

Fair Seas General Election Manifesto

Recommendations:

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Develop an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas in Irish waters with at least 30% of the maritime area designated as Marine Protected Areas by 2030.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Commit to 10% of Ireland's maritime area being 'strictly' protected in line with the EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

OCEAN ENVIRONMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Prioritise the publication of a coherent overarching Ocean Environment Policy Statement.

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Ensure full and effective implementation of the CFP, including the progression of Joint Recommendations under Article 11 to properly manage Ireland's offshore Marine Protected Areas.

At Fair Seas, we seek to protect, conserve and restore Ireland's unique marine environment. Our ambition is to see Ireland become a world leader in marine protection, giving our species, habitats and coastal communities the opportunity to thrive.

Fair Seas aims to build a movement of ocean stewardship across Ireland that energises and empowers people, to advocate for ambitious and robust legislation, provide impartial scientific data and research, and propose a network of effective well-managed marine protected areas.

The Fair Seas campaign is led by a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental non-governmental organisations and networks.



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Introduction

Incoming members of the 34th Dáil and Seanad will be responsible for delivering on a range of interconnected climate and biodiversity goals that have 2030 or before as the date by which they are to be met. New Marine Protected Areas (MPA) legislation, in line with the EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, will require 30% of Irish Seas to be designated as protected areas, with 10% as strictly protected, while Ireland's climate goals require the State to reduce its emissions by 51% by 2030. The now adopted EU Nature Restoration Law, as well as Ireland's latest National Biodiversity Action Plan, also have a range of biodiversity goals and targets set to be achieved by or before the end of the decade. The new Oireachtas will be assuming authority at the beginning of a crucial period for the health and safety of Ireland's natural environment.

Given the severity of the crises we are facing in our biodiversity, climate and oceans, there is no wriggle room, with targets needing to be achieved or surpassed by 2030. Implementation and delivery should be a hallmark of any new government.

As a coalition of Ireland's leading environmental NGOs and networks, Fair Seas' raison d'être is the introduction of MPA legislation that will ensure the protection and restoration of Irish seas, sustained by effective and well-resourced management. The progression of MPA legislation and its proper implementation, will also be an opportunity to double efforts to ensure that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is being fully implemented so that conservation synergies between the CFP and the MPA network are promoted and realised.

An overarching Ocean Environment Policy Statement for Ireland would aid the development and implementation of strategic actions to protect and restore Ireland's seas, and should be prioritised by the incoming government.

1

Marine Protected Areas

In line with the EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022), the government must designate 30% of Ireland's water as a Marine Protected Area (MPA), including 10% strictly protected by 2030, a commitment which should also be enshrined in domestic MPA legislation. The inclusion of 10% strictly protected areas within the range of different management levels is essential to the effectiveness of the MPA network, with international evidence showing that strict protection of MPAs is the best way of delivering positive biodiversity and societal outcomes.

The success of new MPA legislation will depend on its proper management. The State has previously struggled to effectively manage its protected areas. It is crucial therefore that, with the introduction of supporting MPA legislation, protected areas are managed in the right way in order to deliver the boost to biodiversity that they are designated to protect. The next government must ensure full implementation of current and forthcoming government responsibilities relating to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), national MPAs, and the provision of additional responsibilities to government departments where necessary. This should be underpinned by a proven process of engaging effectively with people, communities and stakeholders to successfully identify, manage, monitor and enforce the MPA network.

FAIR SEAS RECOMMENDATIONS

Incoming government should develop an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas in Irish waters with at least 30% of the maritime area designated as Marine Protected Areas by 2030.

Incoming government must commit to 10% of Ireland's maritime area being 'strictly' protected in line with the EU's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

2

Ocean Environment Policy Statement

The publication of a new Ocean Environment Policy Statement should be prioritised by the incoming government. A comprehensive overarching policy statement incorporating all related policy initiatives such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Nature Restoration Law, the Common Fisheries Policy, and other relevant policies and regulation will ensure greater alignment and coherence across government departments, related policy initiatives and reduce the siloisation of issues while promoting more effective policy outcomes for the marine environment. In particular, a national Nature Restoration Plan underpinned by the now adopted EU Nature Restoration Law, will enable greater focus on the active restoration of habitats, species and ecosystems, as envisaged within new domestic MPA legislation. An overarching environmental policy statement will provide the framework around which these restoration activities would be most effectively facilitated, delivered and resourced, as well as making clear how it relates to other national and international policies and strategies.

FAIR SEAS RECOMMENDATIONS

Incoming government should prioritise the publication of a coherent overarching Ocean Environment Policy Statement.

3

Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

Unfortunately, despite repeatedly committing to meeting its legal deadlines, successive governments have failed to rigorously implement the fisheries and marine management measures embedded in the CFP. Article 11 Joint Recommendations are needed to effectively manage Ireland's offshore MPAs. A fully implemented CFP which achieves its ambition to end overfishing, facilitate the introduction of fisheries management conservation measures in Ireland's offshore MPAs, and delivers truly sustainable fisheries across European seas is vital for the wider health, productivity and resilience of our marine environment and ecosystems. The next government should move quickly and implement all aspects of the CFP to help secure both a sustainable fishing industry and a well-managed MPA network.

FAIR SEAS RECOMMENDATIONS

Incoming government should ensure full and effective implementation of the CFP, including the progression of Joint Recommendations under Article 11 to properly manage Ireland's offshore Marine Protected Areas.