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Trading as:

West Cork Sailing and Powerboat Centre providing Irish Sailing certified sail training and powerboat training.

Wild Atlantic Wild life providing liveaboard sailing wildlife expeditions along the south west coast of Ireland.

Kayak with The Seals offering kayak rental in Adrigole harbour.

We are a family run, rural, marine based establishment along the Wild Atlantic Way primarily engaged in the tourist business. We live on the Beara Peninsula and as well as working in the marine environment, we spend much of our leisure time involved with dinghy racing (we are members of Bantry Sailing Club and Kinsale Yacht Club), Sea Kayaking (we are members of West Cork Kayaking Club) windsurfing, sea swimming and surfing. We enjoy living and working on the sea and we love sharing and showing this wonderful biome with friends, family, visitors and locals alike. We want to preserve and conserve what we have for our (and their) children and grand children to enjoy as much as we do.

We would like to see the Marine Spatial Development Plan have Marine Conservation as its central theme. This, as opposed to “marine economic development” which it currently appears to be directed toward. Ireland is lucky in that much of its marine environment is still pristine. In a world where 60% of the planets living organisms have recently become extinct due to anthropogenic influence and where irreversible climate change is less than 12 years from now, we feel that the baseline report on the MSDP does not nearly begin to address these critical issues but instead focus on an outdated economic policy and resource grabbing.

This is an opportunity to put Ireland centre stage in helping to combat global biodiversity decline, eliminate plastic from the oceans, halt ocean acidification and demonstrate good practice in reversing climate change. Instead of following the trends and mistakes of other nations, Ireland could become a world leader in oceanic renewable energies, integrated ecological mari-culture and high value educational tourist experiences.

Points we would like included in the Marine Spatial Plan

Dedicated department of marine.

- Provides a focal point for all maritime areas.
- Support and a voice for the sector at cabinet and international level.
- Signals to other nations that we are a maritime nation.
- Can develop a maritime identity for all.
- Sector needs require constant exchanges with other departments (more than once a month).
- Enables better and quicker processing of foreshore and boat licencing applications.
- Target funding opportunities.
- Enables proper management of a vast territorial area (which is significantly larger than the terrestrial counterpoint).

Marine Protected Areas

- A vital initiative to prevent ecosystem collapse along the coast. All other developed maritime nations have them as well as many developing nations (Ireland has none).
- They are the seed bed for marine regeneration and safe havens for wildlife.
- SACs are not strong enough to be effective conservation zones.
- MPAs should be dedicated no take zones and permit access areas only.
- They should be large enough and numerous enough to be effective.
- They should be managed and co-ordinated by a team of dedicated marine rangers.
- They can act as study areas for research.
- They help inform the general public about the importance of the marine environment.
- They show that Ireland cares about its oceans.

Maritime identity and Social benefits - Social interaction and social cohesion.

- Encouragement of more marine festivals with traditional cultural elements and linked with local marine produce.
- Development of a traditional boat building industry with emphasis on locally designed Irish boats e.g. West Cork mackerel yawl and Galway Hooker.
- Adapt current licencing arrangements to accommodate these boats for sail training and pleasure cruises.
- Integrate local marine produce with tourism activities (e.g. Arcachon and its oysters, Brittany and mussels).
- Encouragement and investment in sailing regattas, sea kayaking, windsurfing events, surfing events, particularly white sail regattas and “give it a go” events to keep the less experienced and less devoted individuals involved in maritime activities e.g. Scotland .
- Producing more blue ways; particularly for the advanced kayaker.
- Provide opportunity for national and international high-end maritime sport enthusiasts who in turn by their presence capture the imaginations of younger possible participants.
- Tangible and visible targets should be listed within the plan to measure social participation (without quantifiable goals social inclusion statements become useless rhetoric).
- Upkeeping traditional stone-built piers and slipways shows a people proud of its maritime heritage. They provide recreational areas with a connectivity to the sea.
- High quality marinas, launching sites and foreshore development with attractive walks and views which greatly enhance the visitor experience. Making access to the water easier creates a desire for locals to become participants e.g. Brittany.
- Small pontoons in strategic locations will encourage boaters to travel along the coast and spend ashore e.g. Scottish islands, Shannon river.
- Keeping ports harbours and associated structures clean, tidy and free from debris such as abandoned boats, defunct machinery, washing line moorings, unused fishing gear and discarded lines shows pride in the sea and its environs. Well managed harbours with fair rules and costs applicable to all promotes a sense of pride e.g. Dingle.
- Restricting the size of ports and minimizing the impact of terrestrial cargo transport. (industrial zones and heavy traffic reduce serotonin levels in people living and working within these areas which in turn degrades mental health).
- Reduce the visual impact of mussel lines and associated beach debris that results from poorly maintained farms.

- Dedicated Garda aqua unit to help police confrontational areas and avoid competition for space, resources and priority.
- Integration of leisure training qualifications with commercial qualifications will encourage more uptake of such training.

Conservation

- Tangible quantifiable targets are required within the plan to increase biodiversity, increase population densities, reduce eutrophic areas (using words like sustainably is too ambiguous).
- The creation of MPAs as discussed above.
- Development of multi trophic aquaculture systems that enhances biodiversity and provide a sustainable income source for rural communities.
- Measured stock take and enforcement of fishing quota applied to all fishers regardless of nationality.
- Implementation of quotas for unregulated fisheries particularly small shoaling fish like sprat which are a vital food source for most of the vertebrate wildlife along the coast (particularly the large baleen whales which are a big draw for international visitors).
- Discontinuation of scallop dredging and review of the “diving for shellfish” laws - dredging and bottom trawling are two of the most environmentally destructive fishing methods, causing huge wipe-outs of entire benthic food webs which take years to recover. (Develop better technologies to encourage more scallop farms).
- Elimination of ghost fishing gear which are continuous cycling death traps for marine wild life and can be dangerous for small craft and swimmers.
- Discontinuation of seismic activity – noise pollution is one of the largest causes of cetacean death and cetacean displacement. A recent paper cites that larval krill, the base of the food web, are destroyed by sonic blasts. Hydrocarbon technology is outdated, contributes to atmospheric CO₂ and should be phased out. It is also not sustainable as it does not re-generate. Ireland recently divested financially from oil markets but still allows and encourages exploration – this is disingenuous and doesn’t encourage trust.
- Seismic vessels should be required to follow all mitigation guideline measures when shooting air guns to avoid displacement, disturbance and injury to cetaceans; including shut down during line turns.
- The OBSERVE data should be linked with data from previous SCANS surveys to give a clearer temporal and spatial picture of Ireland’s cetacean population trends.
- Halt all mechanical extraction of seaweeds and develop protocols for fast tracking and developing sea weed farms – marine algae and sea grasses are two of the most productive sources of CO₂ sequestration. Mechanical harvesting encourages the growth of invasive sea weeds (*sargassum muticum*) which will choke harbours, estuaries and bays.
- The marine environment is not as robust as we once thought and we should not be using it for a dumping ground for CO₂. CCS is expensive and unknown. This type of “put it away and forget about it” is simply kicking the can down the road. This technology is also not sustainable as there is a finite amount of space available. Focus here should be on societal controls of energy use and individual awareness of our own carbon foot print. The marine spatial plan can be a conduit for such messages.

- Marine aggregate extraction should not be encouraged. It will increase suspended solids in the water column thus depleting dissolved oxygen concentration. This type of activity has led to fish die off in fresh water systems. It will also lead to benthic habitat loss and thus reduced biodiversity. The knock-on effects further along the food web are also unknown and unquantifiable. This is also obviously not sustainable.
- Develop more ecological systems for farming of fin fish, particularly in areas of pollution, source of feedstuffs, disease, antibiotic use and impact on native populations. The current system is not compatible with the goals of climate change and reducing biodiversity loss.
- Better management and education of coastal habitats particularly dune, mahar, wetland and marsh habitats as these are vital for many unique organisms and are very susceptible to climate change, pollution, anthropomorphic influences and erosion.
- The plan should have a much greater emphasis on educating society on reducing micro plastic, toxic metals, PCBs, dioxins/ furans, mercury and other bioaccumulates entering the marine environment.
- Waste water treatment plants in all towns and nutrient restriction levels on all rivers.
- Dedicated whale watching protocols and accreditation for skippers of wildlife tour boats. This demonstrates that Ireland cares about its marine wildlife and promotes Ireland internationally as a whale watching destination. (Ireland has 26 species of cetacean recorded in its waters. 1/3 of the worlds known cetacean species have been spotted in Ireland. Over half of Irish mammals live in our seas).
- Protocols and mitigation measures for fishing vessels to eliminate marine mammal and sea bird bycatch.
- Cruise ship activity should be carefully monitored for kick back to local economy. Not always the golden goose e.g. Caribbean.

The Oceans are the life blood of the planet and sepsis is already setting in. If we don't take unprecedented measures now - the future is bleak.