

MRIA Forum Report

WP2 & WP3

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1. Introduction

ProtoAtlantic were represented at the [Marine Renewables Industry Association \(MRIA\)](#) 10th annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum on Friday 1st February 2019 in The Alex Hotel, Dublin, by WP2 leader Cork County Council and WP3 leader University College Cork. Joint organisation of the event was facilitated by project partner University College Cork through principal investigator Dr Val Cummins.

[The Marine Renewables Industry Association \(MRIA\)](#) represents companies and interests in Ireland and Northern Ireland in the Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies (MRET) sector. MRET, MRJA's key area of concern, include ocean energy and floating offshore wind energy as well as 'hybrids' (energy convertors which combine wave and floating wind devices). The role of the Marine Renewables Industry Association is to promote the development and implementation of policy concerning the Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies. In order to achieve this objective, a separate Council exists within the MRJA to influence policy and enact decision making. The Association are involved in several key actions including; organising the widely attended annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum; participating in research and policy formation; preparing policy submissions on behalf of members and generally seeking to influence key decision-takers in offshore renewable energy; sitting on the Board of Ocean Energy Europe and many other policy and research bodies.

ProtoAtlantic co-hosting of, and representation at, the MRJA Forum facilitated several critical purposes. Firstly, it enabled project partners (WP2 and WP3) to visibly engage with key marine industry professionals, disseminate information in relation to ProtoAtlantic, and inform the large sector-specific audience of over 200 attendees, about the various funding opportunities available through the project, including; Fast Tracked Product Development and Phase II Mentoring and Phase III Demo-Day of the Accelerator Program. In addition to this, the MRJA Forum also provided WP3 leader UCC with an opportunity to discuss the marine policy recommendations aspect of ProtoAtlantic with prominent marine stakeholders.

2. Event Summary

ProtoAtlantic sponsored the [MRIA \(Marine Renewables Industry Association\)](#) 10th annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum, which took place on the 1st February 2019 in The Alex Hotel, Dublin. The event was attended by over 200 key industry professionals in the marine sector, the largest attendance at the event to date, and the largest annual gathering of marine companies nationally in Ireland.



Figure 1: Large attendance of over 200 marine industry professionals at the 10th annual MRIA Forum in The Alex Hotel, Dublin

Peter Coyle, Chairman of MRIA, and Eamonn Confrey, Principal, [Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment](#), opened the event, with Eamonn Confrey outlining the commitment from the Department to continue ongoing efforts to tackle climate change through greater focus on renewable solutions. Following on from this, Dr Val Cummins, [University College Cork](#), presented the ProtoAtlantic project to the audience, discussed the various stages associated with ProtoAtlantic, and the current funding streams available, primarily [Fast Tracked Product Development](#). Dr Cummins also discussed the role of ProtoAtlantic in assisting marine start-ups through the [Accelerator Program](#), as well as the [Marine Policy Recommendation](#) phase of the project.



Figure 2: Dr Val Cummins, UCC, presenting the ProtoAtlantic project to the MRIA Forum

After the initial introductions, Session 1, entitled “What are the key developments concerning the industry?” commenced, and was chaired by Simon de Pietro, Chief Executive of [DP Energy](#) and Co-President of [Ocean Energy Europe](#). Presentations were delivered by Jim Gannon, [Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland](#), Jan Reid, [Scottish Enterprise](#), and Remi Gruet, Chief Executive, [Ocean Energy Europe](#), who discussed perspectives from Ireland, Scotland and Europe. The session concluded with a panel discussion led by session chair Simon de Pietro.



Figure 3: Jan Reid, Scottish Enterprise, discussing the key developments concerning the industry in Scotland

Session 2, “Technology and Project Progress”, was chaired by Sam McCloskey, Director of the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy, [Queens University Belfast](#), and consisted of keynote presentations from seven marine technology companies. Ali Baghei, CEO of Taiwan based [Aquanet Power](#), Ambroise Wattez, Business Development Manager Renewables and Offshore Energy Systems of [SBM Offshore](#), located in Holland, and Max Carcas, CEO of [Caelulum](#), discussed their companies and the technological progress being made in each of their sectors. In addition to this, Sam Roch Perks, CEO of [Simply Blue Energy](#), Tim Kirrane, CEO of Bluwind, Tim Hurst, CEO of [Wave Energy Scotland](#), and Tony Lewis, CEO of [Ocean Energy](#), concluded the presentations from keynote speakers.



Figure 4: Ambroise Wattez, SBM Offshore, outlining technology and project progress in SBM Offshore

The second aspect of Session 2 consisted of brief five-minute snapshots from various companies in the renewable sector. Presentations by specific marine companies or organisations were delivered by;

- Ray Alcorn, CEO, [Exceedence](#): “Exceedence, our experience of crowdfunding”
- David Carrascosa, CTO, [Saitec Offshore Technologies](#): “Saitec Offshore Technologies deployment plans”
- Julie Ascoop, [Arup](#): “Our expectations for marine renewables”
- Karin Dubsky, [Coastwatch Ireland](#): “Coastwatch’s thoughts about offshore renewable”
- Darren Hayes, [Dublin Offshore Consultants](#): “Dublin Offshore Consultants and the marine renewables emerging technologies”

- Dr Simon Berrow, [Irish Whale and Dolphin Group](#): “How nature and marine renewable can live together”
- Cormac Gebruers, Director, [National Maritime College of Ireland](#): “Preparing for the skill needs of marine renewables”
- John Miller, [Wavefore Energy](#): “Waveforce Energy’s Mk 2 WEC”
- Phillip Nugent, Principal, [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government](#): “Progress of Marine Spatial Planning”
- Anne Marie O’Hagan, [MaREI](#), and Hon. Deputy Secretary of [MRIA](#): “MRIA’s view of Marine Spatial Planning”
- John Breslin, CEO, [SmartBay Ireland](#): “Projects and progress at the SmartBay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site, Galway”
- Iris Hoefnagels, [Marine Energy Alliance](#): “Marine Energy Alliance”
- Jimmy Murphy, Principal Investigator, [MaREI](#) and Head of Lir National Ocean Test Facility, and Gillian Bruton, Centre Manager, [MaREI](#): “Lir and MaREI update”
- Vincent McCormack, CEO, [GKinetic](#): “GKinetic moves forward”

Declan Meally, Head of Emerging Sectors, [Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland](#), closed the morning session.



Figure 5: John Breslin, CEO of SmartBay Ireland, outlining current projects and progress at the SmartBay Marine and Renewable Energy Test Site in Galway during a five-minute snapshot

In the afternoon session, Jimmy Murphy, Principal Investigator, [MaREI](#) and Head of Lir National Ocean Test Facility, chaired a third session on “MaREI – a centre of excellence for marine and renewable energy”, and this session consisted of six presentations from researchers associated with MaREI. First, Dr Gordon Dalton, [UCC](#), discussed MaREI participation and contribution to the MEA project, and this was succeeded by a presentation from Stephen Nash, [NUIG](#), on tidal energy research in MaREI. Gregorio Iglesias, Professor of Marine Energy at [UCC](#), delivered a presentation on a vision for MRE research in Ireland, while Li Guo Wang, [Maynooth University](#), and Matthieu Ancellin, [UCD](#), discussed optimisation of a hinge-barge wave energy convertor in the BenchWEC project. Finally, Zoe O’Hanlon, [UCC](#), discussed an evidence based comparative insight of Irish and Scottish regulatory frameworks for offshore wind, while Jimmy Murphy, chair of the session, concluded the forum with a general discussion on research collaboration in MRE in Ireland.



Figure 6: Dr Gordon Dalton, UCC, discussing MaREI participation and contribution to the MEA project, during Session 3 of the MRIA Forum

Peter Coyle, Chairman of MRIA, closed the 10th annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum by thanking ProtoAtlantic for supporting the event, and inviting all in attendance to keep up-to-date with the project progress by visiting the project website, www.protoatlantic.eu , and following the project's active Twitter account [@protoatlanticEU](https://twitter.com/protoatlanticEU). Furthermore, marine industry professionals were encouraged to apply, where appropriate, for the funding opportunities available through the programme, such as [Fast Tracked Product Development](#) and the [Accelerator Program](#).



Figure 7: Keynote speakers at the conclusion of the 10th annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum

3. WP2 Communication MRIA Actions

WP2 Communication lead partner Cork County Council represented ProtoAtlantic, from a communications and dissemination perspective, at the 10th annual MRIA Forum. The forum provided ProtoAtlantic with a unique opportunity to inform a large marine sector specific audience about the project and the current funding streams available for both marine start-ups/entrepreneurs and more established marine industries, including; Fast Tracked Product Development, and Phase II Mentoring and Phase III Demo-Day of the ProtoAtlantic Accelerator Program.

ProtoAtlantic project branding was omnipresent throughout the event, and promotional material was supplied to all attendees as part of an initial welcome pack.



Figure 8: A sample of ProtoAtlantic promotional material distributed at the 10th annual MRIA Forum

In addition to the distribution of promotional material at the forum, WP2 leaders Cork County Council were also responsible for all aspects of media coverage throughout the event, including; dissemination; photography, and; live social media updates.

Social media coverage of the event proved highly engaging, and generated significant interaction on the chosen social media platform for ProtoAtlantic, [Twitter](#). Over the course of the forum, the [@protoatlanticEU](#) Twitter account tweeted 22 times, providing frequent updates from the event using the [#MRIAforum](#). As has been widely accepted, Twitter impressions are one of the best indicators of brand presence, and provide a total tally of tweet viewership. These tweets earned 12.5K impressions between Friday 1st February – Sunday 3rd February 2019. This figure is separate to Twitter reach, which considers how large your audience could potentially be.

Your Tweets earned **12.5K impressions** over this 3 day period

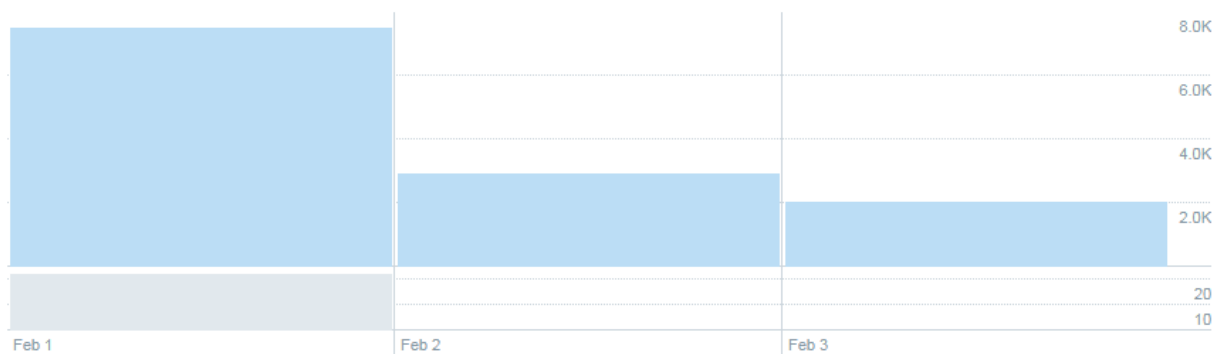


Figure 9: Total @protoatlanticEU tweet impressions during the MRIA Forum

Engagement rate over the course of the three days (including the aftermath of the Forum) was 1.9%, ranging from a high of 2.8% during the event, to a low of 0.5% on Sunday 3rd February. Tweets received 94 likes, and 39 retweets, with activity once more proving significantly more prevalent during the MRIA Forum on 1st February 2019. Engagement rate for individual tweets ranged from 6.8% to 0.8%.

ProtoAtlantic’s most popular tweet, in terms of likes and retweets, related to presentations during the second session of the MRIA Forum, entitled “Technology and Project Progress”, and this tweet received 6 retweets and 9 likes, generating 1527 impressions and 61

engagements (4% engagement rate). However, in terms of impressions, the most prominent tweet related to the afternoon session on “MaREI- a centre of excellence for marine and renewable energy”, which earned 2,611 impressions, 2 retweets and 11 likes.



Figure 10: ProtoAtlantic's most prominent tweet during the MRIA Forum

ProtoAtlantic attendance at the MRIA Forum also had a strong impact on total social media audience, with Twitter followers growing from 190 on Wednesday 30th January to 236 by Sunday 3rd February 2019, signifying a 24% follower increase.

In terms of website traffic, between 1st February- 6th February 2019, there were 98 visitors to the website, corresponding to 480 pages views. Of these visitors, 63% were new site users, and this figure can potentially be attributed to attendance at the MRIA Forum, which has further raised the profile of the ProtoAtlantic project in Ireland.

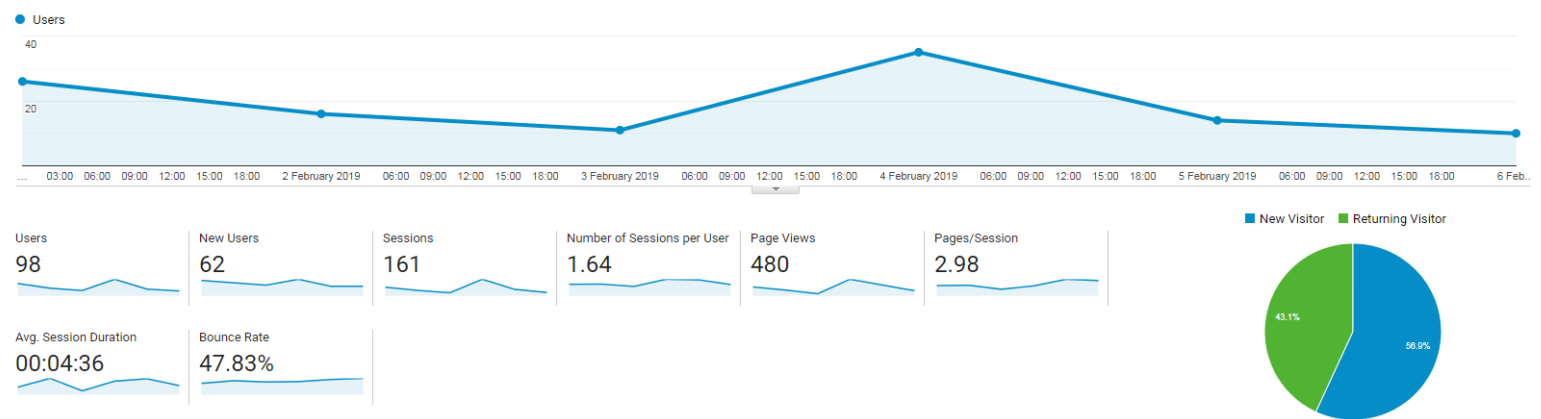


Figure 11: Website analytics 1st February -6th February 2019

Finally, following the completion of the event, a news story was published on the ProtoAtlantic website, entitled “[ProtoAtlantic Sponsor the 10th Annual MRIA Forum](#)”, while a LinkedIn post directing users to this article has generated 158 impressions, achieving 5 likes, resulting in a 5.7% engagement rate.



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Figure 12: News article on the ProtoAtlantic website

4. WP3 Capitalisation MRIA Actions

Prior to the 10th Annual MRIA Forum, ProtoAtlantic hosted an industry dinner, on the evening of 30th January 2019, in Bang restaurant, Merrion Street. This ice breaker event aimed at bringing together speakers, organisers, industry representatives, and policy makers. Round table introductions at the start of the evening allowed everyone to be introduced. A full list of participants is provided in **Figure 13**. Guests included public sector officials, such as the Head of the Commissioners of Irish Lights, and the Head of the Ocean Energy Development Unit in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Also present were utility companies such as ESB, and start-ups such as Excedence.

MRIA Forum Dinner Attendee List

BANG Restaurant, Merrion Road, Dublin 2

31 January 2019

1. *Peter Coyle* - Executive Chairman of MRIA
2. *Ray Alcorn* - CEO Exceedence Ltd
3. *Anne Marie O'Hagan* - MaREI UCC
4. *Val Cummins* - MaREI UCC
5. *Declan Meally* - Head of Emerging Sectors, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
6. *Jeremy Gault* - MaREI UCC
7. *Simon de Pietro* - CEO of DP Energy and President of Ocean Energy Europe
8. *Maureen de Pietro* - Executive Director, DP Energy
9. *Niamh Kenny* - Senior Manager DP Energy
10. *Clodagh McGrath* - Manager DP Energy
11. *Alex McLean* - Partner (energy) Arthur Cox, Solicitors
12. *John Smith* - Director Bluwind
13. *Tom Kirrane* - Director Bluwind
14. *Anne O'Farrell* - New entrepreneur
15. *Sam Roch-Perks* - CEO, Simply Blue Energy
16. *Jan Reid* - Head of marine renewables, Scottish Enterprise
17. *Remi Gruet* - CEO Ocean Energy Europe
18. *Mark Mellett* - Chief of Staff, Defence Forces
19. *Max Carcas* - CEO Caelulum
20. *Tony Lewis* - Chief Technology Officer, Ocean Energy Ltd
21. *Kevin O'Donovan* - CEO Statkraft Ireland
22. *Camel Makhlaoui* - Senior research engineer at Engie
23. *Alexis Lieder* - Energy Systems engineer at Engie
24. *Angela Larkin* - Head of Development Europe, Brookfield Renewables
25. *Peter Campbell* - Head of marine renewables SSE Airtricity
26. *Brona Anderson* - Head of marine renewables InvestNI
27. *Yvonne Shiels* Chief Executive, Commissioners of Irish Lights
28. *Eamon McKeogh* - MaREI UCC
29. *Colm de Burca* - Head of emerging sectors ESB
30. *John Breslin* - Head of SmartBay marine energy test site, Galway
31. *Joan Mulloy* - New entrepreneur
32. *Cormac Gebruers* - Head of National Maritime College of Ireland
33. *Gregorio Iglesias* - Professor of Marine Renewables at UCC
34. *Andy Wheeler* - Head of Geology, UCC
35. *Jessica Giannoumis* - Project Manager, ProtoAtlantic
36. *Nguyen Dinh* - Project Manager, EirWind
37. *Ambroise Wattez* - Business Development Manager SBM Offshore
38. *Ali Baghaei* - CEO Aquanet Power
39. *Ben Hutchinson* - Manager, Simply Blue Energy
40. *Xavier Guillou* - EU Commission

Figure 13: MRIA Forum Dinner Attendee List

Furthermore, a breakfast meeting at the Alex Hotel in Dublin prior to the main event included a discussion with Minister Richard Bruton, appointed Minister of Communications, Climate Action & Environment, Jim Gannon, Chief Executive at Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Declan Meally of Sustainable Energy Authority Of Ireland (SEAI), Mark Foley, CEO of Eirgrid, and Eamonn Confrey, Principal in the decarbonisation division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The breakfast was attended by over 40 blue growth stakeholders, from Irish universities, policy makers, and representatives of marine industries from the sectors of marine renewables such as wind, wave, tidal, and marine aquaculture. Peter Coyle, chairman of MRIA, welcomed the blue growth stakeholders and thanked ProtoAtlantic for providing this platform for an informed policy discussion. The breakfast meeting provided a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to raise issues regarding Ireland's existing marine policies.

Three reoccurring themes emerged from the lively discussions: the need for greater leadership and planning in the marine sectors; the need for more business support (such as the gap filled by ProtoAtlantic), and; the need to develop the supply chain for marine renewables. The stakeholders pointed at examples from Scotland, as a prime example of leadership within marine renewables and the geo-political and strategic decision-making process, and Holland's consent to the grid connection providing investors and existing companies with the needed certainty.

Development in the marine sector requires easy access to the Irish foreshore. The foreshore is the twelve-mile limit (12 nautical miles) between land and the high waters in which the State governs. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is responsible, and under the Foreshore Act 1933 administers for consent for developments that fall into the statutory responsibility of the Department (more information can be found here: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/faqs/foreshore-frequently-asked-questions>). Under current regulation, existing foreshore licencing is difficult to obtain, disincentivising marine sectors to invest into the Irish blue economy.

Finally, the issue of universities and research centres producing evidence-based research was raised. Additionally, universities and industries co-creating curricula, as currently undertaken by the National Maritime College of Ireland, would provide industries with the

skilled workforce that they need. Similar progressive approaches to education and training have also been undertaken by other Irish Universities. Finally, it was acknowledged that Ireland provides a unique support system for start-ups (e.g. ProtoAtlantic) and larger companies.

The breakfast meeting was concluded with a summary highlighting the importance of creating a holistic marine spatial plan addressing the issue of updating the Foreshore Act 1933, the need to create national and international Blue Growth investment and business opportunities in Ireland, and the need to review existing marine legislation and to create centralised policies supporting local marine businesses.

5. Conclusion

ProtoAtlantic sponsorship of the MRIA 10th annual Marine Renewables Emerging Technologies Industry Forum, and the attendance of representatives from WP2 Communication and WP3 Capitalisation, has had significant positive implications for the project.

From a communications perspective, the event endorsed ProtoAtlantic as an exemplar Interreg Atlantic Area project, and allowed WP2 and WP3 leaders to promote all aspects of the project to an audience of over two hundred at the event. This audience was greatly expanded through use of Twitter as a social media platform, with over 12.5K impressions being achieved on the day of the event, and its immediate aftermath. This, in turn, translated to a direct increase in social media followers of 24%. While this assisted in raising the profile of the ProtoAtlantic project, both nationally, in Ireland, and internationally across Europe, it also helped achieve an overall project goal of facilitating enhanced traction in the marine innovation sector.

Furthermore, the promotion of ProtoAtlantic at the MRIA forum also expanded the ProtoAtlantic marine network/ecosystem, through engagement with over two hundred professionals in the marine sector, thus increasing awareness of funding opportunities available through ProtoAtlantic, such as Fast Tracked Product Development and the Accelerator Program. The expansion of this ecosystem, and the increased awareness of these opportunities, is anticipated to result in further applications for these phases of the project.

Lead Partner



Main Partners



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