



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

MPAs in Ireland: science, suitability and space use

Oliver Ó Cadhla, Tim O'Higgins, Joanne Kenny & MPA Advisory Group
(Chairs: Profs T. Crowe, L. Allcock)

MPA Europe Symposium and North Atlantic Stakeholder Workshop
Copenhagen, 18 Feb 2025



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Where are we?

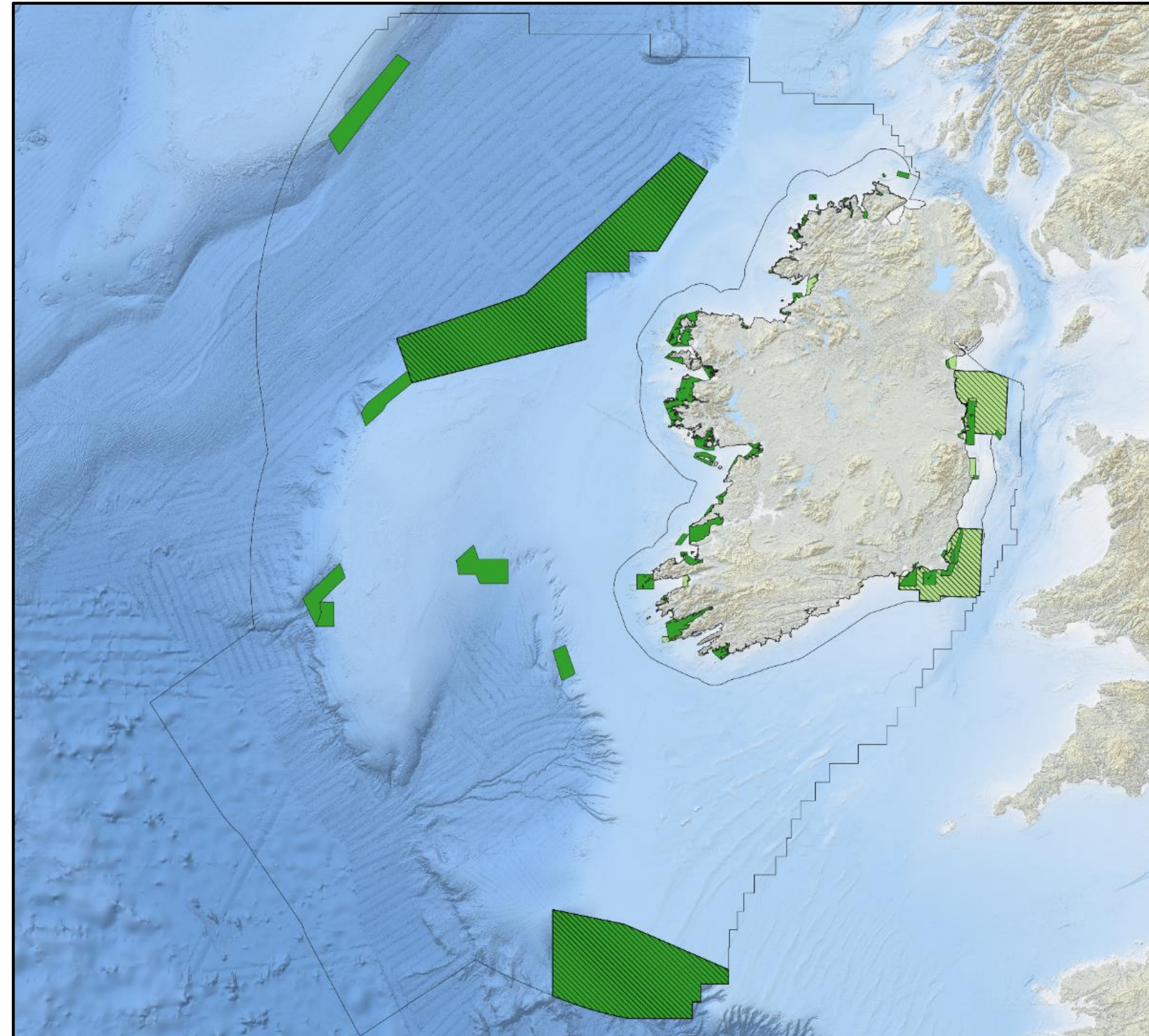


Where are we?



Currently: ~10% of Irish waters under area-based protection (EU Birds and Habitats Directives)

Global & regional responsibilities
(incl. **UN CBD**, **OSPAR**)

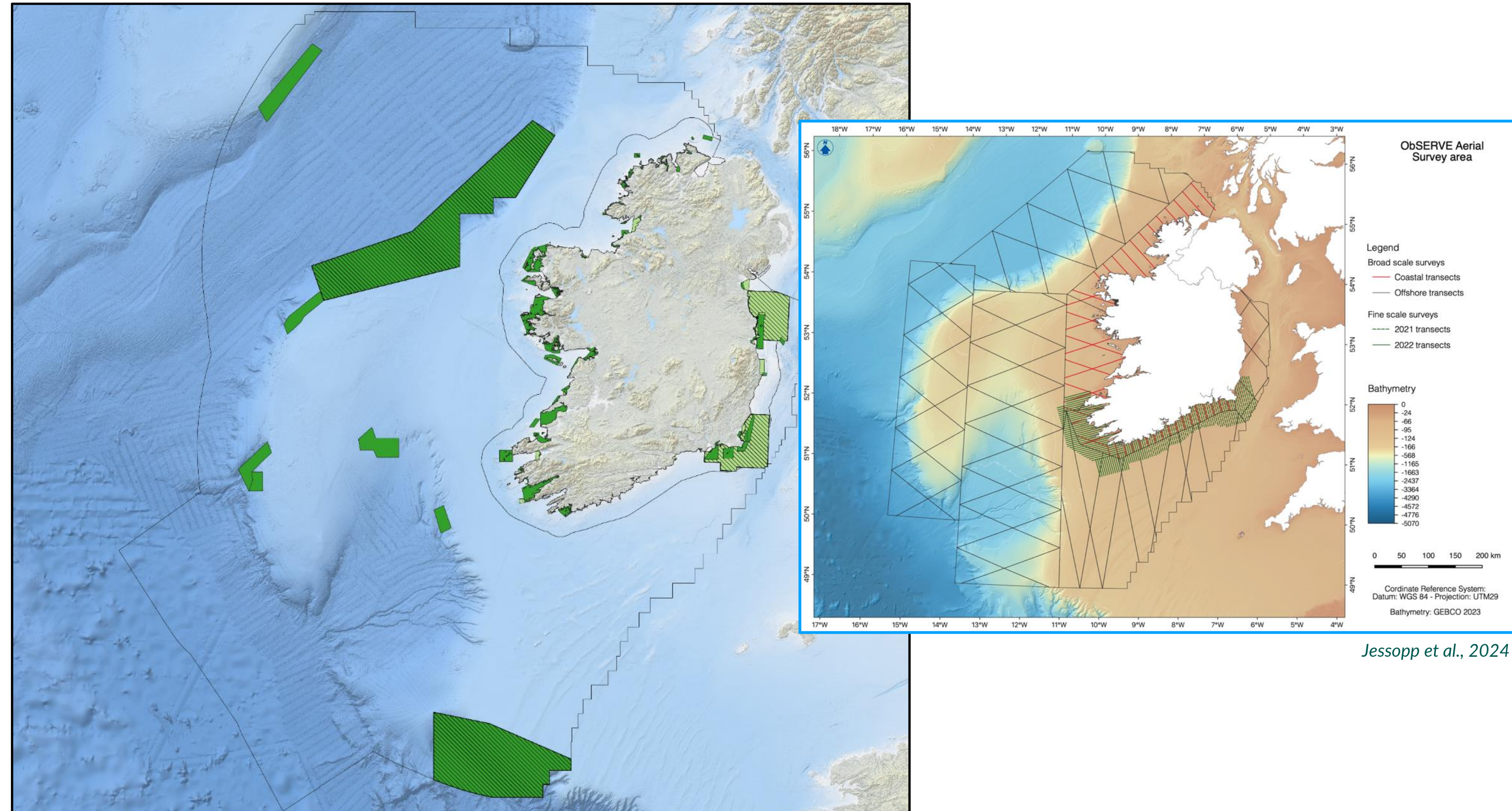


Where are we?



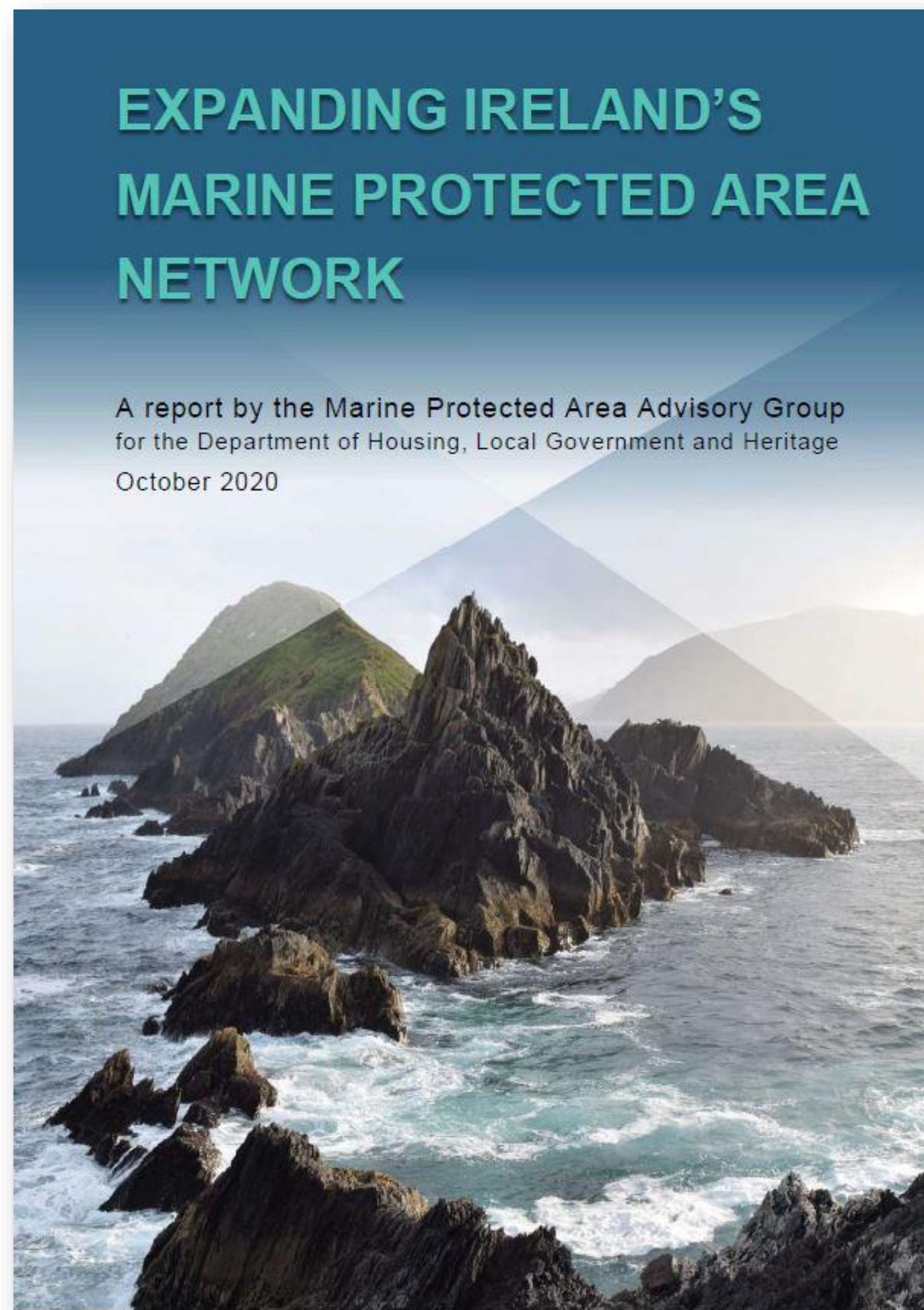
Currently: ~10% of Irish waters under area-based protection (EU Birds and Habitats Directives)

Global & regional responsibilities
(incl. UN CBD, OSPAR)



Jessopp et al., 2024

What have we done so far?

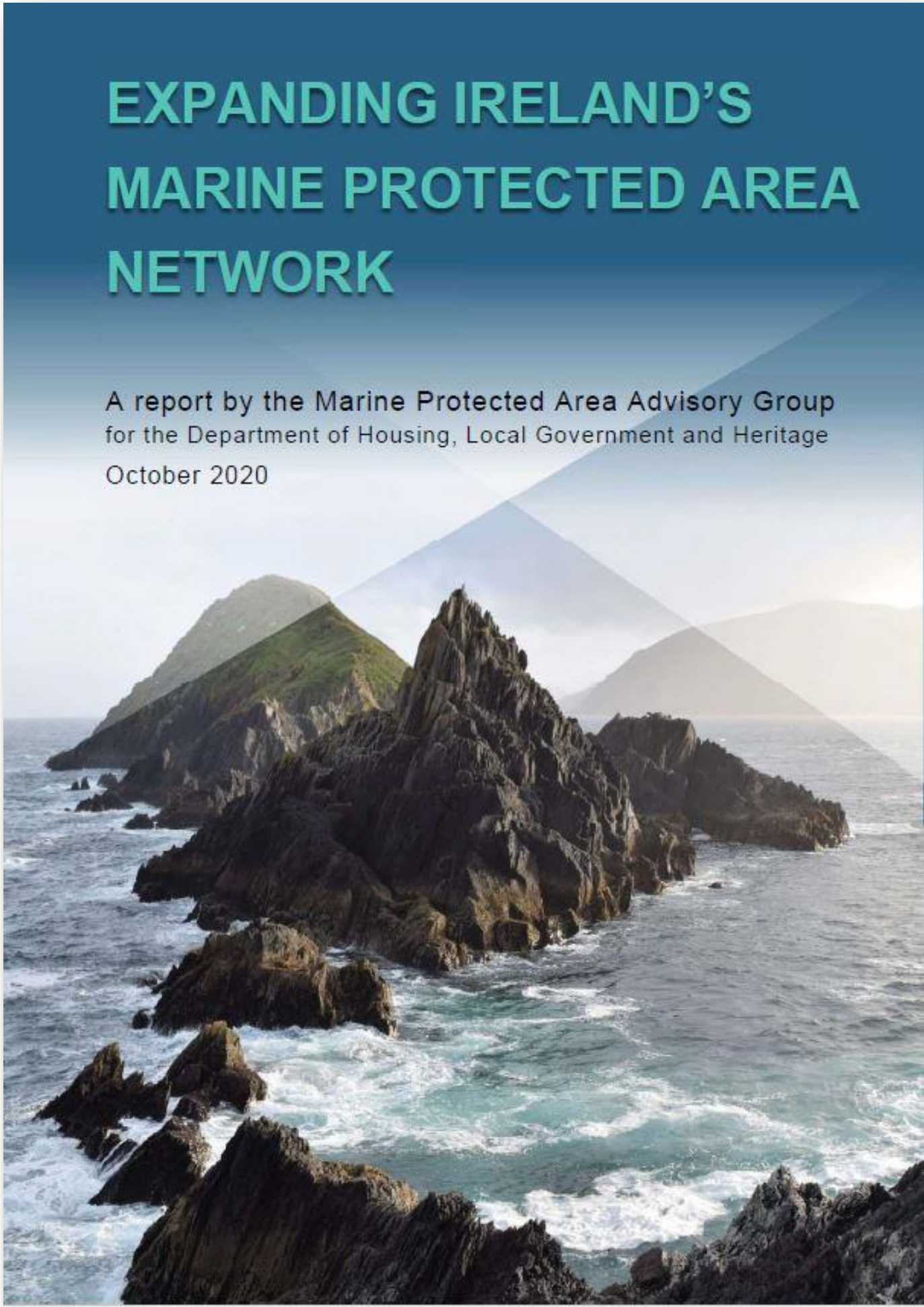


2019-20

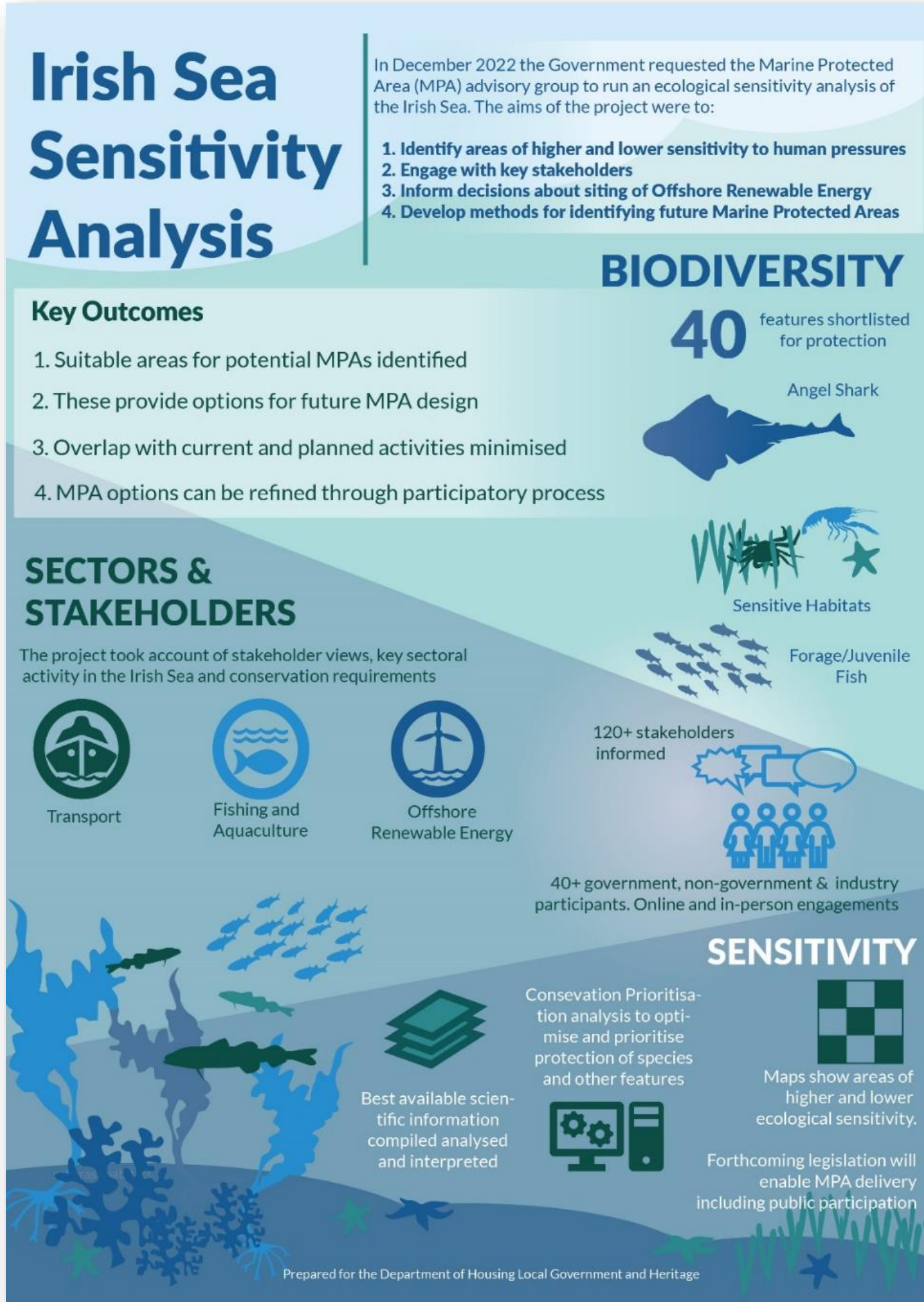
*“A **geographically defined area** of marine character or influence which is **protected through legal means** for the purpose of **conservation** of specific species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and **managed** with the intention of **achieving stated objectives** over the long term.”*

MPA Advisory Group (Crowe et al.), 2020

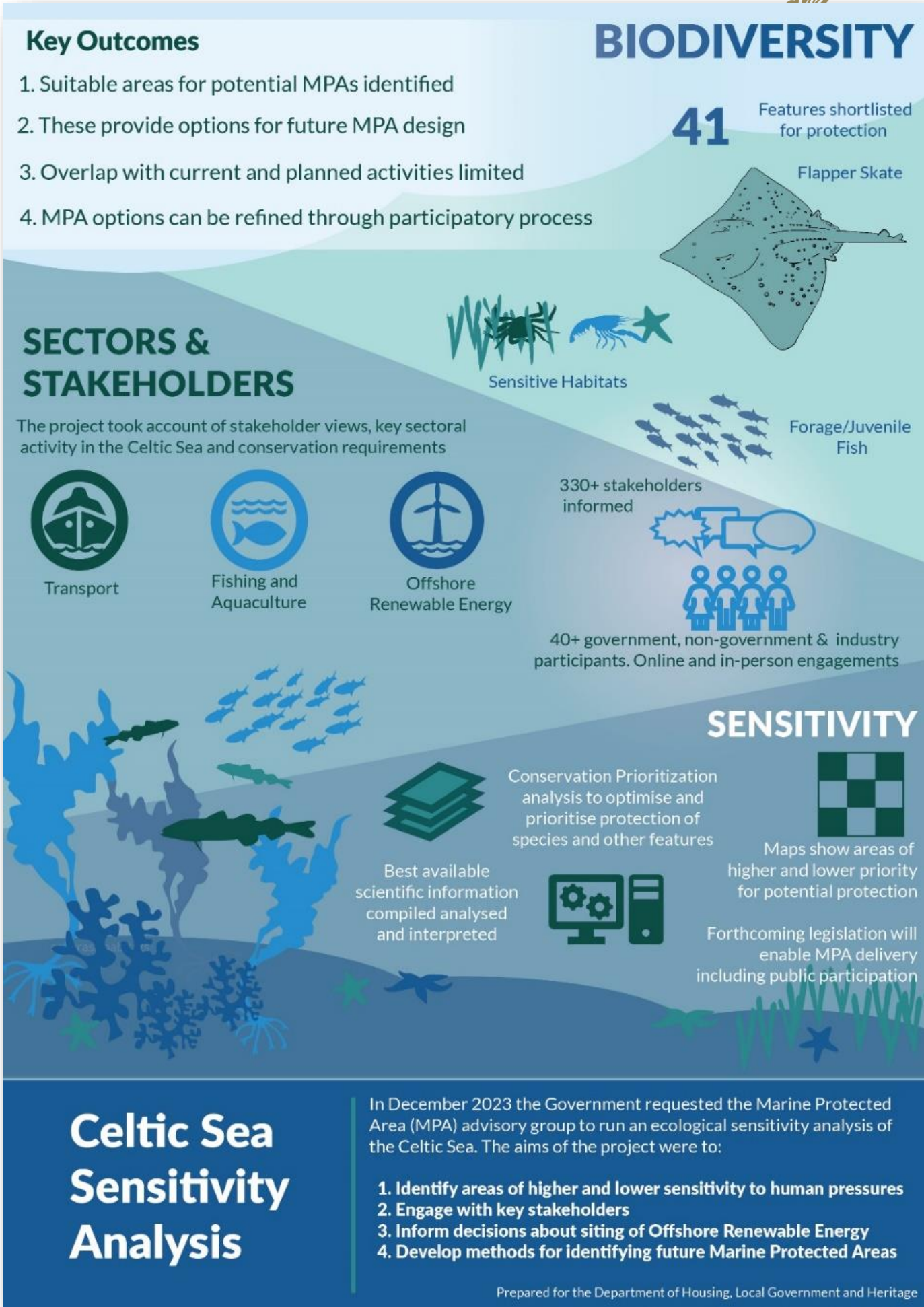
What have we done so far?



2019-20

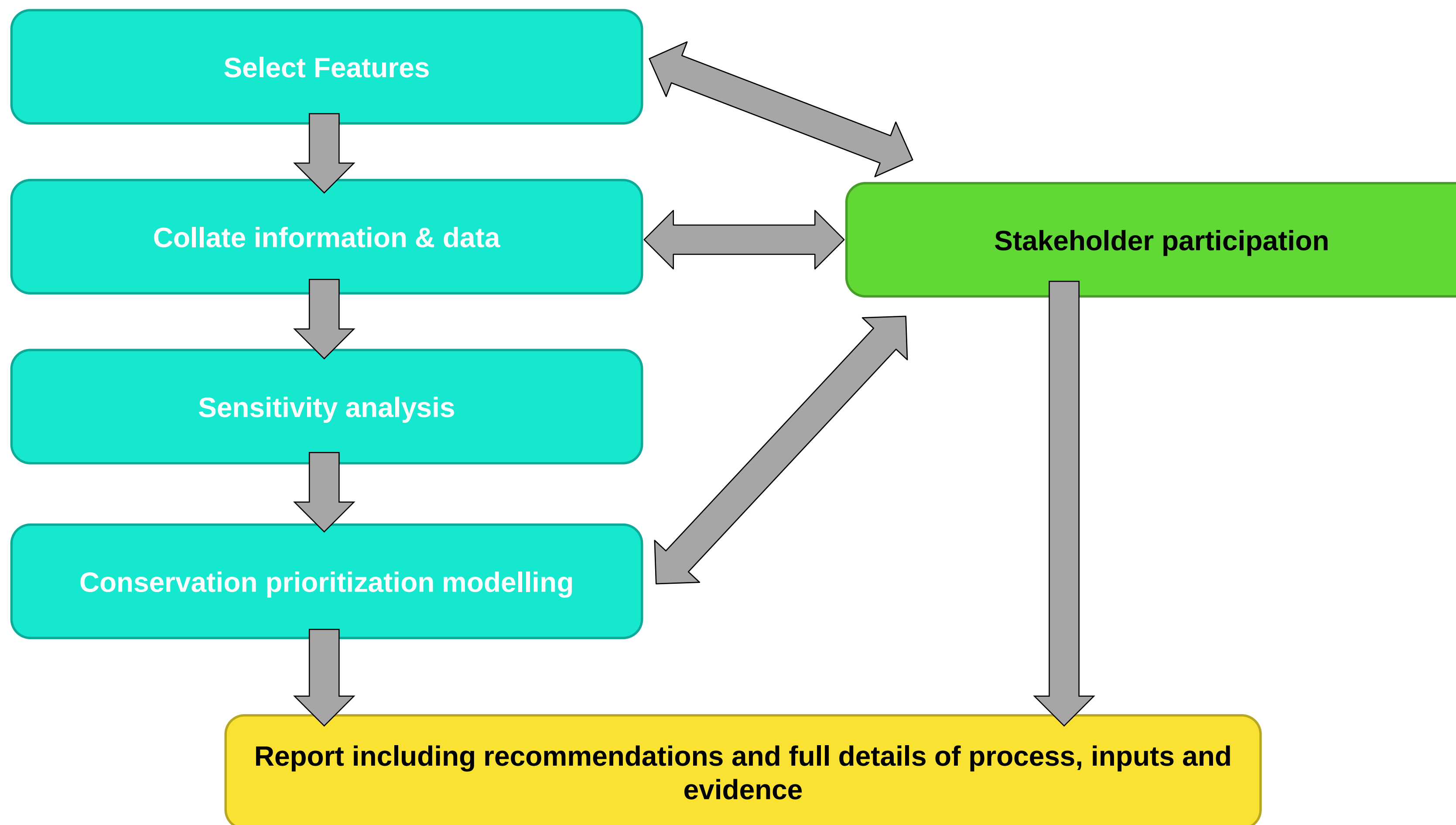


2022-23



2023-24

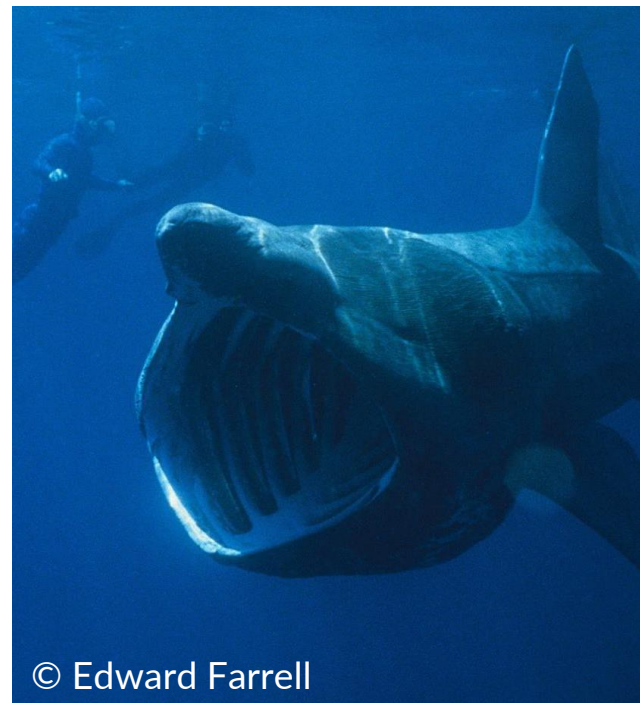
What has been our process?



Irish Sea 2022-23

Celtic Sea 2023-24

What features (so far)?



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N = 40-41 features

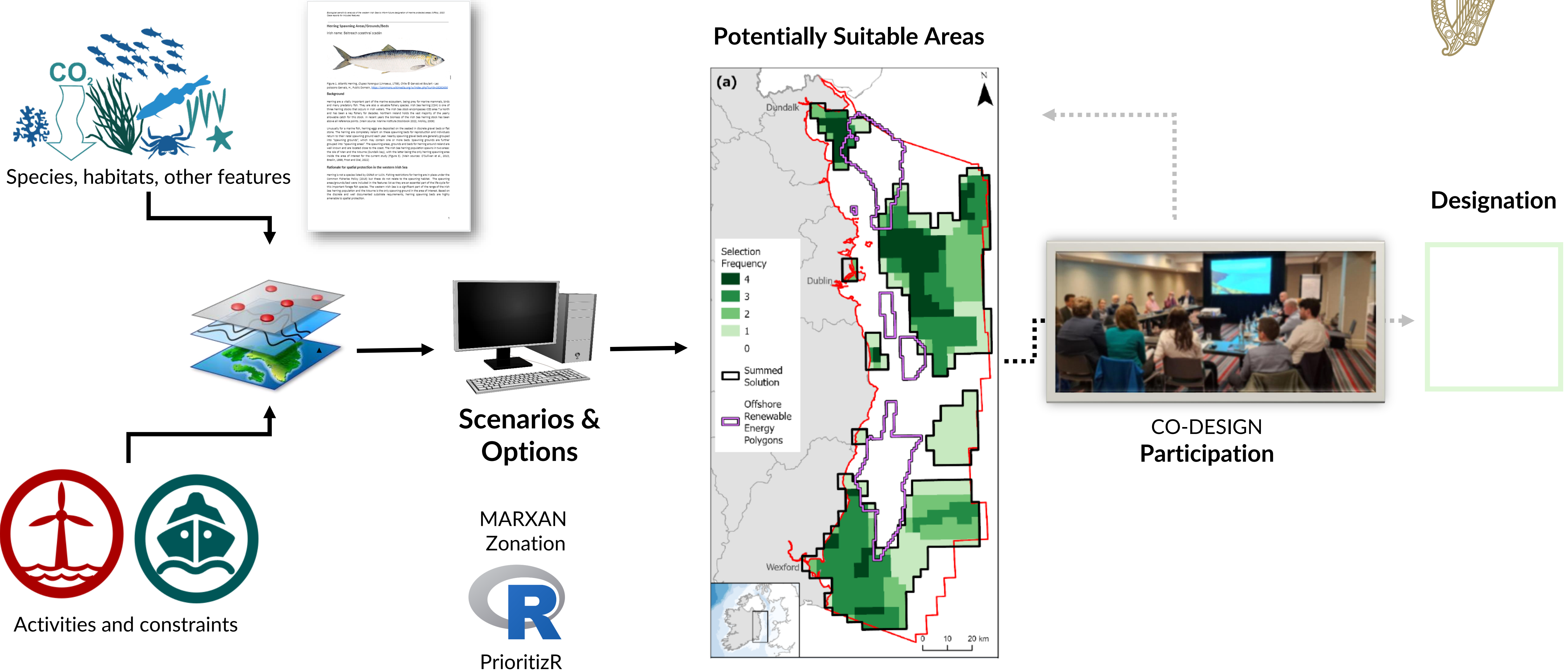
- ✓ 17 threatened species, of which 9 were elasmobranchs; 5 threatened habitats
- ✓ 4 features of ecological importance*
- ✓ 13 broadly representative features
(all benthic broadscale habitat types)
- ✓ 1 area of high biodiversity: Celtic Sea frontal systems
- ✓ 1 ecosystem service: Carbon sequestration



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- 1 Basking shark
- 2 Blonde ray
- 3 Blue skate
- 4 Bull huss
- 5 Flapper skate
- 6 Shagreen ray
- 7 Small-Eyed ray
- 8 Starry smooth-hound
- 9 Tope
- 10 Common spiny lobster
- 11 Fan mussel
- 12 Ocean quahog (Icelandic cyprine)
- 13 European eel
- 14 Ocean sunfish
- 15 Salmon
- 16 Short-snouted seahorse
- 17 Spiny seahorse
- 18 Turbot
- 19 Circalittoral coarse sediment
- 20 Circalittoral mud
- 21 Circalittoral rock & biogenic reef
- 22 Circalittoral sand
- 23 Infralittoral coarse sediment
- 24 Infralittoral mud
- 25 Infralittoral rock & biogenic reef
- 26 Infralittoral sand
- 27 Offshore circalittoral coarse sediment
- 28 Offshore circalittoral mud
- 29 Offshore circalittoral rock & biogenic reef
- 30 Offshore circalittoral sand
- 31 Offshore circalittoral mixed sediment
- 32 Celtic Sea frontal systems (two non-overlapping layers: Celtic Sea Front, and coastal system)
- 33 Intertidal *Mytilus edulis* beds
- 34 Kelp forest
- 35 *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs
- 36 Sea pen & burrowing megafauna
- 37 *Zostera* beds
- 38 Carbon Sequestration (two layers: organic carbon stock, organic carbon content).
- 39 Elasmobranch critical egg-laying habitat
- 40a Forage fish 1 (sprat, anchovy, pilchard)
- 40b Forage fish 2 (sandeel)
- 41 Herring spawning areas

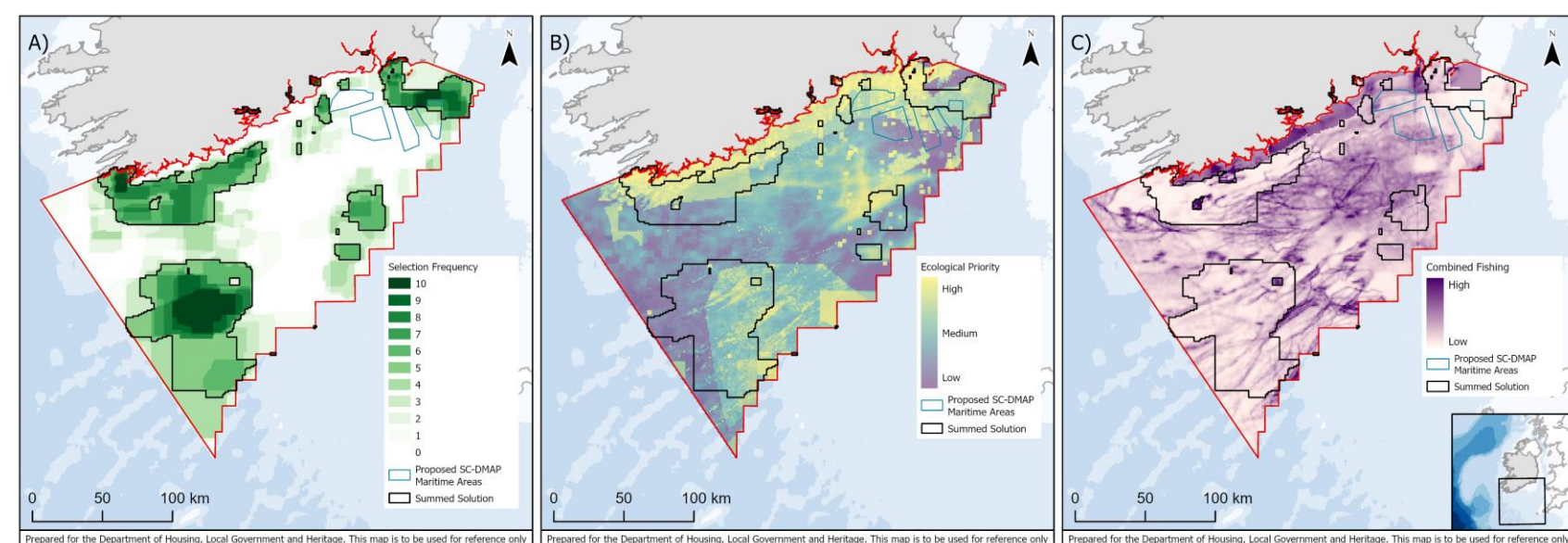
What has been our process?





**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Aim: to support implementation of MPA legislation currently being advanced



2026

MPA LIFE Ireland

Coordinating Beneficiary: Marine Environment DHLGH



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Department of Housing,
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Ollscoil na Gaillimhe
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



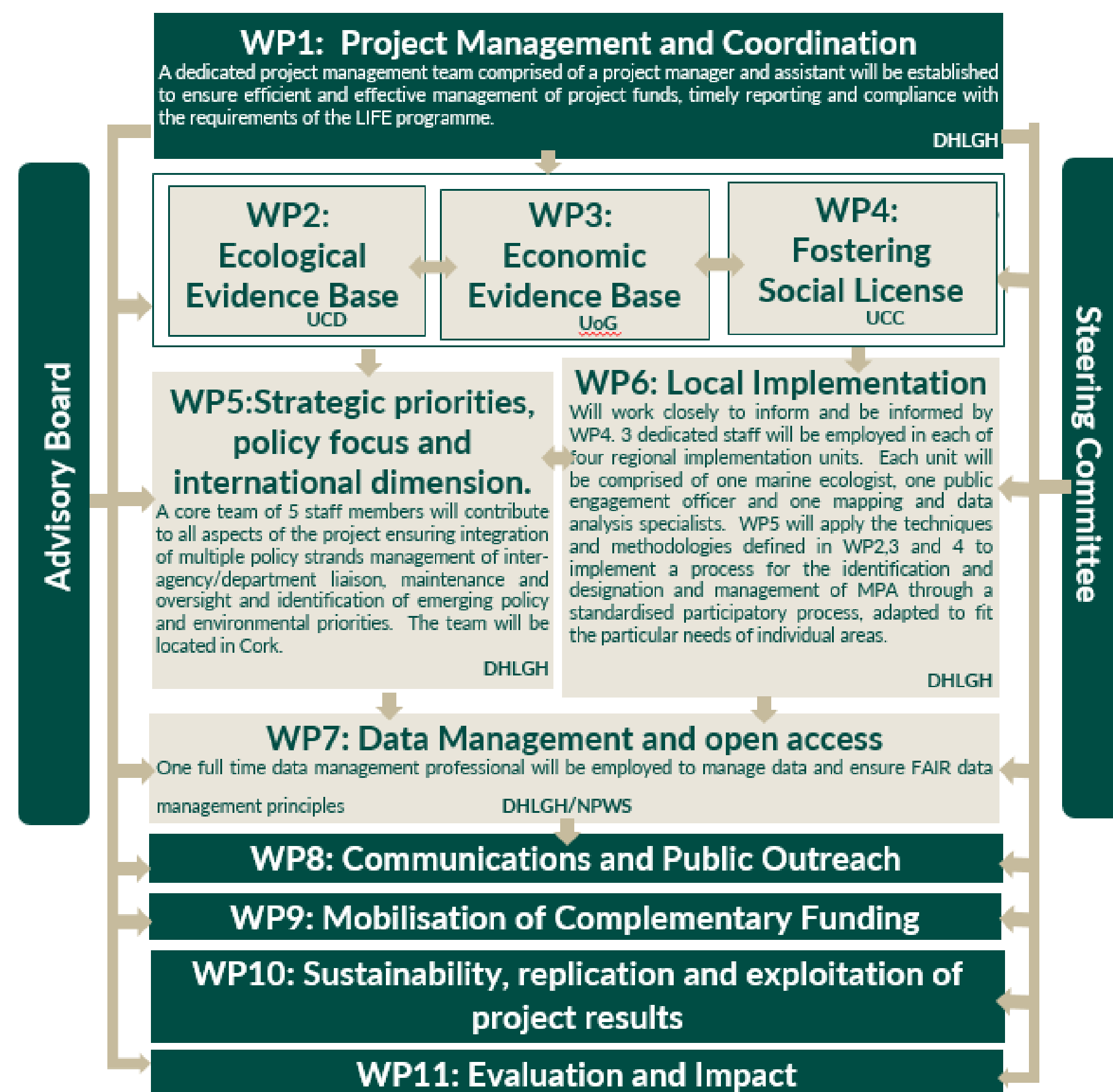
UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



July 2024 to June 2033

Total budget: € 25.3 million

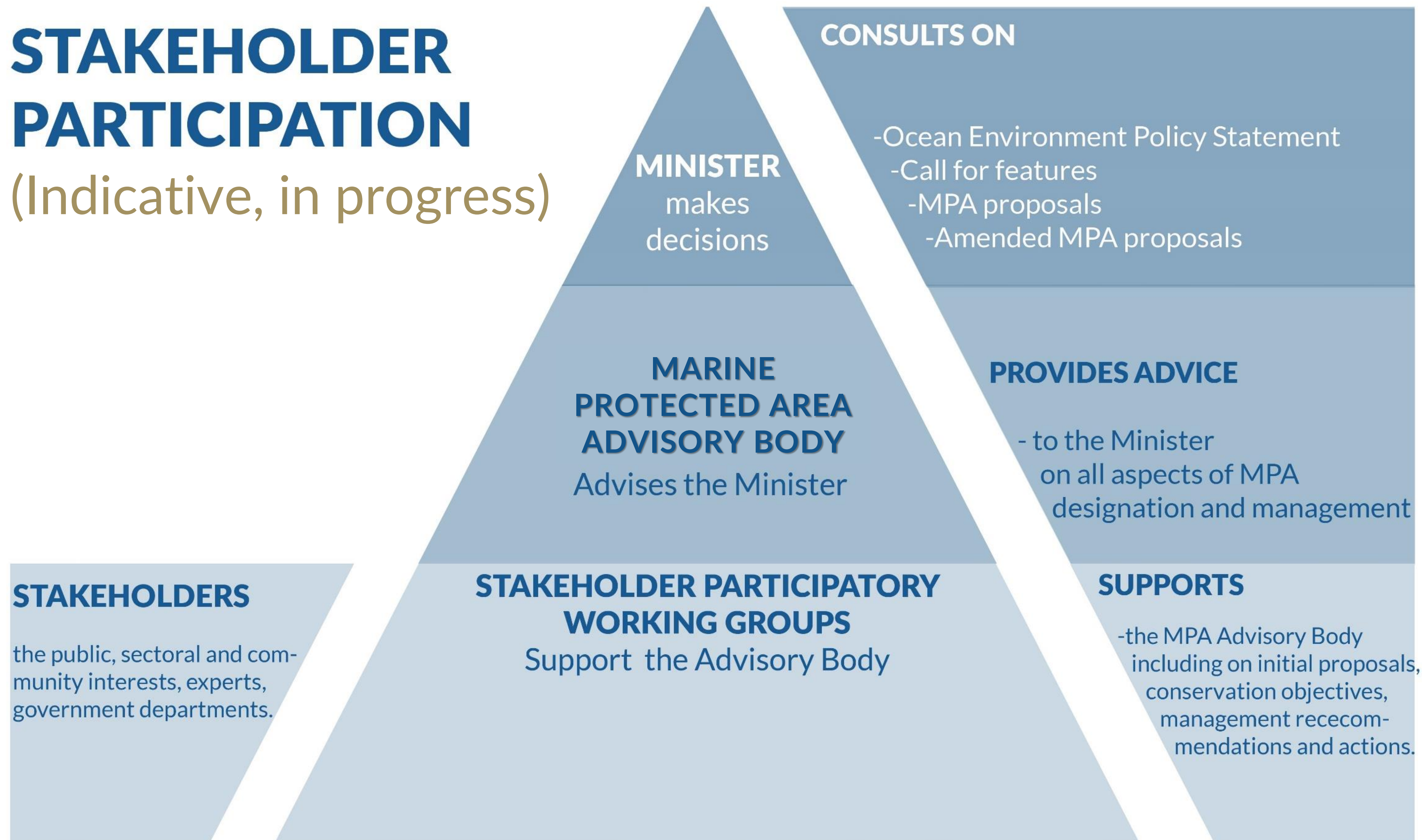
60% (EU) : 40% (IE)





STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

(Indicative, in progress)



Thank you

This project was supported by the Water Division (Marine Environment section) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. We are grateful to Oliver Ó Cadhla, Tim O'Higgins, Richard Cronin and Joanne Kenny for their guidance and contributions during this work. Many thanks also to Mr Macdara Molloy, UCD Earth Institute, for administrative support throughout the project and assistance with the preparation of the report, and to Mr Pádraic Ó Máille of Smácht, Ó Máille Group for facilitating the non-governmental and sectoral stakeholder engagement sessions.

For expert advice and information: Prof. Andy Wheeler, Dr Brendan McHugh, Dr Colm Lordan, Cliona O'Brien, Dr David Lyons, Dr David Tierney, Prof. Emer Rogan, Dr Eoghan Daly, Dr Evin McGovern, Dr Garvan O'Donnell, Dr Glenn Nolan, Gráinne Devine, Dr Hans Gerritsen, Hannah Hood, Dr Joe McGovern, Jon Rees, Prof. Jonne Kotta, Dr Karl Brady, Katie Gillham, Dr Margot Cronin, Dr Mark Coughlan, Dr Mark Jessopp, Mathieu Lundy, Dr Maurice Clarke, Paul Coleman, Dr Russell Poole, Dr Tomasz Dabrowski, Dr William Roche, Dr Yvonne Leahy, Dr Kathryn Schoenrock. See Appendix 9 for further details.

For participation in stakeholder engagement, representatives of: An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, An Bord Pleanála, An Taisce, Ascophyllum nodosum Processors Group, Coastwatch, Commissioners of Irish Lights, Sea Angling Ireland (SAI), Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (including National Parks & Wildlife Service), Department of Transport, Dublin County Council, EirGrid, Environmental Protection Agency, Fair Seas, Federation of Irish Sport, Fingal County Council, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Irish Farmers' Association (IFA Aquaculture), Irish Fish Producers Organisation, Irish Marine Federation, Irish Sailing Association, Irish Seal Sanctuary, Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Irish Wildlife Trust, Killybegs Fishermens' Organisation, Native Oyster Restoration Ireland, Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums – South East, The Heritage Council, Wind Energy Ireland and associated wind energy industry representatives. See Appendix 5c for further details and a list of all stakeholders contacted.

For facilitating the non-governmental and sectoral stakeholder engagement sessions we sincerely thank Mr Pádraic Ó Máille of Smácht, Ó Máille Group.

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For expert advice and information we thank: Luke Cameron, Mark Chatting, Jim Clohessy, Mark Coughlan, Kealan Doyle, Tom Doyle, Karin Dubsky, Afra Egan, Edward Farrell, Neil Garrick-Maidment, Hans Gerritsen, Anthony Grey, Gary Hannon, Louise Healy, Mark Jessopp, Graham Johnston, Hugo Maxwell, Natasha Murphy, Glenn Nolan, Macdara Ó Cuaig, Rory O'Callaghan, Bríd O'Connor, Brendan O'Hea, Eimear O'Keeffe, Louise Overy, Debbie Pedreschi, Rod Penrose, Russell Poole, Anne Marie Power, Declan Quigley, William Roche, Emer Rogan, Kate Schoenrock-Rossiter, David Tierney, Lisa Underwood, Andrew Wheeler, Robert Wilkes, Mark Willis.

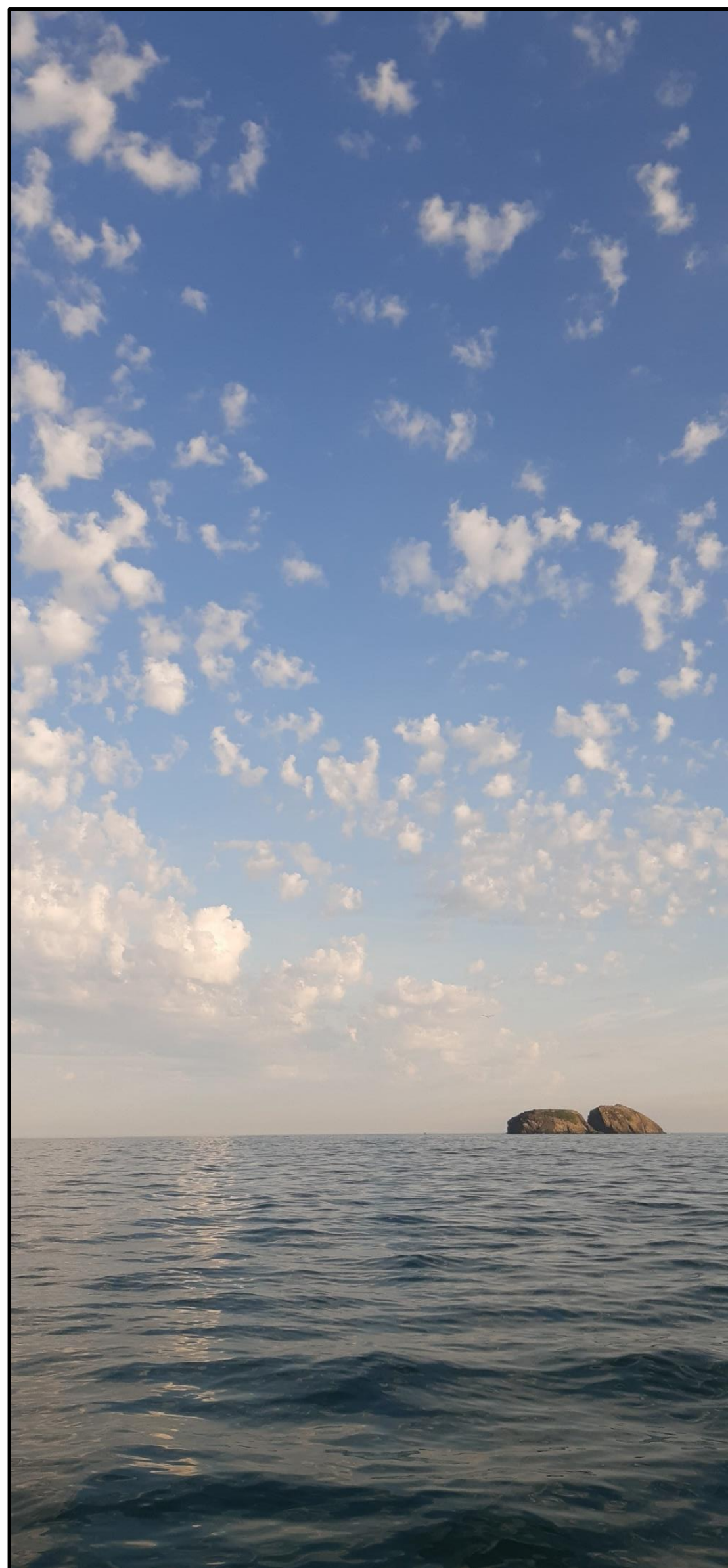
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Acknowledgements



Data providing organisations, including:





Great Sovereign Island, Co. Cork a.k.a. Poll an Phúca



For more, see:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e00ec-marine-protected-areas/>

<https://www.mpalife.ie/>

Go raibh míle maith agaibh



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