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From protest to participation: Learning from experience in Irish inshore fisheries management

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Abstract

Approximately 86% of Irish fishing vessels, as of 2018, are classified as small-scale or inshore (under 12m in length). These vessels are predominantly active within Ireland's territorial waters (up to 12 nautical miles) and as such are subject to national management to a greater extent than the larger vessels that operate in the shared waters that are directly governed by the European Union Common Fisheries Policy. Despite the social, cultural and economic importance of the inshore sector to small coastal communities, a governance framework for small scale fisheries in Ireland has only recently been established. This paper gives a brief overview of Irish inshore fisheries including the numbers and profile of participants, target fisheries and its social, cultural and economic significance. An account is given of a previous unsuccessful attempt to establish a governance system for the sector. The paper then describes and gives some fishers' perspectives on a second iteration of inshore management established in 2014, the Inshore Fisheries Forums, and the recent emergence of a number of representative bodies for Irish inshore fishers. These initiatives are discussed in the broader context of the fragmented nature of marine governance in Ireland.

Keywords: co-management; fragmented governance; coastal communities; island communities; fisheries institutions

1. Introduction

Ireland, being an island with a long coastline, extensive continental shelf and productive fishing grounds, has a long history of subsistence and commercial fisheries. However, the low prominence of fishing in economic, political and social terms, has never matched the high level of natural resources available. Explanations for this anomaly range from blaming centuries of English occupation and a lack of recognition by Irish independence activists of the importance of fishing (McLaughlin, 2010) to the prioritisation of agriculture over fisheries in negotiations during Ireland's entry to the European Union (EU) and its Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) (Irish Times, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2013).

When Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and quota shares for Member States were allocated in 1983, the small Irish allocation (based on historic catch records) did not reflect its significant contribution to the common pool of European fisheries resources (DAFF, 2009). The Irish European Economic Zone (EEZ) represents 10% of the total EU EEZ (DAFM, 2018a) but Ireland averages only about 4% of total EU fisheries production (Eurostat, 2016). However when we consider inshore fisheries, laying the blame for poor management at the door of the EU or the UK does not make much sense. Ireland has been an independent state for almost 100 years, yet there have only recently been attempts to establish a management framework for the inshore fleet.

The first strategic review of the sector was carried out in 1998, by Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Irish Sea Fisheries Board. The resulting report recommended the establishment of a national Inshore Fisheries Advisory Council to consult on and discuss inshore fisheries policy and strategy (BIM 1999, Bresnihan 2016). More recently, in 2014, a cross party Oireachtas (governmental) sub-committee produced a 243 page report setting out a management framework with 29 recommendations for Irish coastal and island fisheries. The priority focus of this sub-committee was “to examine the socio-economic challenges facing rural coastal and island communities” (Oireachtas 2014, 5). Towards the end of 2018, Bord Iascaigh Mhara held a public consultation to inform the future Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector Strategy 2018-2023 (BIM 2018). On 25 January 2019, Irish Member of the European Parliament Liadh Ní Riada launched ‘The Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and the Islands’ (Figure 1) which sets out 24 principles designed to protect the Irish fishing sector, coastal communities, islands and marine biodiversity, with a particular reference to a community focused approach, small scale fisheries and fisheries-dependent island communities (Afloat.ie 2019). On 27 February 2019, a ‘Strategy for the Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector 2019-2023’ (BIM 2019) was officially launched by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

(DAFM 2019). This focus on the inshore fisheries sector is timely given that more than 80% of the approximately 2,000 registered commercial fishing vessels in Ireland, are under 12m in total length and are largely or completely dependent on Irish territorial waters (Tully, 2017).

The Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities & the Islands

This charter is the work of numerous consultations with fishers, NGOs and coastal communities. It contains Sinn Féin's proposals and pledges for safeguarding and promoting our fishing sector, coastal communities, islands and marine biodiversity.

For decades our coastal communities have been ignored by consecutive governments. However, as we approach the renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy and several other agreements there is an opportunity for positive, progressive change. We in Sinn Féin are determined to deliver that change at both national and European level.

This Charter will form the bedrock of our proposals in those negotiations and will outline our guiding principles for all issues regarding our coast; principles that every party can and should sign up to.

- 1. Empower Irish coastal communities**
Safeguard, acknowledge and promote the important role played by the hundreds of Irish fishers, their family dependants and the coastal and island communities of Ireland;
- 2. Fair Fish Quotas and Quotas that benefit coastal and island communities**
Allocate quotas fairly and proportionately. Allocation of fish quotas should be free from political cronyism and corruption. There should be fair access to quotas for inshore and island fleets as referenced under Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy.
- 3. Simplify bureaucracy and end the criminalisation of fishers**
Simplify rules for landing and lessening the bureaucratic burdens for applicants, especially for Fisheries Local Development Action Groups. Favour the introduction of a more proportionate approach to the inspection for Irish fishing vessels;
- 4. Combat illegal and destructive fishing by outside sources**
Prevent foreign flagged fishing vessels that have previously conducted illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing from fishing activities in delicate or protected areas and are harshly penalised in order to protect marine ecosystems and local fish stocks for commercial use. Prevent the mass displacement of EU and non-EU fishing vessels into Irish waters in the event of a no deal Brexit scenario;
- 5. Stop Supertrawlers**
Support an outright ban on supertrawlers and until that can be achieved call for the strictest monitoring by the SPPA of super-trawlers operating in Irish waters;
- 6. Use the European Parliament to challenge the European Commission and protect Irish fishers**
Commit our MEPs towards working for major reform of the Common Fisheries Policy which has been deeply unpopular with Irish coastal communities and fishers.
- 7. Better EU funding**
Work within the European Parliament to propose and support the simplification and expansion of the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund so it better protects and promotes small-scale fishers, coastal communities and a healthy and sustainable marine environment;
- 8. Support the people and organisations that save lives**
Increase measures to support our coastguard, naval and search and rescue services as well as volunteers, voluntary organisations and families who have lost loved ones at sea;
- 9. Community focused approach**
Encourage and support marine stewardship and co-management within local communities as a means of ensuring the protection of the marine environment;
- 10. Building alliances for ordinary fishers**
Assist small scale inshore and offshore fishers in exerting political influence and building alliances at European, regional and national levels; To promote fisheries policies that work for all Irish fishing interests, not just the powerful. The full and equal involvement of fishers in the future development and implementation of fisheries policy at national and international level;
- 11. Scientists & Fishers Working Together to Protect Coastal Communities & our Environment**
Develop a sustainable fisheries policy that is balanced between environmental, economic and social objectives with collaboration between scientists and fishers to ensure commercially and environmentally sustainable fish stocks. Safeguard local fish stocks - The seasonal closures of fisheries spawning grounds, and in unforeseen periods where there are large quantities of juvenile fish in the area.
- 12. Government Priority**
Establish a Department for Fisheries, Marine and Marine Communities with a designated Minister
- 13. Power to our Islands**
Island proof all legislation that passes through other Departments in order to ensure that legislation does not have an unfair or discriminatory effect on island communities. Legislate for an Islands Bill and the creation of a national Islands plan to promote heritage, wellness and tourism and formulate a long-term blue socio-economic and marine development plan;
- 14. Value our stakeholders**
Support the positive roles played by Údaráis na Gaeltachta, Fisheries Local Development Action Groups, Lost at Sea Tragedies, Irish Island Marine Resource Organisation, the Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation, Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation, Bórd Iascaigh Mhara, Killybegs Fishers Organisation, Irish Fish Producers Organisation, Irish Fish Processing & Exporters Association, Marine National Inshore Fisheries Forum, Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums, Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation, Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, Europeche, Low Impact Fishers of Europe, affiliated & non-affiliated parties and all other stakeholders;
- 15. A Post-Brexit Fishing Deal that works**
Negotiate a future fisheries agreement between Britain and Ireland after Brexit that benefits all the fishermen of Ireland which should be modeled on the trilateral agreement between Denmark, Sweden and Norway covering the waters of Skagerrak & Kattegat. This could also resolve the Voinage Agreement impasse. The Irish government must adequately prepare for all Brexit eventualities.
- 16. Zero tolerance approach to illegal fishing by industrial vessels**
Demand stricter monitoring and control of the fishing operations of foreign fishing vessels, particularly those with a history of non-compliance, especially factory vessels or super-trawlers;
- 17. Secure A Bluefin Tuna Quota**
Call on the Irish government, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), European Commission and European Council to secure and grant Irish fishers a commercial quota for Bluefin Tuna, which would also enable recreational fishing for the species;
- 18. Invest in our Fishing Ports**
Invest in improving port facilities and developing transport infrastructure for important fishing ports which are mostly located in peripheral areas;
- 19. Clean our Rivers, build their Fish stocks and Punish Polluters**
Require swifter environmental clean-ups and restocking of fish in waterways where pollution has negatively impacted the ecosystems; Consider the pollution of waterways to be acts of gross and criminal negligence that warrant harsher penalties for those responsible, particularly when this pollution causes moderate to severe temporary or permanent environmental damage to affected ecosystems and waterways, which often results in mass kills of fish and other species kills, lack of access to clean water and disruption to human activities;
- 20. Looking out for small scale fisheries and provision of aid for Fishers**
Support aid for small-scale fishers of a Member State who are directly affected by an unforeseen closure of a fishery they conduct fishing activities in that lies within the Economic Exclusive Zone of their Member State; Legislate to enable access to compensation, aid or funding for operators of fishing vessels less than 12 metres, particularly those who use static gears. Seek preferential access for small scale, inshore, artisanal or coastal fishers between the baseline and 12 miles out.
- 21. Compensate our Eel Fishers**
Legislate for a new European Maritime & Fisheries Fund to allow easier access and broaden the scope for funding, especially for compensation and a support scheme for eel fishers;
- 22. Community Led & Centred Approach to Aquaculture**
Foster an environmentally sustainable, indigenous and community-led aquaculture sector with a robust, transparent and democratic licencing system;
- 23. Value and Nurture Ireland's Maritime Heritage**
Represent and work with small scale fisheries and coastal communities and encourage young people and women to participate in maritime work and fisheries
- 24. Stop the Privatisation of Community-Owned Seaweed and Kelp**
Promote and support community led and owned sustainable seaweed harvesting operations;


 **Sinn Féin**

Figure 1: Recently published Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and the Islands by Irish political party, Sinn Féin.

2. Definition of Small Scale Fisheries

In Irish fisheries management the term “inshore” is used more than “small-scale” when describing and defining fleet sectors. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), “Irish inshore fishing boats are deemed to be sea-fishing boats of less than 12m overall length” (DAFM, 2014, n.p.). This 12m threshold is used to define which vessels can participate in the management framework for small scale fisheries recently established in Ireland, the National Inshore Fisheries Forum (NIFF) and its regional subgroups. The operation of this management framework is described in greater detail in later sections.

The definition of ‘inshore’ used in Irish fisheries management does not map exactly onto the EU’s definition of ‘small-scale’. The European Commission’s advisory Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) specifies that small-scale only covers vessels under 12m using static gears, whereas the Irish inshore fishing fleet includes towed and non-towed gear.

Inshore fisheries within the 6nm limit fall within the sole competence of national authorities, except for changes to technical measures when it must consult the EU even in relation to species caught only within the 6nm limit. Similarly, quota species caught within the 6nm limit are subject to the CFP so that inshore fishermen operating mixed fisheries are required to comply with the landing obligation for such species and are therefore affected by the occurrence of ‘choke species’ (where a species with a low quota can prevent a fisherman from continuing to fish for other species that they have quota for). Although the national authorities also manage and control inshore fisheries within the 12nm limit, some Member States have traditional fishing rights for certain stocks within Ireland’s 6-12nm zone, as defined in Annex 1 of the CFP (Tully, 2017). Inshore fisheries (which operate within the 12nm limit) are also indirectly affected by the CFP via the EU’s environmental directives (Habitats Directive (92/43 EEC), Birds Directive (79/409 EEC) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56 EC)). The conservation focus of these Directives is echoed in Article 1(a) of the CFP Basic Regulation (1380/2013 EC) which requires “the conservation of marine biological resources and the management of fisheries and fleets exploiting such resources.”

3. The Irish Fishing Fleet

The Irish fleet is nationally divided into the following four subsections (Licensing Authority 2017):

- The Refrigerated Seawater Pelagic segment. These are 23 large vessels exclusively targeting pelagic species.

- The Beam Trawler segment. This contains 8 vessels that target demersal species with beam trawls.
- The Polyvalent segment. This is the largest and most diverse segment comprised of approximately 1726 vessels using a range of gears and targeting a mix of fisheries. The majority of small-scale vessels are registered in this section.
- The Specific segment which contains 140 vessels which fish for bivalve molluscs including scallops.

Within the polyvalent segment there is a sub-segment containing vessels licensed to fish exclusively with pots, which must be under 12m length and less than 20 tonnes in registered volume. This segment was created in 2006 to accommodate a large number of small scale vessels which were previously unregistered. The number of vessels in this subcategory in 2017 was 344 (DAFM, 2018). The majority of other small scale vessels are registered within the polyvalent <18m segment and also to a lesser extent in the Specific segment.

There is a trend towards increasing numbers of vessels in the Irish inshore fleet with an increase from 806 active licensed vessels in 2009 to 909 in 2016 (STECF, 2018). Care must be taken with these figures as these are estimates of activity because as previously described vessels less than 10m do not have logbooks and as such their activity is not well defined. This trend was made possible by the fact that inshore fisheries operate under a *de facto* open access framework. A number of factors may have incentivised new entrants to the sector including the recent economic crisis, rising unemployment and also the purchases of inshore vessels following the decommissioning of older larger vessels between 2005 to 2008 (STECF, 2015).



Figure 2: Irish small scale fishing vessel on Arranmore island, Co. Donegal. Credit: Séamus Bonner.

4. Irish Inshore fisheries

The majority of Irish vessels under 12m in total length target shellfish using static gears (63% of the Irish fleet, Figure 2). However, there are also a significant number of active vessels under 12m in length that use towed gears such as trawls and dredges, and if the small-scale fleet is defined to include all active vessels under 12m the percentage figure rises to 86%. These vessels fish almost exclusively within the 12 nautical mile limit with the majority of their activities being within the 6 nautical mile limit (Tully, 2017). Figure 3 shows a recent breakdown of vessel sizes in the Irish fishing fleet.

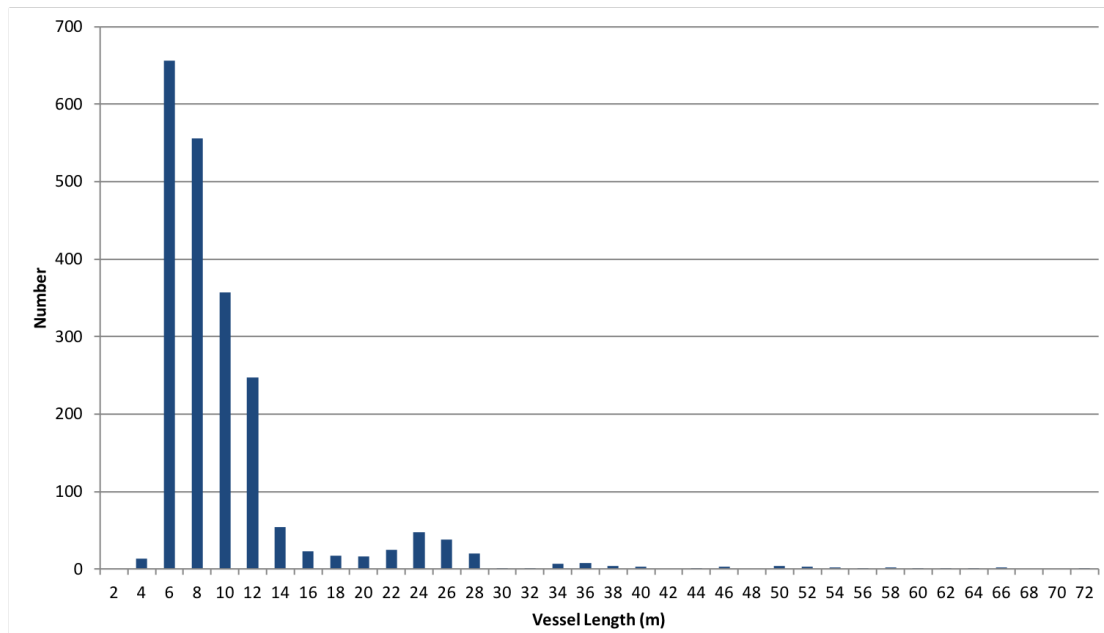


Figure 3: Vessel Length distribution in the Irish registered fishing fleet 2018.

As demonstrated in Table 1, the most significant inshore fisheries, both by volume and value, are for Brown Crab (*Cancer pagurus*), Whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) and Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*). Other significant shellfish fisheries are for Shrimp (*Palaemon serratus*), Velvet crab (*Necora puber*), Spider crab (*Maja brachydactyla*), native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), Razor clams (*Ensis* sp) and Scallop (*Pecten maximus*). Significant finfish species targeted by inshore vessels include Pollock (*Pollachius pollachius*), Hake (*Merluccius merluccius*), Cod (*Gadus morhua*), Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), Herring (*Clupea harengus*) and Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). Figure 4 shows a map of Irish inshore commercial fisheries and some relevant boundaries.

Table 1: Most recently available statistics describing Irish small-scale fisheries (Data from STECF 2018 Annual Economic Report (AER), using 2016 data)

| | Total (all fisheries) | Small-scale fisheries¹ |
|--|---|--|
| Fleet | | |
| Total Number of vessels | 2,044 | |
| Total Number Estimated Active Vessels | 1,440 | 908 (63%) |
| Capacity (GT) | 59,900 | |
| Total Active (GT) | 56,500 | 2,786 (5%) |
| Number of Active fishers | 3,461 | 1,385 |
| FTE | 2,672 | 856 |
| % women | Unknown | Unknown |
| Average age of fishers | 35-39 | 30-34 |
| Landings | | |
| Quantity (ton) | 239,347 t | 14,507 t |
| Value (€) | €265 million | €25 million ² |
| Most common gear used (top 3) (% in total) | Demersal Trawl (41%) Pots (36%) Dredges (10%) | Pots (96%) Fixed nets (3%) Hooks (1%) |
| Most important species in landings: | | |
| Top 3 in quantities (% in total) | Mackerel (34%) Blue Whiting (18%) Horse Mackerel (9%) | Brown Crab (37%) Whelk (35%) Lobster (4%) |
| Top 3 in values (% in total) | Mackerel (21%) Nephrops (20%) Monkfish (5%) | Brown Crab (28%) Whelk (25%) Lobster (18%) |

Note: ¹ Vessels <12m using static gear; ² Total landings may be underestimated due to lack of data.

Landings data given for the small scale fisheries in Table 1 are taken from the STECF 2018 Annual Economic Report (AER) and are based mainly on shellfish landings, most of which are non-quota species. They exclude small scale vessels fishing for demersal or pelagic species with towed gears (as per the STECF and Data Collection Framework (DCF) definition). The Irish experts in the STECF (2017) report have highlighted that the DCF definition's "operational division of the fleet into 'small scale' and 'large scale' fisheries is not a satisfactory aggregation for the Irish Fleet" and recommends that "in future AER reports the term 'small-scale fleet' should be changed to an alternative that includes all vessels under 12m".

Another issue with the data reported for small-scale fisheries as part of DCF is that the landings volume and value for small scale fleet is likely to be a significant underestimate as vessels under 10m are not required to carry logbooks, as noted in Section 2 above. The lack of logbook data from the under 10m fleet means that the reporting of landings, activity and true economic performance of this segment (which makes up 75% of the Irish fleet) is based solely on the limited results from a sentinel vessel programme and the DCF economic survey which is returned by those vessels applying to grant aid.

The lack of data available on the number of women involved in Irish small scale fisheries will hopefully be rectified under the new EU Data Collection Multi-Annual Plan which requires the collection of data on gender by Member States (EU, 2016, p. 170). The current gap in knowledge means that we cannot account for the vital roles women play in the small scale fishing industry. There is increasing recognition of the importance of these roles, for example by BIM's new Women in Fisheries Network, Women in Seafood Programme and podcast (Athena Media 2018, Mills 2018), in principle 23 of the 2019 Sinn Fein Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and the Islands (Afloat.ie 2019) and more generally at a European level (see European Parliament 2013 and AKTEA¹).

A bi-annual report on shellfish stocks and fisheries is produced jointly by the Marine Institute (MI) and the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). Their 2017 review of shellfish stocks and fisheries (Marine Institute & BIM, 2017) points out numerous inconsistencies with landings data for several shellfish species. These inconsistencies arise from large differences in landings estimates depending on whether data is gathered from sales-notes, fisher surveys, sentinel fleet logbooks or other sources. An additional complication with using the landings data presented in the MI/BIM report is that it presents data for shellfish landings by all vessels and for some species there is a significant proportion of those landings made by vessels over 12m in length, e.g. Scallop. As a result of the issues outlined above the landings data for small-scale fisheries must be interpreted with caution and regarded as indicators of general trends at best.

¹ AKTEA – Women in fisheries and aquaculture <http://akteaplatform.eu>

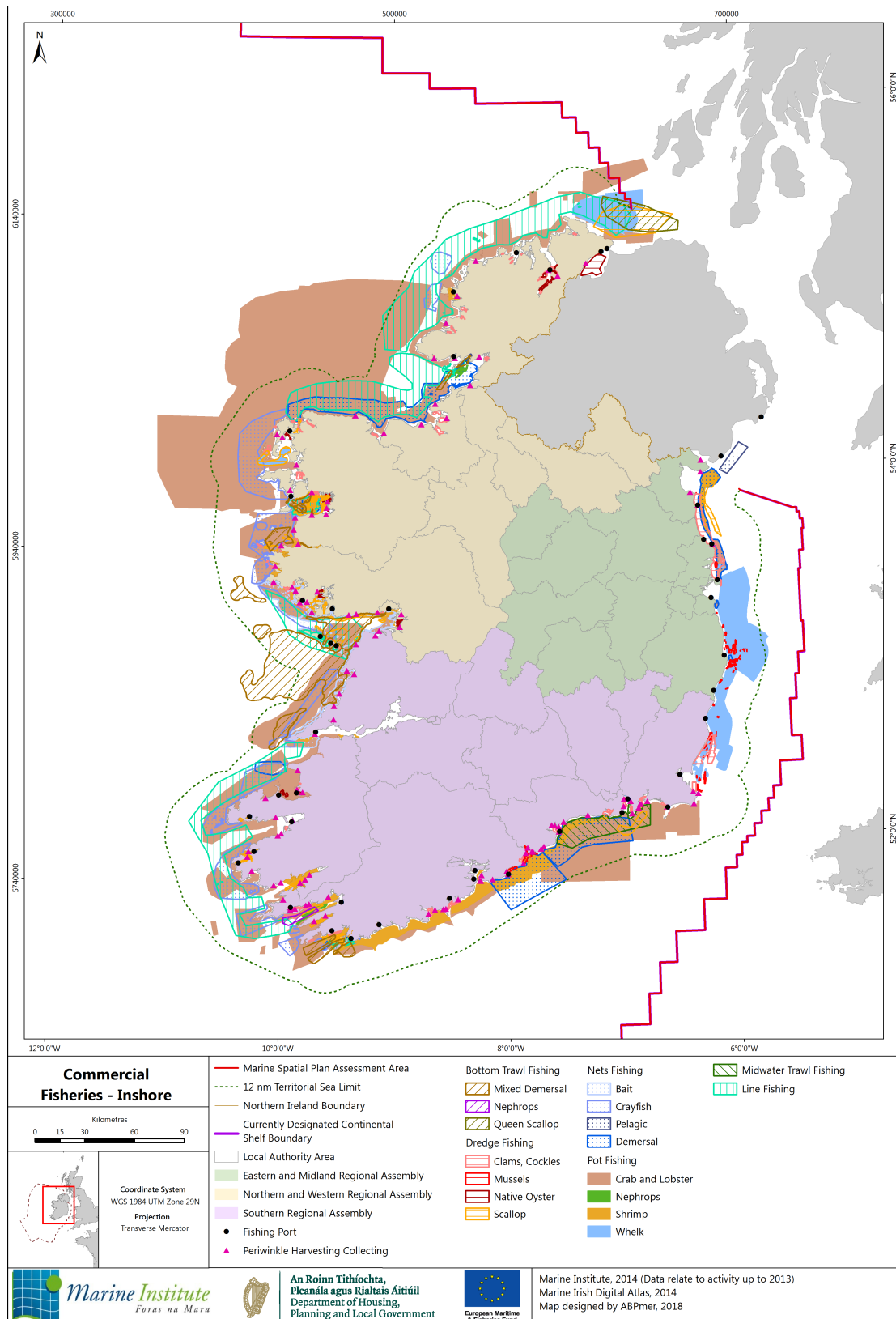


Figure 4: Map of Irish Commercial Inshore Fisheries (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018)

5. Irish small-scale fisheries management.

Although, as noted in Section 2 above, the majority of Irish fishermen (who fish within the 12nm territorial limit) are largely indirectly governed by the CFP, shellfish stocks fall within the competence of the CFP. However, these stocks are generally not limited by Total Allowable Catch (TAC). The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine manages these fisheries by setting minimum landing sizes and, increasingly, by managing fishing effort (input controls) and catch management (output controls) (Marine Institute & BIM, 2017).

Considering that 100% of the inshore catches are landed in Ireland it would appear that effective national governance arrangements for the inshore sector should be a priority. However, with the exception of some local arrangements, such as for oysters in Tralee bay and other areas where management has been devolved to co-operatives (Tully and Clarke, 2012), and requirements under the EU Habitats Directive such as the Fisheries Natura Plan for cockles in Dundalk Bay (DAFM, 2016), inshore fisheries management structures have only recently been established. Catches of some of the most economically important shellfish stocks have declined and there are concerns about the status of a number of stocks (Tully, 2017). For example, lobster catches have fallen from a peak of 856 tonnes in 2004 to 371 tonnes in 2015 despite the use of technical measures such as minimum and maximum sizes and v-notching which prohibits the landing of notched females to improve the sustainability of lobster stocks by protecting female lobsters so that they can breed a number of times.

A number of significant developments in Irish inshore fisheries have occurred within the past decade. In 2006 a polyvalent potting segment was created to accommodate a large number of vessels which were previously unregistered. In addition, in 2006, the Irish Government imposed a moratorium on the use of drift nets to catch wild Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar L.*) and a financial scheme to compensate fishermen for the loss of this fishery was introduced. Not all fishermen accepted the compensation as one of the conditions of the package was a loss of the right to fish Atlantic Salmon in the future should the moratorium be lifted (Brennan and Rodwell, 2008). As predicted by fishermen's organisations at the time, many of those fishermen who accepted financial compensation for the loss of their Salmon fishing entitlement invested that money in shellfish pots, thereby increasing pressure on inshore shellfish stocks (Cawley *et al.*, 2006). Pressure on shellfish stocks was further increased as many boats who would have hitherto operated a mixed fishery by fishing salmon seasonally were now forced to target crab and lobster all year round due to a lack of other opportunities. The Cawley strategy review report of 2006 also recommended the designation of specific coastal areas with exclusive or priority access for inshore vessels and recognised that "the traditional preoccupation with the off-shore sector and the lack of a clear and coherent resource management policy is threatening

the sustainable development of the inshore sector, coupled with the lack of State resources, both in administration and enforcement” (Cawley *et al*, 2006, p12).

At that time there were very few specific management arrangements for Irish inshore fisheries and a number of attempts to remedy this have since taken place. The first attempt to establish a management framework for inshore fisheries in Ireland began in 2005. Following extensive meetings around the coast, a management plan and structure was published by Ireland’s seafood development agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM, 2005). Local Advisory Committees (LAC), a national Species Advisory Group (SAG) and an Inshore Fisheries Review Group to co-ordinate across the species-based frameworks were established. The framework was designed in consultation with experts from other regions, notably Tasmania, but also the UK and France, and in accordance with best co-management practice. As part of this process a draft lobster management plan and access control scheme was published (BIM, 2008), which proposed authorisation requirements for all those involved in the fishery, limitations on new entrants, regional management and reporting requirements. Similar plans were also developed for other shellfish fisheries such as crab, shrimp and scallop.

The initial success of the framework did not last long and by 2009 inshore fisheries management had reverted back to its *ad hoc* nature as participants had lost faith in the process. One of the chief instigators and supporters of the management framework in an interview outlined the following reasons for its failure (Fitzpatrick, 2013):

- Institutional commitment to the process from the fisheries department was lacking and there were delays of up to a year in scheduling meetings of the national Inshore Fisheries Review Group. As a result the overall decision-making capacity of the framework was severely curtailed.
- The de facto open access situation created a significant hurdle to making decisions on meaningful management measures. It created a context where the predominant motivation for fishermen was to maintain the value of their licences in the short-term.
- The requirement for strong top-down drivers was greater than anticipated. The access and licensing issue was a particular example of how clear legislative policies and strong departmental engagement are often necessary conditions to guide and incentivise nascent co-management institutions.
- The culture of inshore fisheries in Ireland had not been one that included participation in management, and individual and institutional capabilities were not sufficient to make the rapid transition to co-management.

5.1 Development of National Inshore Fisheries Forums

The difficulty with implementing governance change, even with well designed and well intentioned efforts, within a complex system influenced by political, social, biological and economic factors, is well illustrated in the above example. Recognising the need for a new governance framework the national agri-fishery policy statement, 'Harvest 2020', included the objective that "implementation of a specific Inshore Fisheries Management framework should proceed as speedily as possible" (DAFF, 2010, p54).

Additionally, Ireland's EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) Operational Programme for 2014-2020 (EMFF 2014a) recognised that the limited management regime for inshore stocks and the lack of data on the activities of under 10 metre vessels was a significant weakness with an associated risk of stock declines. A Small Scale Coastal Fisheries Action Plan developed under the EMFF identified the requirement to develop supports for the enhanced management and conservations of inshore stocks, including v-notching of lobster, more selective fishing gear and preparation and implementation of management plans for inshore stocks. The "Action Plan for the development, competitiveness and sustainability of small scale coastal fisheries" is sparse, consisting of a 2 page appendix of bullet points (EMFF 2014b). The plan was informed by contributions from the 6 Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums and the National Inshore Fisheries forum (EMFF 2014a). These new regional and national management frameworks were established in 2014 and partly funded by the EMFF,

The National and Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums were set up to enable inshore fishermen (under 12m vessels using towed and non-towed gear) to have a greater involvement in sustainable fisheries management within the 6 nautical mile limit, and to facilitate communication between inshore fishermen and managers. The new management structure is comprised of 6 Regional Inshore Fishery Forums (RIFFs) and an overarching National Inshore Fisheries Forum (NIFF). There are approximately 12 members on each RIFF representing mainly inshore fishing but also covering other marine sectors such as aquaculture, recreational fisheries, tourism and environmental interests. Two delegates from each RIFF participate in meetings of the NIFF where issues raised at regional level with national relevance are discussed. The NIFF members also report back to the RIFFs on national issues.

Although inshore fishermen, via the NIFF, now have formal involvement in meetings ranging from national quota management to EMFF allocation and industry-science research partnerships, not all inshore fishermen feel that their voices are adequately represented. Thus while some inshore fishermen feel that Inshore Forums have good engagement with

administrative officials in DAFM and that decision-making is moving from opaque and exclusive to transparent and participative², others, such as members of the Irish Islands Marine Resources Organisation (IIMRO³) do not feel adequately represented by the Inshore Forums. For example, the NIFF Terms of reference are limited in a number of key areas⁴ and the makeup of the group is not member based meaning that nominees of member based grassroots organisations are not necessarily included on the forums. This has led to some issues with poor communication of outcomes of regional and national inshore forum meetings back to individual fishers who are not participants in the forums.

The wider context of Irish marine governance is also relevant here. Governance of Irish fisheries and Ireland's marine environment more generally is spread across several different government departments. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is not the only government department relevant to inshore fisheries. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive team sits in a different government department: the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government (where the priority of the relevant minister has been the housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland over the past decade) and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are also relevant for rural coastal and island fishing communities. In total 11 government departments and 21 state bodies are involved in governance of Irish marine affairs (Kelly, Ellis and Flannery, 2018). The fragmented nature of this governance is not conducive to effective co-management of Irish inshore fisheries. In this regard it is noteworthy that both Recommendation 2 of the cross party parliamentary report on the socio-economic challenges facing rural coastal and island communities (Oireachtas 2014) and the more recent Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and Islands (Figure 1) call for a dedicated Department of Fisheries, Marine and Marine Communities with a designated Minister (Afloat.ie 2019).

The process of participation in management and improving the influence of the inshore sector is an incremental one which is dependent on learning and building capacity (Fitzpatrick, 2013). There is currently a feeling of frustration amongst certain inshore fishers that consultative processes lead to reports that are then ignored or sidelined by the Government.

² Personal communication, National Inshore Fishermen's Association representative, July 2017.

³ IIMRO is a national organisation set up in 2014 to represent the voices of island communities on marine related matters. It works in partnership with LIFE (Low Impact Fishers Europe) and the European Small Islands Network. <http://www.iimro.org/index.html>

⁴ The terms of reference of the NIFF specify that "forums will not spend time on issues that do not have significant impact on inshore fisheries (for example, management of many offshore fisheries...)" (<http://inshoreforums.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/IFF-TOR-Jan-2016-with-Env.pdf>). While the intention may understandably be to focus discussions on inshore fisheries so that the process stays on track, it is highly political to assume that the management of offshore fisheries does not have significant impact on inshore fisheries and therefore should not be discussed in the forum.

The frustration of the inshore sector is all the more keenly felt as inshore fishermen have finite resources in terms of time and finances to devote to the participatory process. An example of this is the trend of increased inshore fishing effort or “fishermen working harder every year for the same money”. There are diverse views within the Inshore Forums on how best to address this complex issue. How well it is tackled will be a significant test of the inclusiveness, representativeness and problem solving capacity of this participatory management process.

The quota allocation process, particularly for non-shellfish species, can be very problematic for inshore fishers. This is despite the existence of traditional inshore fisheries for many whitefish and pelagic species using a range of fishing gears. Although inshore vessels with a polyvalent license are given monthly vessel-specific allocations for whitefish species, in practice a number of issues can create quota shortages or in some cases, a lack of access to quota. For inshore vessels the averaging of allocation throughout the year has a disproportionate impact as they are more vulnerable to weather disruption than larger offshore vessels and there are frequently times when they cannot catch their allocations. Conversely there are also occasions when a greater allocation of quota within a calendar month would be needed. It is imperative for such vessels to have sufficient quota when they can go to sea. Inshore vessels also have more restricted mobility than offshore vessels and quota allocations at times when the relevant species are not in their area or during bad weather are of no benefit to them. Measures such as the restrictions on fishing with trawls or gill-nets in ICES Area VIa under the Cod Recovery Plan which ran from 2008 to 2018 (DAFM, 2017) also have a disproportionate effect on inshore vessels as they do not have the option to steam to a different area in order to avail of other quota opportunities there. The fisheries-dependent small island communities on the Donegal islands, off the north-west coast of Ireland, are located within ICES Area VIa.

Inshore vessels have also been negatively affected by the allocation of some pelagic quotas based on track record. Such allocations favour larger vessels with more stable fishing patterns. In addition, the fact that under 10m vessels have not been required to carry logbooks has mitigated against them in establishing track record. A more flexible quota allocation regime accounting for the needs of inshore vessels is possible under CFP provisions such as Articles 7 and 17 which allow for Member States to promote and incentivise low impact fishing methods and to consider environmental, social and economic criteria when allocating quota. A recent report on the national marine planning framework acknowledges this “limited access to some quota stocks (eg mackerel and herring)” but highlights the maintenance of

inshore water quality as the main issue to focus on as regards the inshore fisheries sector (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018, p53).

Practical limitations on access to quota, as described above, mean that many of the 63% of inshore fishers that are using static gear (as opposed to mixed gear) are not doing so by choice. These fishers now target non-quota species such as crab, lobster, whelk and scallop all year round which they would traditionally have fished seasonally. In addition, prior to the Irish Government's moratorium on drift net fishing for salmon in 2006, some inshore fishermen depended on mixed stock salmon fishing (using drift nets) as part of a seasonal fishery system. A more flexible quota access regime would likely see many inshore fishers returning to a mixed gear seasonal fishery which would present a different picture.

In recent years IIMRO have been proactive in finding ways to address this challenge. From a policy perspective, these island inshore fishing communities have relied on paragraph 20 of the CFP which recognises that "*small offshore islands which are dependent on fishing should, where appropriate, be especially recognised and supported in order to enable them to survive and prosper*" and on Article 17 of the CFP (as described above).

A ministerial review of mackerel quota allocations was conducted in 2017 and IIMRO requested that 0.1% percent (106 tonnes of a total of 86,426 tonnes) of Ireland's mackerel quota be allocated to island inshore fishers. However, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Marine decided to maintain the existing share-out in the allocation of mackerel quota (DAFM, 2017). The Minister's decision was arguably not in line with Recommendation 7 of the 2014 parliamentary committee report on promoting sustainable rural coastal and island communities (Oireachtas 2014, 73) which stated: "*The sub-Committee recommends that in the event of an extra mackerel quota being given to Ireland, a more equitable distribution of mackerel should be decided on and that the inshore fishing fleet should be accommodated*". IIMRO have summarised the existing licensing and quota allocation regime as one which "*is driving fisheries and access to the fishery resource towards industrial scale operations that cannot help island communities⁵*".

Recommendation 10 of the 2014 parliamentary committee report on promoting sustainable rural coastal and island communities recommended a change in licensing policy as follows: "*The sub-Committee recommends that the Government examines the feasibility of 'heritage licences' to be issued by the Department for rural coastal and island communities. Such*

⁵ IIMRO submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Island Fisheries (Heritage Licences) Bill, May 2018.

licences would, optimally facilitate traditional fishing practices in conjunction with the establishment of a producer organisation representing vessels under a certain LOA in these designated areas” (Oireachtas 2014, 95).

Box 1 provides details of the Island Fisheries (Heritage Licence) Bill which is currently going through the parliamentary legislative process in Ireland.

BOX 1: The Island Fisheries (Heritage Licence) Bill 2017

The 2014 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) recognises that “small offshore islands which are dependent on fishing should, where appropriate, be especially recognised and supported in order to enable them to survive and prosper” (para 20). In 2014, the Irish government was advised by a national sub-committee to examine the feasibility of issuing “heritage licences” to rural coastal and island communities to allow for traditional fishing practices on offshore islands (Oireachtas 2014).

In July 2017, the Island Fisheries (Heritage Licence) Bill 2017⁶ was introduced to the Dáil (Irish Parliament) and it is currently at Stage Three of a five stage legislative process. The Island Fisheries (Heritage Licence) Bill 2017 provides for non-transferable island community quota for CFP quota species within the six mile limit via heritage licences for under 12m vessels using low-impact, non-towed gear. The Bill is being driven forward by the IIMRO. If the Bill becomes law, it will allow for changes in fishing patterns which island fishing communities believe will be more sustainable and appropriate to their needs.

Although the Bill is supported by the opposition parties in parliament, the Government has stated that “The Department’s legal advice is that the Bill is not compatible with EU law and the provisions of the Common Fisheries Policy” (Oireachtas 2018a, n.p.). The Bill is also opposed by the existing Producer Organisations, who allege that it could change existing quota allocations and create unfair discrimination against mainland small-scale fishermen (Oireachtas 2018b). In this regard it is noteworthy that advice sought by IIMRO from DG MARE in the European Commission indicated that the Bill would not breach the CFP.⁷

[End of Box 1]

⁶ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2017/10517/b10517d.pdf>

⁷ “It was agreed that quota assignment is a matter of the national authority and that any allocation for islands within the national quota is not contrary to the Common Fisheries Policy; Local management of areas of concern to islands in line with Marine Protected Area guidelines is not contrary to the Common Fisheries Policy.” Excerpt from Minutes of IIMRO meeting with Director General Machado, DG MARE, December 2015.



Figure 5: Fresh pollack from Iasc Inis Oírr, an island-based micro-processing family business set up in May 2018 on Inis Oírr island, Co. Galway.

Interviews conducted by one of the authors with representatives of the inshore sector reveal that they encounter a persistent perception among policy makers that inshore fishing is a vocational or lifestyle choice with limited economic and social importance. Although the inshore fleet contributes a smaller proportion of the fishing industry's overall income than the offshore fleet, inshore fisheries have a particular social, cultural and economic value for smaller coastal communities (Bresnihan, 2016, Figure 5). Entry costs to the inshore sector are prohibitively high, ranging from €80,000 to as much as €300,000. Making a strong case as to the economic importance of the sector is particularly difficult given the lack of inshore fisheries data with the result that the contribution made by inshore fisheries is routinely undervalued.

In addition to the recent emergence of the Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums a number of inshore fishermen have recognised that there was a difficulty in relying on existing representative or Producer Organisations with low membership rates of inshore fishermen. In some cases there are significant conflicts between inshore and offshore fishing interests, particularly on pelagic issues. Although IIMRO has been a representative organisation since 2006 for Donegal island inshore fishers and since 2014 for Irish island inshore fishers (under 12 metre vessels with non-towed gear), IIMRO do not represent non-island inshore fishers. Accordingly, a dedicated representative organisation, the National Inshore Fishermen's Association (NIFA), was established in April 2017 to represent inshore fishers (under 12m

vessels with non-towed gear). One of the goals of NIFA, in addition to improving the influence and representation of inshore fisheries, is to reinvent the inshore sector and to differentiate it from offshore fisheries. The intention is that this will be done through a stronger emphasis on the local economic, social, employment and environmental benefits of sustainable inshore fisheries with a good governance framework as opposed to one that is predominantly driven by economic efficiency. Within this framework, individualisation of quotas, including the use of ITQs, is opposed due to what is seen as an inevitable move towards concentration of ownership and an associated dissipation of wider social benefits (see Bresnihan 2016, Bresnihan 2017). Furthermore, links to complementary activities such as coastal tourism and restaurants promoting local fish supply will be developed in contrast to the more typical emphasis on export oriented seafood production. Since fisheries in Ireland also include vessels above 12m using towed and non-towed gear, a sister organisation to NIFA was also set up alongside NIFA to represent this category of fishers – the National Inshore Fishermen’s Organisation (NIFO). It is noteworthy that IIMRO is the only Irish inshore fishing organisation to date that is represented (by the Vice-Chair of IIMRO) on the European North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC). IIMRO are currently in the process of applying for representation on a number of groups related to marine spatial planning, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive as well as inshore fisheries.

To date, many Irish inshore fisheries representatives have had limited contact with some of their European counterpart organisations such as Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) and one reason for this is a difference in how some such organisations, in common with the CFP, define small-scale or inshore fisheries. The exclusion of mobile gears such as trawls or dredges, which are included in the Irish inshore fleet, is perceived to be due to the influence of environmental NGOs, even though this distinction is supported by small-scale fishers (under 12 metre vessels) using non-towed gear. With the new EMFF set to increase funding for small-scale fishers to 100%, there is currently pressure from certain Members of the European Parliament on the Fisheries Committee to enable each Member State to adopt their own definition of “small-scale” rather than applying the current EU definition (of under 12m vessels using non-towed gear) across all Member States. This is unsurprisingly being resisted by the small-scale fishers using non-towed gear. The Irish inshore forums do not exclude vessels using mobile or towed gears so that the NIFF and RIFFs represent all under 12m vessels. The island inshore fishers are, once again, distinctive in that IIMRO have been a member of, and actively engaged with, LIFE since 2014. For example in March 2017 the Deputy Director of LIFE brought an IIMRO representative to Galicia to meet with, and learn

from, inshore fishermen there; IIMRO have applied for an EMFF grant with LIFE; and most recently IIMRO were involved with LIFE in a campaign against electric pulse fishing.

In December of 2018 the Irish Fisheries Minister announced that vessels over 18m in length would from 2020 be unable to fish inside the 6 mile limit (Merrionstreet.ie 2018). This decision followed a public consultation process which received over 900 submissions, many of which came from inshore fishing interests. In a public statement on the decision the Minister said that he was “very conscious of the exclusive reliance of small-scale and island fishermen on inshore waters and the benefits this change will bring for those fishermen. I firmly believe that this will, in the medium term, provide ecosystem and nursery stock benefits for all fishermen.”

6. Conclusion

It appears from the recent history of small scale fisheries management in Ireland that significant lessons have been learned and that some important progress has been made. A sector that was excluded from a governance perspective, operating without an overall plan, without overall leadership and without influence in national decision-making now has a management framework and has started to gain a voice through the establishment of a number of representative organisations and an industry-led ‘Strategy for the Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector 2019-2023’ was presented to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on 30 January 2019 (DAFM 2019).

There are significant challenges ahead however. Maintaining the commitment of fishers to put significant personal efforts into participation in management forums and achieving agreement between diverse, independent-minded fishermen will not be straightforward while acknowledging the diversity and nuances within the inshore sector. Improvements in communication and representation in the inshore forums while finding ways to address increasing inshore fishing effort are necessary. The emergence of new organisations while being positive in providing more responsive and appropriate representation to the sector will also create challenges in the wider context of fragmented representation within the Irish fishing industry (Cawley et al, 2006).

It is disappointing that the recent report on the national marine planning framework aims to manage inshore fisheries “in a way that is sustainable both economically and environmentally” with no reference to socio-cultural considerations (DAFM 2018, 56), particularly in light of the recognition within the CFP that “small offshore islands which are dependent on fishing should, where appropriate, be especially recognised and supported in

order to enable them to survive and prosper”. It is encouraging, however, to see the new Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and Islands call for a specific focus on fisheries dependent, small island communities and co-management of fisheries via a community focused approach.

Avoiding the pitfall of creating a small-scale sector which is merely a scaled down version of more industrial fisheries where management is dominated by a narrow, economically rational ethos (Berkes, 2003; Bresnihan, 2016) is necessary if small coastal and island fishing communities are to retain their identity and viability in the face of change. On the other hand providing the data which demonstrates that inshore fishing can be a viable economic activity in its own right may be more persuasive for policy makers who are operating within the constraints of economic rationalism. A policy and governance framework which recognises the diversity of contributions inshore fisheries make to the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of coastal communities is essential. Resolving fundamental policy challenges such as this may well be dependent in turn on higher level issues such as reducing the level of fragmentation in wider Irish marine governance. In this regard it is noteworthy that both Recommendation 2 of the cross party parliamentary report (Oireachtas 2014) and the more recent Charter for Fishers, Coastal Communities and Islands call for a dedicated Department of Fisheries, Marine and Marine Communities with a designated Minister (Afloat.ie 2019).

Lessons Learnt and Challenges

Avoiding the pitfall of creating a small-scale sector which is merely a scaled down version of more industrial fisheries where management is dominated by a narrow, economically rational ethos (Berkes, 2003; Bresnihan, 2016) is necessary if small coastal and island fishing communities are to retain their identity and viability in the face of change. On the other hand providing the data which demonstrates that inshore fishing can be a viable economic activity in its own right may be more persuasive for policy makers who are operating within the constraints of economic rationalism. A policy and governance framework which recognises the diversity of contributions inshore fisheries make to the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of coastal communities is essential. Resolving fundamental policy challenges such as this may well be dependent in turn on higher level issues such as establishing more coherent Irish marine governance, for example through establishing a dedicated Department of Fisheries, Marine and Marine Communities with a designated Minister.

There are significant challenges ahead for the management of Irish inshore fisheries. The fragmented nature of the governance of Irish fisheries and Ireland's marine environment more generally is not conducive to effective co-management of Irish inshore fisheries. In total 11 government departments and 21 state bodies are involved in governance of Irish marine affairs (Kelly, Ellis and Flannery, 2018). Maintaining the commitment of fishers to put significant personal efforts into participation in management forums and achieving agreement between diverse, independent-minded fishers and fishing groups (such as island and mainland inshore fishers) will not be straightforward while acknowledging the diversity and nuances within the inshore sector. Improvements in communication and representation in the inshore forums while finding ways to address increasing inshore fishing effort are necessary. The emergence of new organisations while being positive in providing more responsive and appropriate representation to the sector will also create challenges in the wider context of fragmented representation within the Irish fishing industry (Cawley et al, 2006).

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