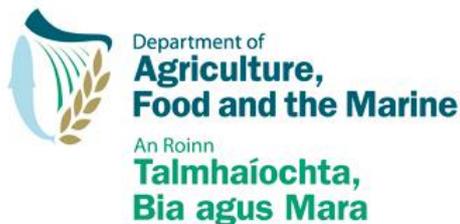


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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARINE**

**SIMON COVENEY TD AT THE OPENING OF  
HARNESSING OUR OCEAN WEALTH CONFERENCE**

**10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2015**

Welcome to the second '*Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth*' conference and more importantly, welcome to Cork and to Ringaskiddy, the maritime capital of Ireland.

Over 3 days, 'SEAFEST 2015' is bringing together investors, academics, key figures and stakeholders from the private and public sector with an interest in the marine at what is one of the biggest cross sectoral marine events ever to take place in this country.

I am delighted that EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella has been able to join us today. Commissioner Vella has very firmly demonstrated his commitment to the development of the Blue economy and I wish him well in his considerable and ambitious programme of work ahead.

As you know, I share responsibility for marine issues with a number of Government colleagues and I am delighted that we are joined by Ministers White, Coffey and Sherlock. Later on we will be joined by Minister Brendan Howlin.

The Taoiseach will of course join us tomorrow for the official opening of the Beaufort Building, UCC's flagship presence at IMERC - the headquarters of the Marine Renewable Energy Ireland (MAREI) Research Centre and the co-located Lir Ocean Test Facility.

Today's event will have a particular focus on developing the marine economy. It is an honour to have the Newfoundland and Labrador Minister, Honourable Darin with us today to speak on this topic.

The state of the art facilities that surround us here today in the National Maritime College of Ireland are a real indicator of where this industry is headed. This is a college with a very bright future.

### Marine in Ireland, An era of radical change

Ireland is now firmly on what I believe is an unstoppable voyage of marine expansion. The publication of Ireland's first ever integrated blueprint for the marine in 2012 and the work of the nine departments on the Government's Marine Coordination Group, has begun a process of radical change in the approach to development of marine policy. The central role that the Department of the Taoiseach and the Marine Institute have played in that process has been absolutely crucial.

The HOOW Progress Report, which you have in your conference pack details real, tangible developments in the marine since we met at last year's conference in Dublin Castle.

Within my own remit as Minister for the Marine, a number of key milestones have been reached;

### Common Fisheries Policy

The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform agreement, finalised under the Irish Presidency has now moved into the implementation phase.

The agreement is designed to ensure the long term sustainability of fishing in Ireland and throughout EU waters; setting fishing levels on the basis of MSY (max sustainable yield) and introducing a phased "obligation to land" all catches to end the unacceptable practice of discarding fish at sea.

I fully recognise that the new policy involves a period of challenge for our industry. We need to work together, in partnership, to support fishermen during the coming period and I have made significant funding available to the industry to support this progressive change.

### Seafood Development Programme 2014-2020

In tandem with the implementation of the CFP, we are now very close to finalising a new Seafood Development Programme for the period to 2020.

The proposed EMFF /Seafood Development Programme investment package of €241m will represent by far the largest ever Government investment in the Seafood sector. It is hoped that a final agreed document with the EU Commission will be in place by the end of 2015 to allow full implementation to begin in 2016.

The funds allocated to Ireland under the EMFF will be invested in 5 areas:

- Seafood development,
- Control and enforcement,
- Data Collection,
- Storage Aid,
- Integrated Maritime Policy.

### New Seafood Markets

The Seafood Operational Programme will provide the capital to assist seafood enterprises to sustainably grow their production and add value to our seafood exports.

To add to this effort, Bord Bia in collaboration with BIM continues to broaden and tailor its seafood export programme to capitalise on the growing demand for premium, quality assured seafood in emerging seafood markets in the Asia Pacific and other non EU markets.

In 2014, Irish seafood exports delivered a solid performance reaching €533million. Notable growth was seen in African markets, such as Nigeria, Cameroon and Egypt, as well as in Asia, particularly in China, Hong Kong and South Korea. Exports to Asia reached approximately €50 million, led by China, where Irish seafood exports increased by 45%.

My Department has also recently produced a National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture. The NSPA targets growth of the aquaculture industry by 45,000 tonnes to 81,700 tonnes by 2023. I urge people interested to submit their views to the ongoing consultation process before the

closing date of 24 July. This will be a well managed and regulated growth journey that will protect marine ecosystems while allowing the commercial potential of a growing sector to be realised.

### Research

I expect my colleague Minister Sherlock will speak to you in detail about recent developments in the research area but I'd like to briefly commend Irish marine researchers who are continuing to perform well in European Union competitive research funding. A few months ago Ireland's marine researchers won €5.5m in EU Horizon 2020 competitive funding in the areas of Blue Growth and Sustainable Food and Security.

In addition, the Marine Institute lead Galway Bay Cable Project is another milestone in the progress of HOOW. This innovative project is establishing a national shared marine research, test and demonstration platform and is a world leader in marine observation science.

The continuing interest in and importance that Commissioner Vella attaches to the Atlantic Strategy and Action Plan is something that I welcome very much. I want to extend a special welcome to Craig McLean (NOAA USA) and John Bell (DGRTD) who together with Trevor Swerdfager are the custodians of the Galway Statement.

The internationalisation of the Strategy through the Galway Statement is also something that Ireland very much welcomes. The Marine Institute continues to play a leading role in the coordination of the Atlantic Research Alliance, alongside USA and Canada.

### Marine Taxation Review

To further reinforce the Government's commitment to the Marine and following the success of the agri-taxation review last year, the Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, announced in his October Budget Statement last year his intention to review the taxation supports available to the marine sector. Indecon Economic Consultants are currently carrying out this review. It is due to be completed shortly and will deliver strategic taxation measures for the marine for the first time when the Budget is being framed for October.

## Maritime Development in Cork

There have been a number of really significant marine developments in Cork;

- In the last 12 months alone the Port of Cork has secured planning permission for a €100m new port development here in Ringaskiddy.
- Work has commenced on Phase 1 of the Master Plan for Spike Island, with €4.5m committed by Failte Ireland and Cork County Council, to enhance the visitor experience of the Island
- MaREI has continued to develop as a centre of excellence for marine renewables. Up to 42 industry contracts signed and €4.7m in competitive EU funding bids won so far.
- And in the past month, the Entrepreneur Ship has opened its doors on the IMERC Campus to accommodate start-up companies and to provide a soft landing for foreign direct investment - Europe's first blue tech incubator.

## Haulbowline Remediation

- Looking across the water we see the Irish Naval Base at Haulbowline. The Haulbowline remediation is now proceeding and we recently reopened the fully remediated bridges to the Island. This along with a brand new roadway completed just days ago will enable proper infrastructure access for the core remediation of the Island to proceed.
- Last month Cabinet approved a spend of €61m for the remediation of Haulbowline. The project is set to transform the land on the east tip area into a major public amenity area and, when fully completed, will also provide a potential future development location for the Irish Naval Service, which already has its permanent base on the Island.
- Entirely separate to the remediation, Cork County Council (in consultation with various stakeholders) has also recently prepared a master plan which outlines an integrated potential future vision for the island as a whole.

## Naval Service

As you will be aware the L.É. Eithne arrived in the South Central Mediterranean in May 2015 to assist the Italian authorities in humanitarian search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. As of the end of June, L.É. Eithne has rescued over three thousand three

hundred people in over 22 operations.

Minister Sherlock and I, together with Minister Frances Fitzgerald visited the LE Eithne this week and witnessed firsthand the professional, compassionate and courageous contribution that our naval service is making in the Mediterranean. The LE Eithne will shortly be replaced by the LE Niamh, which departs later this evening and I would like to take this opportunity to wish them well.

The Naval Service Ships Replacement Programme continues to move ahead with the formal handover for LÉ James Joyce expected very soon. The third New Ship is scheduled for delivery in July 2016. The role of the Naval service on this campus remains a vital one. The continuing involvement at NMCI and the partnerships that the Naval service are developing with innovators and entrepreneurs are creating exciting pathways for new technology development and innovation.

I would like to take a moment to formally congratulate Rear Admiral Mark Mellett who was very recently appointed by Government as the new Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and will take up office in September.

#### Developers Task Force

Achieving the HOOW targets nationally will require new thinking on all our parts. To help get us there, a really significant body of work has been produced during the past year by what's known as the Development Task Force.

The report, which we are launching today, has been endorsed by Government and is an accumulation of 16 months of work by 24 key contributors.

The message from the Task Force is clear; business as usual is no longer an option.

The DTF identifies new approaches across a range of thematic areas;

- Marinising Existing Enterprise Sectors such as Energy, IT and Food - extending their businesses into a range of new marine-related markets (ICT for the Sea, marine biotechnology and maritime commerce)
- 'Strengthening' Established marine industries
- And Developing untapped natural resources or existing resources in new ways

Central to the report, is the proposition that action is required to create more marine successes by supporting demonstrator projects.

It recommends establishing an Integrated Marine Development Team to drive the implementation of our ocean wealth ambition and instigate & support private sector investment.

An Initial Investment Programme with both private sector and State investment is also recommended, to generate confidence and initiate growth.

If we are to realise the potential that the marine has to offer, Ireland needs to create more success stories such as those you will hear about today. This framework provides us with the basis upon which those stories may be built.

The Government is determined not to lose any of the excellent momentum generated from the work of the Development Task Force (DTF) and will ensure that proposals to implement its key recommendations will be brought forward for discussion by the Government Marine Coordination Group (MCG) in the coming months.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members and specifically the Chair and Vice Chair of the Group Robert Dix and Peter Heffernan, as well as recognise the commitment and hard work of four sub-group chairs /editorial committee from the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, SFI & CIL.

#### Enablers Task Force Report

We are also publishing today the report of the Enablers Task Force, which provides a framework for the development of a national marine spatial planning (MSP) process

This framework will significantly progress the achievement of some of the most ambitious goals in Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW).

This piece of work is the culmination of a joint effort by a number of Government Departments, but I would like to pay particular tribute to Dr Peter Heffernan of the Marine Institute, who chaired the process, and also to Peter Langford who ably assisted as Vice-Chair.

My colleague Minister Coffey will speak to you in more detail about the importance of this area a little later in the morning.

### Ireland's Ocean Economy report

In setting out our vision for our marine resource in Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, we set ambitious targets to increase the turnover from our ocean economy to exceed to €6.4billion by 2020 and to double the value of Our Ocean Wealth to 2.4% of GDP by 2030.

Today, I'm pleased to launch the latest report on Ireland's Ocean Economy, produced by the Socio Economic Marine Research Unit at the National University of Ireland Galway by Dr. Stephen Hynes and his team and the results of associated work by Prof. Cathal O'Donoghue of Teagasc, working in collaboration with SEMRU and the Marine Institute.

The report provides us with really solid and useful evidence on where the blue economy sits at present and what kind of growth we can project for the future.

The research reveals;

- Our marine sectors are performing on average better than the general economy with growth up to 9% over the last five years.
- Our ocean economy is worth €1.4bn. With a turnover of approx. €4.5bn.
- Our ocean economy employs in excess of 18,400 Full-Time Equivalents.
- Over the period 2010-2012 a 33% increase in turnover was reported. Employment has also steadily risen, with an increase of 5-6%.

In addition to the direct value and impact of our ocean economy, significant knocks-on effect in the wider Irish economy.

- 13,000 people are employed across the wider economy, creating an additional €3.3bn in turnover
- For every €100 turnover created from our ocean economy, a further €78 is created in other sectors. For every 100 marine jobs, a further 75 jobs are supported in other parts of the economy.
- The ocean economy now stands at 1.3% of GDP.

### Future Job Creation

The data, announced today, also shows us what we can achieve if the targets set out in Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth are met:

- 29,300 new jobs could be created by 2020.
- An additional growth of €2.7bn in the wider economy

This strategically positions the marine as a key growth area in terms of the wider economy.

### Future Skills Needs

To harness this potential we need to know exactly what skills are available and needed. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs assessed labour market trends in the maritime area. Their work indicates that many roles which are traditionally seen as land based, such as engineers, lawyers, technicians and welders can be “marinised” with top up training to enable them work in the marine environment.

An example of this in action is the post graduate maritime law programme currently being set up in University College Cork in collaboration with the Naval Service and the National Maritime College of Ireland.

### SeaFest highlights

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly mention some highlights at Seafest tomorrow;

- A state of the art simulator used to train ship captains.
- The BIM Beaufort Scale Hurricane Experience
- Children will be able to get close to seahorses and starfish and there will be plenty of fun science experiments.
- A host of public friendly science talks including one from Jean-Michel Cousteau (son of the legendary Jacques).
- There will be a fantastic seafood exhibition by BIM.
- Tours of the Naval Base and the LE Samuel Beckett
- Two fantastic and technologically advanced Ocean racing Yacht will face off against each other in the harbour.
- We will have a parade of sail up to Cork City where Cork City Council and UCC are organising events in the city.
- And so much more.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that the outlook for the sector is really exciting and the possibilities really are endless. The challenge now is to make the marine sector a leading contributor to

the Irish economy and to recognise the potential we have as an island nation to be a major player in the sector internationally.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference today and I look forward to speaking with many of you throughout the day.

Thank You.

**ENDS**