

Each month the MARINE TIMES invites a guest contributor to express their views on current topics in the maritime sector.

This month our contributor is one of Ireland's leading marine researchers and environmentalists, Matt Murphy, the Director of Sherkin Island Marine Station in West Cork.



He has devoted a lifetime to the work of maritime research and is deeply concerned about what he calls 'The Plague of Marine Debris.'

Matt Murphy is also Editor of 'Sherkin Comment' the quarterly environmental publication of his marine research station. The current issue, No.61, deals with the topic of marine debris from which this month's Op-Ed is taken.

Letters & Comments to the Editor or any of our Correspondents are always welcomed and they can be sent via email to [marinetimes@eircom.net](mailto:marinetimes@eircom.net) or in the post to: The Editor, Marine Times Newspaper, Cranny Road, Inver, Co. Donegal

# op-ed

## The Plague of Marine Debris – Most of it Coming From Land

### 80 Per Cent of Marine Debris Originates on Land and Most of it is Plastic

**M**arine debris is a worldwide problem. Around 8 million tonnes of plastic enters the ocean every year. At least 1 million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals, such as whales, turtles, dolphins, die each year due to plastic pollution. They are eating the plastic and dying from choking intestinal blockage and starvation.



Bord Iascaigh Mhara established the 'Fishing for Litter' programme in three ports – Castletownbere and Union Hall in Co. Cork and Clogherhead in Co. Louth. The idea is to encourage fishermen to collect litter out at sea, both on board and litter that is caught in nets or drifting at sea.

The response has been extremely positive.

A programme in Scotland - 'Fishing for Litter Scotland' - has removed 800

tonnes of litter from Scotland's seas. 212 boats and 15 harbours around the coastline of Scotland are participating. 800 tonnes is the equivalent of bringing more than 47 million empty drink cans ashore.

The litter originates from a number of sources, much from the general public.

In the US plastic pollution causes at least 13 billion US dollars in damage every year to industries that include fishing, shipping and tourism. The reality is that 80 per cent of marine debris originates on land and most of that is plastic.

The problem is getting worse.

Marine debris that enters the sea can have a 'long life':

- Fine fishing net – at least 500 years
- Plastic bottles 450 years
- Foam cups and tin cans 50 years
- Cigarette butts 1-5 years
- Orange and banana peel up to 2 years
- Papers 2-4 weeks

The environmental charity – Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful – carried out a 3-year study on 14 reference beaches including Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough. They found that the 2015 results were the worst yet.

Marine debris comes ashore every day on Irish beaches.

Here on Sherkin Ireland on just three small beaches there are always some items being washed up on the strandline – pieces of fishing nets, ropes and net cords, large and small pieces of plastic. Local volunteers help to collect this debris.

If you go for a walk on your local beach why not slip a shopping bag into a pocket and when your walk is done, fill the bag with marine debris and take it home for disposal. Your good deed may be the cause of saving the life of some marine animal. However, one can remove plastic from a beach today and the next day strong winds arrive and bring with them more debris. There is no end to the problem. The way to contain it is by not creating the problem, so we must reduce, re-use and recycle.

Exploring the shore line can open a tiny window on the world that lives beyond the waves arriving on our beaches. It is a world that we need to respect.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### APPLICATION FOR A FORESHORE LEASE EXTENSION OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION PERIOD

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 19 of the Foreshore Act, 1933 that the Marine Institute has applied to the Minister of the Environment, Community and Local Government for a lease under the said Act for the purpose of testing prototype wind, wave and tidal energy devices at the Galway Bay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site Spiddal, Co. Galway

A copy of the application, and the relevant maps, plans, reports and drawings, are available for inspection until 2nd August 2016, free of charge, at:

Salthill Garda Station, Salthill, Galway City (24 hours)

Spiddal Public Library, Spiddal, Co. Galway (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.30 to 13.00 hours and 13.30 to 17.00 hours, Wednesdays from 14.00 to 17.00 hours and 17.30 to 19.30 hours, Saturdays from 11.00 to 15.00 hours, Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public / bank holidays)

Comhlacht Forbartha An Spideal Teo, An Spideal, Co. naGalainne (09.30 to 18.30 hours Monday - Friday)

The documentation is also available on the Department's website at:

<http://www.environ.ie/planning/foreshore/applications/foreshore-applications-2016-and-2015>

Any person who wishes to make an objection to, or a representation in respect of the grant of the licence sought should do so in writing, giving reasons, within 21 working days of publication of this Notice (quoting ref: FS 006568), to the Foreshore Unit, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Newtown Road, Wexford or [foreshore@environ.ie](mailto:foreshore@environ.ie).

The closing date for receipt of submissions is extended to close of business on 2nd August 2016.

All objections and representations received will be forwarded to the applicant for comment prior to any decision being made in the matter. Material upon which the Minister shall determine this application may be published on the Department's website. In this regard the Department wishes to draw attention to its policy on defamatory material that may be contained in submissions it receives which may be found at:

<http://www.environ.ie/planning/foreshore/public-participation-foreshore-consent-process>

Dated this 27th day of June 2016

Michael Gillooly  
Director

Marine Institute, Rinville, Oranmore, Co. Galway

#### John Thomas McDowell, A Chara A Tribute to a Long Friendship

We sailed together, you and I, for more than thirty years,  
And landed many a hard-won catch in places far and near.  
Through many a winter storm we wrought, and many long summer days.  
From the 'Humber' to the 'Nor-west Bank', 'Fladden Ground' to 'Sandy Bay'.

Herring and haddock at 'Flamborough Head', and cod at 'Stormy Bank'.  
We worked the 'Minches' and the 'Flannan Isles', 'The Butt' and 'Barra Head'.  
'Oigh Sgeir' and the 'Hillys', 'The Passage' and the 'Dutchman's Cap',  
'Skerry-vore' and 'Dubh-Artach', 'Klondyke' and 'Stanton Bank'.

We played chess in Tobermory Bay, you taught me how to play,  
And got the cod-end in the screw, in the lee of 'Eriskay'.  
We set new records in our time, and reset some ourselves!  
And poked our way through blanket fog, in round "St. David's Head".

We fished in close at 'Inishtrahull', and the 'Sandbanks at Bushmills'  
Seine'd for plaice in 'Coleraine Bay' and sheltered in 'Moville'  
We fished 'Nor-West of Tory' and 'West of Arranmor'  
At 'The Stags', 'Broadhaven', 'The Eagle' and all along that western shore.

Good friends we made in every port, and even more at sea,  
For the fishing folks communion, needs-must, is strong and free.  
We helped many men and we were helped, by colleagues of all creeds,  
And no pay was asked by anyone within the Irish fleet.

Do you remember, John a chara, the day at Inishtrahull,  
When you put the 'Croidte an Duin' about to run into Moville.  
A big sea smashed the port rail down from the gallows to the winch.  
You jacked it back in place next day, and carried on to fish.

We kept some long, long watches, John! But the worst of them all  
Was the watch we kept by your death-bed, when the cancer made its call.  
John, I treasure still the privilege of your comradeship those years,  
And of your wife and family, with who we shared the tears.

Gerry Doyle