



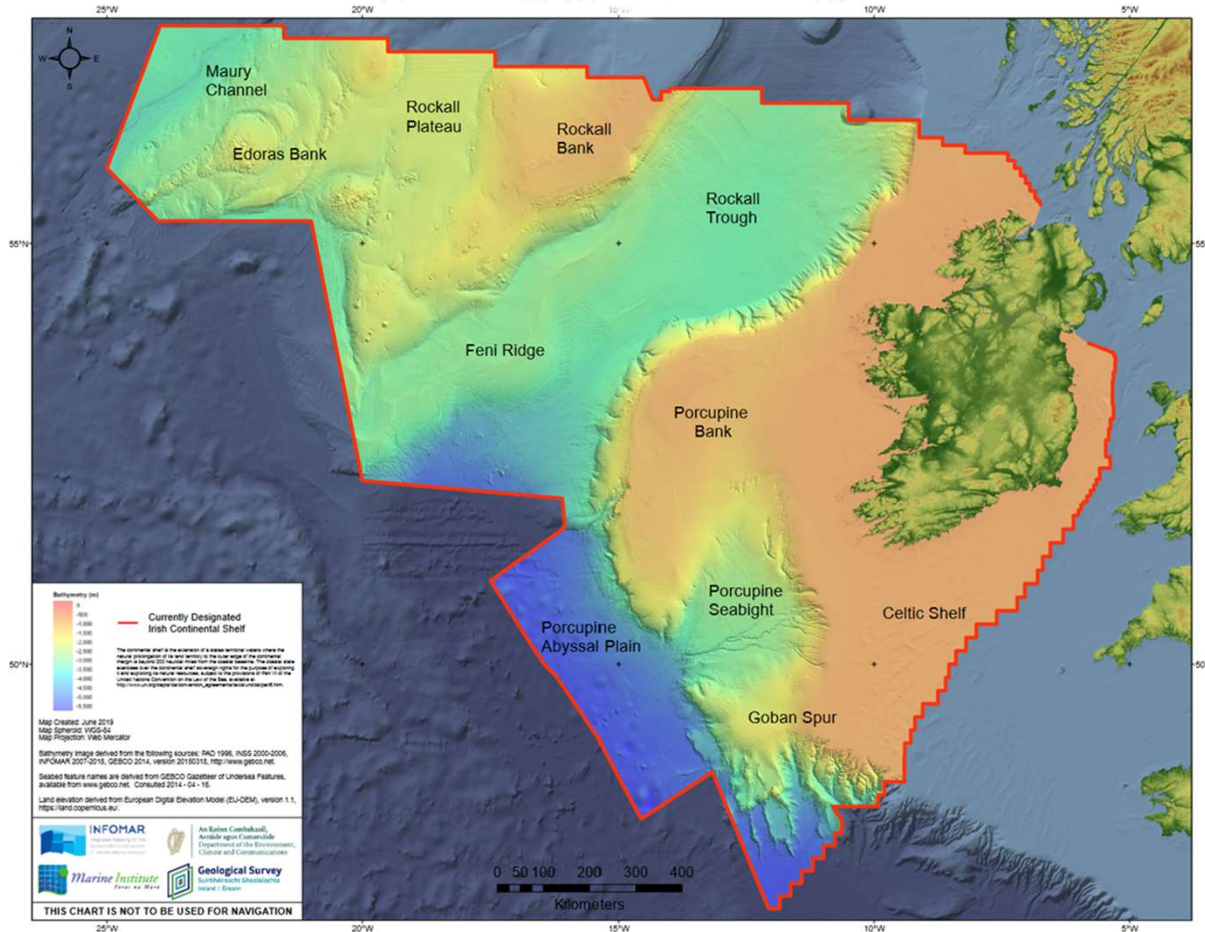
The Irish Ocean Literacy Network: Building Community, Connection and Trust

Catherine McCann,
Executive Officer,
Irish Ocean Literacy Network (IOLN)





The Real Map of Ireland



Ireland is a marine nation

- One of the largest marine territories in the EU.
- Includes Atlantic Ocean, Irish Sea & Celtic Sea.
- ~40% of our population live <5km from the coast

STATISTICS (from The Marine Institute)

Land area: 84,421 km²

Coastline: ~7,711 km

Marine territory: >880,000 km²



International Council of Associations for Science Education

ICASE 8TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

OFFICIAL BOOK LAUNCH — CORK, IRELAND 2026



- 250+ Authors
- 42 countries/regions
- 80+ Peer Reviewers
- 65 Chapters
- 3 Volumes



**2021
2030** United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

THANK YOU TO THE OPEN-ACCESS SPONSORS!





***Communities come
before strategies***



Irish
Ocean
Literacy
Network

Five things that defined the IOLN



1. Began as a movement rather than an institution
2. Deliberately chose to amplify, rather than compete
3. Embraced an all-island perspective
4. Brought together people who would not normally sit around the same table
5. Recognised that Ocean Literacy is not simply about increasing knowledge

Building a movement



IOLN EVOLUTION

Sea for Society and Irish Government 'Harnessing our Ocean Wealth' supports the concept of the Ocean Literacy Network. Because of policy and stakeholders wishes, Marine Institute agrees to provide 2 years of seed funding for an IOLN secretariat.

2012
–
2016



2016
–
2018

First IOLN Meeting takes place in Belfast. Secretariat and Steering Committee launch vision, mission, terms of reference and actions for the network. Membership begins to grow and annual meetings take place.

2018
–
2022

The IOLN provides a networking tool, separate to marine consultations which are fraught with conflict; All island approach helps IOLN become a community builder.

The IOLN brings members together to run its first campaign and becomes involved in european and international organisations such as EU4Ocean and IOC-UNESCO Ocean Literacy with All



2022
–
2024

Prep4Blue funding supports the IOLN to increase reach and impact through a range of activities including regional meetings and members working Groups.

Formalisation of the network as a legal entity results in codevelopment of a new IOLN strategy, membership plan and accessibility to national and international funding opportunities.



Post 2024:

A sustainable Network is funded through membership fees, sponsorships and grants. Regional Meetings, Working Groups and Strategic Actions help the Network achieve its Goals and Objectives.

Amplify, don't compete



A deliberately Member-first Network

OCTOBER 30TH | 11:00 AM | ONLINE MEMBER WEBINAR

Financing Ocean Literacy in Ireland

- Explore EU, national, & corporate funding.
- Learn from organizations with a track record of success.

IOLN Members Event

Planning Campaigns and Advocacy Webinar

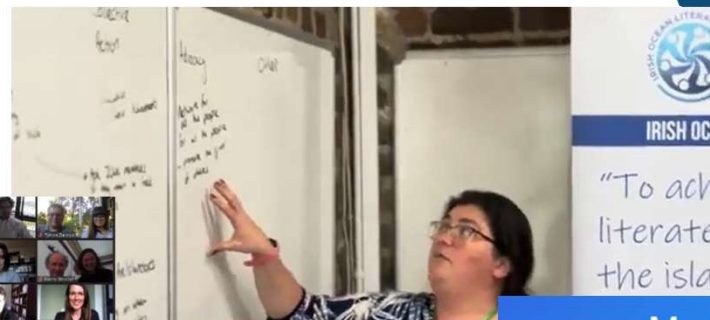
Michéal O'Cinnéide
IOLN

Grace Windsor
IOLN

Aoibhlin Ryan
Leave No Trace, Ireland

Rachel Shawe
Leave No Trace, Ireland

Wednesday, 4 February, 11 am-1 pm [Register now!](#)



Member Spotlight: WiseWater Academy

March 3, 2026

A photograph of a woman in a blue shirt interacting with children at an outdoor event. A banner in the background reads "WISE WATER".

All-island approach

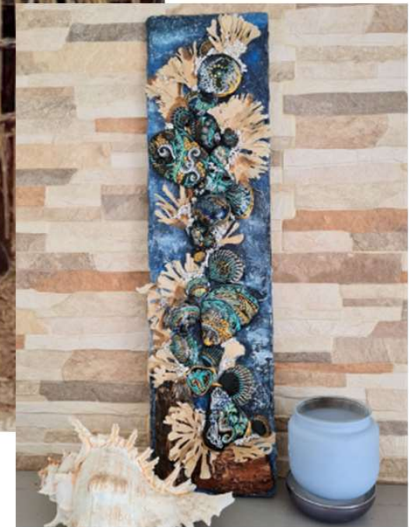


Connecting people,
organisations and
communities
across the island
of Ireland.

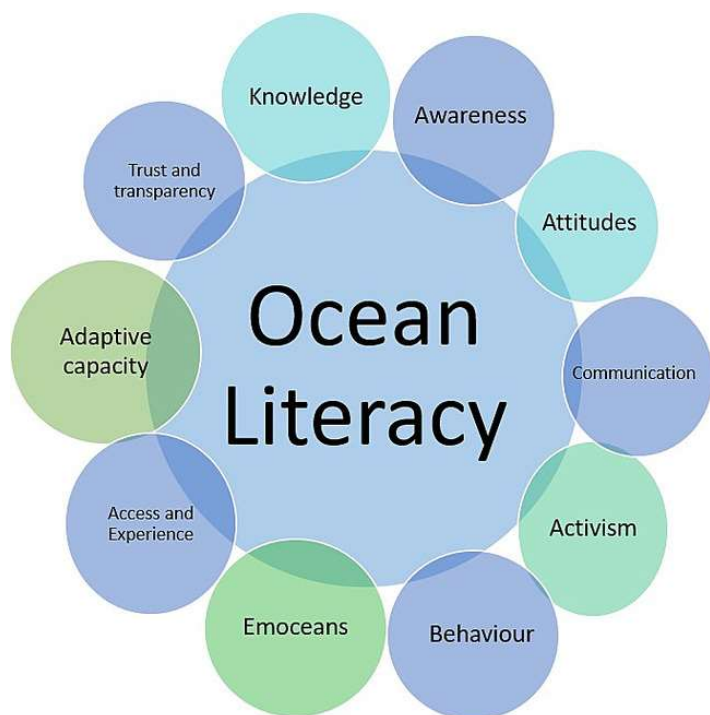


Shared Island
Initiative

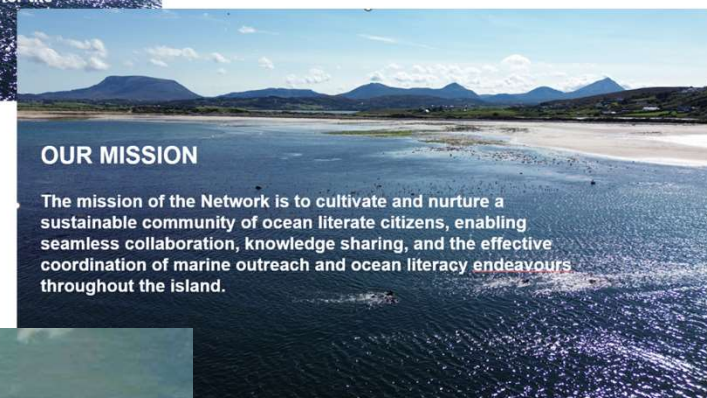
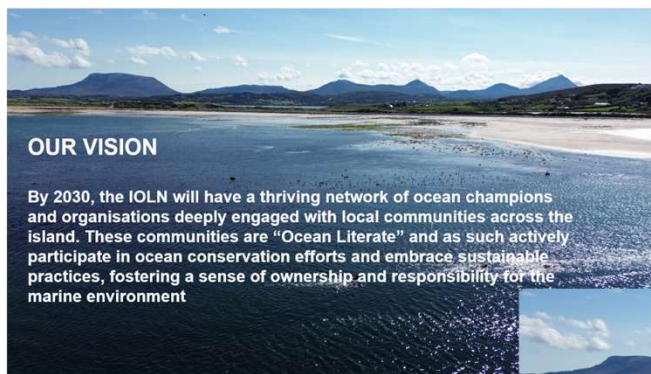
Ocean Literacy belongs to everyone



Ocean Literacy is not just building knowledge



Mckinley et al., (2023). The evolution of ocean literacy: A new framework for the UN Ocean Decade and beyond



Weathering the storms



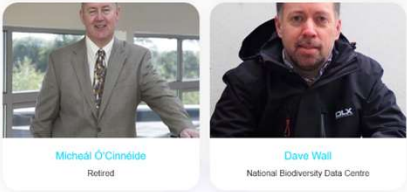
- **No legal structure**
- **No access to funding**
- **No permanent staff**
- **Dependent on the goodwill and time of passionate people**

YET

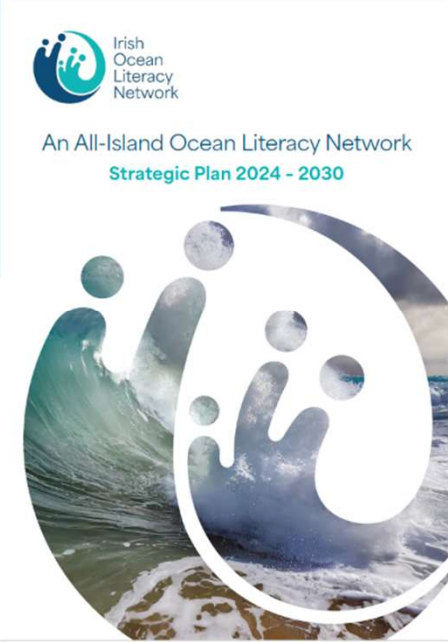
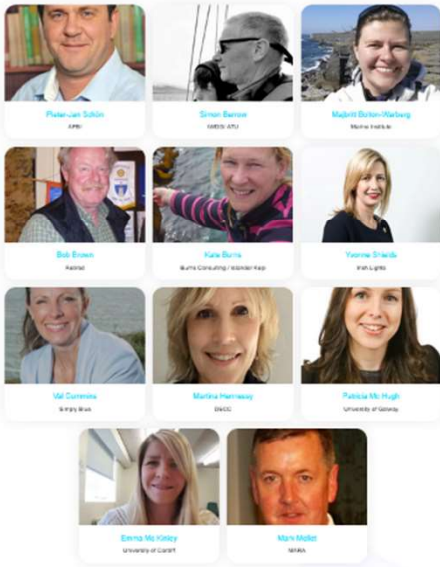
- **Successful – grew beyond the structure that originally supported it**

Formalisation

Board Of Directors (2025-26)



Advisory Panel Members (2025-26)



Strategic Objectives of the IOLN



1. Enhance Network Capacity

2. Promote Engagement and Collaboration within IOLN Membership

3. Facilitate Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

4. Champion Best Practices in Ocean Literacy and Community Engagement

5. Establish a Sustainable Funding Model

How we work together



Working Groups

1. Understanding local activism
2. Training and capacity building
3. Education
4. Campaigns

Communication & Resources

- Website, newsletter, social media
- Information sharing (e.g. directory of education programmes)

Projects

- GuardIAS



Where we are today



Training & Capacity Building

1. Practical skills (Sept 2025)
2. Financing ocean literacy (Oct 2025)
3. Campaigns and advocacy training (Feb 2026)
4. Evaluating impact (May 2026)

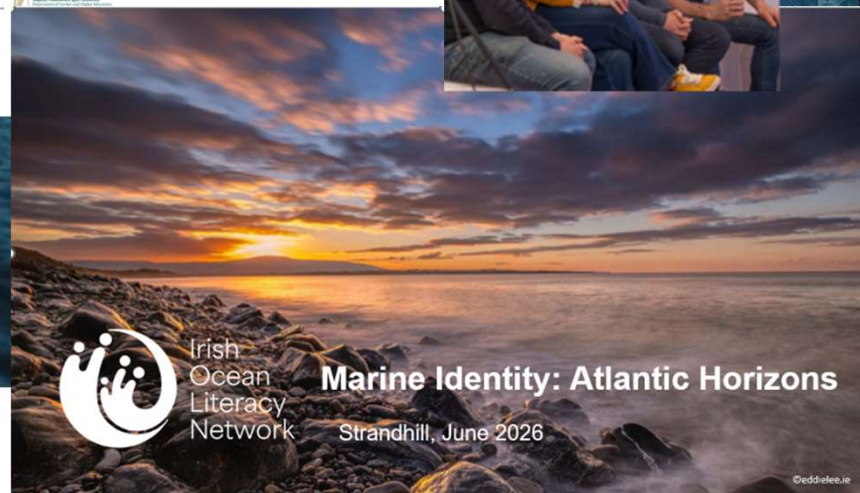
Training is free for IOLN members

The logo for the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, featuring a stylized blue wave with three white human figures inside it, and the text "Irish Ocean Literacy Network" to the right.

Get involved with the 'My Ocean' campaign

A collage of images related to the 'My Ocean' campaign, including people, marine life, and coastal scenes.

Upload your stories, art, poems, or videos to www.ioln.ie/campaign

A QR code linking to the campaign website.

Looking to the future



“Ocean literacy is ...an outcome.

A society that understands, values and cares
for the ocean, making decision sand
behaving in ways to ensure a healthy ocean,
to sustain all life – current and future.”

Diz Glitheroe

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and purple clouds. The sea is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the foreground, there are green, rolling hills and a sandy beach. A small inlet or bay is visible, with a few small structures or boats. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

*Communities built on trust
have an extraordinary capacity
to create change.*



Irish
Ocean
Literacy
Network

Go raibh maith agaibh!

