FAIR SEAS

Building a Movement of Ocean Stewardship

#FairSeas
#30x30

BirdWatchIreland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity

FAIR SEAS

We are a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental non-governmental organisations and networks.

Our ambition is to see Ireland become a leader in marine protection, giving our species, habitats and coastal communities the opportunity to thrive.

Our Partners

Irish Wildlife Trust

BirdWatchIreland
protecting birds and biodiversity

Sustainable Water Network
SWAN

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

IEN

Coastwatch

Our Funders

OCEANS5

Blue Nature Alliance

BFCT

The Wyss Foundation

- **Ireland’s marine area is enormous – its stewardship by successive governments has failed to deliver its full ecological, economic or social potential**

- **Despite some progress, the quantity and quality of Ireland’s current MPA network is poor**

- **Irish Government is drafting new MPA legislation as we speak –exciting moment for Irish marine conservation**

- **At the end of the day, healthy seas help tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis**

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What is a MPA?

“a geographically defined area of marine character or influence which is protected through legal means for the purpose of the conservation and/or restoration of species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services, processes and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated conservation objectives”

A marine protected area is like a national park for the ocean

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Why marine protection matters for seabirds

An effective network of MPAs would achieve positive conservation objectives for seabirds.

- Providing suitable **breeding grounds** and **safe migration routes**.
- Making it easier for them to find enough **food** to survive and reproduce.

The state of seabirds is a strong biodiversity indicator of ocean health. So, what does it tell us that **23** of Ireland's 24 breeding seabirds are red or amber listed birds of conservation concern?

Gannets in flight

Gannets and fulmar feeding

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Newly published seabird census 2015-2021

Across the UK and Ireland, 11 of the 21 seabird species with comparable data have declined since the last census in 1998-2002.

Puffin now a Red-listed bird of conservation concern (reliant on sandeels which are in decline)

Black-legged Kittiwake has declined by 36% in Ireland since the previous census

Report after report shows us that life in Ireland's ocean is at crisis point.

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Healthy seas can tackle nature AND climate crises.

Marine Protected Areas help deliver healthy seas. And healthy seas are:

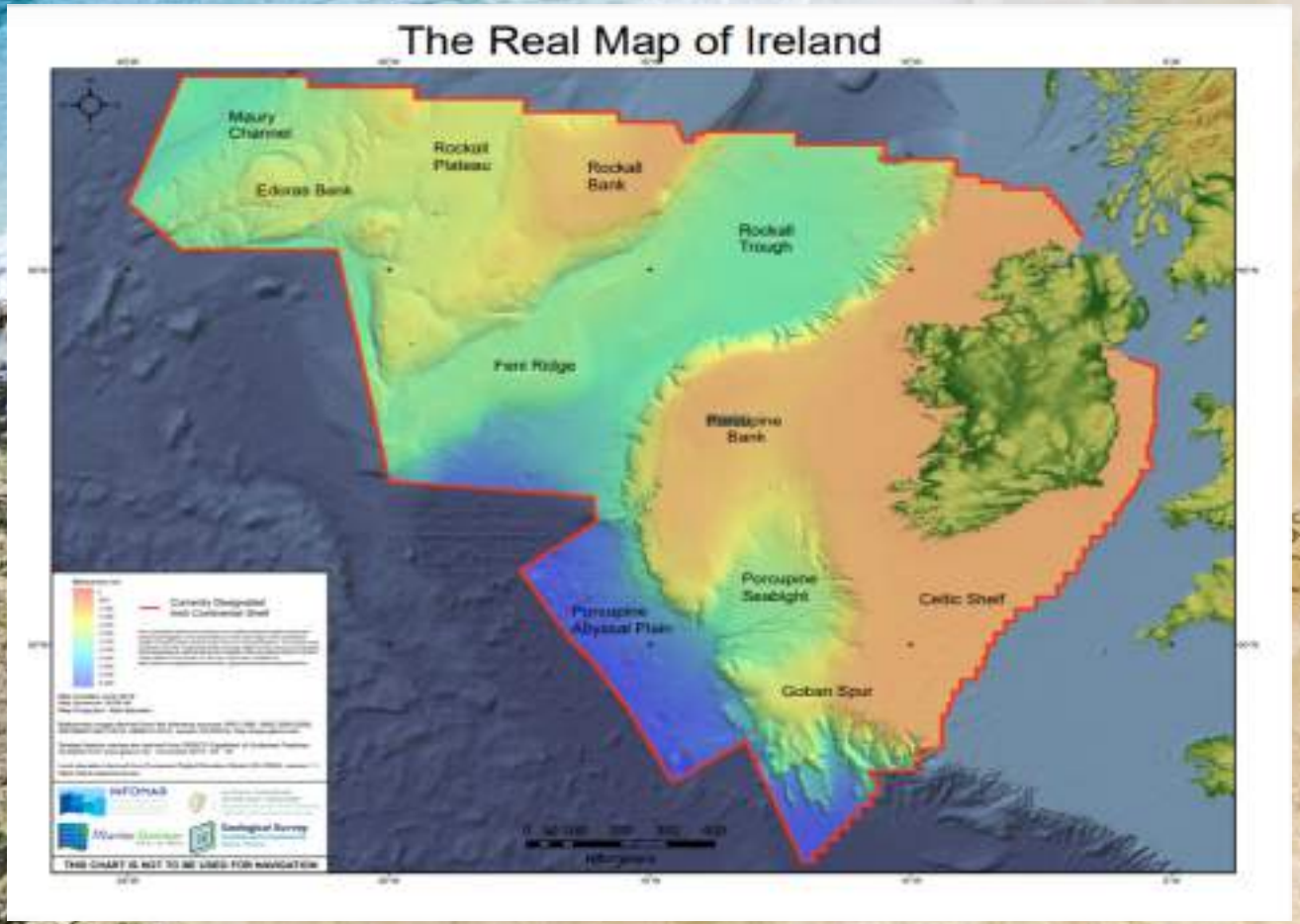
(1) Better able to mitigate the impact of climate change at global scale

(2) More resilient to the ever-worsening impacts of climate change

(3) Better positioned to help coastal communities adapt to the social and economic changes brought about by climate change

Other benefits of MPAs:

1. **Eco-tourism (wildlife tours etc)**
2. **Fisheries enhancement:** well-designed MPAs can lead to increased fish populations (“spillover effect”). By allowing fish to grow and reproduce within MPAs, there will be more fish available for sustainable fishing in surrounding areas.
3. **Support scientific research** (Marine Institute, Cork)
4. **Contribute to the “blue economy”**



Farraigí na hÉireann

- Real map of Ireland is 10 times the size of the Island of Ireland
- Over 490,000km^2
- Includes territorial waters, EEZ and parts of the continental shelf
- Ireland has one of the highest sea to land ratios in Europe

Duty and responsibility to look after this vast marine area

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30x30 target

The target of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030

Ireland's 30x30 MPA commitments

Ireland has committed to protecting 30% of its waters in a protected area by 2030;

Nationally	Programme for Government (2020) & multiple Government announcements and speeches
Europe	EU Biodiversity Strategy (2020) & EU Commission MPA Pledge
Globally	The Kunming-Montreal Agreement under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity - COP15 (2022)

©Aoibheann Gillespie Mules

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Ireland's new MPA legislation must include:

(1) Ambitious and binding targets to effectively protect 30% of Ireland's seas as MPAs by 2030

- Including a target of 10% "strictly" protected.

(2) A robust management framework which clearly defines:

- What will be protected and how;
- The responsible government authorities for implementation and management.

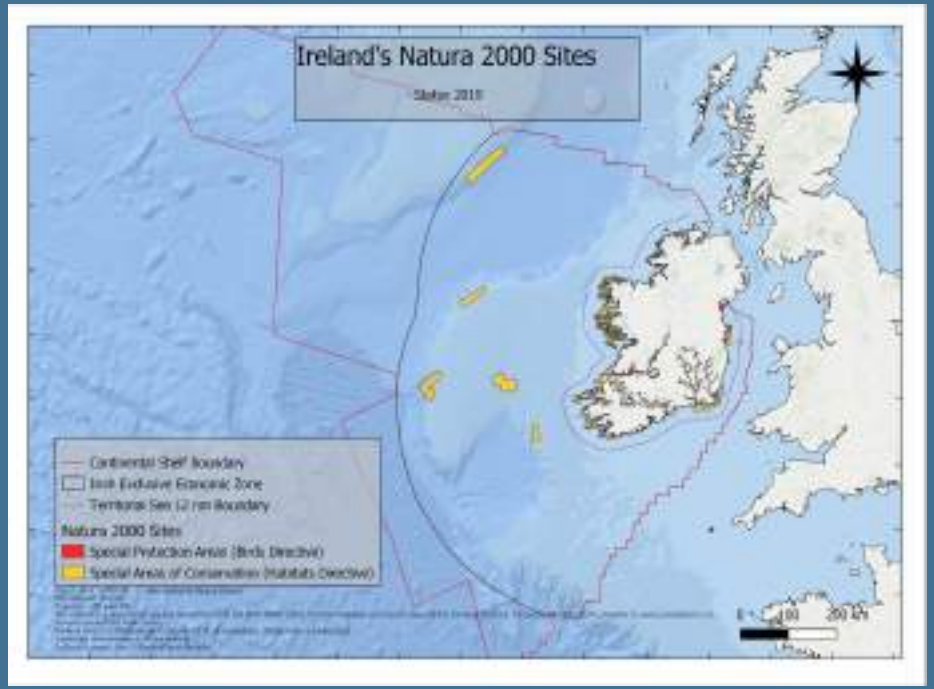
(3) Community engagement at every stage of the MPA designation and management process

- Based on transparency and fairness among local, regional, and national stakeholders.

How effective is Ireland's current MPA network?

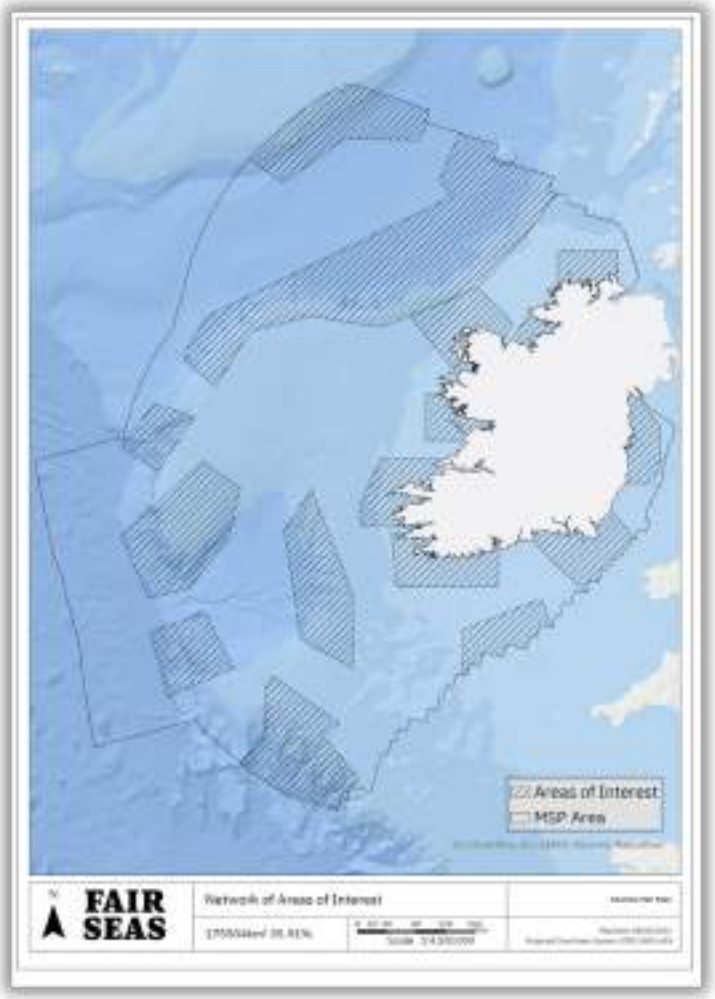
- Consists primarily of Natura 2000 sites established under EU Nature laws. Managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- 9.4 % of Irish waters designated.
- Site-Specific Conservation Objectives, Management Plans, and conservation measures often lacking. Associated court cases and EU Commission warnings.

Paradigm shift is needed in how we designate and implement MPAs in Ireland



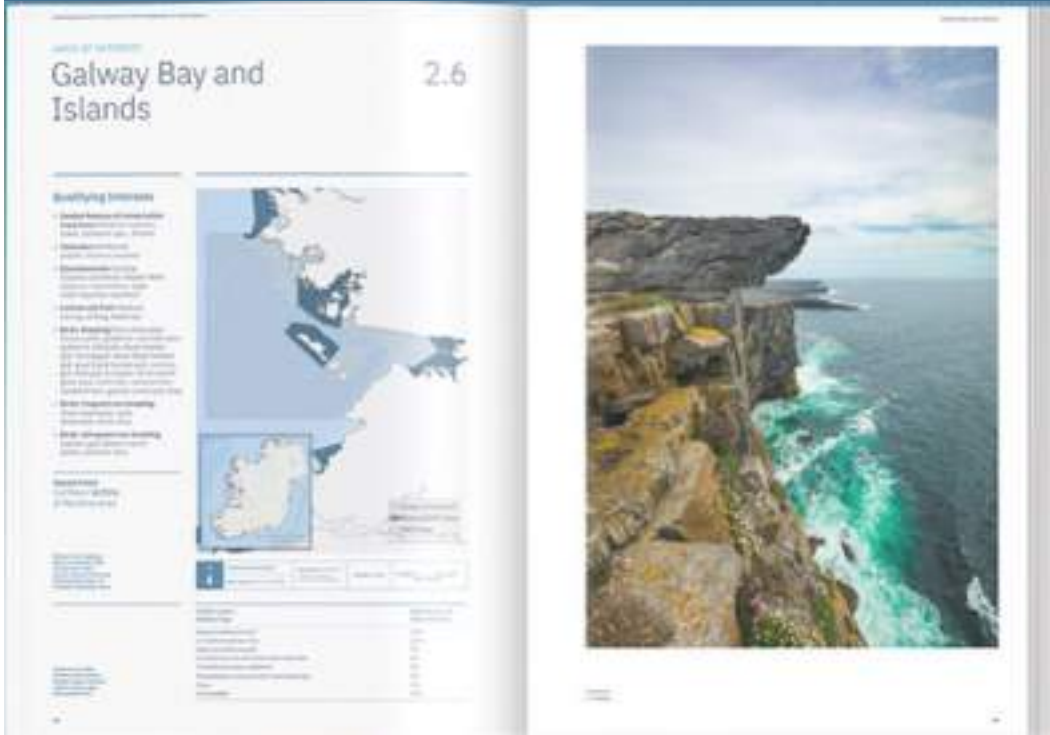
Meanwhile... Fair Seas is making a splash

COMING SOON



Main report findings

16 Areas of Interest covering 36% of Ireland's seas (8 coastal and 8 offshore)



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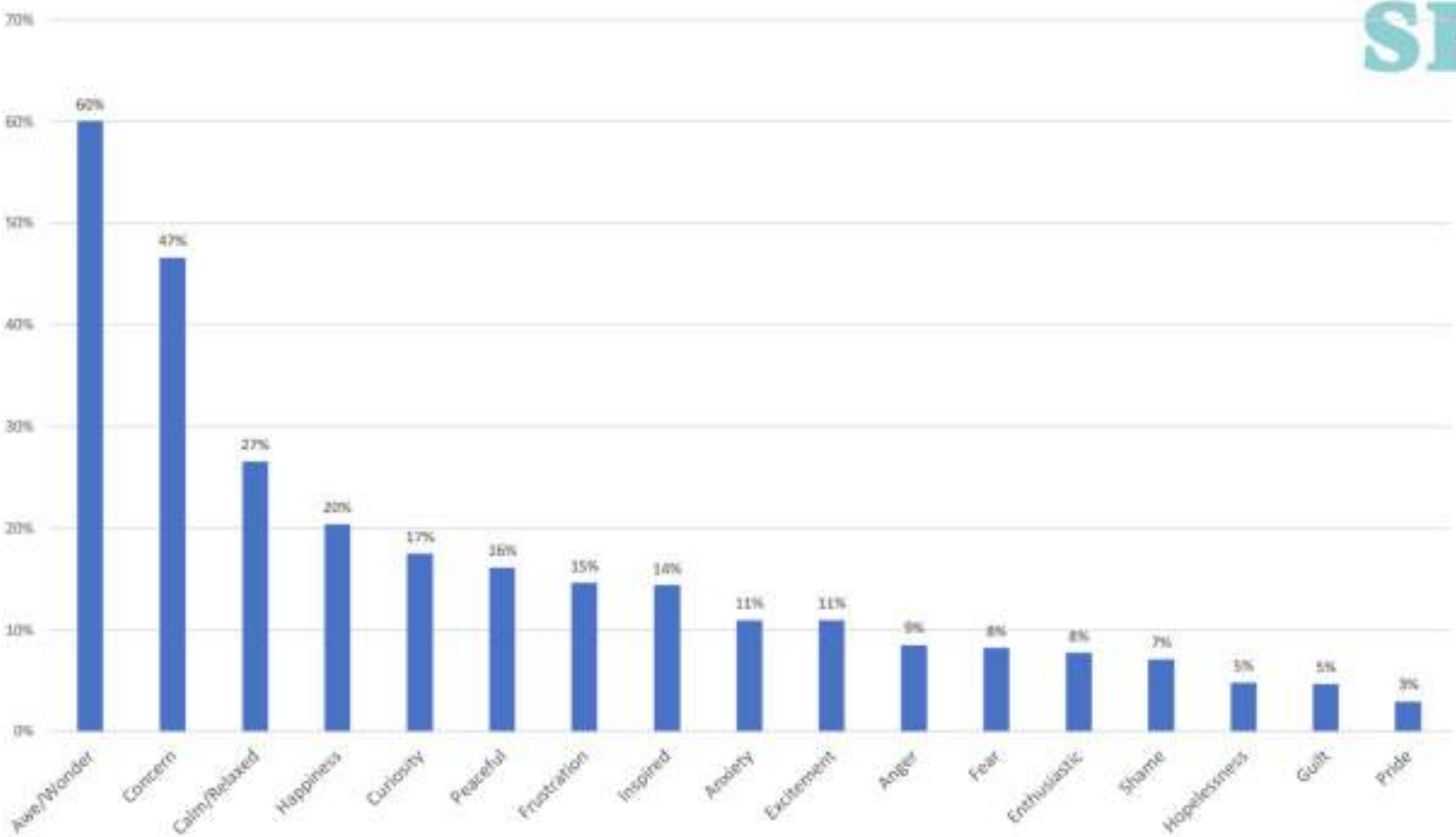
Almost 1,300 people provided their views on their relationship with the sea. Some key findings include:

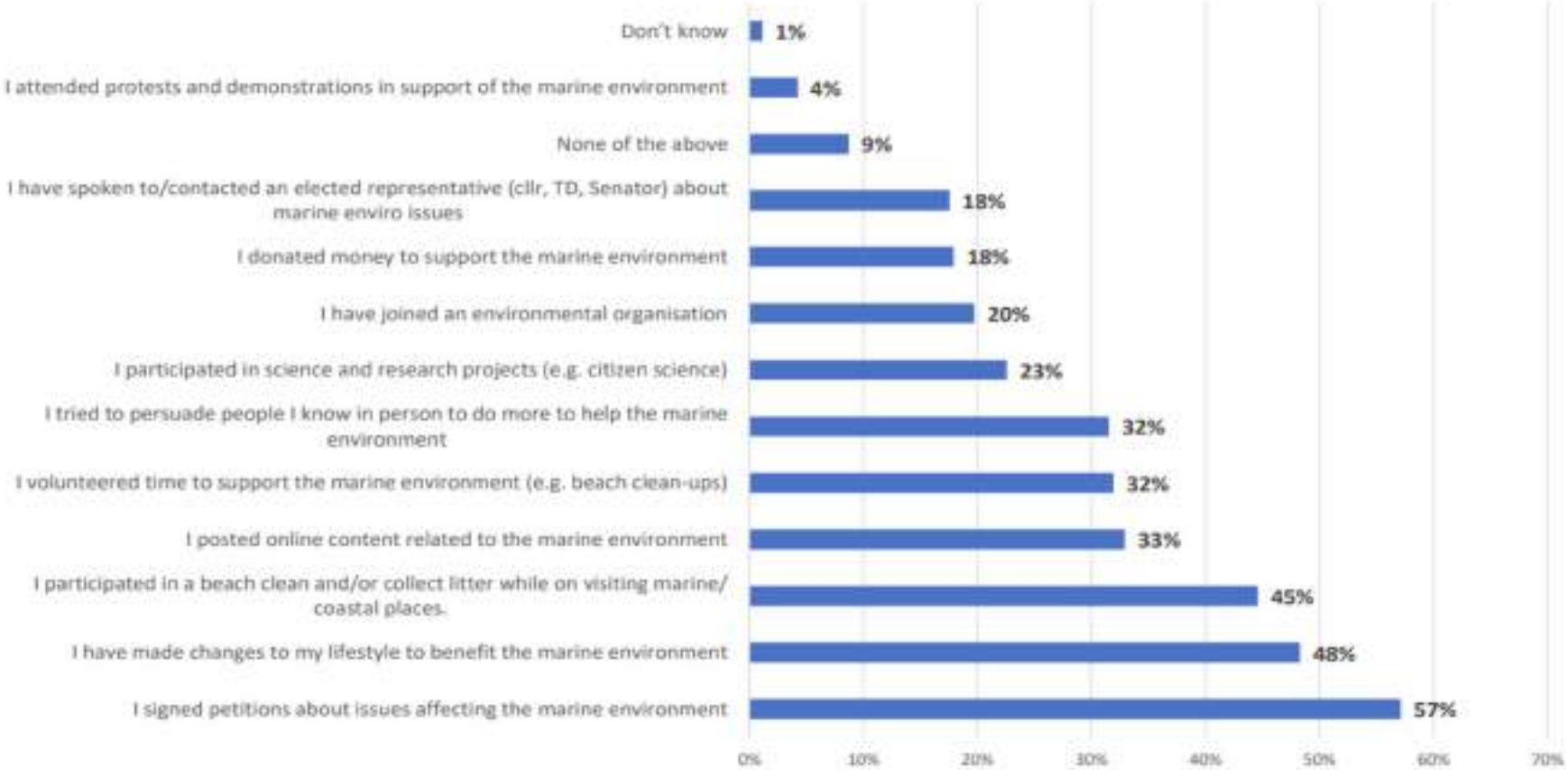
- **98%** support MPA designation to some degree.
- **99%** indicated that protecting the marine environment is either important or very important to them on a personal level.
- **76%** of people selected lack of political will to protect/ manage the ocean effectively as the biggest threat to the ocean.

Fair Seas published the results of its first Ocean Literacy Survey in summer 2023

How do you feel when you think about the marine environment?



Actions people have taken to address issues facing the marine environment



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AV Room & Petition Launch
25th October 2023

Presentation in AV Room

Presentations on the legislation, debunking myths of MPAs & highlighting benefits for fisheries and communities

Strengthening climate-ocean nexus

- Reinforcing the important role that our ocean plays in the climate system.
- Ocean acts as a carbon sink. Over the last 50 years, the oceans have absorbed 90% of excess heat that the earth has experienced through human activity.
- Ocean was part of the COP28 deal for the first time.

When will we see the Bill?

- In response to a PQ in late Jan, Minister Noonan mentioned Q1.
- First mention of Q2 in Morning Ireland interview following Seas Off Wexford SPA
- Strong signals that the MPA Bill will be progressed in the next few months

What to expect in 2024

- Climate Report and Offshore Renewable Energy Policy to be released in March
- Ken O'Sullivan lecture tour
- Biodiversity Week in May
- Bloom Festival in June
- Local/ EU/ General Elections

Only 43 sitting days until Dáil summer recess…

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What you can do to support our Fair Seas campaign

1. Sign the Fair Seas online petition calling on the government to act (big 6-week push from 22 January)

2. Contact your local politician and alert them to this legislation

3. Follow the campaign on your preferred social channels

#FairSeas
#30x30

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Despite the challenges, Ireland has never been in a better position to live up to the letter and spirit of it 30x30 commitments to protect nature at sea
#OceanOptimism
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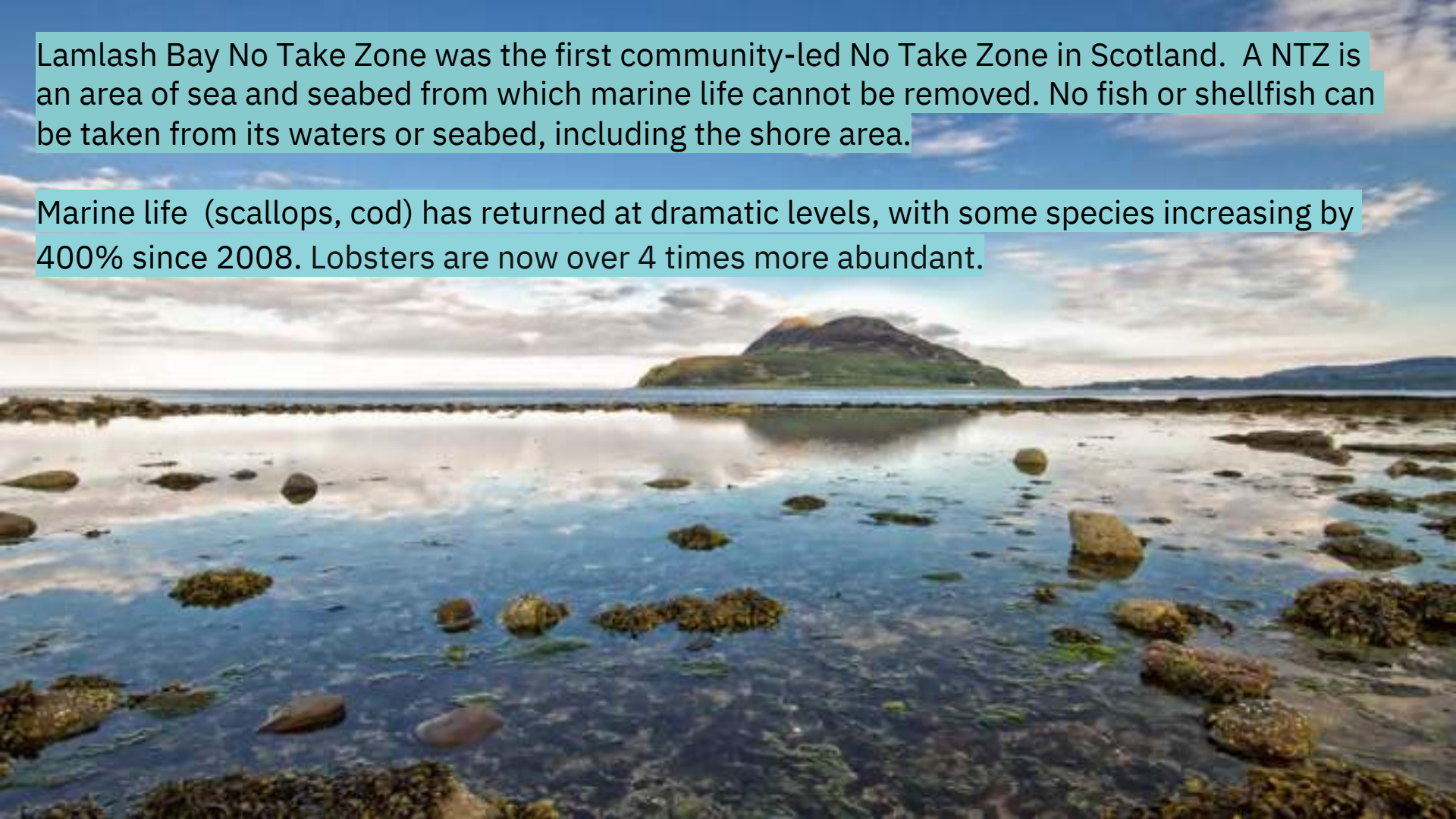
Is this worth protecting?



Lamlash Bay No Take Zone was the first community-led No Take Zone in Scotland. A NTZ is an area of sea and seabed from which marine life cannot be removed. No fish or shellfish can be taken from its waters or seabed, including the shore area.

Marine life (scallops, cod) has returned at dramatic levels, with some species increasing by 400% since 2008. Lobsters are now over 4 times more abundant.

Community-led, labour of love project

13 years of campaigning from COAST (Community of Arran Seabed Trust) → the creation of Scotland's first No Take Zone in 2008 → much larger South Arran MPA designated in 2016.

Science and communities supporting each other to influence policy