfished, showing that the partnership of managers, the fishing industry and scientists continues to deliver good decisions in the interest of sustainability,” the report says. The economic contribution of the commercial fishing industry has a gross value of production for wild-catch fisheries at AUS\$1.79 billion in 2017-18. From an environmental perspective, there were no concerning issues or trends identified in relation to the outcomes of ecological risk assessments or interactions with protected species.

While confirming that management outcomes remain largely on track, the report also pointed to areas where improvement is needed, with some jointly-managed stocks by commercial interests said to be showing overfishing, primarily striped marlin in the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

## INDONESIA Commitment To Sustainable Fishing



Indonesia is the second largest fish producer in the world, according to statistics and its catch volumes are increasing. Because of concern about over-fishing the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and the Marine Stewardship Council have signed a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ affirming a joint commitment to sustainable fishing. This will focus on increasing accessibility of the MSC’s programme to fisheries in Indonesia.

The Ministry’s Secretary General, Nilanto Perbowo, said the intention is for the MSC “to assist the Indonesian government in giving global market recognition for Indonesian fisheries products that are free from illegal, unreported and unreported fishing as a premium product. We hope the MSC can push Indonesian fisheries product to the global market”.

The Indonesian government has been working with stakeholders to overcome some of the challenges facing wild-capture fisheries, such as overfishing. The MSC says it initiated the ‘Fish for Good’ project to support these efforts and is working with the Indonesian government, small-scale fisheries and stakeholders towards more sustainable fishing practices.

## NORWAY Exports to China Blocked by Russia

A plan to export salmon from Norway to China by train has been stopped by the Russian government. They were to have been carried by rail for 6,500 kms (4,000 miles) from Narvik, via Finland and through Moscow. It would have been one of the longest train journeys carrying freight in the world. There have been discussions about such a project for many years. The first train was to run in February but Russian authorities did not give approval for the export of the fresh salmon. The ten-day journey was regarded as a response to environmental criticism of the number of flights carrying seafood and alleged road congestion caused by

fish trucks” Environmentalists find various reasons to obstruct the aquaculture industry in Norway. A new technology product, BluWrap, doubling the life of foodstuffs was to keep the salmon fresh throughout the journey. Depending on the number of refrigerated wagons, each salmon train journey could have eliminated the need for dozens of flights. The halting of the plan had nothing to do with the coronavirus in China. Russian has, apparently, changed its rules about overland transportation of fresh food. A decision from Russia about operating the train is awaited in Narvik.

## ICELAND Nephrops Quota Allows for Monitoring



The Marine Research Institute in Norway has recommended a 214 tonne nephrops quota for 2020 which fishermen say is just enough for the state of the stock to be monitored. The Institute has defended the small quota as “enough to allow the strength and distribution of nephrops to be monitored this year.”

Two areas should be completely closed to fishing for nephrops to protect juveniles, the Institute has said. It has also proposed that trawling for groundfish should be closed in a number of areas. Last year the nephrops stock was judged to have decreased by 20%. Indications are that recruitment to the nephrops stock is at its lowest for many years. The Institute says that the stock will continue to decline.

## CANADA Prime Minister Accused of Reckless Behaviour Towards Fish Farming

The President and Chief Executive of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance has accused the country’s Prime Minister of trying to introduce a “reckless policy, not grounded in science,” that will threaten hundreds of jobs across Canada.

Tim Kennedy said that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s plan to ban net pen salmon farming in British Columbia threatened the industry.

Trudeau announced late in his election

campaign in the Autumn that he wanted to transition net pen farming in BC to closed containment systems by 2025, a move the industry described as ‘reckless’ and trying to curry favour with environmentalists.

A government report by Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans into different production systems for salmon farming in BC found that a complete move to land-based sites by 2025 would involve several hurdles. Land-based RAS and hybrid systems are the two technologies ready for commercial development in BC, it said. Floating closed containment require two-to-five years of further review and offshore technologies may require five-to-ten years of review, said the report. Challenges to land-based RAS grow-out facilities were identified as including shortage of a trained workforce, fish quality, fish health, broodstock development, energy efficiency, stocking densities and financial risks.

The report has suggested that to use the new technologies, several things need to align better, including national legislation and a policy to clarify the requirements for aquaculture in terms of environmental and social performance.

## GENDER EQUALITY Sought in Seafood Industry

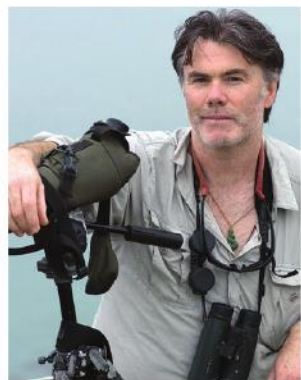
The International Association for Women in the Seafood Industry has called for greater gender equality in the seafood industry, to meet United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which were adopted in 2015 to challenge inequality. The fisheries and aquaculture industries have devised numerous actions for seas and marine resource sustainability, but have been identified as lagging behind on gender equality. The seafood industry has been described as, if it were a country, “it would be one of the most gender unequal in the world.” The WSI has stated that industry leaders are predominantly males, unaware of the actual gender imbalance and the detrimental impacts on the sector as a whole. It says that a survey it carried out showed that “55% of male industry leaders consider that this problem is solved and 85% don’t pay attention to it.” It said that gender equalities benefit business and has called on fishing and aquaculture stakeholders, corporations, professional organisations and NGOs to “devise projects to help achieve a better gender balance.”

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## IRISH WHALE AND DOLPHIN GROUP IWDG NEWS

*There is a 'new kid on the block' in the dolphin world, in terms of a regular visitor to Galway, who has chosen Nimmo's Pier in the Claddagh area of the city as his berth. Appropriately, the 'newbie' – though now a visitor for five years – is named Nimmo and the regular visits have been recorded by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group whose Sightings Officer, Padraig Whooley, says this is a wonderful*

*opportunity for Galwegians to observe a wild dolphin close to a city centre. Could 'Nimmo' be a counterpart of the famous 'Fungi' in Dingle?*

## Reflections on Winter

With the stretch in the days and February behind us, we can reflect on Cetacean activity this winter and look ahead to what we might expect this coming spring. Analysis of cetacean activity over a winter period at these Latitudes is likely to be brief. This reflects as much on the prevailing poor winter weather in the North Atlantic, than any notions we may have about the presence or absence of animals.



**Harbour Porpoises.**  
Photo Padraig Whooley IWDG

IWDG has still validated over 60 sightings of four cetacean species since January 1, of which the harbour porpoise, makes up just over 50%. The harbour porpoise, known in the Kerry Gaeltacht as 'An Tóithín,' is our smallest whale and is quite common for this species. They have showed quite well along the East Coast. In second place was the bottlenose dolphin with a good run of sightings along the East Antrim coast between the mouth of Belfast harbour and Red Bay in January

### Promenading in Galway

The most noteworthy bottlenose sighting to date this winter has been of an individual who will be familiar to many wildlife enthusiasts who regularly walk along the Galway promenade.



**Nimmo pictured in Galway by Margaux Pierrel**

On January 28 IWDG received and validated a sighting by Andrew Morgans of a solitary "dolphin" off the Nimmo's Pier area of Galway Docks. Given the location and circumstances, we are confident this is another inter annual re-sighting of the adult bottlenose dolphin known, perhaps not surprisingly, as 'Nimmo'. Hopefully this will be the first of many such records we'll receive of him/her in the coming months.

This sighting brings to five, the number of consecutive years that IWDG has tracked this individual in the inner Galway Bay area and specifically around Nimmo's Pier. He/she first came to our attention in 2015, and has since been recorded on 82 days. Similar perhaps to our humpback whales along the Southwest, the data suggests that 'Nimmo' is appearing earlier most years. It's also interesting to look at the number and span of sightings year-on-year, which tells us that not only is 'Nimmo' arriving earlier most years, but also staying longer. While this could be an artefact of increased awareness of its presence and more people reporting to IWDG, the data suggests that this area now represents important core feeding habitat for 'Nimmo.'

This is a wonderful opportunity for Galwegians to observe a wild dolphin close to a city centre and often within clear view of the shoreline, where optics may not even be necessary to see it. So it will be very interesting to see how 'Nimmo' gets on this year and how long he/she will remain in the area, if at all. We ask people to report any sightings of 'Nimmo' over the coming months. It is your daily reports that help us build the all-important bigger picture as to how populations use all Irish waters and how individuals use local waters.

## Whale Reports and Storm Batterings

It's been very quiet on the whale front, with just two confirmed sightings reports of fin whales off the Ling Rocks south of Cork harbour and Hook Head, Co. Wexford on January 21/22. Sightings of late season fin whales along the Celtic Sea are not uncommon and coincide with the presence of spawning herring and sprat in traditional spawning grounds in places like Dunmore East.

It is very likely that there were a lot more fin whales and perhaps even some humpbacks spread out over a wide area extending from East Cork along the Waterford coast, towards the Hook Peninsula, but even the planet's second largest animal is difficult to spot without calm seas and clear skies, which have been in short supply in recent weeks. So it's quite likely that our paltry two whale records say more about the succession of Atlantic storms that have battered our coastline than it does about the whales.

With humpback whales arriving off the Azores in recent weeks, it seems reasonable to assume that the Southbound migration to the tropical breeding grounds off the Cape Verdes and Caribbean is well underway. Although there is evidence that not every whale makes this long migration, it's likely that a few hardy or lonely individuals chose to over-winter at our Latitudes, or further north. It is a long track south for a whale, if at the end of the day you're going to partake in neither the making of, or giving birth to, babies!

So for those that are either too young or post-productive, (code for too old), staying where the food is, may not be such a bad alternative. Their blubber layer is more than adequate for taking care of the cold sea temperatures!

### West Cork Conference

If you're interested in large whales, or curious about their conservation and research into these magnificent mammals returning each year to our South coast, then the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group is delighted to announce 'Whale Tales Cork' on Saturday, March 28, starting at 10 a.m. at the Celtic Ross Hotel Rosscarbery, with an optional land-based Whalewatch at nearby Cloghna Head between 4 and 5 p.m. - weather permitting.'

This unique one-day event, will bring together a diverse mix of citizen scientists, researchers, operators and marine wildlife enthusiasts, all passionate about whales, to share their stories and experiences. It will be an opportunity for the IWDG to present its findings with members of the public who have supported the Irish Cetacean Recording Schemes over the past 25 years and to encourage participation. It will also be an opportunity to look ahead to the next 20 years and to explore the challenges facing our visiting giants. All are welcome. Bookings on Eventbrite via IWDG.ie

**Irish Whale and Dolphin Group**



## ICES Workshop Aims to Map Deepwater Sharks in the North-East Atlantic

**Experts in shark biology, data and mapping recently met at the Marine Institute's headquarters in Oranmore, Co Galway to map the distribution of deepwater sharks, skates and chimaeras in the North-East Atlantic Ocean. This information will assist in understanding the range and habitat of these species, underpinning future management decisions.**

The International Council Exploration of the Seas (ICES) WKSHARKS Workshop aims to produce maps that indicate the area and depth of 25 species of deepwater sharks, skates and chimaeras. This information will be considered by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to determine future action to sustainably manage these populations. These two organisations have a joint interest in the open north Atlantic, while ICES scientists have unique knowledge of the deepwater fisheries and species in this area. Ireland, Portugal, Iceland and the UK are the main countries involved in this review.

Maurice Clarke, Fisheries Scientist at the Marine Institute and WKSHARKS Workshop Chair said, "Sharks and rays have an important function in maintaining balanced and healthy marine ecosystems. Providing scientific advice is essential to protecting these marine species in the North-East Atlantic. For many of these species, this is the first time that data from European surveys is being collated and analysed for this purpose."

Irish waters are home to 71 species of sharks, skates, rays and chimaeras. These species include some of the latest maturing and slowest reproducing of all vertebrates, resulting in very low population growth rates with little capacity to recover from overfishing and other threats such as pollution or habitat destruction.

Scientists and marine experts analysed decades of data from research surveys in the North Atlantic Ocean. This included nearly 30 years of data collected by Irish scientists on board the Marine Institute's RV *Celtic Explorer* and commercial vessels.

The WKSHARKS workshop included experts from Ireland, United Kingdom, Portugal, France and Denmark, with other experts contributing remotely from Norway, Iceland and the Netherlands.

ICES received a joint request from the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to develop distribution maps of deep-sea sharks, rays and skates, and also to advise on methods of mitigating bycatch of these species.



# Irish Intervention in U.S. Court Case About Titanic

International maritime lawyer Michael Kingston, who has been a leading advocate for the rights of the relatives of the French and Irish victims of the Betelgeuse oil tanker disaster in Bantry Bay and who has called on the Gardai to conduct an inquiry into the State's role in investigating marine accidents, intervened in a case in the United States involving the *Titanic*.



He says this was in support of "Irish interests" because of an application by a salvage company to penetrate the hull of the sunken *RMS Titanic* for the first time.

The Court case is in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, involved the salvage company R.M.S Titanic Inc ('RMST Inc') seeking permission from the Court to penetrate the hull of the *Titanic* wreck for the first time.

Mr Kingston, from Goleen in West Cork, is an international maritime expert, who works as a consultant to the United Nations maritime agency, the International Maritime Organisation. He is also Consultant and Vice-Chairman of the Irish Cultural Centre at Hammersmith in London. He wrote to the Senior Judge of the Court presiding over the case, the Honorable Rebecca Beach Smith. RMST Inc want to enter the wreck to retrieve its Marconi wireless telegraph.

In his letter, supported by fellow Corkman and lawyer, Ciarán McCarthy, Mr Kingston asked the Court to reject RMST Inc's application on the basis that "no proper consultation has taken place with Ireland's 'Interests as a Nation', particularly because of the need to consider the families

of those who died, but also the ship's other close connections with Ireland (in Cork and Belfast)."

Mr. Kingston has worked on the international 'Agreement for the protection of the wreck of the *RMS Titanic*' which was ratified by the United States. He says Ireland should accede to the Agreement in order to protect Irish interests.

In his letter to Judge Smith, Mr. Kingston cited Ireland's preservation order on the *R.M.S Lusitania*, which prohibits any penetration of the wreck as it is a grave site. He said that Ireland has shown the victims the deepest respect and that the United States should reciprocate that respect and refuse RMST Inc's application.

Ciarán McCarthy B.L., is a guest lecturer in maritime law at University College Cork and at the UN Convention on Trade and Development; a Lecturer at the National Maritime College of Ireland and a former ship's officer. He said: "The *Titanic* disaster has maintained an indelible stain on the Irish consciousness in the more than a century since the ship's launching in Belfast and the termination of its ill-fated maiden voyage in the North Atlantic on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1912. It is a matter of intense con-

cern that it is proposed that the hull of the wreck, essentially the grave of over 1,500 souls, including the emigrants from Ireland who had boarded the ship in Queenstown in Cork on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1912 in search of a new life in the United States, should be penetrated to facilitate the removal of relics. This proposal stands in stark contrast to the Irish government's continuing commitment to the preservation order protecting the wreck of the *Lusitania* which sank three years later, while travelling in the opposite direction with its many US victims and is in clear defiance of the recently ratified, "Agreement for the protection of the wreck of the R.M.S. *Titanic*". The opening of a grave to recover items should be strenuously opposed in the absence of clear scientific or investigative motivation, as opposed to the ghoulish recovery of artefacts for commercial gain."

In January Mr. Kingston submitted material to the Gardai at a meeting at Garda Headquarters, pursuing a request to investigate what he has described as "the failings of the State in investigating maritime accidents." He asked for this to be done "as a matter of urgency in order to save life and to establish the fundamental rights of victims in death and those of their family members in investigations."

The European Commission, in 2018, held that the involvement of the Secretary General of the Department of Transport and the Chief Surveyor of the Irish Marine Survey Office in maritime investigations was not impartial under EU law. It referred its decision to the European Court of Justice, where a date for a hearing is still awaited.

The Gardai said that correspondence given to them by Mr. Kingston, who was accompanied at the meeting by Independent T.D. Mattie McGrath; Schull fisherman Pierce O'Driscoll who has been involved in raising issues about safety equipment and Anne Marine O'Brien whose brother John drowned in 2010 of Helvick Head, Co. Waterford, when Patrick Esmonde also died; is being considered.

In the *Titanic* case, Judge Rebecca Beach Smith deferred a ruling on the case, after

hearing an oceanographer say that salvaging the Marconi wireless telegraph "would not be grave robbery, but a way to connect people to the ship's legacy and honour its passengers."

"It's one of those iconic artefacts, like the signal flares that the sinking ship launched," said David Gallo, an oceanographer who retired from the U.S. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and is now a consultant for R.M.S Titanic Inc., the salvage company.

The company is also facing resistance from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which represents the public's interest in the wreck site. The US Attorney's Office in Virginia represents NOAA. Its lawyers argued in court documents that the proposed retrieval runs contrary to prior court orders that prohibit the firm from cutting holes or taking items from the wreck.

The salvage firm has previously records items from debris outside the wreck, including silverware, china and gold coins.

"It seems clear that this is not simply a 'one-off' proposal for the Marconi wireless telegraph, but a placeholder for future requests to take similar actions in order to recover other artefacts from inside the wreck," NOAA's lawyers told the Court.

There was also opposition from the Massachusetts-based *Titanic* Historical Society whose President, Karen Kamuda, said: "We have been against disturbing the wreck because it is a grave site. This request is all about money."

Judge Beach Smith said it was too early for her to make any decisions on the proposal, that she needed more details. She intends to schedule another hearing at "some time in the future."

Michael Kingston told the *Marine Times*: "This was a successful result. Basically the Judge has asked R.M.S Titanic Inc to go away and think things through. The battle is not over yet, but now we have time as a nation with an interest in this as I have shown to act now, following my intervention."

## Poots Pledges to Stand Up for Northern Fishermen

Recently appointed Fisheries Minister Mr Edwin Poots, has vowed to fight for the local fishing industry in Northern Ireland and support its growth as he visited Kilkeel Harbour recently.

The Minister met with Mr Alan McCulla, OBE, Chief Executive of the Anglo-Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, and representatives of Sea Source, to hear first-hand the issues facing the Northern Ireland fishing industry.

After the meeting, the Minister said: "I visited Kilkeel to see for myself the current concerns facing our fishermen.

"I recognise the challenges faced by our industry and will stand up for our local fleet. I'm very keen to hear how we can

work together to help with the industry's ambitious plans for future development.

"We discussed potential future fishing opportunities in the Irish Sea and even more pressing, the need to protect and support the industry to prosper, post-Brexit. I have made clear that it is unacceptable for our industry to be at any disadvantage.

"The industry has made real progress in improving sustainability and we need to build on this to ensure a vibrant and prosperous future for the industry."

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# Ireland's Oyster Producers Rise to Market Challenges

**Sustainability, Competitiveness and Innovation form key topics of two-day seminar**

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Ireland's Seafood Development Agency, in association with IFA Aquaculture, recently hosted a two-day seminar for members of Ireland's vibrant oyster farming sector, valued at €43million according to the latest (2018) Business of Seafood report. The sold-out event, which took place in Carlingford, Co Louth, attracted participants from more than 85% of businesses in the industry.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, BIM's chief executive, Jim O'Toole said, "The demand for Irish oysters continues to increase in Ireland and overseas. Consumers in Europe and Asia are actively seeking out Irish oysters and cite the

unique characteristics and diversity in taste between brands. This strong and growing reputation has translated into strong prices for Irish oysters and excellence in food safety management and stringent attention to quality control among industry members



(Above): Ireland's Oyster Producers Rise to Market Challenges: Sustainability, Competitiveness and Innovation to form key topics of two-day seminar. Pictured at the opening of the seminar are (l-r): Kian Louët, Director - Carlingford Oysters, Teresa Morrissey, IFA Aquaculture, BIM's Chief Executive, Jim O'Toole and Gary Harty, Galway Gourmet Oysters.

(Below): Some of the participants at the oyster industry workshop taking part in site visits on Day Two to Carlingford Oyster Company. The two-day event, presented 13th-14th Feb in Carlingford in collaboration with Irish Farmers' Association Aquaculture, also featured talks from industry leaders on topics ranging from health and water quality to the latest technical industry developments.



accounts for much of these successes. BIM continues to support and work closely with the sector. It is a sector that has enormous potential to continue in its upwards growth trajectory and to further benefit those living and working in coastal communities throughout Ireland."

The sector enjoyed a positive year in 2018, according to the BIM Business of Seafood report, producing an all-time high of 10,300 tonnes of oysters and employing 1,300 people nationwide. The seminar was taking place in an area renowned for its quality oyster production and featured presentations from a host of experts on practical topics of immediate interest to the Irish sector.

Despite recent health and socio-economic challenges presented by the Asian market that have affected exports Irish oyster producers remain at the forefront of the luxury offering, with the sector showing continued investment in packaging and branding, focusing on Irish oyster's superior quality. The latest figures show nearly 30% of Irish oysters are now packed and branded in Ireland prior to export, adding extra value to the sector. While France remains our largest export market at 74% of total export volume in 2018, we are continuing to diversify into alternative European markets such as the Netherlands and Belgium (2019 saw a 31% increase in exports to the Netherlands).



The morning session included short 'flash' presentations from IFA Aquaculture on where we are as an industry, the latest BIM initiatives which aim to further promote sustainability, innovation and competitiveness in the Oyster Sector as well as some of the more innovative approaches from industry to further develop their businesses.

The second part of the morning session looked at some of the results from BIM's Bluefish Climate Change project, funded by the Ireland Wales Programme. There was an overview of our current trade position and opportunities for further expansion. Bord Bia highlighted oyster promotional events in Europe throughout 2020 and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland to take us through some of the possible implications of Brexit in terms of food safety regulations.

Speakers from the Marine Institute, the SFPA and other industry experts focussed the afternoon session on topics such as water quality biosecurity, biotoxins and other environmental factors which significantly affect both oyster production and trade.

The final aspect of the workshop was an informed panel discussion, based on the days presentations and addressing questions posed by workshop attendees.

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Return To: The Editor, Marine Times Newspaper,  
Cranny Road, Inver, Co. Donegal.



## A Trip to Beginis Island and Memories of Childhood Days

The day that dawned was fine and fair as I was reminiscing  
With thoughts of friends and those I knew and the ones I'm always missing  
Then with punt and paddles I off did row to Beginis Island yonder  
With my mind on times and a way of life that, alas, now is no longer

And as I climbed the stony strand I thought of long ago  
With those our age we pulled around while they taught us how to row  
Although that boat so long now gone, some sixty years, I'd say  
The holy water carried in her bows can still be seen today

Then standing there outside the house where many's the story told  
Of sailing ships and sailor men back in the days of old  
And how we blushed with childhood pride when they told us we were good  
As we "helped" to beat the churn while on a chair we stood

For the Pilots Lookout I next set off, in the sky a summer sun  
I passed my bother's name in stone since Nineteen Fifty-One  
For Mawma's ridge I moved along and next passed Garrai Garbh  
God rest the souls of those I knew – Mar Taid Imeasc Na Marbh

The climbing up old Cooracoo in I picked my steps with care  
I like the view before my eyes and took in the salt-sea air  
Well, what a view it was that day, I will take you through the full circle  
That God did make the likes of it must surely be a miracle

Cnoc na dThobar is fine and clear today, you can see the Canon's Cross  
Famed Bi-Na-Tighe 'bove Cahirsiveen and onward to Ardcost  
And memories come flooding back when their oarsmen reigned supreme  
But we'll move on, we'll not stay long and next we see Glanlean

And Cromwell's Fort is down below, that tyrant one of old  
Though long now gone his deeds live on and would make your blood run cold  
The lighthouse there before my eyes, the Blaskets 'way Northwest  
And Dingle Bay is calm today and looks its very best

The piloting, too, comes quick to mind and racing out to sea  
To be the first to get on board was how it used to be  
In dark of night or light of day with engine, sail or oar  
Near Skellig's Rock or Dingle Bay and when the wind did roar

When swell and seas were running high and risks were often taken  
But God was good, He kept an eye – and they were not forsaken  
'Twas a way of life that's long now gone with many tribulations  
But men were men and sometimes then it had its compensations

And life was never easy then, no hand-outs for the taking  
When a pound was often the worth of two while nothing else was making  
Again I look at the rock once more where my father's name still seen  
Since he wrote it there so long ago in March Nineteen Fourteen

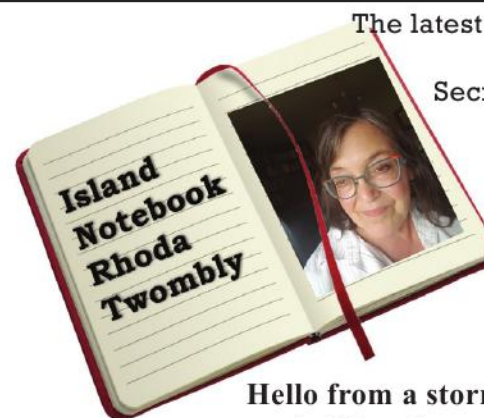
High in the sky the seagulls cry – have they too heard the story?  
When friends held dear were always near in former times of glory  
Though thoughts like these can oft-times please, it's sad to reminisce  
On days of old and stories told and friends I will always miss

Memories, find memories that have stood the test of time  
Some were good – as they would – and I remember mine  
But that was then, 'twas also when a different 'song' was sung  
Oh God be with the long ago when all around was young.

**Dan McCrohan, Valentia, 2008**  
(Son of Willie McCrohan of Beginis Island 1894 – 1934 and Valentia)

Dan McCrohan: Valentia Island in the southwest of county Kerry has been linked to the mainland by the Maurice O'Neill Memorial Bridge at Portmagee since the early 1970s. The main road leading from the Bridge across the Island takes one to Knight's Town, the largest settlement on the Island. A kilometer or so off shore is the island of Beginis – roughly translates as 'small island'. It was a deep lifetime association with that island and its people that inspired Dan McCrohan to compose, almost story like, the accompanying twelve four line stanzas.

Not surprisingly the McCrohan family has always been deeply involved in maritime orientated activities. Willie, Dan's father lived the greater part of his life on Beginis. Dan, who frequently visited the island for short stays, was born and reared on Valentia, where over the years he helped his parents run a Post Office, fished a half-decker, ran a taxi business and served as an RNLI volunteer crewman. Perhaps though, it is as a highly proficient boat operator, who in partnership with his son Donal, have been taking visitors to the Skellig Islands for over thirty years, that Dan has become widely known.



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

## Heading for Arranmore to Learn More About Internet for the Islands

**Hello from a storm battered Inishlyre, my home island in Clew Bay as I write these notes in late February, following storms and more storms.**

The cheerful tete-a-tetes and daffodils now sadly bow their heads, burned by the harsh, salty wind. Worde, our pontoon is threatening to separate from the pier, cutting off our point of access. We are not the only Island to have problems with piers and pontoons: the damaging weather over the past months have left their mark.

For the first time in years the Comhdháil AGM will be held in Donegal on Arranmore. We are really looking forward to the event, scheduled for the weekend of the 3rd – 4th of April. The theme of the meeting will be Connectivity and the sustainability of Islands. As Arranmore is deeply involved with the work of broadband provider Three in designing a package of cyber-solutions for a range of Island challenges, it is of great value to explore the possibilities created by high-grade internet provision. And, as the AGM is over a weekend, Islanders from along the coast will have a better chance of travelling up to Arranmore for what is traditionally a great opportunity for old friends to catch-up, mixed in with Island business, music, dancing and in general good craic.

Before the General Election, Comhdháil Oileán na hÉireann asked candidates of all parties, especially those from constituencies that contain Islands as well as relevant politicians running for re-election to sign up to the Pledge of Support for Ireland's Offshore Islands. Comhdháil sought support from candidates and their party in creating and/or supporting Government Policies that encourage and strengthen sustainability of our Islands. Some of the areas being stressed in the Pledge are the creation of offshore Islands policies and lobbying for positive incentives to encourage companies and individuals to create jobs and sustainable employment. This would include prioritising and promoting remote work.

The pledge also seeks support for improvement of transport systems and infrastructure, the creation of a bespoke education and schools system suitable to the needs of Islanders, strengthening of the special recognition in the common Fisheries Policy for small offshore Islands as well as the recognition of the challenges of offshore Island farmers. Other aspects listed as vital to offshore Island sustainability are healthcare, child and eldercare, housing and reduction of the cost of living on Islands, estimated as a third higher than living on the mainland.

There has been a show of support for the pledge with several candidates signing up to the document. Comhdháil will follow up with all successful candidates with a view to discussing a detailed action plan for the offshore Islands.

Finally, the Islands office of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is in the middle of their public consultation process. Officials from the Islands section of the Department have travelled to some of our islands to consult with Islanders on how residents see the future of their islands and express their ideas on the way forward. The sea conditions have not always co-operated, and some visits had to be cancelled but we are assured new dates will be set for those cancelled so that all offshore Islands will have their say.

There have been mixed but generally positive reviews of the consultations held. While important issues were raised the over-riding fear is that action won't be taken on recommendations. It is thought, however, that this is a constructive start that, taken along with the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Islands, will form a plan of action for our off-shore Islands.

So for now it's slán from the Islands!



**Achill oyster boats taking shelter at Roigh Pier, Rockfleet before Storm Jorge - Photo by Philomena O'Toole**



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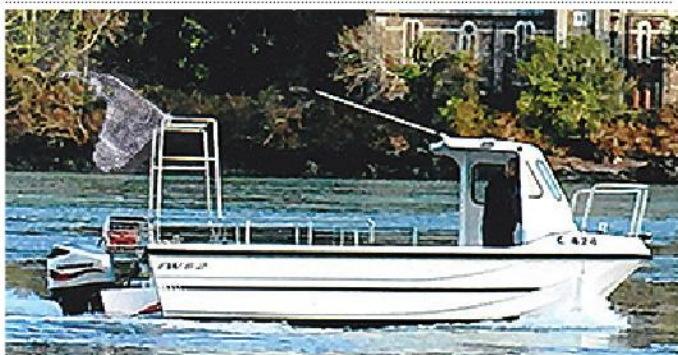
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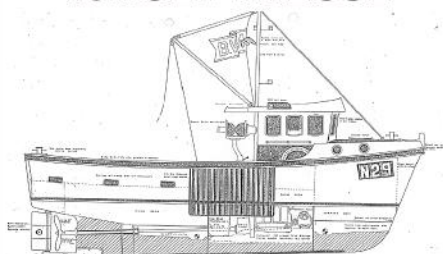
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## Cullen Fellow Developing Methods to Map Ireland's Seaweed Species

Tom Rossiter is a PhD student at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) and a Marine Institute funded Cullen Fellow. His research, entitled 'An Integrated Approach towards Seaweed Resource Assessment' aims to develop methods to map the distribution and the total quantity of two seaweed species in pilot study areas in Ireland.

One of these species is the common brown seaweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) found in the intertidal zone, the rocky area where the ocean meets the land between high and low tides.

"Seaweeds in the intertidal zone may look quite similar, especially in terms of colour. By using a drone equipped with a special type of camera, a hyperspectral sensor, we are able to view the areas of the electromagnetic spectrum that can't be seen by the human eye or a normal camera. This allows us to identify subtle colour changes between the different species of seaweed. Using a computer programme, seaweed can then be identified when looking at images produced by the drone," Tom explains.

Tom is also using acoustic sensors mounted on research vessels to map kelp, the brown seaweed species commonly found around the coast of Ireland.

"By measuring how long it takes sounds to travel from the sensor to the seabed, we can map water depth. As the seabed is hard, it strongly reflects sounds and provides a clear image. Kelp will often appear as noise

above the clear image of the seabed. By tuning the frequency of our acoustic sensor, we can focus on this noise which enables us to further understand the height and area covered by kelp," Tom said.

Tom's research is being undertaken as part of the INFOMAR Programme. INFO-MAR is jointly managed by the Marine Institute and Geological Survey Ireland and funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. INFOMAR surveys Ireland's unmapped marine territory and is also creating a range of integrated mapping products of the physical, chemical and biological features of the seabed.

Tom is working in a space where established mapping techniques have not yet been developed. He says his research will provide data to support informed decision-making about how to assess environmental impacts and manage Ireland's seaweed resource in the future.

"With increasing awareness of the value of seaweed, both ecologically and economically, it is imperative that effective man-



Tom Rossiter with drone at the Marine Institute.

agement decisions are made to ensure the sustainability of this resource. Potentially the methodologies that are being developed could be scaled up to allow for the mapping of larger areas and to provide the data that decision makers require."

Tom says one of the many benefits of the Cullen Fellowship programme is being a part of the INFOMAR team and engaging in activities outside of his PhD. "Whilst also being integrated into the university setting, I have been involved in science outreach activities, and have had the opportunity to work in different areas, including surveys on the RV *Celtic Voyager*. Being part of a group of like-minded researchers has also created a valuable support network, as well as many scientific discussions."

Tom's research supervisors are Thomas Furey, Marine Institute / INFOMAR, Dr Dagmar B. Stengel Botany and Plant Sci-

ence at NUI Galway, and Dr Tim McCarthy, Maynooth University.

The Marine Institute funded Cullen Fellowship programme builds marine research capacity and capability by equipping graduates with the skills and expertise in raising awareness about our ocean, as well as Ireland's rich marine biodiversity and ecosystems. The programme has provided grant aid to the value of €2.06 million supporting twenty-four PhDs and three MSc students over the last five years. The research addresses a number of the 15 research themes identified in the National Marine Research & Innovation Strategy 2017-2021.

This project (Grant-Aid Agreement No. CF/15/02) is carried out with the support of the Marine Institute and funded under the Marine Research Programme by the Irish Government.

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Foras na Mara  
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Explorers Super Girl Seren Flavin (6) from Scoil Shéamais Noafa, Barna, gives Climate Change a POW! The Explorers Education Programme has recently launched an Ocean Super Hero creative writing and pop art competition for primary schools. Funded by the Marine Institute and supported by Camden Education Trust and the Galway Education Centre the national competition provides a great opportunity for children to come up with creative solutions to climate change and its effects on the ocean. Check out [www.explorers.ie](http://www.explorers.ie) for more information.





Eilean Croine battling the seas off the west coast in pursuit of mackerel - Another stunning photo by John Roberts

## Eel Fishermen to Intensify Campaign for Restoration of Fishery

**Eel Fishermen are to intensify their campaign to re-open the fishery.**

A statement from them says that "following the results from the General Election, after discussions, eel fishermen are to lobby the incoming government on the future of the eel fishery."

They have outlined a number of points they will be raising, which include seeing the Eel Hardship payment as "interim compensation"

- Review of the decision to close the eel fishery
- Re-opening the fishery in areas where eel stocks are above conservation limits
- A "single boat payment system for small operators."

They are also calling for "urgent action" to be taken on what they allege to be "impacts on eel stocks from ESB turbines on the River Shannon; expansion of the dairy industry resulting in an increase in

slurry and chemical fertilisers usage in river valleys and lakelands."

The eel fishermen also want recognition of their heritage and "our right to our cultural identity."

They suggest that there could be a successful development of artisan Irish sustainable smoked eel as a commercial product.

The fishermen have repeated their call for a "restructuring of Inland Fisheries Ireland to include a voice of commercial fishers" and say that there should be "recognition of active fishermen as being important stakeholders and holders of traditional knowledge."

They have called for an "Independent judicial review of the eel hardship package in light of the Nigel Mott judgement in the Supreme Court in the UK and the European Court of Human Rights."

## Maybe It's Time to Reset the Compass??

**"Since our last edition we have had an Election which may or may not give us a 'New Minister' who I suspect will approach the job with a mistaken confidence that he can make things better. They all do but when we look back at our last 4 or 5 Ministers can we say that things have improved? All the new Ministers thought they were in Charge - God help them!"**

**Art Kavanagh - Read more on Page 2**



# CHPM

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