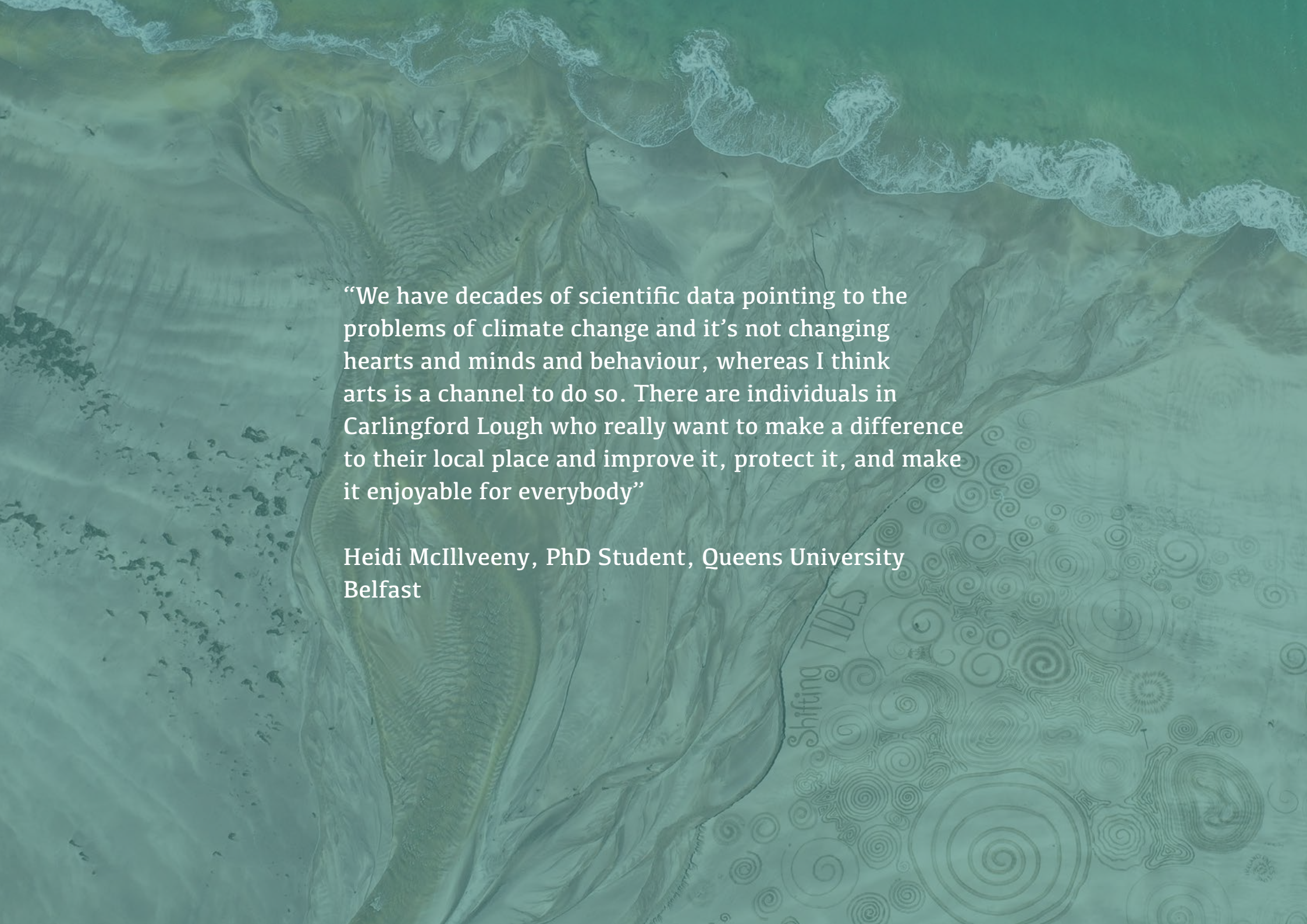


Shifting Tides 2023- 2025



An aerial photograph of a coastline, likely Carlingford Lough, showing waves breaking on a sandy beach. A river estuary flows into the water, with intricate patterns in the sand and water. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter.

“We have decades of scientific data pointing to the problems of climate change and it’s not changing hearts and minds and behaviour, whereas I think arts is a channel to do so. There are individuals in Carlingford Lough who really want to make a difference to their local place and improve it, protect it, and make it enjoyable for everybody”

Heidi McIlveen, PhD Student, Queens University
Belfast



Shifting Tides is a recipient of the Creative Climate Action fund, an initiative from the Creative Ireland Programme. It is funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in collaboration with the Department of the Taoiseach. The fund supports creative, cultural, and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empower citizens to make meaningful behavioural transformations.

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1. Introduction



1.1 Project Overview

The Shifting Tides Project was a two-year initiative that brought together coastal communities from the twin shores of Carlingford Lough, across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, fostering new connections with the local marine environment through practical ecology and the creative arts. The collaborative approaches employed in gathering and sharing knowledge reflect the heterogeneity of seascapes that are often out of sight and best understood through a diversity of methods. The project sought to represent the multifarious nature of marine environments and the human communities that live alongside them, characteristics that can be accentuated in border regions with their cultural and political complexity.

Carlingford Lough is an inlet of the Irish Sea with a border running through it from east to west between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This presents ambiguity over how the lough is managed from an environmental perspective.

Carlingford Lough is governed through a highly complex cross-border system involving multiple agencies from both Northern Ireland

and the Republic of Ireland. At the centre is the Loughs Agency, a transboundary organisation established in 1998 under the Belfast Good Friday agreement, which manages fisheries and marine resources across the whole Lough. On the Northern Ireland side, key departments include DAERA and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), alongside local councils such as Newry, Mourne & Down District Council. On the Republic of Ireland side, important bodies include DAFM, NPWS, EPA, IFI, DHLGH, Irish Water, and FSAI, with Louth and Dundalk councils responsible for local planning and infrastructure. In addition, EU-funded programme bodies, scientific institutes, and community groups play a role. Because responsibilities are spread across so many organisations, governance is often fragmented and difficult for communities to navigate, even though many decisions directly affect the Lough's ecological health and local livelihoods.

The project sought to overcome institutional barriers by empowering local people as custodians of their marine environment.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, a series of citizen science workshops and webinars, coastal foraging events, oral heritage recordings, scientific diver training, varied

arts engagements workshops, podcasts and performances, were developed to explore ways of knowing the sea. Exhibitions, short films and a longer documentary incorporated arts outputs and showcased the local marine environment from a variety of perspectives to build a deeper understanding of the relationships between humans and the undersea world in the specific context of Carlingford Lough.

By catalyzing input from local and non-local artists, providing support and guidance across the community, the project has generated definitive change towards approaching the interconnected issues of climate change, destruction of marine habitats, and biodiversity loss.

The Shifting Tides project operated across three levels:

1. Community and Ownership – Climate action must be rooted in communities who are empowered to be active custodians of their local environments. Shifting Tides was developed in collaboration with communities around Carlingford Lough whose knowledge and embeddedness alongside the sea makes them ideal candidates to take charge of positive climate interventions and the management of marine environments.

2. Collaboration, Creativity, and Education Arts-based practices are increasingly seen as an effective way to collaboratively develop meaningful connections with climate change issues, and to encourage public engagement. Culture has the capacity to influence trends and behaviours, eliciting creative responses that are essential in climate adaptation and resilience.

3. Government Agencies – Recent years have seen increased awareness of marine issues by governments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is committed to achieving a goal of 30% Marine Protected Area (MPA) coverage by 2030,

while Northern Ireland is focusing on building an ecologically coherent network of Marine Conservation Zones. This shift reflects global trends in marine governance, led by the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The Shifting Tides project acted as a link between coastal communities and government agencies, inviting dialogue through arts-based approaches.

Climate action and marine environments are tightly interwoven. The ocean regulates Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide and heat, and healthy ecosystems like seagrass meadows store carbon and protect coastlines. Protecting the ocean strengthens its role in fighting climate change, building resilience and balance in marine ecosystems, and the communities who are connected with them.

1.2 Purpose of Report & Framework

The purpose of this report is to provide an impact evaluation for the two-year Shifting Tides Project, from January 2024 to October 2025. Using a 'Multi-Solver Approach', the report assesses how involvement with the project has empowered communities on both sides of Carlingford Lough to take ownership of their local marine environment. It identifies stronger connections and collaborations between local communities and state agencies or local government actors, looking at how they are working together to elicit behaviour change towards climate and environmental action around Carlingford Lough.

1.3 Project Objectives & Predicted Outcomes

For the project to be co-created with local communities in dialogue with the lough and marine life, it took a flexible and adaptable approach, keeping in mind the three pillars of the project outlined in section 1.1. The following outcomes provided a vision to guide the

project, but the means through which they could be achieved were not fixed. This allowed space between the objectives and outcomes for creativity that reflected the dynamic nature of marine environments, coastal communities, and cross-border politics.

Level 1

Empower and mentor **Local Communities** to take ownership of their shores through participation in events, training and knowledge sharing. *Overall outcomes were predicated as: Increased cross-community and cross-border connections, increased positive attitudes towards marine environment, improved ocean literacy, increased willingness to take conservation actions; better community dialogue on marine issues.*

Level 2

An Increase in **Creatives**, Scientists, Divers, and **Local Champions** Engagement. *Outcomes were predicted as: high-quality citizen science, increased local marine monitoring, more communication between local champions & communities, greater engagement with decision-makers, enhanced cross-border cooperation, potential for community-led habitat restoration.*

Level 3

Level 3 – Improved Cross Sectional Behaviour Change among **State Agencies** and **Local Government Actors** in both jurisdictions *Outcomes were predicted as: strengthened connections with local communities, increased collaboration on marine safeguarding, enhanced cross-border information sharing; Positive behaviour change towards environmental action.*



Local champions are community members who draw on their lived experience to help gather knowledge, lead creative and ecological activities, and bridge cultural and political complexities. By modelling collaborative stewardship, these champions anchor the project's citizen science and arts practices, fostering community-led action for climate resilience, habitat protection, and biodiversity.



2. Project Team



Building an initiating core team with a variety of backgrounds and experiences was crucial to the success of the project. Team members had a range of skills in project management and communication, science, policy, arts and local knowledge. The core team came from different parts of the island of Ireland, and while this allowed for connections to a range of supportive organisations and networks, it was crucial that local actors became involved and influence co-creation from the beginning. Critically, the core team was supported by the networks and resources of The Wheel and NICVA, including communications, finance and evaluation team members.

With the core team established and directed by the overall vision of the project, they began working to facilitate and connect the ideas of local creatives and community members who were embedded in the landscape and seascape of Carlingford Lough. This expanded the breadth of the initial team so the project could enhance and connect with the skills, knowledge and experience of local people in constant dialogue with their needs and priorities.

Initiating Core Team

Suzie Cahn has been Shared Island Project Director at the Wheel since 2021. Her role is to manage this joint initiative of The Wheel and NICVA, working collaboratively to bring communities together to address challenges, highlight solutions and capitalise on opportunities on a shared island basis.



Alexander McMaster is a writer and marine ecologist. He writes for The Irish Times and RTÉ radio, Geographical Magazine and Dark Mountain Project. As a professional skipper and diving instructor, he has worked in Ireland and the Mediterranean engaging communities with the sea through science and the arts. He also leads search and rescue operations with NGOs in the Central Mediterranean.



Samuel Arnold Keane is a forager, illustrator and musician who blends his various art forms to tell the stories of seaweeds, plants coasts and streets where he gathers, wades and walks. He is a qualified surf instructor with an academic background in Visual Communications, specialising in illustration & printmaking.



Danae Wollen is a qualified zoologist who recently shifted her focus to circus, acrobatics and physical performance. She performed with a number of Irish companies before spending two years exploring contemporary circus in Spain and France. In her work, she seeks ways to merge art forms such as circus with live music, storytelling through movement.



Declan Mallon is the director of Upstate Theatre Project in Drogheda. The company was formed in 1997 and is dedicated to socially engaged art practices adhering to a participatory and collaborative ethos.



Expanded Team, Advisors and Supporters

Suzanne Carroll is a Visual artist from Dundalk leading The Fishery Exchange, a unique initiative pairing artists, scientists, and oyster farmers to explore the intersection of culture and conservation.



Heidi McIlvenny is a Marine researcher and PhD student at Queen's University Belfast, whose work on

seagrass habitats blends science with community engagement. A founding force behind shark-tagging and habitat restoration programmes.



Tara Doyle is a Sustainability Graduate, with a focus on reporting and evaluation projects.

Claire Casey is a Northern Ireland coordinator of SeaSearch, a citizen science project for divers and snorkelers, designed to gather data for marine research.

Robert Walsh is a Northern Ireland Marine Task Force officer, representing a coalition of environmental NGOs working on ensuring healthy, resilient, and productive seas for Northern Ireland.

Lea Philcox is a filmmaker who documented the journey of scuba divers becoming citizen scientists, as well as convening a survey dive and photographing Shifting Tides events.

Dain McParland is a veteran scuba diver and marine science educator based in County Down. With over 3,000 dives under his belt, Dain uses his deep knowledge of local waters to inspire conservation through his business, Oceanauts Diving.

Dave Wall is Citizen Science Officer at the National Biodiversity Data Centre, ran citizen science workshops with community members on both shores of the lough.

Richard Nairn is a writer and ecologist who holds a

Master's Degree in Zoology. He has published seven previous books including a recent trilogy on nature in Ireland.

Local Champions

Colum Sands Storyteller, musician and environmental advocate drawing on a long Irish tradition of humour and poetry to weave songs for the world.

Steve Lally Storyteller and author created socially engaged sculptures inspired by stories of smuggling between Omeath and Warrenpoint.

Kian Louet-Feisser Managing director of the Carlingford Oyster Company

Eloisa Wainwright Student and scuba diver interested

in studying marine biology and educating people about the ocean.

Phil Scott Scuba diver and underwater photographer.

Susan Farrell Writer and painter inspired by her love for the shores of Carlingford Lough.

Muirin Sneddon Student, sailor and artist inspired by growing up on the shores of Carlingford Lough.

Sandra Woods Scuba diver and open water swimmer

Frances Lambe Scuba diver and ceramic artist

Eoin McCartan Events for Newry, Mourne and Down Council, and member of Love Your Lough.

Ocean literacy is a term that describes how people understand their influence on the ocean and the ways it influences them. It has been used to grow public awareness, knowledge, and engagement with marine environments. By increasing ocean literacy, the Shifting Tides project aims to build capacity for people to engage with marine science and policy in an informed manner.



3. Key Activities and Strategies to Achieve Goals

A community mapping strategy was used to explore existing local and island-wide networks, seeking possibilities for collaboration and integration. Initial contact was made through online searches and Facebook groups, with individuals and organisations contacted by email, phone and video calls. A record of connections was kept with detailed notes. It was important at this stage to cast a wide net – any pathways that seemed fruitful were taken. This approach followed the notion that the project should not be entrenched by preconceived ideas but rather flow as much as possible with naturally arising opportunities that aligned with the project objectives.

Following initial outreach, the project team spent time around Carlingford Lough meeting local people and stakeholders in person, building connections that were mutually beneficial to the project and potential participants. An online expression of interest form was opened so that people could express their specific interests, skills and ideas. The database created from the Expression of Interest (EOI) form was used to disseminate information about the project and opportunities to get involved. The results of this mapping phase can be categorised as:

Island-wide institutions and organisations

– Universities and national bodies were contacted to ensure that island-wide engagement could be achieved, but also to link our work with existing research and arts projects. Citizen science organisations were involved for the sharing of expertise so that data gathered locally could be used in wider research projects. Some of these connections contributed to the legacy of Shifting Tides beyond the two-year funding period, whilst building the capacity through shared expertise.

Local groups / Local Champions – There were several local action groups and individuals already engaged with conservation, environmental protection, knowledge gathering and awareness activities. They included tour operators, activists, scuba divers, swimmers, artists, fisherfolk, and people with a keen interest in the lough. Many of them had valuable insights gained through time and experience that were central to guiding the project, which in turn was able to platform some of their ideas and concerns.

Creatives – There is a wealth of cultural activity around Carlingford Lough with the potential to contribute meaningfully to the project. Well-established local institutions carry out preservation work through their conservation of oral and local histories, arts and cultural heritage, offering skills and ideas that had the potential to be integrated and enhanced through Shifting Tides.

Climate action officials – To meet cross-border collaboration goals, the project team met with the Loughs Agency and local government actors including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural affairs. These key stakeholders were provided with regular updates on the project through communication channels and one-to-one meetings.



3.1 Activities

The program of activities was designed in collaboration with local community members, participating artists and relevant NGOs and academics to meet the ocean literacy and educational aspects of the project, as well as building capacity for action on marine conservation and restoration. Following the mapping phase, a symposium of citizen science and marine ecology was held in Rostrevor. Speakers and panellists were invited from universities, marine conservation NGOs and local organisations to share knowledge on marine ecology, governance and policy, and opportunities for engagement in citizen science. Representatives from community groups elsewhere on the island spoke about how they had enacted change in their local areas, sharing the challenges encountered and lessons learned. Workshops explored the issues raised by participants so that creative pathways could be discussed within the symposium. The event was followed by another arts-based event in Carlingford village's heritage center, a performance of **Where Seaweed Dances by Danae Wollen and Samuel Arnold Keane** of Duileasc proceeded by a coastal foraging walk by Samuel and integrating some of the oral

history recordings by Declan Mallon. These events established the presence of Shifting Tides around Carlingford Lough and provided an opportunity for their impacts to guide the future of the project.

There was strong interest from community members to learn more about marine life and contribute to citizen science, so a series of onsite coastal educational workshops were organised in collaboration with the National Biodiversity Centre, and complimented by an online webinar series involving guests who spoke across a range of scientific topics. And a Performance Lecture by Yvanna Greene blurring the lines between our conception of arts and science, entitled 'The Limpet & the Anthropocene.' Many of the attendees at these events were local people, artists, while others were interested in using citizen science to advocate for policy change and marine conservation. In collaboration with Seasearch, who trained local scuba divers to conduct scientific surveys, a documentary film was produced about their journeys. These early connections led to later developments in the project.

Having established the local presence and scientific and artistic foundations of the





project with the support of the core team, additional artists were invited to an open call briefing in Omeath and a follow up online briefing where they could share ideas and hear about opportunities to contribute to Shifting Tides. Many of the arts proposals led to community arts events around the lough in the summer of 2024. Creatives were encouraged to submit proposals that reflected the themes of the project, and targeted specific audiences. Selected artists were then connected with venues and resources, where requested, scientists and community members; to develop work and deliver workshops, performances and exhibitions over the course of the project. These provided forums for community members to creatively engage with new ways of experiencing the lough and its shores. There were frequent crossovers of people from both shores and many discussions overlapped with those held during the citizen science face to face and online events.

The arts workshops included microphotography and cyanotypes using elements from the lough, poetry and writing at sea, driftwood sculptures and storytelling inspired by cultural heritage, portrait photography and a short film

production called “Body of Water” that incorporated words and paintings of local sea swimmers and a composed soundscape containing only sounds that were recorded on and underneath the Lough, Hidden Life in Carlingford Lough (2024). The resulting works were exhibited as part of a culture night event held in Warrenpoint in September 2024, showcasing additional performances including improv comedy and vocalizations and dance performance, underwater



photography, storytelling and poetry, music, oral history, underwater soundscapes, heritage photography and coastal foraging skills. The exhibition was a celebration of what had been achieved throughout the Shifting Tides' first year, gathering a wealth of arts outputs upon which to build informed dialogue on climate action, conservation, restoration, peacebuilding and the future of Carlingford Lough.

In the second year of the project, the activities were honed to those which the project team felt had potential for wider or deeper impact. Three were selected for additional resources,

- the Shifting Tides podcast season (on the Across Divides Podcast),
- The Fishery Exchange focused on artists, scientists and oyster farms, and
- Who Needs Anemones, Divers for Life in Carlingford Lough documentary following the journey of divers from hobbyists to citizen scientists.



3.2 Strategies

'The project established an active Instagram presence and consistently produced engaging communications, which helped build a strong reputation over time. Additionally, word-of-mouth played a significant role in attracting participation and growing interest.'

Suzie Cahn, Project Director.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

The dissemination and communication workstream formed an important part of the success of the outputs and played a key role in meeting engagement targets North and South. Social media has become central to community initiatives, so we tapped into existing channels and developed strategies to widen our engagement.

A dedicated website, Eventbrite dissemination and registrations, YouTube, and Instagram showcased event footage and images. Content was shared via targeted newsletter



campaigns and press releases to local and national media. Social media reach on the main Shifting Tides channels show a wide reach of over 14,000 impressions – far exceeding the target of 5000. Engagement within those channels shows direct engagement rates of over 14%. Email Engagement in terms of Click Through rates and Opens remained high throughout the project (11%/65% respectively.)

3.3 Data Collection and Engagement Strategies

Measuring the impact of the Shifting Tides Project involved a mix of quantitative tracking and reflective, qualitative methods. The complex and multi-faceted nature of the project meant that data collection for the report needed to be done in a structured way to gather all outputs and the outcomes in line with Creative Ireland requirements. Supporting documents included:

A Data Tracking Template – Engagements were tracked in a data tracking template filled out periodically by the relevant project team members, including event and observer course registrations, social media &

Social Media	Shifting Tides YouTube - TheShiftingTidesProject - Views	840
Social Media	Shifting Tides YouTube - TheShiftingTidesProject - Impressions	4100
Social Media	Shifting Tides Instagram - Shiftinttidesproject - Accounts Engaged	322
Social Media	Shifting Tides Instagram - Shiftinttidesproject - Impressions	5171
Website	Shifting Tides Website(TheShiftingTides.org) - Page Views	912
Website	Shifting Tides Website(TheShiftingTides.org) - Unique Visitors	731
Website	Shifting Tides Website(TheShiftingTides.org) - Video Views	4758
Event and Project Updates	Shifting Tides Event Updates and Project Updates – 35 Emails sent to 5205 Recipients - Opens	3317
Event and Project Updates	Shifting Tides Event Updates and Project Updates – 35 Emails sent to 5205 Recipients - Click Throughs	524
Podcast	Across Divides – 6 Episodes about Shifting Tides - Listeners	645

website engagements, click-throughs from newsletters. Cross border data was gathered where possible as part of this process. A Master Mailing List was created which was segmented by type of involvement and number of attended events. Actual event attendees were tracked using sign-in sheets.

Citizen Science Portal – External citizen science data was mined from the external reporting portals. These were Seasearch (underwater survey), CoastWatch Shore Surveys and the National Biodiversity Centres' new Explore-Your-Shore website. These portals were chosen as a possible way to monitor the success of the transfer of knowledge.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) Form –

This was completed by local people and artists prior to the main events schedule, in addition to any community members or representatives of organisations interested in participating in the project.

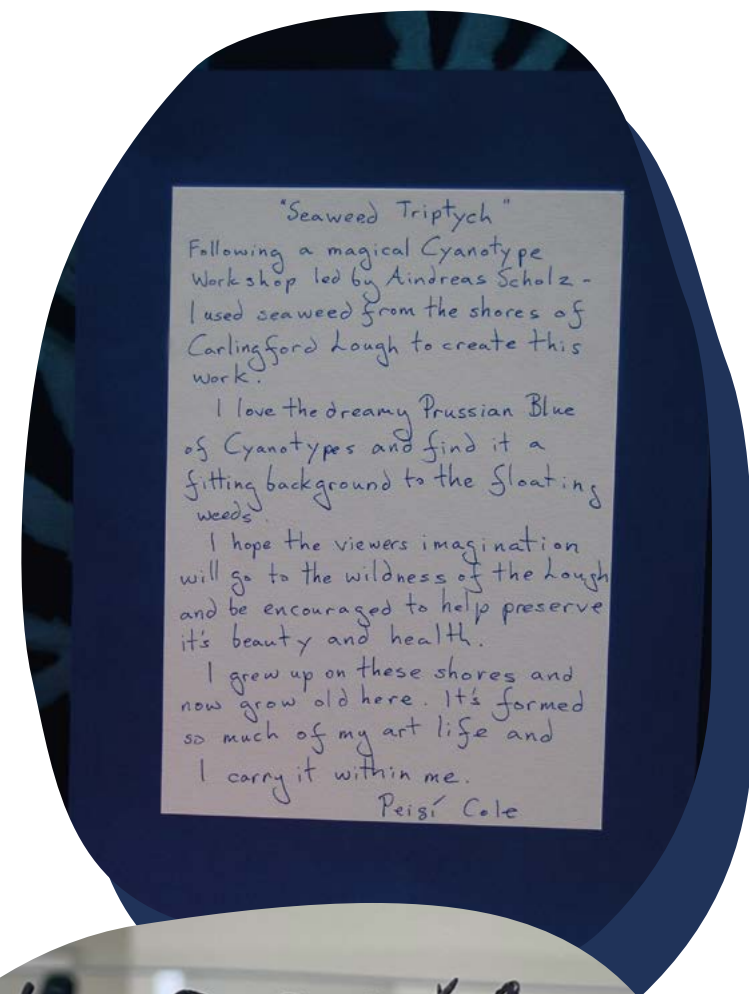
Surveys:

Pre/Post-Event Surveys – A survey was conducted with all participants in year one to measure changes in awareness throughout the project. The team found

that pre- and post-surveys did not work particularly well in this context, likely due to the fluid, creative nature of the project and the informal structure of many events. However, the post-event surveys provided valuable qualitative information about the outcomes of the project in line with the project objectives.

Artists Surveys – Impact surveys were sent to all artists to get more meaningful insights. Artists were asked not only to document what they had created but to reflect on personal growth and behavioural changes, both in themselves and among those they worked with. These reflections provided a rich, narrative-based understanding of the project's influence that went beyond traditional evaluation metrics

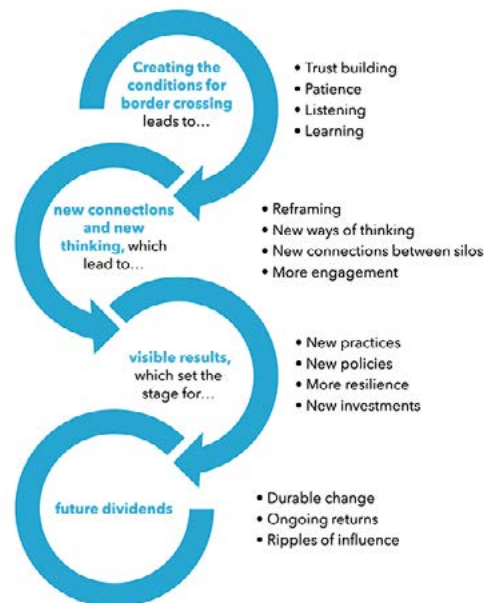
Impact Interviews/Case Studies – To ensure that key developments and learnings were preserved, the project team also produced case studies and project profiles, capturing specific stories and moments of change. These were supported by a dedicated team member who was appointed specifically to oversee quantitative record-keeping.



4. Impact Evaluation - Outputs & Outcomes



Multisolving Generates Results by Enabling People to Cross Borders



Multisolving is an approach to problem-solving that intentionally designs solutions to address multiple interconnected challenges at the same time—such as climate change, public health, equity, and economic resilience. Instead of treating issues separately, multisolving applies systems thinking to create strategies that deliver multiple, reinforcing benefits.

Multisolving: Designing for Multiple Benefits
Sawin, E. R., Eccles, K., Moser, S., & Smith, T. A. (2023)

This section gives an overview of progress of activities against the expected goals of the project using the 'Multi-solving' Framework and data collected over the 2-years from the data tracking templates, post –event surveys, and impact interviews. See the full goals to impact table in appendix.

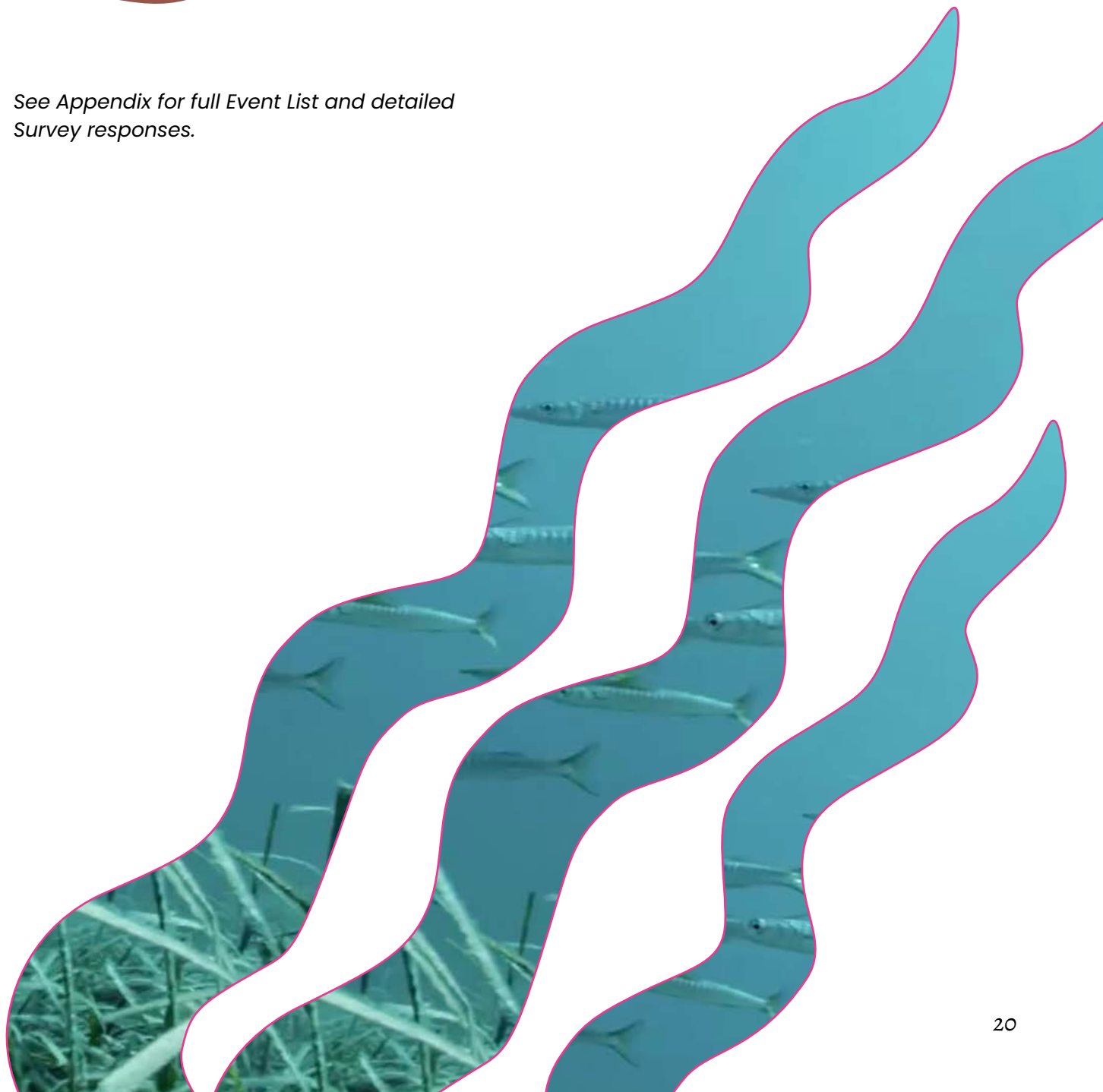
4.1 Level 1 Progress & Impact - Learnings, Connections, Positive Attitudes & Willingness to act

During Year 1 of the project, the focus was on casting a wide net to engage a broad range of artists whose work would spark dialogue and involvement from the local community. This foundational year emphasised cross-lough, cross-community engagement, complemented by cross-disciplinary high-level stakeholder consultations at both local and national levels. The events schedule officially kicked off in February 2024; The first event was a family-friendly shoreline foraging activity, and the second was a multi-sensory performance featuring 'seaweed dances'. An interdisciplinary Citizen Science Symposium was also held to introduce and promote the benefits of citizen science. These

events introduced the project to the public, built trust, drew participants attention to the lough, and encouraged new perspectives on ocean literacy, and marine-focused climate actions. To better understand local sentiment, a community pre-event survey was conducted during the launch events focusing on people's knowledge of and connection to the lough. Post event surveys were also sent to measure changing attitudes, ocean literacy and to gauge people's interest in becoming citizen scientists. We also asked respondents if they felt more connected within the lough community and who they connected with.

The kick-off events in February were very well attended, with 277 registrations in total. 1069 people registered for events over the two-year programme, 365 Unique registrations were received, with some people (92) attending multiple events and we had an average of 30 registrations per event – These figures show that we reached our targets of 250–450 participation at events and workshops. Attendance tracking via feedback forms showed strong conversion from registration (70%/80%). When we asked people who they made connections with, they mentioned many local groups and organisations involved in the project, a key outcome of the project.

See Appendix for full Event List and detailed Survey responses.



Learnings	Positive Attitudes	Willingness to Act
Event feedback forms highlighted improved ocean literacy and increased conservation intent – 91% of surveyed participants reporting new learning and insights (Appendix 1 – figure a).	84% reported changed perspectives, which would suggest new ways of thinking and a reframing of people’s knowledge of the lough (Appendix 1 – figure b). The question about changing attitudes supports people’s newfound awareness of the lough – 75% report having positively altered views. (Appendix 1 – figure e).	71% expressed significant confidence to take action (Appendix 1 – figure c) and, to the open question, ‘What would change because of what you learned?’, many mentioned actions they would take to protect the Lough:
<i>‘I learned tonnes about the ecological makeup of the lough, and the various species that live in and around it!’</i>	<i>“I was amazed about the wealth of sea creatures we have in Carlingford lough and shore, especially seeing an anemone! I’ve grown up here my whole life and never knew they existed.”</i>	<i>‘I will gather more debris and encourage more people to participate.’</i>
<i>‘If you have a better understanding of an eco-system, you are more invested in it and inevitably you tend to care more.’</i>	<i>‘I have a better understanding of complex eco-systems that are out of sight.’</i>	<i>‘I will be more aware of the variety of natural materials to be found on the beach.’</i>
<i>‘(The event) Evolved my understanding and knowledge of the environment, particularly marine, and the possibilities for arts/science collaborations.’</i>	<i>‘I am becoming aware of the incentives communities can initiate to preserve and cultivate marine environment further.’</i>	<i>‘I will be better at spotting seagrass and highlighting natural seagrass.’</i>
	<i>‘I have started to look/think about sea grasses and molluscs etc in a new way!’</i>	<i>‘My family regularly cross over the lough, and it is beautiful. To think that there is so much underneath it that we are not always aware of.’</i>
	<i>‘I have started looking around more while at the shore. I’ve also wanted to take more of an active role in surveying and protecting the species that live in our lough.’</i>	<i>‘I am more committed to the well-being of the lough. I have better appreciation of eco-systems that are out of sight.’</i>

Key Level 1 Post-Event Survey Data

4.2 Level 2 Progress – Educational Artist Engagement and Enhanced Co-operation on Habitat Restoration

Through the creative and citizen science activities the project supported local divers, artists, fishers and scientists working together to develop skills in shoreline surveying, scientific diving, knowledge of coastal ecology, marine restoration and citizen science initiatives. Many of the participants were from siloed groups who, up until the Shifting Tides project, had been working on an individual basis to protect the lough. The activities brought the individuals together to support long-term marine restoration efforts, increase community involvement, and strengthen collaboration between local stakeholders and decision-makers.



Creativity as a tool for dialog

Suzie Cahn, Project Director commented on the artists in a Creative Ireland monitoring interview, 'Artists played a central and strategic role in the Shifting Tides Project, becoming embedded within communities as trusted brokers who could foster open, honest conversations across diverse groups often due to their open curiosity. Their presence was not only about producing creative work, but about cultivating spaces where dialogue could flourish, and curiosity could override division.'

The large amount of level 1 activity in early 2024 meant that a list of new connections and trusted brokers was useful for the project to invite interested people to events and gain their support as local champions and encourage artists to make creative proposals. Qtr 3 2024 saw the rollout of 19 of those proposals, and many were represented at an exhibition event in Warrenpoint on Culture Night in September 2024. The workshops produced artworks and materials that were also uploaded as resources onto the Shifting Tides Website and some artists also contributed blogs for the websites. Some of the wonderful stories from the local

community, as well as interviews with artists and scientists, were used in the 6 –series podcast 'Across Divides' (See Appendix For Full Topics and Contributors List). The photos and other creative outputs were continually shared at events, such as, the pop up exhibition at the IOLN regional gathering in Carlingford in July 2025) and the dissemination trip in Cork and Kerry in September 2025. They were also used as part of social media and newsletter updates. The documentary by Lia Philcox *Who Need Anemone's* that was an output from the diver's observation course, was showcased during screenings in Carlingford, Rostrevor and Kerry. The final output of the Fishery Exchange meetings was an exhibition previewed as part of the Fiddlers Green Festival in Rostrevor and launched in Carlingford. in September 2025.

Samuel Arnold Keane, who performed *Where Seaweed Dances* and ran several seaweed foraging events, talks about how the collaborative aspect of the project really demonstrates how new connections can bring about more successful community engagement, 'Collaborating with other artists and members of the community was deeply enriching. The unknowable creations that spark from these new relationships is powerful. Blurring the lines that divide people from different paths allows them to collaborate, and builds long lasting community engagement.'

Aindreas Scholz, a PhD student and photographer who ran a workshop on cyanotype camera-less for *Shifting Tides* recognises the power of the shared experience: 'It is important to see the project not only as a platform for creating artworks, but as a space for listening, learning, and building relationships. The most meaningful outcomes often lie in those shared moments of exchange.'

Ali Warner, who ran a writer's workshop, commented on the impact of the project on her practice, 'The *Shifting Tides* project had a significant impact on me around a deepening

confidence in myself as a nature-artist-leader. I'm really grateful to Suzie's sensitive, insightful & heart-based guiding of the project that created such special and expanding possibilities for me and for all involved.'



Citizen Science and Habitat Restoration

Sandra Woods, a scuba diver describes her excitement when she observed the seagrass in the lough and knowing what it was, 'Heidi knew there was seagrass in the lough but wasn't sure where. Then when we were scuba diving we came across a seagrass bed, and we knew what it was and how important it was. We reported the location back for Heidi's Phd research project. We would never have known what seagrass was if it wasn't for Shifting Tides, everything we learned and the connections we made.'

While the artistic engagement was deeply educational, the proposals served to progress the behavioural change outcome of the project which were explored in a later phase of the project. The development of citizen scientists among the diving community was one notable outcome; 11 hobby scuba divers participated in the Shifting Tides/SeaSearch Observation course in July 2024, and a further 14 Divers took part in a survey dive in June 2025. The group cataloged species during dives, contributing valuable data to marine ecology efforts. Alex McMaster, as a marine ecologist, journalist and scientific diver from the core team helped bridge overlapping

aspects of the project, from stakeholder engagement, to supporting writers outings onto the lough, and the divers. Alex conceived of the podcast and wove his recordings into coherent stories as host. Lia Philcox a diver, an aspiring documentary filmmaker, received funding from Shifting Tides to produce the documentary. The documentary was aimed at inspiring similar dive communities across Ireland to engage with citizen science and marine conservation with the support of Seasearch. The divers from the observation courses went on to submit 6 records into the 'SeaSearch' Portal for the Northern side of

Citizen science involves collaboration of the public with scientists on research, often equipped with some form of skill training. It usually involves data collection, allowing for a broad scope over larger areas, and increases public understanding of environmental issues and scientific methods. It can also be used to formalise the observations of people who are in close relationship with their local environment on a regular basis.



Carlingford Lough, and 7 were recorded on the Southern side. Since the last observation course, divers from diving groups from both sides of the border have been doing dives together and cleaning plastic from the lough bed. The Irish Ocean Literacy Network, Seasearch and Lia are collaborating to continue to show the documentary to coastal communities and divers around the island. Several have already taken place in Waterford and Dublin with more planned for the coming year. RARE, a local group took inspiration from the Shifting Tides project and are planning on integrating citizen science into their own work.

Dain McPartland, has been a key local champion who developed a strong relationship with the project and supported dives throughout and became one of the subjects of the documentary. He is also a marine biologist and had extensive experience in scientific diving in the Middle East for a New York university. As a result of Shifting Tides he has been encouraged to develop a new ecological diving course and is setting up a community interest company to sit alongside his dive instructor business to be able gain funding for this course to be free or subsidized 'Sharing knowledge about the undersea world with as many people as possible is the best

way to get people excited about marine life and encourage protection. 'If you have a better understanding of an eco-system, you are more invested in it and inevitably you tend to care more.' Dain McPartland, Oceanauts Diving.

Lia Philcox, the documentary film maker, spoke about the divers she worked with and the catalyst that brought them all together 'I made strong connections on this project, and I feel like there is a community forming, people are really into in and enjoying it. There is also momentum building for doing surveying and recording on the lough; the group was larger for the 2025 dive with people bringing friends along who were interested. Divers from both sides of the lough connected, the Dundalk Divers and the Oceanauts. They each dived in parts of the lough they had never dived before – that only happened because of Shifting Tides.'

Another habitat restoration outcome has been the emergence of a new relationship between scientists and oyster farmers. The lead artist in the Fishery Exchange, Suzanne Carroll worked with oyster farmers from both shores bringing them together with scientists from Queen's

University and the Loughs Agency. She involved other artists and Declan Mallon and other relevant attendees such as a member of Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) through a series of creative, curious, conversations. 'By bringing together oyster farmers from both sides of the border, along with marine scientists and the historical sound recorder, the artists cultivated mutual understanding and conversations on conservation and long-term collaboration on restoration. The oyster farmers gained deeper insights into marine ecosystems, while sharing their own practices, needs and concerns about sustaining their livelihoods. The Fishery Exchange Exhibition shared the creative results with a local audience who were very engaged with the resulting artworks and the ways they had interpreted their deep listening to the processes of the sea and its past, present and hopefully future bounty for humans and other than human needs.

An Excerpt from the Fishery Exchange catalog (see Appendix 6.9) – 'The Fishery Exchange exhibition demonstrated that environmental stewardship is inherently collaborative work. Just as healthy oyster reefs depend on countless interconnected species, protecting coastal ecosystems requires diverse perspectives working in harmony.

The conversations that began around oyster trestles have expanded into recognition that creative practice has a vital role in how we relate to and care for the natural world.'

Heidi McIlvenny, PhD student at Queens in Belfast whose research is focused on seagrass, spoke about new perspectives at the Fishery Exchange, 'It brings a new perspective to me about how to communicate on the issues in the lough is facing, and the messaging of hope around oyster restoration.'

One of the longer term potential outcomes was shifting the farmers' perspective. While they continue to farm Pacific oysters commercially, they have begun exploring the production of native oyster species as they learned about how important they are for restoration efforts. One powerful stakeholder, The Loughs Agency, began to collaborate in earnest towards the end of year 2 with participation at IOLN event and further conversations planned in 2026 to build on work initiated by the 'Fishery Exchange' project supported by researchers at Queens. They have committed to exploring funding for a PhD project to look at the feasibility of the oyster farmers producing certified native oyster

sprat for reintroduction in restoration projects around the island.

Kian Louët-Feisser from Carlingford Oyster Company, gave us some feedback for our report, 'I just wanted to say that it was a fantastic opportunity to be involved with the Fishery Exchange Project. This is especially true because we farm our oysters on the foreshore that dries out at low tide which is leased from the Department of Agriculture & Marine. This is a space we share with other stakeholders, so this is a fantastic opportunity to meet and discuss any concerns, explain our oyster growing process, and highlight some of the positive environmental impacts that shellfish aquaculture provides. I believe the proposed reintroduction of some native/*edulis* oyster stock to Carlingford could be very worthwhile and it is something that has always been of interest to me. I'd be delighted to assist in this if there is anything Carlingford Oyster Company can do to help.'

Ostrea edulis is a species of Oyster that once formed vast reefs protecting our coastlines while filtering millions of gallons of water daily. These oysters fed coastal communities for millennia, from Mesolithic times to the bustling commercial fisheries of the 1800s. Yet by 1903, intensive harvesting had depleted populations to near extinction, fundamentally altering our loughs' marine ecosystem.

An Excerpt from The Fishery Exchange Project Catalog.



Community-led Networking

A community-led network, called 'The Lough Keepers Group' emerged from the many repeated opportunities for cross-lough informal connections made during the project. Committed to protecting the lough as their core remit, they have held meetings, drafted a constitution, and begun setting conservation goals. Members of the group from the southern shore have started connecting with their northern counterparts through inclusive events such as a World Café focused on lough conservation. Although all members shared the common goal of protecting the lough, their motivations vary; from promoting biodiversity and tourism, to preserving social heritage. The project has planted seeds of civic engagement and empowerment that could grow into structured policy participation over time. One key aspiration is that the newly formed Lough-Keepers group will eventually become a strong enough voice to present its perspectives to councils and agencies, advocating for the health and protection of Carlingford Lough.

Fionnula McKinley, the founding member of 'the Lough Keepers Group' talked about how she made lots of contacts at the initial

Shifting Tides Symposium in 2024, 'We made a lot of connections at the Citizen Science Symposium, people had found very hard to contact until then –diving groups, scientists, ecologists. This was important for our work. We now have a vision and a charter and we are having a public meeting soon to set up a committee. Suzie has given us ideas around funding and introduced us to some great people. The group has potential to be real advocates – we want to be able to talk to the local council about what is best for the lough, instead of them just telling us'.

Another group called 'Love Your Lough' was inactive for a period and are now in talks to get back up and running influence by Shifting Tides connections and events. They also hope that the new Narrow-water bridge opening between both sides of the Lough will help cross-lough collaboration. Anecdotally, there has been more connectivity, between groups across the lough such as the heritage and festival groups linking and weaving events and speakers and more environmental themes because of Shifting Tides, beyond the recent pieces from the Fishery Exchange included in an exhibition at Fiddlers green and divers meet ups. For example, the 14th Annual Thomas D'Arcy McGee Summer School Festival

focused on: 'Climate Justice & Human Rights in a Changing World Order.' Both Shifting Tides and the Fishery Exchange scientist Heidi were contributors and attendees visited the concurrent exhibition. Author Richard Nairn spoke at a Fiddlers Green event after meeting organizers at a Shifting Tides event in Carlingford marina and he contributed to the podcast. The IOLN ran a regional gathering and hosted the head of science from the Lough's Agency's Sara who had also been a Fishery Exchange contributor. In attendance were members of the new Lough Keepers group who were able to ask questions about who is responsible for the protection of the Lough. These themes were further explored as ACT and Hometree selected Carlingford for one of their community conversations on Ireland Nature Restoration plans due to the new EU laws.

Project Director Suzie Cahn says, 'They chose Carlingford having been aware of Shifting Tides through its newsletters and other events. It is hard to track the level of multiplier effects, ripples and connections but a project's activities that are so multimedia friendly and sharable through word of mouth, supported by our comms channels, can create excitement, momentum that begins to build

on itself, giving a sense of a new identity, as a place where positive things are happening. This can be vital when the challenges can seem insurmountable.'

Eoin McPartland, founding member of 'Love Your Lough' is positive about the Shifting Tides project, but somewhat disillusioned about marine safeguarding in Carlingford Lough. 'I was very interested in Suzie's' approach; using science and real data to inform people, not just activism. It's about making a better argument. But I don't see any one point of contact at local government level to raise issues, this needs to change.'



Key Level 2 Post Event Feedback Data:

Connections	Citizen Science	Artists Feedback
91% of respondents reported to some extent/absolutely an increase in connections (Appendix 1 – figure f).	Respondents reported a newfound interest in citizen science recording practices – 87% either were very interested/somewhat interested in becoming a Citizen Scientist. (Appendix 1 – figure d). Those respondents, plus the divers, amount to approx. 50 new people interested and willing to carry out citizen science in the lough.	3 out of 4 Of the Artists who responded to the Artists Survey said that:
<i>'I'm from Riverstown, Co. Louth and made several new connections from both sides of the border during the day!'</i>	<i>'Martha Farrell's story inspired me to work harder for the conservation of my own local beach. I'm also inspired to work on local species documentation.'</i>	The collaboration significantly changed how they think about art and its role in environmental or community contexts.
<i>'I made so many connections and have been inspired by the talks and information given. Makes me aware of so many things such as eating seafood sustainable stocks, litter on the beach and my use of plastic.'</i>	<i>'I have a better understanding of the ecology of the lough and the impact local fishing industry has on it. I am also more aware of pollution coming from the land in the form of wastewater and agricultural runoff and the detrimental impact it has locally.'</i>	The experience has significantly influenced how they view their role or responsibility as an artist in the climate emergency.
<i>'One of the main things that stood out to me about the events was connecting/reconnecting to locals and further afield artists/peers in a way that felt exciting and interesting.'</i>	<i>'I am more committed to the well-being of the lough.'</i>	The experience with Shifting Tides has influenced the direction or content of their recent artistic work.
<i>'I am starting to see silos breaking down and am starting to see people understand that we are all in the same sphere, we are just looking at it from a different angle'</i>	<i>'I have better appreciation of eco-systems that are out of sight.'</i>	They formed lasting collaborations or connections as a result of Shifting Tides.
		All 4 respondents said that 'Art has a powerful role to play in climate action and ecological repair.'
		See Appendix for Full Artists Surveys

4.3 Level 3 Progress - Improved Cross Sectional Behaviour Change among State Agencies and Local Government Actors North and South.

One of the key outcomes of the Shifting Tides project, is strengthened connections between local communities North and South of the lough and increased cross-border collaboration and information sharing on marine safeguarding – through the Loughs Agency, biodiversity/climate action officials, and joint research initiatives. To support this outcome, the stakeholder engagement exercise carried out by the Project Team in Year 1 included the names of many climate action officials and local government actors, as well as contacts from local community platforms with shared interests in the arts, ecology, and the well-being of Carlingford Lough. Local and National agencies and Educational Institutions that were relevant to the objectives of the project were also included.

Suzie Cahn Project Director spoke about the communication strategy, 'The communication strategy was intentional in its inclusivity,

aiming to reach a broad audience without creating division or discomfort, particularly in the sensitive context of Northern Ireland. To avoid alienating participants, the team made a conscious decision not to gather information about religious or political affiliation. The focus remained on community, environment, and creativity, not identity politics. It was hard to know if we were reaching both communities in the north equally, but that was never a target aim.'

Throughout the project, events were held continuously on both sides of the border, ensuring regular engagement across the two jurisdictions. While each event attracted attendees from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, participation tended to be stronger from the area in which the event was hosted. Nonetheless, there was consistent cross-lough travel and interest, reflecting the projects' core goal of fostering cross-community and cross-border collaboration. An interesting cultural observation was that it seemed that artistic engagement was notably stronger on the southern shore, while scientific engagement was more prominent in the north. However, both shores have their own rich engagement with festivals, including folk music and Wake the Giant which has

'It's great to know that you have an available group of individuals who have so much enthusiasm. It really invigorated me.'

Claire Casey, Sea Search NI



increasing had an environmental message. The overall engagement data (Social Media Metrics, Website data, Event Registrations) shows approx 40% ROI/60%NI split of people who engaged with the project.

Suzie went on to give more insight into the cross-border collaboration aspect, 'While the desire to connect was clearly present, actual cross-border interaction remained limited for many participants. When people were asked in a survey whether they previously travelled across the lough to participate in activities, the overwhelming response was, "I wish I did, but I don't." This revealed a huge will and desire to engage, but also a long-standing absence of cross-lough interaction in practice.'

Citizen Science State Agencies were well represented at the events, with Dave Wall (Marine Biodiversity Programme Manager, National Biodiversity Centre, Ireland), Clare Casey (Sea search NI Coordinator), Tony O'Callaghan (Co-ordinator & tutor, SeaSearch Ireland), Karen Dubsky (Coastwatch Ireland) all regularly attending events. Engagement with Mourne and Newry Councils was strong from the start. The Marine Protection Officer from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Anna Murtagh, attended the Citizen Science

Symposium and encouraged locals to submit any queries about marine protection in the lough. However engagement with The Loughs Agency didn't solidify until late in the process, despite repeated attempts. The Lough Agency have a large remit including Lough Foyle where they have a stronger local presence but have opened a new office in Carlingford with a view to closer collaboration and visibility. The Fishery Exchange provided the interest and opportunity and links with the IOLN that are continuing to be developed. One of the promising legacies has been the establishment of a local cross-community network known as the Lough-Keepers, which was formed with the explicit aim of protecting Carlingford Lough.

Claire Casey from Sea Search NI spoke about the connections she made and the appetite for marine recording, 'I met members of the Dundalk Sub-Aqua club and they were keen to do more recording. It's great to know that you have an available group of individuals who have so much enthusiasm. It really invigorated me.'

One of the exciting developments was the extent to which academics from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) became involved. The

relationship with Queen's commenced when members of the initiating team met a former chancellor of the university, who later became the keynote speaker at the project's launch event. Additionally, the team discovered and connected with a relatively new network focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the university, and were invited to speak at a event hosted by Queen's University network that expanded the project's reach and relevance within academic and policy-making circles. Heidi McIlvenny, also A PhD student from Queens University Belfast, has been doing research into seagrass restoration and working closely with Shifting Tides , first through webinar contributions and then again due to the opportunity the Fishery Exchange provided. Alex McMaster, a key collaborator on the Shifting Tides project, was accepted by QUB to do a PhD on ocean resilience. There was further Academic interest in the project from Clement Agoni PhD, Research Ireland. He spoke with Suzie on approaches to funding citizen science research projects in Ireland.

Heidi McIlvenny talked about the power of art and creativity in behaviour change, 'We have decades of scientific data pointing to

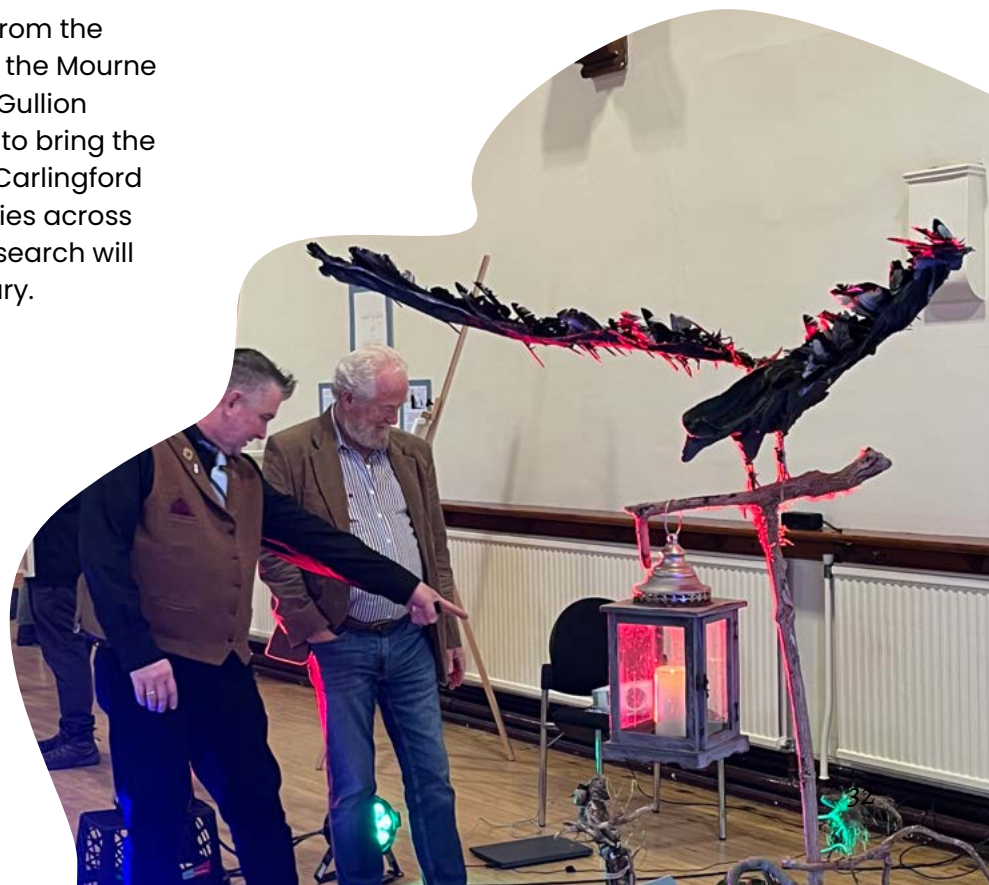
the problems of climate change and it's not changing hearts and minds and behaviour, whereas I think arts is a channel to do so. There are individuals in Carlingford Lough who really want to make a difference to their local place and improve it, protect it, and make it enjoyable for everybody, which I maybe hadn't realised.'

Suzie spoke about time constraints and her focus on legacy, 'From the beginning of the project I was aware of the risks involved in building something ambitious within a two-year window. 'It's frustrating You build all this bit up... and just as we're getting somewhere, it runs out. That's why I've been focusing on legacy. I would have loved one more year's funding to capitalise on the high stakeholder engagement from the Loughs Agency and bring in organisations like Involve NI to speak about deliberative democracy* - with the long-term goal of possibly establishing a mini citizens' assembly focused on marine planning.' As Suzie put it, 'Communities don't always know their own power or agency. They need to be given their connecting points. This project has worked to provide those connecting points, fostering confidence, relationships, and the beginnings of civic

structures that could influence policy in meaningful ways in the future.'


*Creative Ireland provided additional funding at the end of 2025 that is being used to bring about the vision of deliberative democracy Suzie wished for to meet the need identified by many people including the Lough Keepers for local voices to matter. A citizen's jury will be held in early 2026 and a report will subsequently be produced.

The legacy of the artists outputs from the programme are to be included in the Mourne Gullion GeoPark website, Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark. Suzie toured to bring the stories, films, and learnings from Carlingford Lough to other coastal communities across Cork and Kerry and IOLN and Seasearch will continue this with the documentary.



Key Level 3 Post Event Survey and Event Engagement Data

Positive attitude towards change	Increased Engagement	Legacy
Responses from surveys show that people recognize the issues and want change; many citing pollution, looking after the coast and preservation of the Lough ecosystem in post event surveys. 70% of respondents identified something they might change as a result of the workshop learnings.	<p>The Master contact list show 55 State Agencies and Local Government Actors North and South were contacted over the course of the project – 24 of those attended events, some more than one event, 13 signed up for the newsletter for updates on the project. Over 200 event participants and artists filled out feedback surveys</p> <p>The total recipient list grew from 120 in April 2024 to 350 in August 2025. The Master list was 499 by the time all the Year-2 events happened. Engagement in terms of Click Through rates and Opens remained high throughout the project; 11%/65% Respectively on average (Appendix 2- a). Over 92 people attended multiple events.</p>	<p>6 Other events Recorded (By Nov 2025) directly because of the Project; film screenings and speaking ops.</p> <p>1 Further Local Actor (Oceanauts) is applying for funding for a locally delivered marine ecology shore and diver-based course.</p> <p>A Newsletter in in the pipeline from the Lough Keepers Group</p>
<i>'I'm just a local person interested in art, science and nature. I attended the Shifting Tides opening in early 2024, an art workshop in Omeath and now the film screening. Maybe I'll dive under the Lough someday. I usually swim on top of it.'</i>	<i>'I am starting to see Silos breaking down and am starting to see people understand that we are all in the same sphere, we are just looking at it from a different angle' – Dr Sarah McClean, Loughs Agency, at the IOLN Fishery Exchange Event.</i>	Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark taking custodianship of online materials from the project.
	<i>'People don't protect what they don't understand or experience. By getting people onto the shore looking at plants and animals they get more enthused about those plants and animals and about protecting them and their habitat.' – Dave Wall, Marine Biodiversity Programme Manager, National Biodiversity Centre, IOLN Fishery Exchange Event.</i>	Queens looking into PhD for oyster farmers production of native oyster for restoration projects
		*Citizens Jury 2026 on the future of the lough



‘Communities don’t always know their own power or agency. They need to be given their connecting points. This project has worked to provide those connecting points, fostering confidence, relationships, and the beginnings of civic structures that could influence policy in meaningful ways in the future.’

Shifting Tides Project Director, Suzie Cahn

5. Project Challenges, Unexpected Outcomes, Opportunities & Success

Over the course of two years, the Shifting Tides project has enabled cross-lough connectivity, bringing together communities who are geographically proximate but historically disconnected. It fostered new relationships that bridge longstanding cultural and disciplinary divides, with several notable examples. There was a strong desire to connect among participants, with cross-border interaction encouraged throughout the project. An open approach was taken so that no specific social groups were targeted, with no tracking of demographics based on religion or politics. The aim of this was to create open and welcoming opportunities for connection, removing barriers where possible whilst acknowledging the ways in which they still exist. The focal point of the project is a belief in the latent power of communities, making the connections that foster confidence and agency in environmental decision making.

The impact of the arts was significant, with a strong connection between science, performance, photography, visual arts, traditional practices, storytelling and heritage, building a strong meshwork of knowledge upon which to make informed decisions about the future of Carlingford Lough. During

the Culture Night Exhibition, attendees were universally shocked to see what creatures could be found at the bottom of the lough they live beside, in photographs and film taken by divers, and to hear those creatures in a sound composition gathered in local waters. There were moments of awe throughout the project as participants came to know the lough in entirely new ways, whether that be through an art workshop or citizen science course. The training of citizen scientists created a lasting impact among the diving community, and there has been sustained engagement with research and advocacy organisations across the island, including the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, who hosted a regional meeting in Carlingford Lough in partnership with Shifting Tides.

In contrast to common discourse around aquaculture, a major achievement of the project is the potential engagement of local oyster farmers in conservation initiatives. While large-scale commercial mussel dredging operations in the lough were considered harmful by most participants in the project, and disconnected from the local community coming from multi-national companies, the oyster farmers involved were considered part of the heritage and community fabric



and this was farther demonstrated through their commitment to avoiding environmental damage. Through the fishery exchange, the relationship was nurtured between the oyster farmers and scientists at Queens University Belfast, looking at possibilities for reintroducing native oysters to the lough with benefits for biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. Another promising legacy was the establishment of a cross-community network that has come to be known as the Lough-Keepers, formed with the explicit goal of protecting Carlingford Lough. There is a need to share the messages wider that both farmers and fishers can do good for the natural environment, and that such community-led conservation efforts are possible under the right conditions.

While the diverse and open nature of the project represented both the nature of marine habitats and the coastal communities who exist alongside them, its complexity did present challenges that were managed through careful design whilst maintaining a grasp on core project goals and themes. The short term of funding also presented difficulties when dealing with issues that can only be addressed through dedicated multi-annual work. This was mitigated

through legacy planning including the handing over of project materials to the custodianship of the Ring of Gullion UNESCO Geopark, whose staff have committed to continue local engagement through their marine engagement officer. Lia Philcox, the documentary film maker, is collaborating with the IOLN and Diving Ireland (the national governing body for recreational underwater sports) to engage divers in citizen science through film screenings hosted by dive clubs in Dublin (UCD, TCD, Nautidivers, and other centres), Cork, Galway, Dundalk, and Inishowen (Donegal), as well as Oceanauts dive centre at Carlingford Lough (NI) and the Dublin Food Co-op (Dublin 8). The film is also likely to screen at Diving Ireland's annual two-day Dive Expo in March, which attracts thousands of Irish and international attendees.

Screenings will coincide with the start of the diving season (March/April) and include Q&A sessions with Lia and guests such as featured divers, SeaSearch representatives, and other citizen science advocates. The film will also be submitted to relevant film festivals, with plans for global online streaming via platforms such as Waterbear. Cork Community TV and IMMA's Earth Rising festival have also expressed interest.





The final additional funding has also made a citizens jury possible.

The administration of large levels of funding is also a challenge that requires significant fiscal management processes which are likely more difficult for smaller organisations. In the case of Shifting Tides, we were fortunate to have the resources and expertise of The Wheel financial team to facilitate this but given larger organisations are managing multiple funding streams it was still challenging at times to meet deadlines.

Although no formal policy changes have been reported as a direct outcome of the Shifting Tides Project, significant groundwork has been laid by fostering a receptive and connected community with strong foundation for co-creation with bodies such as the Loughs Agency and local councils. There is a clear desire to hold stakeholder meetings, specifically aimed at sharing and disseminating the learning and outcomes from the project, ensuring that the momentum and connections made continue to grow and influence future efforts.

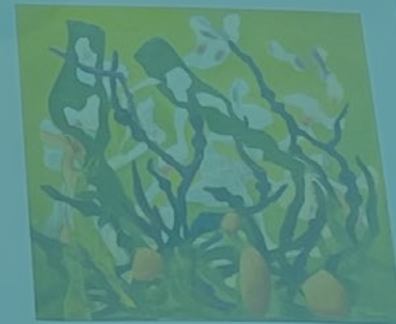
As a legacy of the Shifting Tides project, a citizen's jury will be held in 2026 on the

tensions between the economic development and ecological restoration needs for the future of Carlingford Lough. This will consist of a small, diverse group of people from the local area who will hear from experts and stakeholders, question them directly, discuss evidence together, and agree on recommendations. Facilitated by Involve NI, this is a major step towards embedding community voices in local place based decision-making processes. In this way among others, the innovative and impactful work of Shifting Tides has a ripple effect that continues through community, academic, and political spheres.



‘Shifting Tides may have helped raise the level of engagement and concern for the lough but that could have left people frustrated, caring but not feeling their voices are heard the addition of a Citizen jury gives the communities a chance to shape the decisions that affect their environment and daily lives. When local voices are sidelined, decisions are often driven by outside interests, and communities lose both agency and confidence. Strengthening participatory democracy helps restore balance and ensures people can actively shape the future of the places they care about.’

Shifting Tides Project Director, Suzie Cahn



Title: Seaweed Sway
Year: 2025
Materials: Acrylic on board
Dimensions: 30cm x 30 cm
Artist: Suzanne Carroll

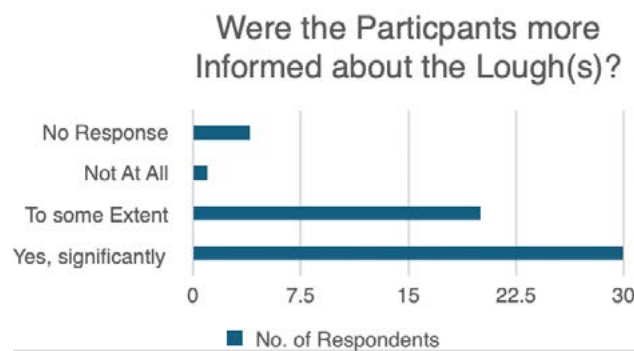


Title: Shape Shifting Dulse
Year: 2025
Materials: Mixed Media
Dimensions: 40cm x 60cm
Artist: Suzanne Carroll

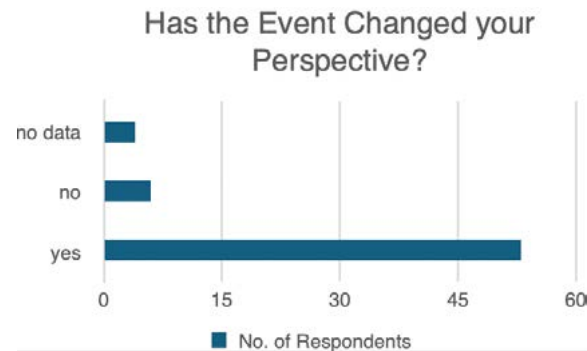
6. Appendices

6.1 Survey Responses

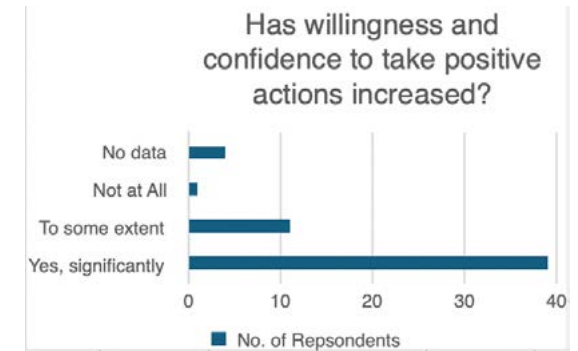
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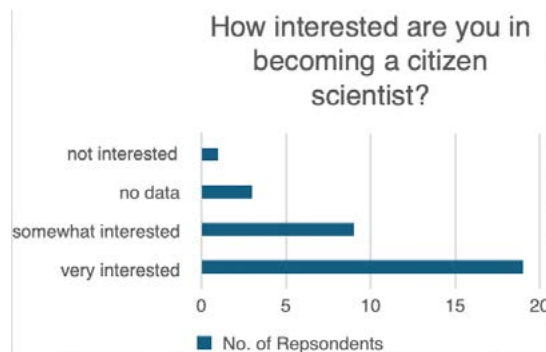
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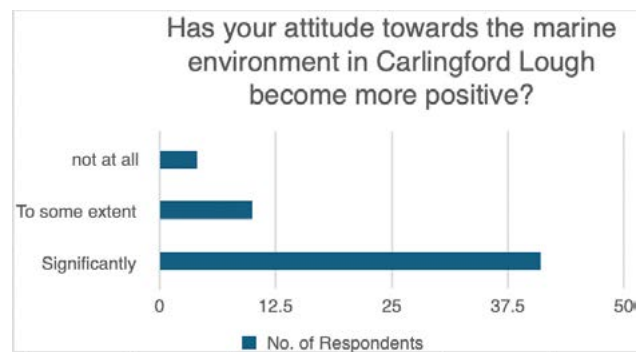
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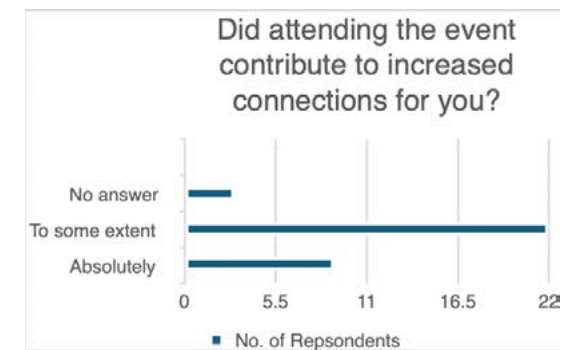
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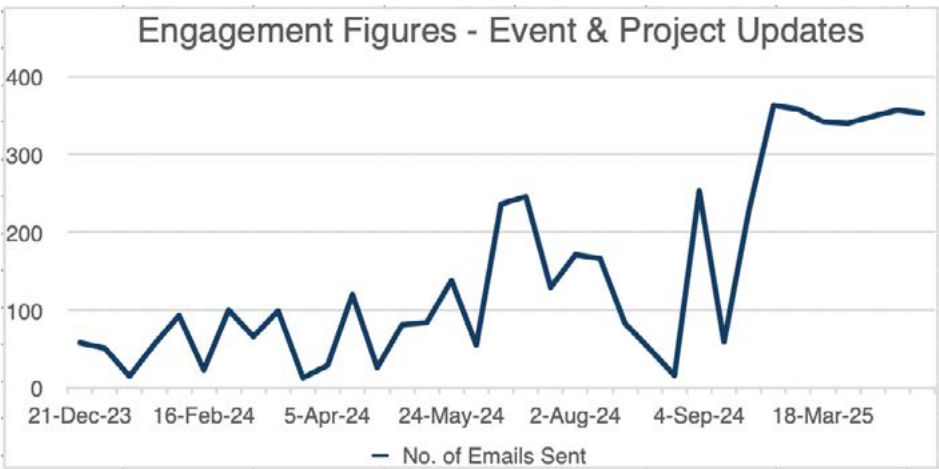


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6.2 Engagement Figures

A. Newsletter Recipient List



B. Event Registration List

02/03/2024	Foraging walk with Samuel Arnold	40
02/03/2024	Where Seaweed Dances Show	180
02/24/2024	Citizen Science & Marine Ecology Symposium	100
03/03/2024	The Big Beach Biodiversity Survey & Workshop	25
03/28/2024	Webinar: The Wonders of Undersea Meadows	33
04/09/2024	Webinar: Kelp Forests	17
04/09/2024	Briefing for Socially-Engaged Creatives (online)	10
04/21/2024	Briefing for Socially-Engaged Creatives (in-person)	25
04/25/2024	Webinar: Sponges and Rock Pools	29
05/19/2024	Rocky Shore and Rock Pools Biodiversity Walk and Talk	36
6/13/2024	Citizen Science - Your Results So Far - Online Meet-up and Share	7
7/27/2024	Seasearch Observer Divers Course	25
8/2/2024	Nature Restoration on the Coast and Sea with Richard Nairn	24
8/3/2024	Voices on the Lough: writers workshop with Ali Warner and Alex McMaster	11
8/4/2024	Listening beneath Carlingford lough with composer Karen Power	15
8/10/2024	Cyanotype Cameraless Photography with Aindreas Scholz	14
8/11/2024	Beach and Underwater Cleaning: Greencastle Beach	8
8/17/2024	Body of Water filming Anna Konieczna and painting day Clíodhna Doherty.	10
8/18/2024	Microphotography Art Workshop with Anna Marie Savage	13
8/24/2024	Just for One Day: Beach Sculpture Workshop (Omeath)	16
8/24/2024	Just for One Day: Beach Sculpture Workshop (Warrenpoint)	25
9/20/2024	Culture Night 2022 FULL EVENT	75
7/27/2024	Seasearch Observer Divers Course	14

B. Event Registration List continued

26/03/2025	Launch of the Across Divides Podcast Season 2: The Shifting Tides Project	31
06/10/2025	Launch of Across Divides Podcast, Season 3: Young Voices, Shared Futures	26
7/07 2025	IOLN Event Omeath	62
30/08/2025	Film Screen - Carlingford	34
31/08/2025	Fishery Exchange	41
09/01/2025	Film Screen -Rostrevor	44

6.3 Podcast Topics and Contributors

Episode 1	Shorelines - With Colum Sands,Dave Wall, Susan Farrell
Episode 2	Crossing the Lough - With Steve Lally , Samuel Arnold Keane. And Stories from Ian Sherry, Roisin Mulligan, and Anne McKeown, recorded by Declan Mallon and Steve Lally.
Episode 3	Soundwaves - With Dr. Karen Power
Episode 4	Diving Deep - With Dain McParland, Muirín Sneddon, Eloisa Wainwright, Claire Casey
Episode 5	Living on the Lough - With Heidi McIlvenny, Kian Louet-Feisser, Suzanne Carroll
Episode 6	Save Our Seas - Richard Nairn, Robert Walsh, Anna Murtagh,Cara Bradley

6.4 Artist Surveys

A. Narrative

Name:

Samuel Arnold Keane

Can you share a short bio?

I am a multidisciplinary artist now based in west cork. My passion for foraging and ocean awareness is a focal point and inspires much of my artistic practice, which stretches from music, performance and visual art.

What initially drew you to take part in the Shifting Tides project?

As stated above my passion for the marine environment is only matched by a passion to share this with people. Shifting Tides being a cross border project, very much embracing community, as well as growing deepened awareness of the Lough, felt so very special.

Name one new skill, media or method that you have developed?

With Shifting Tides we had an opportunity to collaborate with other artists and members of the community, this was deeply enriching. The unknowable creations that spark from these new relationships is powerful. One artist

we invited is an expert in soundscape and projection art which brought a new depth to the work we had been doing.

Name one change in your own behaviour ?

Although I have long been a keen observer of the ocean, I am constantly learning. With Shifting Tides, some of the collaborators had extensive knowledge of the fishing industry which led me to make more informed decisions of sourcing my fish.

Do let us know of any broader reflections you might have?

I think there is great potential in merging art, science, activism and indeed, blurring the lines that divide people from different paths to collaborate. I would keep going further with this, as an ongoing conversation, and I think shifting tides has allowed for a long lasting community engagement that bridges fishermen, artists and environmentalists. May it be a rippling effect for other communities in need of opening conversations. We are so much stronger together even though at the start it may seem like an impossibility for people with seemingly different interests to connect. In fact, at the end of the day, we all are caring for the same thing- for this Earth to

be our home.

Name:

Aindreas Scholz

Can you share a short bio?

I am a German Irish photographer based in London, working primarily with sustainable, cameraless photography. My practice reimagines 19th-century processes, particularly cyanotype, through experimental methods using eco-friendly chemistry, seawater, minerals, and plant matter. Rooted in both material innovation and socially engaged practice, my work explores ecological vulnerability, resilience, and care in the context of climate change. Themes of fragility and transformation are central, informed both by the environments I work within and by my own lived experiences of difference and vulnerability. Recent projects, including 'And So I Watch You From Afar', expand photography beyond representation

to become a process of collaboration with natural forces and communities, generating images that are as much records of place and condition as they are artworks.

What initially drew you to take part in the Shifting Tides project?

I was drawn to 'Shifting Tides' because of its focus on the coastline as a space of both beauty and vulnerability. Much of my experimental work is shaped by water and coastal environments, using polluted seawater as both material and metaphor within experimental cyanotype processes. The project offered an opportunity to connect my emerging practice with a wider dialogue on ecological change, while engaging with others who are also responding creatively to the shifting conditions of our shared environment.

Name one new skill, media or method that you have developed?

Through Shifting Tides I developed new approaches to facilitating participatory cyanotype workshops in outdoor, coastal settings, learning how to adapt my eco-friendly processes to unpredictable natural conditions and to integrate participants direct experiences of place into the making of the work.

Name one change in your own behaviour ?
As a result of Shifting Tides, I have become more deliberate in sourcing local and sustainable materials for my cyanotype processes, reducing reliance on commercial suppliers and strengthening my connection to the immediate environments I work within.

Do let us know of any broader reflections you might have?

I would encourage another artist to approach an environmentally focused, community-engaged project with openness to unpredictability. Working with natural processes and peoples lived experiences requires flexibility, patience, and care, but that unpredictability is also what makes the work powerful. The environment and the community will shape the outcome as much as the artist, and that co-authorship can be deeply rewarding. It is important to see the project not only as a platform for creating artworks but as a space for listening, learning, and building relationships. The most meaningful outcomes often lie in those shared moments of exchange, rather than in the finished object alone.

Name:

Anna Marie Savage

Can you share a short bio?

My name is Anna Marie Savage and I am based in Omeath, Co. Louth. I am a visual artist working at the intersection of art and science, using microscopy and water testing to explore hidden ecosystems. My practice involves collecting water samples from natural sources and analyzing them under magnification, revealing microbial life and invisible contaminants. These findings become the basis for visual works such as collage, paintings and painting installations, that evoke both scientific clarity and poetic interpretation.

What initially drew you to take part in the Shifting Tides project?

There were two main reasons, one, I live and work in Omeath on Carlingford Lough and two, as a visual artist I use a microscope within my practice which I use to examine polluted water within our ecosystem.

Name one new skill, media or method that you have developed?

I had normally only ever delivered kids art n craft workshops but had stopped them a few

years previous. Shifting Tides gave me the confidence in myself and work to deliver an adult's workshop based on my practice and the findings from the microscope.

Name one change in your own behaviour ?

I have become more aware of the sea (Carlingford Lough) around me and what it actually contains and how valuable they are.

Do let us know of any broader reflections you might have?

I think- definitely do it!!! These small actions that we take as an artist community become bigger and bigger and there is no stronger voice than that of an artist community. I think this is the way forward.

Name:

Ali Warner

Can you share a short bio?

I'm based in rural Co. Louth outside Dundalk. My main artistic discipline is an emergent voice & body practice. The theme I'm exploring

is the way nature can express herself in all her forms through our bodies & voices.

What initially drew you to take part in the Shifting Tides project?

It was a local project with public gatherings that brought together a care for nature with the practices of the arts.

Do let us know of any broader reflections you might have?

The Shifting Tides project had a significant impact on me in a way that wasn't around the development of my skills/behaviours/relationships to others or nature but rather around a deepening confidence in myself as nature-artist-leader, through getting to experience myself in this way by the opportunity provided to me through the project.

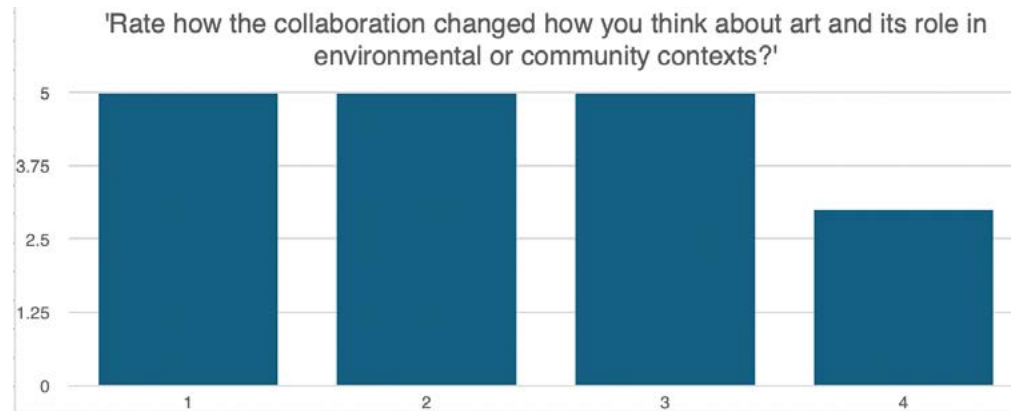
This was down to Suzie's leadership of the project as Director, her constant sensing of the collective field of those who were part of it - both human and more-than-human - and her making repeated moves to weave each element/being into the picture in a way that best suited them & their next steps and was of most benefit to the whole.

It was through this that the project had an

impact on me in the way that it did, and I'm really grateful to Suzie's sensitive, insightful & heart-based guiding of the project that created such special and expanding possibilities for me and for all involved.

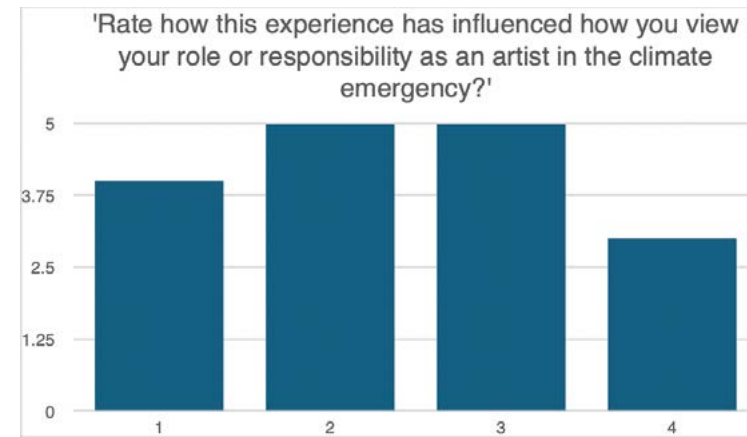
6.4 Artist Surveys continued

B. Quantitative Data



1: There has been no change at all to my thinking

5: The collaboration made a significant change to my thinking



1: No influence at all

5: The experience has greatly influenced how I view my role

6.5 Documentary: Who Needs Anemones?

Title: Who Needs Anemones?: Divers for Life in Carlingford Lough

<https://seasearchireland.ie/who-needs-anemones-divers-for-life-in-carlingford-lough/>

Filmmaker: Lia Philcox

Subject: Follows local scuba divers on both sides of the border in Carlingford Lough who are trained as citizen scientists



A FILM BY LIA PHILCOX

WHO NEEDS ANEMONES?

DIVERS FOR LIFE IN
CARLINGFORD LOUGH

6.6. Impact Interviews

We had impact interviews with a number of project collaborators and artists, as well as local champions, to see what impact this project has had/is going to have on their learnings, practices and lives. We wanted to see if our work is making a difference; we were particularly looking for emotional connection with the project, and ongoing legacy.

Alex McMaster

Alex is a writer and marine ecologist from the Atlantic coast of Ireland. Alex writes and produces the 'Across the Divides' Podcast. Alex is currently doing PhD research into community resilience and adaptive capacity through ocean literacy.

As a key project team member, Alex was able to give great insight into the legacy of the project within the community and beyond Carlingford Lough, 'The project has given community members the skills to be able to pick up the baton and carry things forward. The Lough keepers group has formed, and there are now diving groups from both sides of the lough diving together and cleaning plastics from the Lough bed. They have been

very productive.'

Alex went on to say, 'The podcast used the voices and stories collected during the project to expand the reach even further; Ulster Wildlife, The National Biodiversity Centre, The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group are all aware of what we are doing and involved in some aspect'

Fionnuala McKinley

Fionnuala is retired Nurse and midwife and a trained phycologist. Fionnuala set up the 'Lough Keepers Association' and is a Shifting Tides local Champion, attending multiple events on both sides of the Lough.

Fionnuala talked about how at the initial Shifting Tides Symposium in 2024 she made lots of contacts 'We made a lot of connections at the Citizen Science Symposium, people we had found very hard to contact until then –diving groups, scientists, ecologists. This was really important for our work.'

Fionnuala also talked about setting up the Lough Keepers Group and advocating for marine protection, 'We have a vision and a charter, and we are having a public meeting soon to set up a committee. Suzie has given

us ideas around funding and introduced us to some great people. The group has potential to be real advocates – we want to be able to talk to the local council about what is best for the Lough, instead of them just telling us'

Eoin McPartland

Eoin works for Newry, Moran and Down Council and is a member of the 'Lough Your Lough' group. Eoin is a local champion and attended many events.

Eoin is positive about the Shifting Tides project, but somewhat disillusioned about marine safeguarding in Carlingford Lough.

'I was very interested in Suzie's' approach; using science and real data to inform people, not just activism. It's about making a better argument. But I don't see any one point of contact at local government level to raise issues, this needs to change.

'Since the project, the two sides of the Lough are doing more events together, we recently did the 'Wale the Giant' festival together. I am starting to see some joined up thinking as well , this will increase once the bridge between the two sides is constructed.'

Claire Casey

Claire is Seasearch NI Coordinator and Marine Biologist. Claire was involved in organising the Observation and marine monitoring dives in 2024 and 2025.

Claire spoke about the connections she made and the appetite for marine recording, 'I met members of the Dundalk Sub-Aqua club and they were really keen to do more recording. It's great to know that you have an available group of individuals who have so much enthusiasm. It really invigorated me.'

Lia Philcox

Lia is an Anthropologist, Freelance Film Maker, and Diver.

Lia spoke about the community of divers she worked with, 'I made strong connections on this project, and I feel like there is a community forming, people are really into in and enjoying it. There is also momentum building for doing surveying and recording on the Lough; the group was larger for the 2025 dive with people bringing friends along who were interested.'

Lia attributes Shifting Tides as the catalyst to bring them together, 'Divers from both sides of

the Lough connected, the Dundalk Divers and the Oceanauts. They each dived in part of the lough they have never dived before – the only happened because of Shifting Tides.'

Heidi McIlvenny

Heidi is PhD student at Queens in Belfast whose research is focused on seagrass. Heidi is also involved in the Irish Ocean Literacy Network (IOLN).

Heidi also talks about the benefits of more local citizen scientists to do monitoring and recording 'It's really great to have a diving expert willing to help, because you can really scale up the amount of the seabed you cover.'

Heidi talked about the power of art and creativity in behaviour change, 'We have decades of scientific data pointing to the problems of climate change and it's not changing hearts and minds and behaviour, whereas I think art has is a channel to do so. There are individuals in Carlingford Lough who really want to make a difference to their local place; improve it, protect it and make it enjoyable for everybody, which I maybe hadn't realised.'

Sandra Woods

Sandra is a teacher from around Carlingford Lough and took part in the observation dives that were organised as part of the citizen science aspect of the Shifting Tides project.

Sandra describes her excitement when she observed the seagrass, and for the first time knowing what it was, 'Heidi knew there was seagrass in the Lough, but wasn't sure where. Then when we were scuba diving we came across a seagrass bed, and we knew what it was and how important it was. We reported the location back for Heidi's project – we would never have known what seagrass was if it wasn't for the Shifting Tides; everything we learned and the connections we made.'

6.7 Goals to Impact Tables

Level I: Participants at events/ Workshops

Goals	Activities	Target Outputs	Results and Indicators
Empower and mentor Local Communities to take ownership of their shores through participation at events, training and knowledge sharing. Overall outcomes were predicated as; Increased cross-community and cross-border connections; Positive attitudes towards marine environment; Improved Ocean literacy; Increased willingness to take conservation actions; Better community dialogue on marine issues.	The delivery of Site- Specific Performances, arts events & workshops co-developed with the coastal community and relevant stakeholders showcasing; arts events/ workshops, coastal foraging walks, oral heritage recordings, scientific diving and underwater photography. Performances focused on the biological richness and inherent beauty of marine environments. Theme(s) addressed included 1) Connecting to the Biodiversity Crisis 2) Understanding the Changing Climate. Input from local artists to be catalyzed by creative team.	10 community workshop events 6 podcast episodes Films (6) <i>Targets were to engage 250-450 participants in workshops; Reach 5,000 people via web & podcast series</i>	EVENTS (27 Events Days/34 Events) Unique Eveny Registrations: 365 Event Registrations & Attendance: 1069 Registrations/ Approx 70/80% Attendance. 277 registrations for first 2 events in Feb 2024 Attendees at Multiple Events: 92 SOCIAL MEDIA & PODCAST (69 INSTAGRAM POSTS, 17 YOUTUBE VIDEOS, 6 PODCAST EPISODES) Total People Reached Through Web & Podcast Series: YouTube Video Views + Followers: 840 Views, 41.8 Hours watched, 3.9%, average click through rate and an average of 3 minutes watched. Most Popular was the 'What is the Shifting Tides Project' Instagram Accounts Reached +Followers: 259 Followers, 322 Accounts engaged, 5171K Impressions.90 days engagement rate is 35% Unique Visitors to iCommunity and Shifting Tides Website: 731 Unique Visitors, 912 Video Views, 4758 Page Views (Shifting Tides Website) Podcast Listeners: 645 EMAIL MARKETING(35 X PROMOTIONAL EMAILS AND 10 X SURVEYS) (Shifting Tides Updates) Total Recipients: 5205 Average click through: 11% Average Open Rate: 65% PRESS RELEASES (4 x PRESS RELEASES) Media Mentions: 7

Level 2: Creatives. Scientists & Local Champions

Goals	Activities	Outputs and Targets	Results and Indicators
High-quality citizen science; Increased local marine monitoring; More communication between local champions & communities; Greater engagement with decision-makers; Enhanced cross-border cooperation; Potential for community-led habitat restoration	<p>Skills training in scientific diving & underwater photography; Training in coastal ecology & species ID; Participation in citizen science projects (Coastwatch, Sea Search Ireland);</p> <p>Arts events & workshops co-developed with the coastal community arts events/ workshops, coastal foraging walks, oral heritage recordings, scientific diving and underwater photography.</p> <p>Local engagement with marine conservation groups & government bodies</p>	<p>Scientific diving with underwater photography for local sub aqua clubs that will raise awareness of the importance of healthy marine ecosystem. Increase participation in all-island Coastwatch shoreline surveys/ Sea Search NI & IRE</p> <p>surveys/Explore your Shore Surveys</p> <p>Community workshop events, A soundscape podcast and mini documentary web series, short films and 6 podcast episodes Artwork Exhibitions, Photos Retained from Events and uploaded into Resources.</p>	<p>SEA SEARCH DIVERS OBSERVATION COURSE Number of Divers who took part (2 x Dives): 11 & 14 = 25 Number of Divers who submitted : 4 NI + 7 IRE Divers Submitted Observer Forms</p> <p>EXPLORE YOUR SHORE CITIZEN SCIENCE Number of Species Recorded in 'Explore our Shores' Portal 2024/2025: 1857 Species</p> <p>COASTWATCH SURVEYS & EVENTS Number of Species Recorded in 'Coastwatch' Portal 2024/2025: Coast Watch data unavailable but aggregate number of forms submitted in 2024 was lower because a key local surveyor had stopped submitting data.</p> <p>CREATIVES Creative Proposals Submitted: 31 Workshops :19</p> <p>LOCAL CHAMPIONS IDENTIFIED FOR COMMUNITY-LED NETWORKING 23 (Divers, PhD Students, Local community Groups, Artists, local farmers) 1 new group as a result of the project (Lough Keepers Group)</p> <p>CITIZEN SCIENTISTS 50 people in surveys + divers have expressed interest in citizen science</p> <p>CROSS BORDER DATA: Event Bright Registrations Shows 36% UK and 64% IRE Split. Website Stats show similar figure of 34% UK/66% IRE split</p>

Level 3: State Agencies & Local Government Actors

Goals	Activities	Outputs and Targets	Results and Indicators
<p>Improved Cross Sectional Behaviour Change among State Agencies and Local Government Actors North and South. Outcomes were predicted as strengthened connections with local communities, increased collaboration on marine safeguarding, enhanced cross-border information sharing; Positive behaviour change towards environmental action.</p> <p>Strengthened partnerships between agencies & local communities; More unified cross-border action for marine conservation.</p>	<p>Engagement with biodiversity/climate action officials; Cross-border collaboration through Loughs Agency; Joint research, community workshops, and awareness campaigns.</p> <p>Greater involvement with Loughs Agency, local government, NI Marine Task Force, ROI Fairseas NGOs</p>	<p>A stakeholder engagement exercise and cross-border communisations strategy to include people on both sides of the border – many climate action officials and local government actors, as well as contacts from local community platforms with shared interests in the arts, ecology, and the well-being of Carlingford Lough.</p> <p>Engagement with Queens University Belfast. Citizen Science Agency Involvement. Project Updates to all key contacts and Agencies. Creatives engaged from both sides of the Lough.</p>	<p>TOTAL NO OF CONTACTS MADE Total Contacts Made: 499 Recipient list grew from 120 in April 2024 to 499 in Oct '25</p> <p>CROSS BORDER DATA: Event Bright Registrations Shows 36% UK and 64% IRE Split. Website Stats show similar figure of 34% UK/66% IRE split More Creatives from IRE and more Citizen Scientists from NI (Suzie)</p> <p>SURVEY REPSONSES: Pre&Post Event Surveys Received: 221</p> <p>PHD STUDENTS: 4</p> <p>STATE AGENCIES, NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENT Event Invitations & Registrations: Approx 55 invited, 24 representatives attended workshops, 13 Requested project updates and a number attending multiple workshops.</p> <p>ONGOING LEGACY WITH KEY ACTORS 6 Other events Recorded (By Nov 2025) directly because of the Project; film screenings and speaking ops. 1 Further Local Actor (Oceanauts) has applied for marine ecology funding A Newsletter in in the pipeline from the Lough Keepers Group Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark has been engaged to store resources</p>

6.8 External Portals

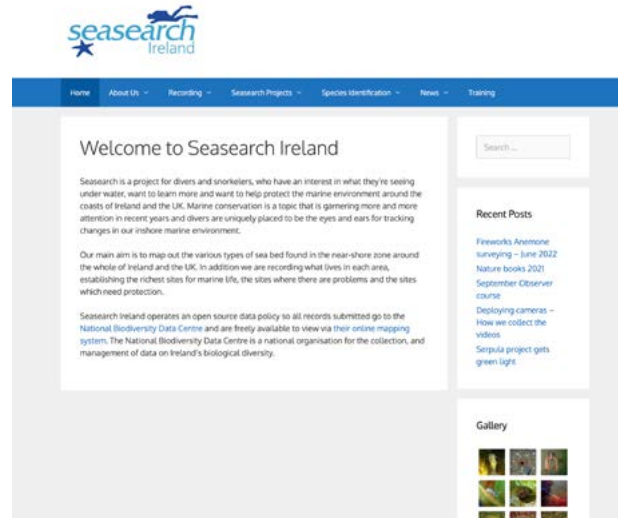
Ireland's Marine Biodiversity Citizen Science Platform – Explore Your Shore!

<https://exploreyourshore.ie/>



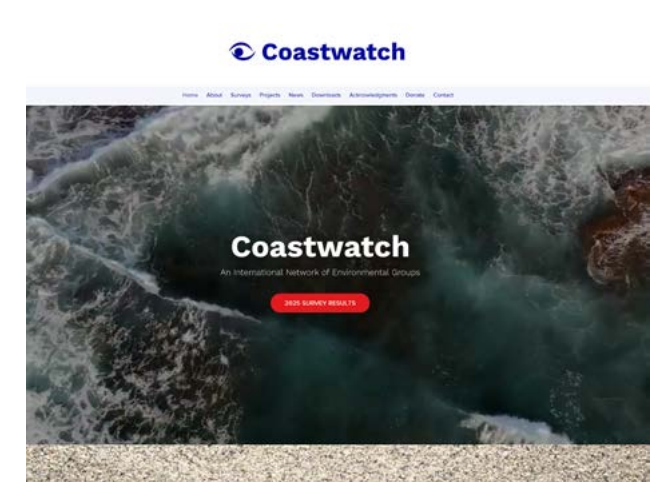
Seasearch Ireland – Citizen science in Irish marine waters

<https://seasearchireland.ie/>



Coastwatch Europe – Environmental NGO – Ireland

<https://www.coastwatch.org/>



6.9 Fishery Exchange Catalogue

The Fishery Exchange Project



Contemporary Art Exhibition
Station House Carlingford
Sunday 31st August- Wednesday 3rd September 2025



The fishery exchange project was supported by Creative Ireland's Creative Climate Action Fund as part of the Shifting Tides initiative, fostering cross-border collaboration and environmental awareness through the creative arts.

Shifting Tides is a recipient of the Creative Climate Action Fund, an initiative from the Creative Ireland Programme. It is funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in collaboration with the Department of the Taoiseach. The fund supports creative, cultural and artistic projects that build awareness around climate change and empower citizens to make meaningful behavioural transformations.



The waters of Carlingford Lough hold stories that stretch back thousands of years—from oyster shells in ancient middens to the weathered hands of generations of fishermen. The Fishery Exchange Project emerged from a simple yet profound question: what happens when artists, scientists, and those who work the water come together to reimagine the future of our coastal heritage?

Initiated by artist Suzanne Carroll through the Shifting Tides project this cross-border collaboration has brought together voices from both shores of Carlingford Lough. Through gatherings, site visits, and shared conversations, participants explored the relationship between human activity and the marine environment, between tradition and innovation, between what was lost and what might be restored.

At the heart of our conversations lies the native oyster—*Ostrea edulis*—a species that once formed vast reefs protecting our coastlines while filtering millions of gallons of water daily. These oysters fed coastal communities for millennia, from Mesolithic times to the bustling commercial fisheries of the 1800s. Yet by 1903, intensive harvesting had depleted populations to near extinction, fundamentally altering our lough's marine ecosystem.

Today, the possibility of native oyster restoration offers hope for the entire coastal ecosystem. Modern oyster farmers like Kian Louet-Feisser of Carlingford Oyster Company, John & Mark Doran of Cahir Linn Oysters and Stephen & Jonathan O'Hare of Fomhar

Na Mara Ltd bring decades of hands-on experience working these waters with Pacific oysters. Their intimate knowledge of tidal patterns, seasonal changes, and the lough's rhythms proved invaluable when shared with marine scientists Hóldi McIlvenny from Queen's University Belfast and Sarah McLean from the Loughs Agency. In turn, these researchers—who have built their careers studying marine ecosystems and working alongside fishing communities—offered scientific insights into habitat restoration and ecosystem recovery. This genuine exchange of knowledge, where practical wisdom met scientific understanding, became central to understanding both the challenges and possibilities for native oyster restoration.

The artworks represent a year-long journey of discovery and collaboration. Helen Marry's stained glass pieces meditate on seagrass meadows and tidal patterns, while Fiona Kerbey reimagined artifacts from shoreline materials using sustainable practices. Suzanne Carroll's paintings literally incorporate the landscape itself—pigments ground from lough stones and mixed with walnut oil and oyster shell—while her vitrine weaves together scientific observation, artistic practice, and cultural memory.

Sound artist Karen Power contributes 'Hidden Life of Carlingford Lough,' amplifying the underwater soundscape to reveal diverse life beneath the surface. Declan Mallon's audio documentaries preserve oral histories and traditional knowledge from local voices like Kian Louet-Feisser.

This exhibition demonstrates that environmental stewardship is inherently collaborative work. Just as healthy oyster reefs depend on countless interconnected species, protecting coastal ecosystems requires diverse perspectives working in harmony. The conversations that began around oyster trestles have expanded into recognition that creative practice has a vital role in how we relate to and care for the natural world.

These artworks ask us to look more closely at tidal patterns, understand the vital work of filter-feeding organisms, imagine seagrass meadows swaying beneath the surface, and envision a future where native species might once again flourish in these waters. Through projects where art, science, and community intersect, we're writing new chapters in an ancient relationship between human creativity and marine life.



Left to Right: Declan Mallon, Suzanne Carroll, Helen Marry, Fiona Kerbey

Participating Artists & Their Practices

Suzanne Carroll
Practice:
A Visual Artist and NCAD graduate (2021) Suzanne Carroll employs a research-based approach to her practice focused on environmental issues and fragile ecosystems. Her site responsive projects help to engage communities with their local environment. Through the Fishery Exchange project Suzanne fostered dialogue between marine biologists, creative practitioners and oyster farmers, where they explored the possibility of oyster reef restoration and the importance of native oysters in Carlingford Lough. Her materials include sourced earth pigments, oyster shells, and natural binders, emphasizing environmental authenticity.

Helen Marry
Practice:
Helen is a stained glass artist based in Kesh, Co. Meath. With a background in science and adult education, she has over 20 years of experience designing handcrafted stained glass artworks. Deeply rooted in the rural Bomey valley and inspired by neolithic art, Helen combines her passion for nature, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. Her artistic process often includes the use of recycled materials and responds to ecological themes.

Fiona Kerbey
Practice:
Fiona is a Meath-based artist who completed her MA at NCAD and previously studied ceramics at LSAD. Her sculptural work often explores themes of ethnology, anthropology, and ecology. Transforming everyday materials into poetic artifacts, for the Fishery Exchange Project, Fiona created small sculptural works using shoreline materials and sustainable, biodegradable adhesives, reflecting her interest in biodiversity, water quality, and environmental restoration.

Karen Power
Practice:
Karen Power is a composer whose work explores the relationship between acoustic instruments and everyday environmental sounds. With a focus on how we listen to the world around us, her compositions often incorporate field recordings and challenge conventional ideas of music. Her work spans sound installation, orchestral pieces, and cross-disciplinary collaborations, with a strong interest in natural soundscapes and ecological listening.

Declan Mallon
Practice:
Founder of the Update Theatre Project, Declan is a filmmaker whose documentary work focuses on rural and coastal community stories. His practice emphasizes oral histories, heritage, and environmental change. For the Fishery Exchange Project, he collaborated with Carlingford Heritage Trust to produce an archive of community voices tied to the lough's waters and shellfish industry.

6.9 Fishery Exchange Catalogue

Artworks and Their Inspirations



Title: Montague's Crab, Artist: Suzanne Carroll
Materials: Crushed Carlingford Lough stone pigment & walnut oil



Install shot: Carlingford Lough Earth Pigments, Artist: Suzanne Carroll

Suzanne Carroll
Untitled Series (Paintings, Collages, Encaustic Wax Works)
Inspiration:
Inspired by a year of research on Carlingford Lough's ecosystems and collaborations with marine scientists and oyster farmers. Suzanne used local earth pigments, walnut oil, oyster shell, and seaweed to create works that are materially and conceptually grounded in place. The pieces reflect on biodiversity, ecological restoration, and cultural history, including folklore such as a mermaid sighting from the 1930s.



Title: Meadows Under The Sea, Artist: Helen Marry
Materials: Cut stained glass & recycled copper wire

Helen Marry
"Meadows Under the Sea"
Inspiration:
Represents the critical role of seagrass meadows in oyster reef restoration. The piece depicts the blades of seagrass offering shelter and nutrient concentration, enabling oyster spat to anchor and reefs to form.
"Ebb and Flow"
Inspiration:
Evokes the tidal rhythms of Carlingford Lough and their influence on marine life. The work reflects tidal patterns,



Title: Oysters Gathering, Artist: Helen Marry,
Materials: Driftwood & Tinned Copper Wire

nutrient movement, and the visual memory of oyster harvesting grounds using driftwood borders.
"Oysters Gathering"
Inspiration:
Highlights the formation of oyster reefs, using driftwood to symbolize the rocky substrates necessary for oyster spat to gather. The work references both the biological process and the communal aspect of reef development.



Title: Sea Pinks and The Tang of the Sea, Artist: Fiona Kerbey
Materials: Carrageen moss and dried bryozoans

Fiona Kerbey
"Sea pinks and the tang of the sea"
Inspiration:
Created using carrageen moss glue and bryozoans shaped into a bowl, referencing marine biodiversity and the fragility of coastal organisms.
"From the bosom of the sea"
Inspiration:
A sculptural necklace incorporating coralline seaweed and broken pearls, exploring transformation and the interweaving of human and marine histories.
"The river is within us, the sea is all about us"
Inspiration:
A poetic reimagining of a table setting using seaweed, fish bone, and found fabric with 18th-century utensils, reflecting cultural memory and the materiality of the sea.



Title: From the Bosom of the Sea, Artist: Fiona Kerbey
Medium: Found jewellery box, set of broken knotted pearls laced coralline seaweed

Declan Mallon
Audio Works: "Shore Stories," "Klan on Oysters," "Shellfish"
Inspiration:
Based on oral histories and recordings with local oyster farmers and community members. These sound pieces document traditional knowledge, environmental change, and cultural identity tied to Carlingford Lough, offering a multi-voiced portrait of place and ecology.

Karen Power
Title: "Hidden Life of Carlingford Lough"
Composed using underwater recordings made in Carlingford Lough, this immersive sound work reflects the hidden life of the marine environment. By turning field recordings into a musical composition, Karen invites the listener to engage with the acoustic ecology of the Lough and consider the subtle, often unheard rhythms of underwater ecosystems.

APRIL 23rd
2025

CARLINGFORD OYSTER COMPANY

"WE NEED a HOLISTIC & CO-DESIGNED APPROACH"

NATIVE OYSTERS
are a
KEYSTONE SPECIES

I'M A
HABITAT!

RESILIENCE

SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS

"WE MUST NOT
DECOUPLE
BIODIVERSITY
Laws from
CLIMATE
CHANGE
Laws"

Fishery
FROM CONSERVATION TO A FULL

ECOSYSTEM-BASED
approach

WE NEED to
LISTEN to FARMERS
& FISHERMEN

CUSTODIANS
OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

HEALTHY
ECO SYSTEMS

BALANCE

CARLINGFORD
USED to be the MOST
PRODUCTIVE
OYSTER HARVESTING
CENTRE on the ISLAND

"NATURALLY"

50%
DECLINE

IN
25
YEARS

FEWER NATURAL REEFS

PEOPLE HAVE FARMED
native oysters
FOR CENTURIES

midden evidence

NOBODY OWNS the
SEA FLOOR.....

OYSTERS need COMMUNITY

LOUGH AGENT HISTORY

ATLANTIC SALMON
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LOUGH AGENT HEAD OF SCIENCE

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