

Marine Spatial Plan Review Submission

Anonymous 5 – 30 August 2024

I would like to share my comments and my huge concerns regarding the changes being proposed by the Minister to the future Marine Protected Areas (MPA) within the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP).

I would ask you to do every thing possible to ensure that a very clear and detailed map showing the comparison of original vs current proposed MPA's is provided and shared as widely as possible so everyone can see how misleading many of the statistics now being quoted really are. We need to see accurate, scientifically based data showing the habitat of all areas within the previous and present proposals.

I hope that when you see the comparison you will see that the revised plans mean we will lose huge areas where the seabed needs to be protected from the current dredging and trawling activities, and these have been replaced by other areas that are not dredged or fished currently. I strongly suspect this has been done to appease or even protect the current minority of our fishing industry who refuse to diversify into more sustainable methods of fishing, and the changes will mean they can continue and potentially increase their ongoing destructive activities.

These new areas in the revised proposal have just been added to the proposed MPA's to get the quoted % of MPAs back up to 23 % (after a reduction from the original 27% in the first draft), but in reality the most recent proposed MPA will reduce by half the amount of vitality important and critically endangered seabed that will be protected.

The areas of seabed that have been removed from the current proposed MPA are critical areas for feeding grounds, particularly for juvenile fish and shellfish, and crucial spawning and nursery areas for a wide range of fish and shellfish. It makes no environmental, ecological or sustainable planning sense for these to have been removed.

When challenging the Ministerial proposal I would ask that you demand evidence and assurances of the following

- 1). Ask for credible evidence to explain the reasoning and evidence behind the new areas in the proposed MPA
- 2). Ask them to explain why the proposed new areas are, in the main, areas that are not currently commercially dredged or fished, and on that basis if inclusion in the MPA will actually result in any tangible improvements to the protection of our seabeds?
- 3]. Ask for evidence of how much dredging and fishing of the currently dredged and fished areas will be reduced now that they have been removed from the proposed MPA.

I hope that the Scrutiny review will help the Minister revert back to his original aims and assurances, and our seabeds will be properly protected as it's so important not only for the environment but for all commercial fish species and therefore to safeguard the overall fishing industry.

Thank you for your work and efforts to ensure our Government does the right thing for all our future generations.