



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Project Marine Newsletter

Issue No. 4

June 2023



Prepared by the Marine Planning, Policy and Legislation (MPPL) Section
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
[gov.ie/housing](https://www.gov.ie/housing)

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Recent Legislative & Policy Developments	2
Ireland's First Marine Digital Hub Wins Major Award	5
Appointments/Departures.....	6
Regional News	7
Waterford	7
Wexford.....	9
Cork.....	11
Provisional results of first offshore wind auction announced	13
Citizens' Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss.....	14
A New Era – MARA to be established from July	15
New convention to strengthen Ireland's international role in maritime safety and marine aids to navigation	17
Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI)	18
“The Future is in Your Hands!!!”	19
All the latest news from the Marine Institute.....	21
Fair Seas launch new Survey.....	23
The Marine Spatial Planning Challenge	24
Historical Maritime Tours in Waterford	26
The Selkie Project – Streamlined commercialisation pathway for the Marine Renewable Energy Industry	27
European Maritime Day 2023.....	29
A View from Europe	30
“Blue Carbon needs to go public”	32

Introduction

The Marine Planning Policy and Legislation (MPPL) unit welcomes you to our fourth newsletter. We would once again like to thank those of you who provided us with feedback and suggestions for future topics, and we will do our utmost to include these in future issues. As always we are appreciative of all feedback, and can be reached at msp@housing.gov.ie.

It is now one full year since our initial newsletter was launched and to celebrate we have a bumper edition with news from across all sectors of the Marine Industry. As ever we will keep you up to date on recent legislative and policy developments (see pages 3, 4, & 5).

We are also very pleased to announce that our own www.marineplan.ie won a very prestigious award at the ESRI's Customer Success Awards last March. The Principal Officer position here at MPPL has also changed hands following the well-earned retirement of Damian Allen. The new incumbent Marie Minihan took over the role in May and we wish her all the very best going forward.

Our Regional News section continues with updates from Waterford, Wexford and Cork. The provisional results of Ireland's first offshore wind auction were announced under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (see page 14).

The pathway to a more sustainable future continues with the establishment date of MARA announced by Minister Darragh O'Brien (see page 16). The Marine Environment Section of the Department report on their recent schools conference in Athlone with the assistance of the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce.

The Marine Institute and Fair Seas each keep us up to date with their contributions, as does Coastwatch. The MSP Challenge Workshop paid a welcome visit to Custom House, Dublin while MaREI give us a breakdown on the SELKIE project. Maritime Affairs Attaché Eoin Leahy returns with his View from Europe and we also report on an Irish delegation visiting European Maritime Day in Brest, France.

We hope you enjoy the read and we would also remind readers that if you have anything you would like included for future editions, contact us at msp@housing.gov.ie. Another newsletter will issue in late Autumn 2023.

Recent Legislative & Policy Developments

This section of the newsletter highlights significant legislative and marine policy developments recently announced.

Public Consultation on the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II (OREDP II)

An 8-week public consultation on the draft Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan II (OREDP II) and its associated environmental assessment reports (Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment) recently closed on the 20th of April 2023. The OREDP II is Ireland's first **national-level spatial strategy** for our offshore renewable energy (ORE) future. It provides a high-level framework to support and guide the long-term, sustainable and planned development of Ireland's immense offshore wind, wave and tidal resources.

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) held in-person consultation events in 16 coastal locations around Ireland. Online events tailored to citizens and communities, e-NGOs, fisheries and the maritime industry also took place. A large amount of engagement and feedback has been gathered with a total of over 1,100 oral and written submissions received.

The OREDP II is one of the key building blocks of the **Future Framework** – the long-term model and vision for offshore renewable energy in Ireland. The draft plan outlines proposed criteria to identify initial **Broad Areas of Interest (BAIs)** – areas in our seas which are technically suitable for ORE development as part of the Future Framework. These BAIs will then subsequently be further researched and refined into smaller geographical areas before moving into the formal statutory designation process for ORE via Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAPs) set out in the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (MAP Act). Other key steps in building the Future Framework, such as the Hydrogen Policy, Interconnector Policy and Economic Assessment, are currently being progressed. The OREDP II will be key in setting out the framework for where offshore renewable energy will be developed, as part of the Future Framework.

A significant amount of valuable feedback was received on the proposed Broad Areas of Interest, criteria to evaluate Broad Areas of Interest, data, the review process for the plan, sharing the maritime area, environmental assessments and governance among others. DECC is currently updating the draft OREDP II based on this feedback as well as policy and technological developments.

An independently developed detailed report summarising consultation feedback will be published on gov.ie in June 2023. This report will provide an overview of feedback to support work to finalise the draft OREDP II this summer. Please click the following link for more information on [ORED P II](#).

Source: Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

Majority of Part 2 of MAP Act now in operation

In May Minister Darragh O'Brien signed off on Part 2 (with the exception of Chapter 9) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

On May 15th last, the order came into operation. Part 2 (excluding Chapter 9) provides for the preparation and publication of Maritime Spatial Plans; for the designation of public bodies who may make Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAP), and for the preparation and publication of Designated Maritime Area Plans.

This part also provides for the judicial review of Maritime Spatial Plans and the DMAPs and for compliance by public bodies with the National Marine Planning Framework.

A DMAP is a forward-looking sub-national marine plan that will contribute to the overall management of the maritime area. DMAPs will support sustainable development of the maritime area and facilitate coherent and transparent decision-making. This paves the way for plan-led development of offshore renewable energy. DMAPs are an important forward planning tool that will enable us to balance harnessing our huge offshore wind potential with protecting our rich and unique marine environment.

DMAPs will be consistent with the Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS), the National Marine Planning Framework and any other relevant Ministerial guideline or policy directive. DMAPs may have a particular sectoral or geographic focus or both. The DMAP proposal is required to set out the objectives of the NMPF that the DMAP will seek to attain, the geographical areas proposed to be the subject of the DMAP, the protected sites to be taken into consideration and the maritime usages proposed to be the subject of the DMAP. All DMAPs will be subject to environmental assessments.

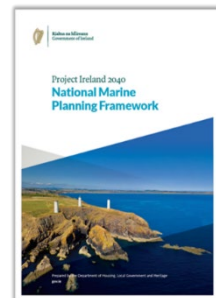
Public participation will be at the forefront of the DMAP process. All DMAP proposals are required to include a public participation statement that outlines how stakeholders including the public will be consulted and included in the DMAP process. The Department is currently working on guidelines for DMAPs and will publish those in due course.

Chapter 9 of Part 2 was excluded from this Commencement Order as it relates to the establishment of a Maritime Authorisation Database which will be provided for in a later Commencement Order when it is the appropriate time to do so.

Source: Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (MPPL Section)

NMPF Copies Still Available

Our National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) is still available. The NMPF is Ireland's first national framework for managing marine activities and outlines the Government's vision for how we want to use, protect and enjoy our seas in the years up to 2040.



Please click the following link to find all relevant details of the development history of the [NMPF](#). Should you wish to acquire a hard copy of the NMPF, please email mshp@housing.gov.ie and we will be happy to post one out to you.

Requests for a copy of the NMPF **as Gaeilge** will also be facilitated.

Ireland's First Marine Digital Hub Wins Major Award



Pictured are: Mick Byrne (ESRI, Irl), Rob Ovington (GIS DHLGH), Juliet Fitzpatrick (MPPL), Michelle Roche, Deirdre Kelly (all GIS DHLGH), Paul Synnott (MD, ESRI, Irl)

We are delighted to announce that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage was deemed this year's winner of the ESRI Ireland's Mapping & Visualisation award for their entry for <https://marineplan.ie/>

This award recognises organisations who demonstrate excellence in understanding locations & relationships with maps and visual representations.

The awards night which was held in the Marker Hotel last March, was an opportunity for those shortlisted to highlight the innovative work they are doing within the ESRI customer community.

Accepting on behalf of the MPPL Unit was Assistant Principal Juliet Fitzpatrick:

"We were delighted when we received word of the nomination and honoured that all our hard work was being recognised. Again, I want to give a huge thanks to our internal and external project teams, ESRI Ireland and the Marine Institute for their commitment and enthusiasm in bringing MarinePlan.ie to fruition."



You can access the digital hub here on www.marineplan.ie

Appointments/Departures

Well-earned retirement for Damian

Since our last newsletter, Damian Allen has retired as Principal Officer of the Marine, Planning, Policy and Legislation section with the Department.

After nearly 40 years in the Civil Service Damian bid a fond farewell to his colleagues last March. Damian was at the helm of many projects during his varied career, including working in Social Welfare, the old Department of Marine, as well as the Department of Agriculture before joining the Department of Housing in 2008 where he worked in the Water Quality Unit up to and including the EU Presidency in 2013. We wish him all the very best in his retirement.



Damian Allen

Marie takes over MPPL Role

Marie Minihan takes over Damian's role as Principal Officer of the Marine, Planning, Policy and Legislation section. Marie has worked previously with the Department of Justice in the Criminal Justice Co-operation and Prisoner/Central Mental Hospital Reviews Section. Marie took up her new role in mid-May. We wish her the very best of luck for the future and look forward to working with her going forward.



Marie Minihan

Have you any appointments you would like featured in an upcoming edition of Project Marine Newsletter?

If so, contact us with a short biog, photo and send it to mpp@housing.gov.ie and put "Appointments Page, Newsletter" in the subject box.

Regional News

Other Government Departments and organisations work in tandem with our local authorities in improving our Maritime/Coastal areas. The following articles are just some examples of the excellent work they have carried out. We here in the Marine, Planning, Policy & Legislation Section are happy to further promote the work of all these organisations and wish all parties concerned every continued success.

Waterford

Work gets underway at new North Quays Project

History was made as ground was officially broken in March on the North Quays Public Infrastructure Project in Waterford by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD and Minister for Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan TD.

The project comes following last year's Government approval of €170.6m of investment in the North Quays Project, consisting of €100.6m of **Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)** funding and a further €70m

from the **Department of Transport** through the National Transport Authority (NTA), which will open up access to the Strategic Development Zone (SDZ).

The public infrastructure works funded by the Government in the North Quays will include enhanced multi-modal access routes, an integrated transport hub including the relocation of Waterford train station to a more convenient location, and the



Michael Walsh, Chief Executive WCCC; Minister Darragh O'Brien TD; Taoiseach Leo Varadkar; Mayor of WCC Cllr. John O'Leary and Minister Eamon Ryan.
Photo: Patrick Browne

sustainable transport bridge. The sustainable transport bridge will link the reallocated train station to new walking and cycling infrastructure. These works will reduce the reliance on private car and facilitate alternative modes of transport for those accessing the area through the delivery of enhanced and integrated sustainable and active travel infrastructure.

The main contract for these infrastructure works was awarded to BAM in November 2022 and the ground breaking ceremony signalled the commencement of substantial construction works which are expected to be completed in 2025.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD said: “This high quality, sustainable public infrastructure project in the heart of Waterford City, along with the attendant development of the North Quays Strategic Development Zone, is of huge economic and social importance to the city and the South-East.”

The infrastructure will enable the commercial development on the SDZ Site, which will include offices, residential, retail, accommodation, and tourism investment in conference/exhibition facilities, as well as a 4-star hotel and visitor’s centre. There will also be significant investment in new civic spaces, pedestrian facilities, and high-quality transport infrastructure which will connect Waterford and the Southeast greenways.

Waterford’s new state of the art Transport Hub will be unique in Ireland and will put Waterford at the forefront of integrated city centre transport infrastructure, with train, bus, taxi, cycling and car parking all in one location. The North Quays will be connected to the heart of the city centre by a new sustainable transport bridge for pedestrians, bicycles, and a courtesy bus service.

The commercial development of the site will be carried out by Harcourt Developments, a Dublin-based property development and management company with a broad portfolio of award-winning projects, including Belfast’s Titanic Quarter, Park West Plaza, and numerous shopping centres throughout the country.

Minister Darragh O'Brien TD said: "This is a transformational project for Waterford. The North Quays is a site I have visited before and I think it is clear for all to see the potential for jobs, for investment, for commercial development and indeed for much needed residential development. I want to highly commend Waterford City and County Council for the work they have done on getting to this point."

Source: www.waterfordcouncil.ie

Wexford

Sod is turned at 10-acre Trinity Wharf Development

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD was busy with another 'turning of the sod' ceremony when he returned to Wexford in late February and announced a significant job creation initiative for County Wexford and the South East region, with Phase One of the iconic waterfront development at Trinity Wharf.



Standing – Patrick Brennan, Roadplan Consulting Ltd; Cllr Maura Bell, Mayor of Wexford
Seated – Tom Enright, CE WCC; Cllr George Lawlor, Cathaoirleach WCC; Minister Darragh O'Brien; Declan Foley, Contracts Manager, Glas Civil Engineering Ltd

Strategically located on the most prominent site in Wexford Town, Trinity Wharf boasts

unrivalled panoramic views from its river front position. This 10-acre site with its strategic location at Wexford Harbour provides an unrivalled development and commercial opportunity to create:

- A mix of modern office space with 200,000 sq ft commercial office space
- Hotel accommodation/Restaurants/Retail units
- Landmark cultural and events building with conference facilities
- 64 berth marina, a new boardwalk linking Trinity Wharf with Paul Quay and the Crescent, and an urban greenway
- High quality public areas/Residential Apartments

Tom Enright, Chief Executive, Wexford County Council, stated that:

“The Trinity Wharf development will provide an ideal property solution for the world’s leading companies to invest and grow. The ambitious economic project will deliver a public private partnership of €110 million investment in the flagship project and I want to commend Minister Darragh O’Brien who allocated over €20m under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund towards the project. The investment in the Trinity Wharf development will complement the provision of the new purpose built university campus in Wexford by SETU”.

To date €20 million has been allocated under the Urban Regeneration Fund / Project 2040. A further €7m has been ring-fenced by the elected members of Wexford County Council demonstrating the support for this initiative to position Wexford for Foreign Direct Investment.

The recently established Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) will be located at Trinity Wharf, providing the first anchor tenant. The agency will be responsible for licensing for marine activities, in particular offshore renewable energy, which will play a key part of the climate action programme to reduce our carbon emissions by 2030 at national level. With the potential to create up to 200 jobs, it will be on a par with the Environmental Protection Agency already established at Johnstown Castle.

It is estimated a further 2,000 jobs will be created over the next five to ten years at Trinity Wharf.



Digital Illustration of the proposed new Trinity Wharf Development

Mr Enright congratulated Glas Civil Engineering Ltd on being awarded the €2.5 million works contract. He commented that 'Glas Civil Engineering is a firm with a strong track record of delivering projects in Wexford including the South East Greenway'.

Phase One of the Trinity Wharf project is due to consist of:

- A new access road linking Trinity Street to the new railway level crossing at Trinity Wharf,
- Signalised junction at the Trinity Street junction
- New bus stops on Trinity Street
- Watermains upgrade from Parnell Street to Trinity Wharf
- Installation of deep services crossings under the railway line.

These works are expected to complete in Autumn 2023, with the next works contract to commence in 2024.

Source: www.wexfordcoco.ie

Cork

New EirGrid office will co-ordinate development of first offshore substations

A new EirGrid office which will co-ordinate the development of Ireland's first offshore electricity substations was officially opened by Tánaiste Micheál Martin last April in Cork.

The office in Penrose Quay, Cork City, will be also used as a base for the Celtic Interconnector linking Cork with France.



EirGrid CEO Mark Foley; French Ambassador to Ireland Vincent Guérend; Tánaiste Micheál Martin and EirGrid Chair Brendan Tuohy at the office opening.

Developed by EirGrid and its French counterpart, Réseau de Transport d'Electricité (RTE), the Celtic Interconnector is a 700-megawatt high-voltage submarine power cable linking Cork and the north-west coast of France. It will be the first power connection between Ireland and continental Europe. It will travel 575 kilometres from East Cork to the north-west coast of Brittany and will be able to import and export enough electricity to power 450,000 homes.

The delivery of offshore substations is part of EirGrid's **Shaping Our Offshore Energy Future** programme that will mark the first step in the development of an offshore electricity grid for Ireland, a key step in ensuring that up to 80% of the country's energy comes from renewable sources by 2030.

EirGrid will construct new offshore substations as well as the cables and infrastructure linking them to the onshore grid. The substations will connect up to 900 megawatts of electricity from wind turbines delivered by private developers, producing enough electricity to power almost one million homes.

Speaking last April, Tánaiste Micheál Martin said: "I am delighted to officially open EirGrid's new Cork office, which will support the delivery of critical infrastructure across the south of the country that will play an important role in achieving the commitments set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan."

Studies will be carried out into potential locations for the substations, with exact locations to be identified following consultations with the public, local communities and industries.

EirGrid CEO, Mark Foley said: "The delivery of an offshore electricity grid is a big step in achieving Ireland's climate goals. Along with providing social and economic opportunities for the region, the targeted placement of electricity substations will help to ensure that our precious offshore renewable resources can be developed in a manner that is most sensitive to the local environment and communities on the south coast.

"In line with today's announcement, EirGrid is now embarking on an extensive public engagement process that will seek the views of local communities, businesses and industries on how we can progress the delivery of offshore grid infrastructure in a way that takes appropriate consideration of the needs and opinions of all

stakeholders.” [Source: www.eirgridgroup.com](http://www.eirgridgroup.com)

Provisional results of first offshore wind auction announced

An important milestone was reached earlier this year with the announcement of the provisional results of the first



offshore wind auction under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS 1).

In mid-May, it was announced that four applicants were successful under the ORESS which is an auction-based process that invited renewable energy projects to compete against each other in order to win contracts to provide electricity at the bid price for a twenty-year period.

The auction results surpassed expectations, both in terms of the total volume of renewable energy procured and the low price at which it has been secured. The hugely competitive price secured — at an average of €86.05/MWh — is one of the lowest prices paid by an emerging offshore wind market in the world. For comparison, the average wholesale electricity price in Ireland over the past 12 months was in excess of €200/MWh. It is expected that this price will save Irish electricity consumers hundreds of millions of euros per year.

Over 3GW of capacity has been procured from four offshore wind projects, which will deliver over 12TWh* (terawatt hours) of renewable electricity per year. This is the largest volume of renewable energy Ireland has ever procured at auction — equivalent to over a third of Ireland’s entire electricity consumption this year and over a quarter of projected 2030 electricity demand. It is also enough to power over 2.5 million Irish homes with clean electricity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 1 million tonnes in 2030.

Welcoming the provisional results, **Minister for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan said:** "The provisional results of the ORESS 1 auction are not just a hugely positive story for Irish energy consumers, but for Ireland as a whole. The results are further evidence of what many of us have known for a long time; that we, as a nation, can develop and produce enormous quantities of clean energy – securely and at low cost.

The results announced in May are provisional and are subject to the normal RESS confirmation and State Aid processes, both of which are expected to be complete by mid-June, as per [EirGrid's published auction timetable](#).

Under the community benefit fund provisions of ORESS 1, the successful projects are required to make payments to local marine and coastal communities hosting offshore renewable energy projects. These communities will benefit from over €24 million per year, beginning before construction and continuing for up to 20 years after a project begins to produce renewable energy. The Four projects are: Dublin Array; Sceirde Rocks Offshore Wind Farm, North Irish Sea Array and Codling Wind Park.

*12TWh (terawatt hour) = 12,000,000MWh or 12 million MWh (megawatt hour)

Sources: Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and EirGrid

Citizens' Assembly Report on Biodiversity Loss



The Recommendations and Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss – the first such national citizens' assembly anywhere in the world – was launched earlier this year. It contains over 150 recommendations that have the potential to dramatically transform Ireland's relationship with the natural environment.

The report was produced as a result of seven meetings of the Assembly from May 2022 through to the end of January this year. It concluded with the 99 members agreeing to 159 recommendations. These include 73 high-level recommendations and 86 sectoral specific actions and priorities.

[Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss \(link\)](#)

A New Era – MARA to be established from July

MARA

An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD announced in May that the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) will be established on **17th July, 2023**.



Minister O'Brien making the announcement at the Wind Energy Ireland Conference

Making the announcement at the Wind Energy Ireland Offshore Wind 2023 Conference at Dublin Royal Convention Centre, the Minister added that Ms. Laura Brien, currently Chief Executive of the Health Insurance Authority, has accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of MARA.

The establishment of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) on 17th July 2023, marks the transition to the new maritime consenting regime and will be a key enabler in respect of Ireland's ambitions for the Offshore Renewable Energy sector. The new agency will have responsibility for assessing applications for Maritime Area Consents (MACs) which will be required before developers of offshore wind and other projects in the maritime area can make a planning application. It will also be responsible for granting licences for certain activities in the maritime area.

Commenting on the plans to establish MARA and the selection of a CEO, the Minister stated:

"I am delighted to announce that MARA will be established on the 17th July 2023. MARA will be responsible for regulating development and activity in Ireland's maritime area and comes about as part of the biggest reform of marine governance in Ireland in almost a century. MARA will have in place the process and procedures relating to MAC applications for Offshore Renewable Energy and for marine infrastructure that supports the delivery and deployment of offshore wind projects, such as port development work. This is in line with Government's decision on

Prioritisation of Renewable Energy Maritime Plans and Projects as a response to the Energy crisis”.

In relation to the selection of a CEO, the Minister said that filling this key leadership position is a critical step in establishing the new maritime consenting regime.

“During this period of great change in how the State manages its maritime space, MARA will have a key role to play. It is important that the CEO provide effective leadership and strategic vision to the organisation and I’m delighted to announce that Laura Brien will be taking on this role. She has extensive experience in the area of regulation across a number of industries, and this will be crucial in leading the new agency.”

Incoming CEO Ms Laura Brien commented: “I am very pleased to be taking up the role of Chief Executive of MARA and working with the team to build the skills and expertise to deliver on MARA’s mandate. MARA will be a key enabler supporting delivery of projects of strategic importance including offshore renewable energy, ports development, cabling and telecoms projects, and many uses of the maritime area. I look forward to working with the Chairperson, the Board and the broader stakeholder community to achieve MARA’s strategic ambitions in support of sustainable development of our maritime resource”

Source: [MARA](#)

New convention to strengthen Ireland's international role in maritime safety and marine aids to navigation

Ireland has ratified the Convention on the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation which will support safe and efficient navigation around our coasts. As shipping and offshore activity continues to grow, the Convention will enable collaboration and development of consistent standards and practises at international level.

The Convention changes the status of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities or IALA from a Non-Governmental Organisation to an Intergovernmental Organisation (IGO). The status of IGO will give further weight to the standards and recommendations of IALA, leading to greater compliance and navigational safety.

Marking the ratification of the IALA Convention, **Minister of State Jack Chambers** said: “The transport of critical resources by sea enables the majority of our international trade. The last few years have illustrated Ireland’s reliance on marine supply chains with over 90% of goods by volume transported into our ports. New opportunities in offshore wind will bring huge benefits and must be planned and managed carefully in conjunction with fisheries, leisure and marine protected areas. The offshore environment will be busier while physical and electronic aids to navigation will continue to support the protection of lives, trade, property and the environment around our coast. Ireland’s membership of IALA, along with the work of



Captain Dermot Gray, ILV Granuaile; Minister of State Jack Chambers TD; Yvonne Shields O'Connor, Irish Lights Chief Executive; Ronan Boyle, Director of eNavigation & Maritime Services, Irish Lights

my Department at the International Maritime Organisation, will ensure that Ireland contributes proactively at international level to the safe and sustainable development of our shipping and maritime sector,” continued the Minister.

Irish Lights Chief Executive, Yvonne Shields O'Connor said: “We welcome the Irish Government’s support for the ratification of the IALA convention. Increased digitalisation, connectivity, cyber security, expansion of offshore infrastructure, developments such as autonomous vessels and changes in trade patterns and climate are just some of the key issues being addressed at IALA.

As the organisation responsible for delivering essential navigation safety services around the coast of Ireland Irish Lights understands the importance of global co-operation and co-ordination in harmonising marine navigation and related services. Ireland though Irish Lights has been a member of IALA since its establishment in 1957 and we look forward to continuing to play our part in this important work.”

Source: Irish Lights

Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI)



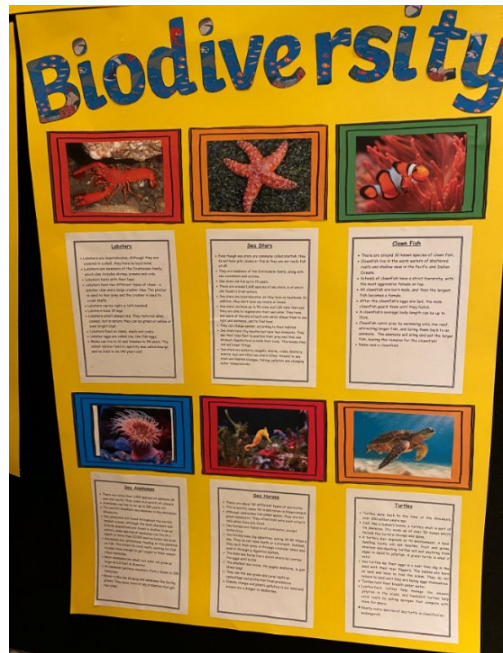
Principal Adviser, Marine Environment: Richard Cronin; **Marine Planning Adviser:** Tom Woolley; **DECC Assistant Principal Officer, Offshore Energy Environment and Consenting Division:** Jane Dooley; **DECC Principal Officer, Offshore Energy Long Term Strategic Planning:** Robert McGuinness; **DAFM Assistant Principal Officer, EU & International Policy, Sea-Fisheries Policy & Management Division:** Anna O’Sullivan; **Assistant Secretary for Water:** Fintan Towey.

On the 22nd-23rd of May a cross-Departmental delegation from Ireland attended a meeting convened by the Governments of France and the Netherlands in Paris. The Greater North Sea Basin Initiative brought together high level Government representatives of fisheries, offshore renewable energy, marine environment and marine spatial planning departments to examine the potential for collaboration in the Greater North Sea Basin. Ireland joined attendees from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the European Commission for a high level dialogue to explore enhanced and strategic cross-sectoral international co-operation for the marine environment/nature, energy, food and spatial planning.

“The Future is in Your Hands!!!”

That was the strong and clear message from **Conall O’Connor of the Marine Environment section** to participating schools at the National Marine Environment Conference which was held in Athlone, on April 27th last.

Funded by the **Marine Environment section**, and delivered by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce, the conference is a highly anticipated key event in the annual Marine Week project, where schools from around the country learn about and celebrate the incredibly rich and diverse environment of the seas surrounding our islands.



Conall’s opening address outlined the important work of the Marine Environment section and emphasised the significant contribution that the public make in helping improve the environment of our seas. He explained the upcoming legislation to create Marine Protected Areas and encouraged everyone to play their part in helping educate and activate their community in keeping our seas clean, healthy and productive for all – and especially for future generations.

A total of eight lucky schools from around the country had the opportunity to attend in person on the day. They each provided a specific project display and comprehensive information stand. Each school also delivered PowerPoint presentations setting out compelling proposals and ideas regarding environmental concerns on a variety of themes including environmental refugees, citing Tuvalu in the Pacific Ocean as a prime and very real example of a small low lying archipelago that is threatened by rising sea levels.

Also in attendance at the conference were Shannon Hoary, Joanne Kenny and Catherine Gaul of the Marine Environment section, as well as Juliet Fitzpatrick and Tracey O’Connor of the Marine Policy, Planning and Legislation section.

Everyone enjoyed the exhibits, talks and activities – especially the ‘Guess the sea creature’ sound – a real ear opener that produced some very funny answers. The Ocean Bingo game that involved matching lines of sea creatures to win a prize certainly brought out the competitive side in the Marine Environment section.



A memorable highlight of the day was the key note address given by Endurance Adventurer and Performance Psychologist, Dr Karen Weekes. Karen was the first Irish woman to row solo, across the Atlantic in 2022. She is an incredibly inspirational supporter of the marine environment and held her audience’s full attention with tales from her epic trans-Atlantic journey of hammer head sharks and snoring whales!

The pupils had many questions for her and were captivated by her passion and love for our oceans.

The conference ended with everyone taking the ‘Sea Keepers’ pledge. It was a thoroughly enjoyable event and one we look forward to travelling to again next year.

Source: [Marine Environment Section \(DHLGH\)](#)

All the latest news from the Marine Institute



Click on each of the links below for more details

[Marine Institute launches new five-year strategy \(link\)](#)

The Marine Institute launched its new five-year corporate strategy (2023-2027) on the 26th May 2023. It sets out eight strategic priorities centring on transforming the Institute's knowledge, advice and services to benefit people, policy and planet. Ocean Knowledge that Informs and Inspires sets out a roadmap to enable Ireland to deliver on national and EU policy goals on sustainable seafood production, ocean science and management, environment and biodiversity, maritime transport, offshore renewable energy and climate action.

[Minister McConalogue launches Marine Institute's Irish Ocean Climate and Ecosystem Status Report 2023 \(link\)](#)

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue TD launched the Marine Institute's Irish Ocean Climate and Ecosystem Status Report 2023 on the 4th May 2023. The report provides important and timely updates on national observations and recommendations previously presented by the Marine Institute.

The report notes the following key findings:

- Sea-level rises of between 2-3 mm per annum since the 1990s,
- A rise of ~0.5C in sea surface temperatures on Ireland's north coast over the past ten years.
- Identification of surface water acidification and year-round presence of harmful algal species.

Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme wins ‘Best Education Outreach Award’ (link)

The Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme topped the ‘Best Education Outreach Award’ category of the Education Awards 2023, announced at a gala event in Dublin (April 27).

Congratulating all those involved with the programme, **Dr Paul Connolly, Marine Institute CEO**, said the win was truly justified: “We are delighted that the Explorers Programme’s outreach module Healthy Ocean Project & Ocean Champions Award has been recognised for its excellence in promoting ocean literacy at primary-school level. This award recognises the quality of the programme and the work of those delivering it throughout the country”.

Minister Dara Calleary visits Marine Institute Newport facility (link)

Minister of State for Trade Promotion and Digital Transformation, Dara Calleary T.D. visited the Marine Institute's Newport Facility in Co Mayo in April. He toured the facilities and meet with some of the scientific researchers. It is a unique research centre, where a range of cutting edge research is undertaken including genetics work across several species of salmon, sea bass, pollock and bluefin tuna, as well as research on catchment ecosystems, climate change, oceanography and aquaculture.

Source: [Marine Institute](#)

Fair Seas launch new Survey



Fair Seas have just published a survey on Ocean Literacy and Coastal Connections in Ireland.

Ocean literacy is the understanding of our individual and collective impact on the ocean and its impact on our lives and wellbeing.

The survey aims to find out how well people in Ireland know the waters around us and how they use them.

Fair Seas is asking people to complete an [online survey](#) answering questions about the health of Ireland's marine environment, how they use the seas and what actions they believe the Irish government needs to be taking to manage this environment.

The survey will only take approximately 15 minutes to complete and all information collected in the survey will be held securely and treated in the strictest confidence.

For more information on Fair Seas, visit www.fairseas.ie

You can also check them out on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

Source: Fair Seas – Images from www.fairseas.ie

The Marine Spatial Planning Challenge

With Dr. Heather Ritchie, Lecturer in Planning, Queen's University Belfast



Participants deep in negotiations at the MSP Challenge workshop in Custom House, Dublin

In May, the MPPL team, through Juliet Fitzpatrick, and Dr Heather Ritchie of Queen's University Belfast (representing the Irish Planning Institute's Marine Planning Committee) organised a joint half-day training session using the MSP Challenge. As part of the 2023 Mandate, the IPI wish to collaborate with DHLGH and OPR and the accredited Planning Schools to support and strengthen MSP through developing and offering various CPD events and training. Representatives from DHLGH, OPR, DECC, MARA, and IPI (Council, Marine Planning Committee and Teaching and Education Committee) attended this unique event, held in the Custom House, Dublin.

Over the course of the morning participants learned more about Marine Spatial Planning practice using the internationally renowned "*MSP Challenge*": a form of serious gaming from Breda University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands. MSP Challenge offers an exciting and interactive opportunity to discuss, learn and make decisions about our seas and oceans, whilst having to balance the conflicting interests of other sectoral stakeholders in a transboundary context.

Participants were assigned into random teams representing three fictional countries: **Bayland, Island** and **Penninsuland**. Each country had their own policy areas to develop including energy transition, shipping and accessibility. Participants were assigned team roles – such as Maritime Planner; Nature Conservationist; Tourism and Recreation; Oil and Gas Sector; Renewable energy; Blue Biotech; Deep Sea mining and local businesses.

After ground rules were set, participants gathered around the table to experience MSP in the fictional sea area of The Rica Sea. The challenge was completed in three sessions, with plenty of time for each country to report back to the wider group their progress in terms of the interrelations between the various sectors, counties and the decisions taken.

The challenge allows the players to experience and discuss the meaning of different maritime strategic objectives such as sustainable blue growth, the blue economy, land-sea interactions, and environmental status of the sea. One of the key outcomes was that participants get a real sense of how congested the marine area can become particularly at the nearshore. Participants jointly make planning decisions for healthy, resilient and productive seas, whilst at the same time dealing with conflicting interests and communication challenges. As the board became filled up with tokens, the planners can assess how the Rica Sea is developing, part of the learning is to discover how MSP can steer marine developments and protect the marine environment. Participants said that you really get a sense of the negotiations and priorities that need to take place, the difficulty in reconciling conflict demands and it was clear to see why a plan-led system is needed.

The game can be tailored for different audiences, and can be played for an hour or run as an all-day event. Real-life challenges can be added in like working within a set budget, nature conservation designations or providing strict requirements to work towards meeting environmental and energy targets.

Thanks to the IPI's Marine Planning Committee Terry Prendergast, Sinead O'Malley and Rob Fennelly, who acted as team observers. **If anyone would like to know more information about the challenge or would be interested in hosting a similar event, please get in touch with Heather at: heather.ritchie@gub.ac.uk**

Historical Maritime Tours in Waterford



Street Art Ink Guided Tours have recently officially launched their first Maritime Walking Tour of Waterford. Titled 'Floating Tours', the programme offers visitors a maritime themed immersive audio-visual experience around the city that celebrates maritime heritage, history and the River Suir.

Floating Tours is an innovative maritime tour – that part of the programme involves outreach with local, multi-disciplinary artists who are

creating art installations, showcasing the beautiful, vibrant street art of Waterford for the community to enjoy.

The tour features maritime artworks such as the mural in the Greyfriars area of the City created by artist David Maker, which celebrates the steamships from Waterford's maritime past. You can catch this wonderful piece about 200m from the propeller down the quay towards Reginald's Tower.

The month of May also saw the official unveiling of the propeller from the old SS Port Láirge steamship. The propeller can be seen on Merchants Quay in the city.

Artist David (*see pic above*) was delighted to be able to see the historic propeller in person, as before this he had used photos of the Port Láirge as reference material for his artwork. It was a very touching moment for David (and tour guides) Joanne and Angela who are looking forward to sharing their stories on upcoming maritime tours. **Further information on the tour can be found at <https://streetartink.ie/>**

The Selkie Project – Streamlined commercialisation pathway for the Marine Renewable Energy Industry



The Selkie Project was an Ireland - Wales co-operation to streamline the commercialisation of the wave and tidal energy industry. It was EU funded, €5.2M, administrated by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) and the consortium consisted of MaREI, the SFI Centre for Energy, Climate and

Marine in University College Cork, Swansea University plus four skilled industry partners, each with their own expertise; Gavin and Doherty Geosolutions, Dublin. DP Energy, Cork, Marine Energy Wales, Pembrokeshire and Menter Mon, Anglesey.

The Selkie project developed a set of multi-use technology, engineering and operation tools, templates, standards and models for use across the MRE sector. You can find them all here: <https://www.selkie-project.eu/tools/>

This cutting-edge, technology development project which ran for four years up to May 2023, designed, built, and tested, innovative, decision support systems to assist marine renewable energy developers get their 'metal wet'. For advanced site selection, the most up-to-date GIS (Geographic Information System) for our region was created, including twenty years of wave, tidal, and weather resource data. Other levels incorporate seabed classification, traffic, cabling routes, grid connections and sections of this metadata has been used within Irelands ORDEPII, Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan, released March 2023. The platform has a first-of-its-kind in renewable energy, a techno-economic calculator, which enables the user to access project feasibility at a given site.



Selkie was awarded the Marine Renewable Industry Association (MRIA) Irish research project of the year 2022 in February of 2023.

Next were the three separate foundation and mooring design modules. These will give you the safest, most cost effective station keeping arrangement for your energy device. Selkie has completed physical and numerical modelling, using industry data and computational fluid dynamics. These predictive models will de-risk open deployments and layout arrays for energy maximization. The Logistics, Operations, and maintenance strategy program takes costs for ports, vessels, components required, downtime and provides a useful baseline to examine and adapt.

Selkie pioneered the use of drones to measure surface currents at sea - easily deployable and low cost, low risk. Another unique measurement capability is the converging beam Doppler profiler. This captures turbulence at a set point, which is not possible with conventional profilers, and is easily assembled and towed at a fraction of the cost for data gathering. The project refined a data logger, built a digital twin model, collaborated with companies and test sites, and used funded tank testing to support early-stage wave and tidal energy developers.

These types of support are vital for the industry and results from the Selkie survey, of over two hundred firms, on barriers and enablers indicated that investment and Government support were lacking.

The advances made are shared through the project's social media channels and website, a host of academic papers, videos, tutorials, a twelve-episode-long 'meet the expert' series and links to the open source tools. They hosted numerous supply chain events across Ireland and Wales and the contacts and relationships from these will help progress the industry as a whole. This type of triple helix (Government, Academic, Industrial) knowledge transfer and collaboration for clean and renewable energy will be key to Ireland meeting its emissions targets and reducing its reliance on fossil fuels.

Watch the Selkie project overview here on [YouTube](#) (link)

You can read more on: www.marei.ie/project/selkie

European Maritime Day 2023

On the 24th and 25th of May the MPPL team joined a group of nearly 30 delegates from different agencies and areas of Ireland at the [European Maritime Day 2023](#) conference in Brest, France.



The packed agenda over the two days included 24 workshops providing the latest thinking in relation to all marine interests and sectors, as well as plenary sessions setting marine matters across Europe in a wider context. These were complemented by an array of stalls and informal pitch sessions. Overall the conference was attended in person by over 1,200 people allowing lessons to be shared between countries. Ireland's attendees included a number of representatives from Cork City and County Councils, there to meet with other host cities to inform preparations for Cork to host the event in May 2025.



Marine Planning Adviser, Tom Woolley; Marine Planning Assistant Principal, Juliet Fitzpatrick; Maritime Attaché, Eoin Leahy; Incoming Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr. Kieran McCarthy



John Hallon (Chief Financial Officer, Cork); Trish Murphy (Events Manager, Cork); Damian Boylan (Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork); Eoin Leahy (Maritime Attaché); Ann Doherty (Chief Executive Cork); Adrienne Rodgers (Director of Services Cork); Juliet Fitzpatrick (Assistant Principal DHLGH)

A View from Europe



Eoin Leahy
Maritime Affairs Attaché



An Roinn Gnóthaí
Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade

Spring in Brussels seemed to go on forever this year on the weather front, but on the work front, it was as busy as ever! Under the Swedish Presidency, there was a big push to conclude our work on the EU Maritime Security Strategy update. Given the changing geo-political environment and topics such as protection of critical infrastructure, the new Strategic Compass, climate change and others, we are focused and close to agreeing this update.

March brought the “Our Ocean Conference” in Panama where I was pleased to be Ireland’s delegate where we made commitments of close to €4 million euros on Ocean issues. At the event I had an opportunity to engage with Valerie Hickey from the World Bank, colleagues from the US State Department, met the President of Fiji, US Ambassador Jessica Lapenn and attended a side event hosted by John Kerry in the US Ambassador to Panama’s residence. Key to attending this was to meet US Ambassador Lapenn who is senior co-ordinator for Atlantic co-operation. Ireland is part of this initiative and developing this relationship is important in our engagement as this initiative is being developed through 2023.

In February, DG R&I and DG MARE hosted the first Mission Ocean Forum in Brussels. Colleagues from the Marine Institute joined me in Brussels. Ireland is centrally involved with this Mission, having hosted the Atlantic launch for this in November last where President Higgins attended and several Irish agencies and institutions are involved in projects associated with this.

Through my role here I also sit on the CISE stakeholder group and attended the most recent meeting in Lisbon in March. This is an integrated maritime surveillance platform to allow sharing of information between national authorities on a single window and also to allow sharing of information between Member States. Ireland has not signed the co-operation agreement on this but we are closely following the work as this system will become operational in 2024.

In April, the EDA hosted a Symposium on critical infrastructure in Brussels. Colleagues from the Naval Service and the Dept. of Defence attended this very engaging event on this very relevant topic. Prof. Brendan Flynn from the University of Galway spoke as a panellist with some thought provoking suggestions and giving some balance to the discussion as a non-NATO Member State.

In July, Ireland is hosting a celebratory event to mark 10 years since the signing of the Galway Statement. An Tánaiste Micheál Martin and Commissioner Mairead McGuinness will welcome political and senior officials to Iveagh House. The Galway Statement was an early success of Ireland's harnessing our Ocean Wealth initiative and the EU Atlantic Strategy in 2013 and Ireland's EU Presidency. This initiative brought the EU, US and Canada together to cooperate on ocean research. It has been expanded twice to now become all-Atlantic with the All Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance signing of the Washington Declaration last summer, where Minister Burke had planned to attend. It now includes EU Member States, US, Canada, Brazil, Argentina Cabo Verde, South Africa and Morocco. I am centrally involved in coordinating the high-level and political attendees. This event is being co organised by DFA, Marine Institute and the EU Commission.

Work on the Atlantic Strategy has been progressing well with a first national coordination meeting, hosted by the Marine Institute in April which brought together the national hub, pillar coordinators, pillar members and myself as National Coordinator along with representatives from several Departments. At the meeting, we had an opportunity to take stock of Ireland's role, identify key areas to focus on and discuss our positions for the Ministerial level meeting planned for October in Porto.

Most recently, I attended European Maritime Day in Brest as part of a large Irish delegation with colleagues from DHLGH, Marine Institute, Cork City Council, SEAI, EirGrid and UCC. Given that we have secured EMD for Cork in 2025, excitement is growing in this area!

As has been a common thread through these newsletters, I am thoroughly enjoying this varied, interesting and challenging role and I am looking forward to the months to come and the variety of topics that cross my desk.

“Blue Carbon needs to go public”

Karin Dubsy - Coastwatch



Karin Dubsy (third from left) at the Baldoyle Bay Seagrass Restoration Project.

Ireland has over 7,500 km worth of long indented coastline with a great habitat mix in the shallow waters accessible to all. Among these habitats, sandy shores are still the most desirable public feature and occur in over three-quarters of our designated bathing waters, receiving significant public funding for monitoring, lifeguards, toilets, access, public information, education events etc.

Both social and commercial interests drive this effort and we can be proud of the results. Annually around 90% of our bathing beaches return top water quality - see www.beaches.ie

If on the other hand we consider the most critical areas for biodiversity and climate change mitigation then we would walk right past the sandy beaches to look over soft saltmarshes, mudflats with glasswort stands, intertidal seagrass lawns and mussel beds. Or we would paddle or snorkel out to find seagrass meadows, forming a patchwork with kelp forests and perhaps even some maerl. All these habitats are teeming with life at different times and seasons, acting as nursery for many fish and shellfish species. On top of that, these habitats are exceptionally efficient at capturing carbon from the atmosphere and water and then storing it in tissue, roots, rhizomes, mussel shell and mud, maerl skeletons and burying it in sediment.

These coastal and marine carbon capture and sink habitats are ‘Blue Carbon’, as distinct from the well-known ‘Green Carbon’ forests and intact peat bogs on land.

But how many people know that?

In May 2023 Coastwatch ran a small pilot survey asking just over 100 students and visitors in Trinity College grounds, had they heard of 'Blue Carbon' and if yes, would they know or take a guess what the term means. Only 17% had heard of it and 7% were able to describe correctly what it is. Most of these were at the science end of college.

It is rather sobering to think that excellent reports on the critical role of Blue Carbon in climate change mitigation have been published over the last 16 years, including the 2009 UN report pulling together strong recommendations for halting the loss and indeed restoring and protecting these habitats. Does it just need time to register? Well no - Instagram was invented a year after that UN Blue Carbon report and everyone has heard of it.

So how can we get people to care for these essential habitats and their health as much as for their bathing beaches? How can we do an Instagram on Blue Carbon?

May 22nd was World Biodiversity Day and Coastwatch organised free public fieldtrip events focussed on or including a dollop of Blue Carbon around this special day with many other NGOs and NPWS grant support.

The first Biodiverse Blue Carbon (BBC) event was set to give our own team more information. The fieldtrip in the Blue Carbon rich Rosslare Municipal District of county Wexford, saw top saltmarsh experts led by Prof Iris Moeller of TCD, explain why saltmarshes are such efficient blue carbon sinks and the importance of the network of tidal channels and saltpans within them. The farmers in the group were astonished. Lower saltmarsh and the channels were not just ineligible for farm payments, but seen as a dangerous nuisance for grazing stock. Next we went to the large seagrass meadows around Kilmore. The Coastwatch team of Mick Berry, Jim Hurley and Karin Dubsy explained its importance for nature and for Carbon capture.

Both key functions are now threatened by a thick blanket cover of invasive alien *Sargassum muticum* seaweed. The new foreshore licensing scheme should make restoration action in cases like this clear, simple and quick.

You can find the report on www.coastwatch.org and the result of the first brood will be announced shortly.

gov.ie/housing

The Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland