



REPORT

Green Foundation Ireland

invites you to an evening in-person
SEMINAR

OCEAN WARMING AND MARINE BIODIVERSITY



Photo by: MARTIN NOLAN, Director of Green Foundation Ireland

Thursday 2 November 2023 – 18:00 to 20:00

**Venue: National Maritime Museum of Ireland
Haigh Terrace, Dún Laoghaire, County Dublin, A96 C8X7**

Admission to this event is **FREE** but you **MUST** register beforehand.
You can do so through [our Eventbrite page here](#).

Ocean Warming and Marine Biodiversity

THEME

Climate change is affecting earth's oceans, with ocean warming reaching alarming levels. Marine warming in the North Atlantic has increased by 5 degrees this year according to UK based scientists. This has put at risk the survival of kelp forests, which play a crucial role as a home for marine biodiversity around Ireland, Great Britain and Europe's Atlantic coast.

The ocean has absorbed 90% of the extra heat added to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels. Ocean ecosystems produce half the oxygen we breathe, represent 95% of the planet's biosphere and soak up carbon dioxide, as the world's largest carbon sink.

The UN Ocean Treaty was signed early this year in New York, as nations finally took action to reverse marine biodiversity loss and tackle climate change affecting the oceans and its fish stocks. The Treaty aims to place 30% of the seas into Marine Protected areas by 2030, to try to reverse marine biodiversity loss. Ireland has planned a number of Marine Protected Areas around the coast of Ireland and detailed legislation is in process. While this is welcome, the crisis is deepening and more needs to be done.

ABOUT OUR SEMINAR

The [National Maritime Museum of Ireland](#) is a beautiful and unusual venue, and was picked for this seminar because of the marine theme of the event.

Chairperson **Nuala Ahern** welcomed attendees and opened the seminar with a tribute to **Dr John de Courcy Ireland**, one of the founding members of the original Maritime Museum in 1959. He also campaigned successfully for the restoration of Mariners' Church, the current home to the Museum.



Nuala then introduced the speakers in turn.



Grace O'Sullivan MEP, a former Greenpeace activist and Irish surf champion, is from Tramore in County Waterford. Having joined Greenpeace at the age of 21, she spent the next 20 years travelling the seas and oceans of the world, taking part in actions for peace and climate justice. She was a crew member of the Rainbow Warrior when it was bombed by the French Foreign Intelligence Service in 1985 in New Zealand. She is now an Irish MEP, working with the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (PECH) Committee, and the Environment (ENVI) Committee of

the European Parliament.

Grace spoke about the Marine Treaty, which aims to place 30% of the seas into Marine Protected Areas by 2030 to try to reverse marine biodiversity loss. Ireland has planned a number of Marine Protected Areas around the coast of Ireland and these urgently need to be brought into being. She reminded us that Ireland's Marine Institute this year reported that we are reaching the limit of how much excess heat the ocean can absorb. Grace will continue to fight in the European Parliament for Marine Protected Areas and nature restoration.

Karin Dubsy is an experienced member of the environmental NGO community, post graduate scientist researcher, consultant and teacher. A marine-ecologist at Trinity College Dublin, she is notable as an environmental activist, co-ordinator and co-founder of [Coastwatch Europe](#). Karin's research work and practical citizen science projects range from nature, especially wetland protection, waste, oil and litter prevention and control, to coastal zone management and better application of environmental law.



Karin gave a lively talk using props such as seaweed, coastal flotsam and jetsam. She stressed the importance of wetland protection and coastal zone management, and how vital it is to protect the biodiversity of the kelp forests surrounding Ireland's shores. Her energy and enthusiasm for communicating and teaching about the plant and animal life of our seas and shores was palpable, and informed by her experience as a scientist, teacher and marine-ecologist. She spoke of her continuous work to prevent raw sewage pollution and the campaign for better treatment of sewage, and how important it is to keep our bathing waters free of pollutants so our children could grow up enjoying the seas around our shores.



Dr Donal Griffin is the Marine Policy Officer with the [Fair Seas](#) coalition campaign in Ireland. With a strong background in marine biology and ecology, he leads on policy issues such as Marine Protected Areas, sustainable fisheries, offshore renewable energy and spatial planning. Donal has a wealth of policy experience from the UK, Northern Ireland and Ireland and he is also a co-ordinator of the Irish Basking Shark Group. Donal sits on the UK Ocean Decade Committee and has

represented Ireland at the UN Ocean Youth Forum.

Donal gave us an informative insight into the need for Marine Protected Areas and his experience of working with the implementation of Marine Protected Areas in the UK. Fair Seas aims to have 30% of Ireland's ocean territory to be fully protected by 2030.

Donal has provided his [presentation slides](#) to accompany this report.

Dr Saule Akhmetkaliyeva is a postdoctoral research fellow at University College Dublin, where she works in the [Blue Carbon Lab](#). Her research focuses on organic geochemistry, with extensive experience in polar and coastal environments. As part of the BlueC project at UCD, Saule investigates the drivers of carbon accumulation in Ireland's blue carbon ecosystems.



Saule presented the work of the Blue Carbon project on coastal wetland ecosystems. Tidal saltmarshes, seagrass beds and their ecology provide numerous benefits and services including protection from storm surge and sea-level rise, erosion prevention along shorelines, and habitat provision which are essential for climate adaptation and resilience. They also remove large amounts of the greenhouse gas CO₂ from the atmosphere. This carbon sequestered in coastal vegetated habitats has been termed "Blue Carbon".

Saule has provided her [presentation slides](#) to accompany this report.



Overview of Seminar



l to r: Nuala Ahern, Saule Akhmetkaliyeva with Cllr Tom Kivlehan and Minister Ossian Smyth

There was thirty minute Q and A session at the end of the evening, with a very engaged and interested participation of the attendees and informed responses from the presenters. Nuala thanked those who came out on such a cold autumn night to address the topic, as well as each of the speakers for their presentations.

You can [access our videos of the seminar here](#).

Green Foundation Ireland

13 November 2023