

@LivingSeasNW

#MarineMudness



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Wildlife Trusts

The trouble with mud and prawns:

Issues and opportunities in the Irish Sea

Coastal Futures 2017

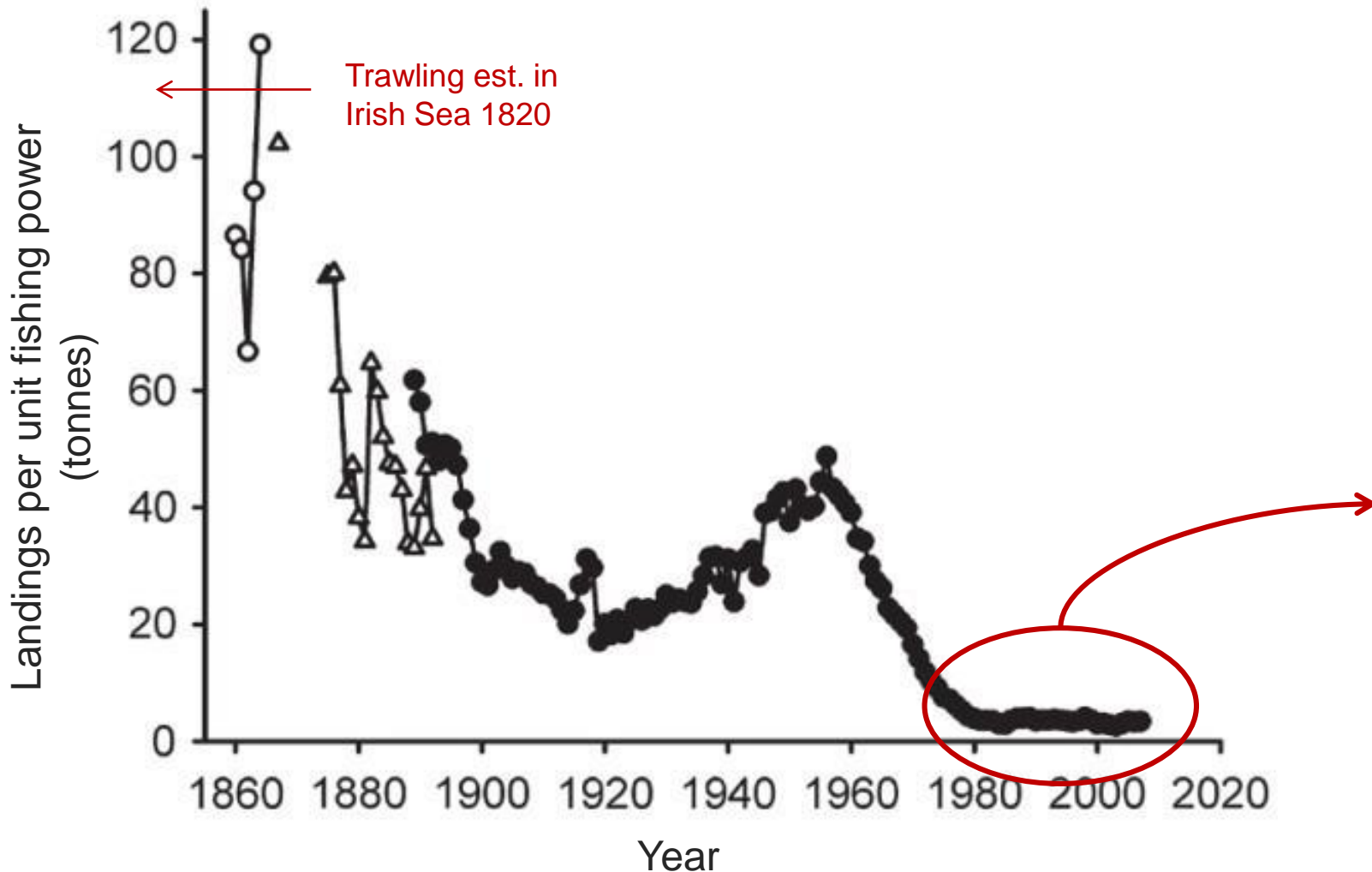
Dr Emily Baxter
Senior Marine
Conservation Officer
North West Wildlife Trusts

Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

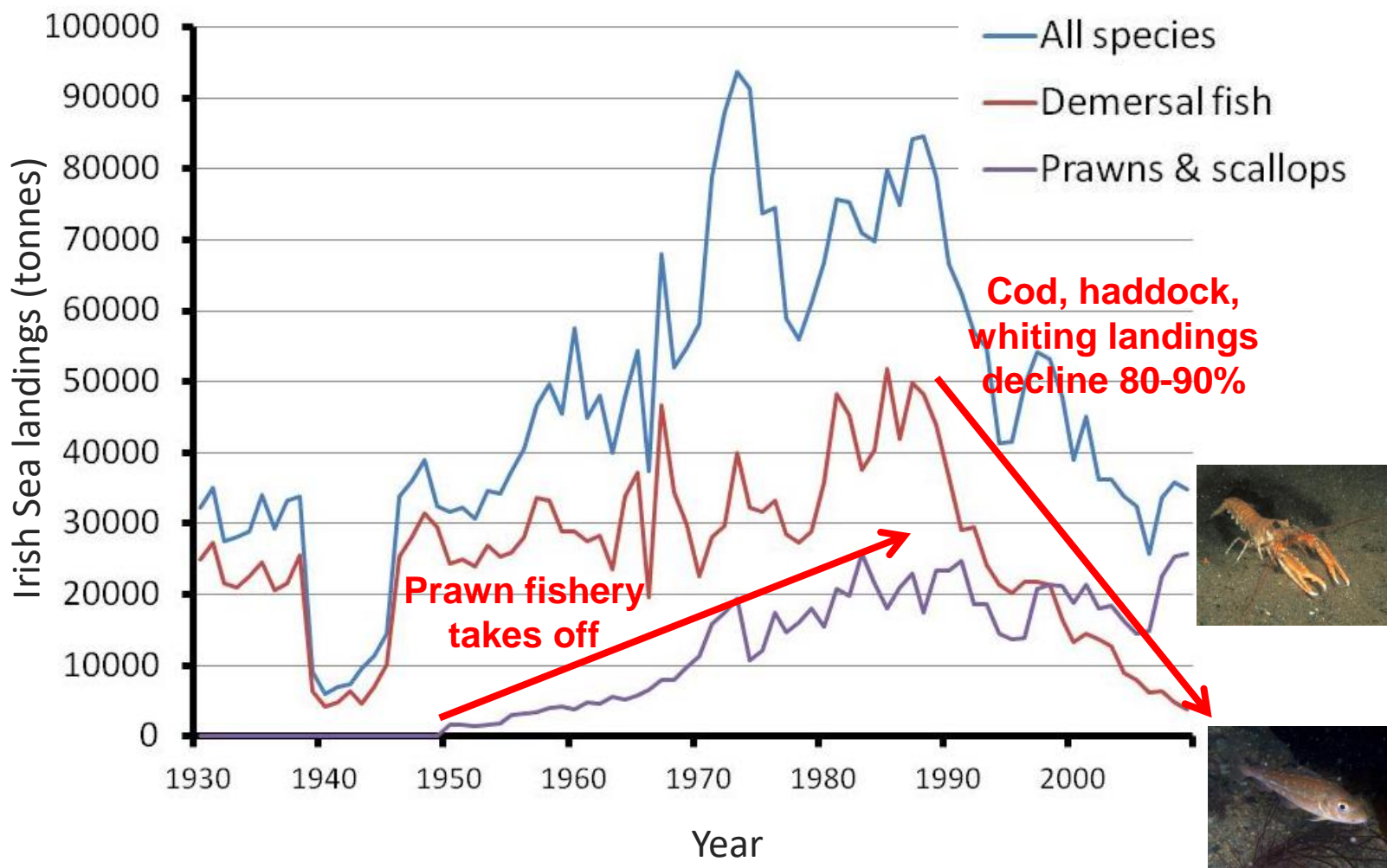
Key messages

1. Mud habitats and fish stocks are being damaged by overfishing
2. Muddy habitats play an important role in the Irish Sea ecosystem
3. We need to manage fisheries and protect mud habitats to benefit people, wildlife and economies

A brief history of overfishing



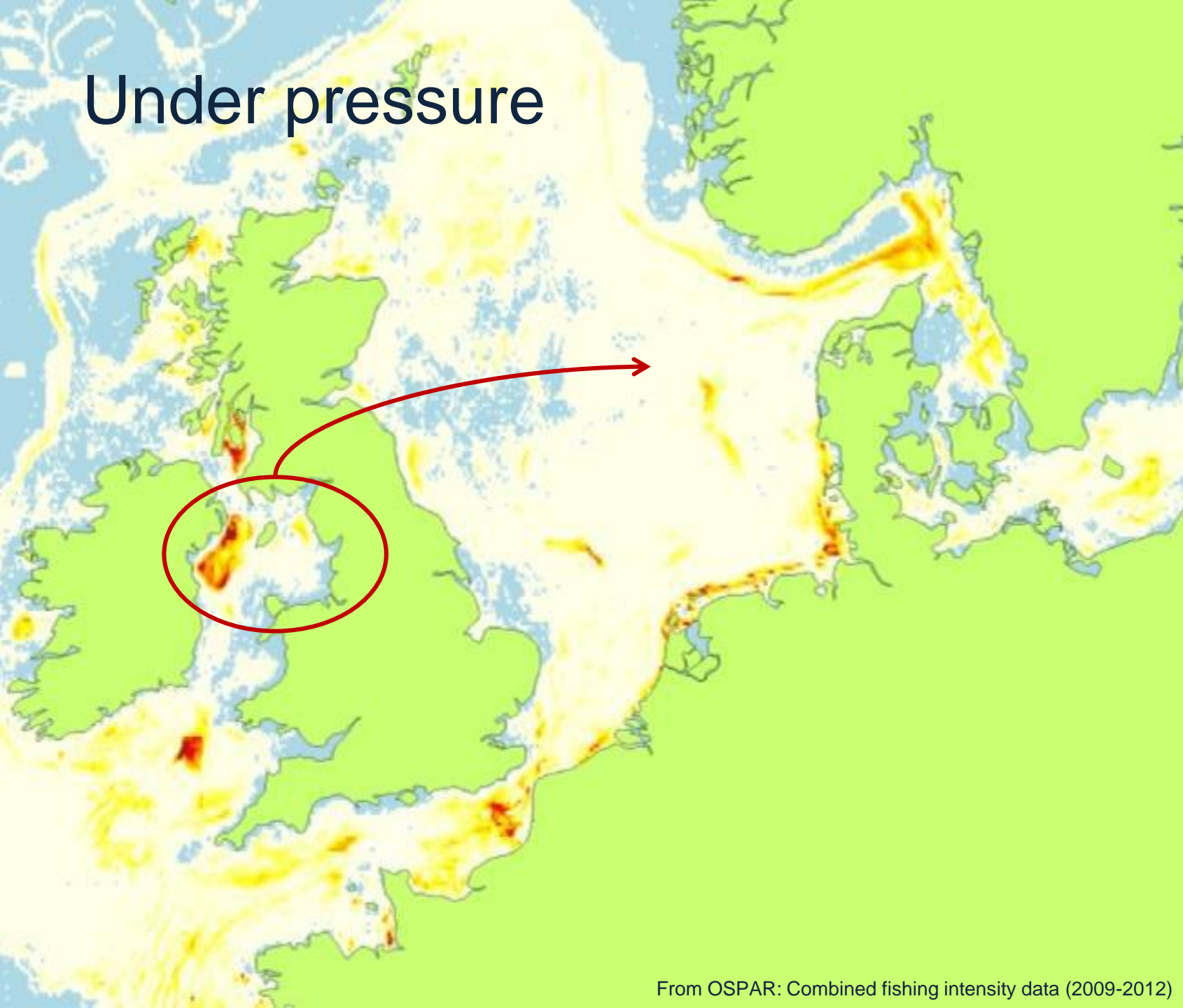
Are we fishing prawns by default?



Under pressure



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From OSPAR: Combined fishing intensity data (2009-2012)

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It's all about the mud



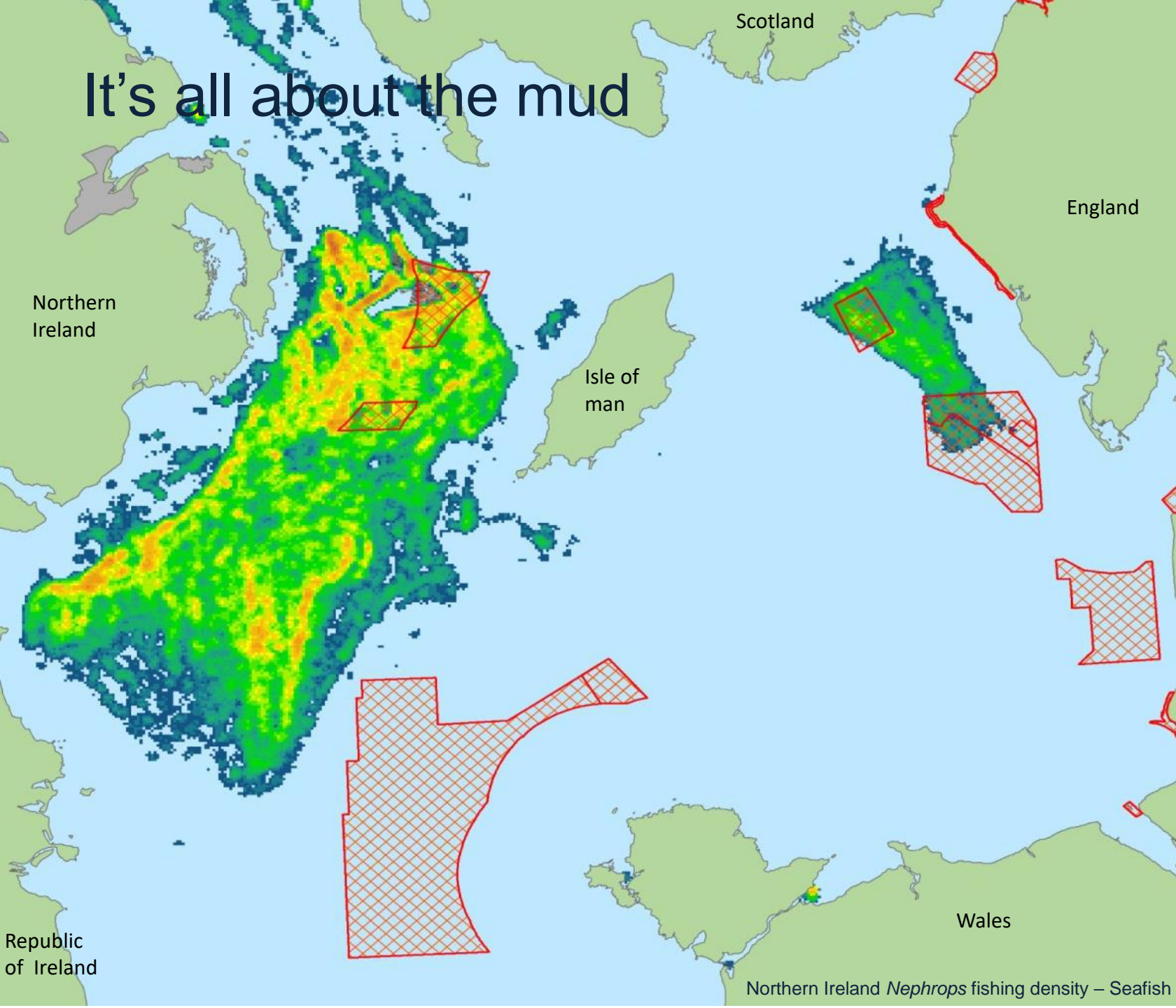
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6,364km²
mud habitat
with prawns

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It's all about the mud



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Northern Ireland *Nephrops* fishing density – Seafish

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The trouble with mud... ...glorious mud

Low-energy

Little natural disturbance

Geographically isolated

Biodiversity

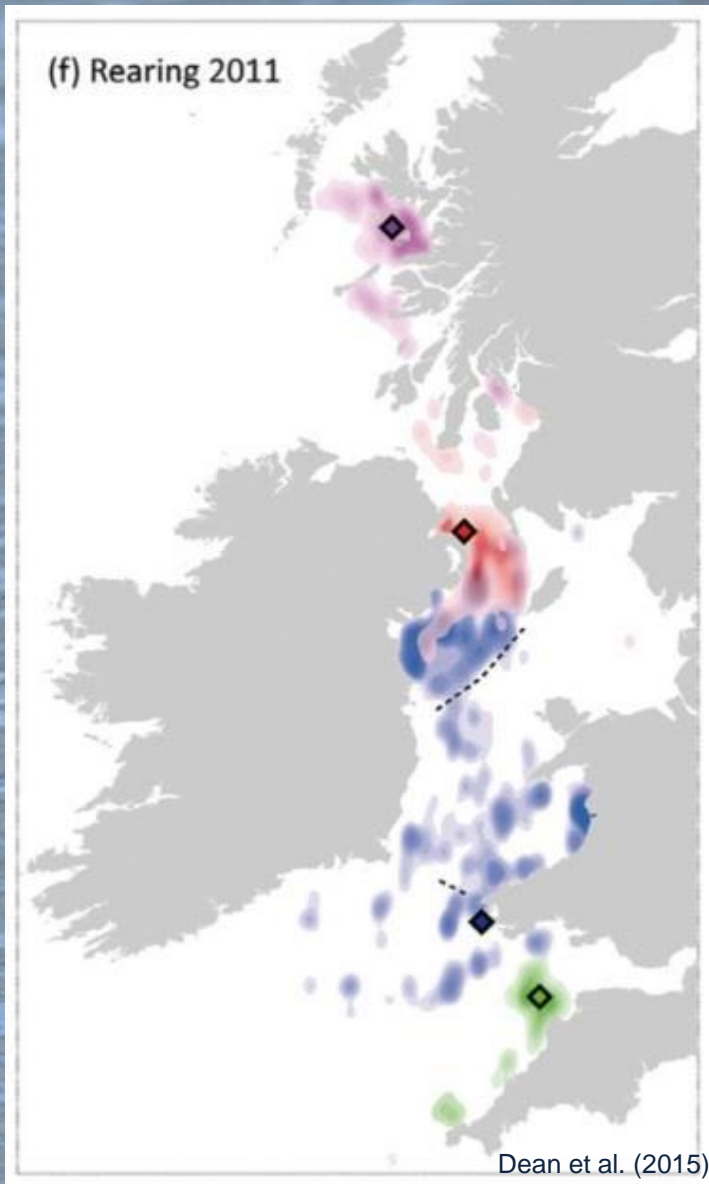
Supports commercial species

Ecosystem services

Natural capital

Megafauna →

Additional ecological importance



The trouble with prawns

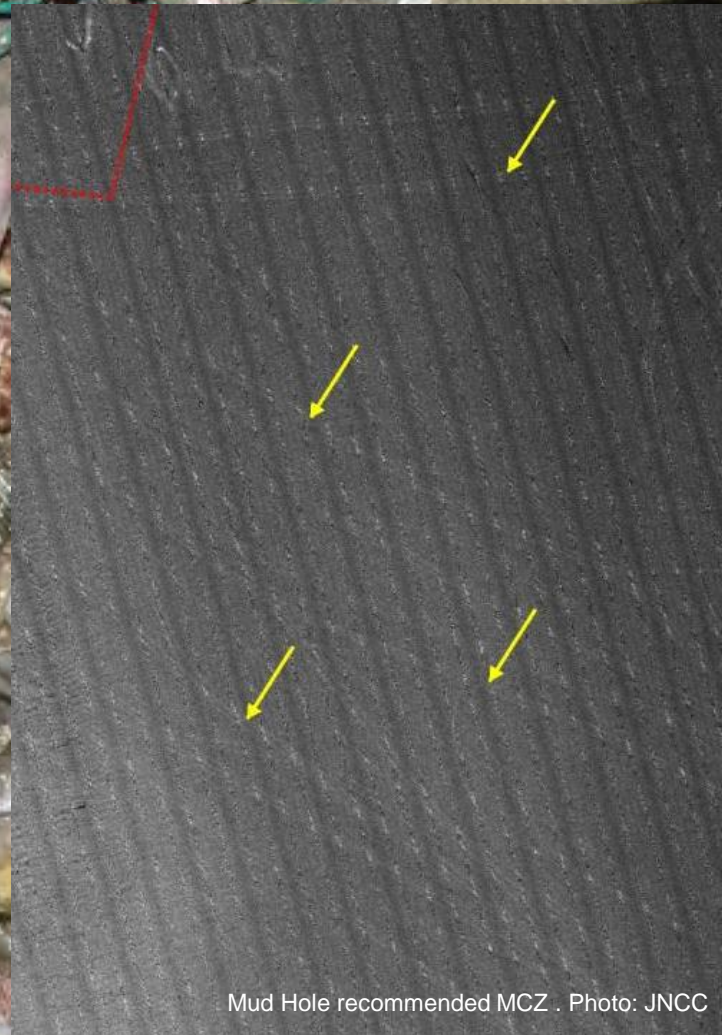
Habitat damage

Removal of sediments

Marine life impacts

Bycatch of commercial species

Skinny fish



Mud Hole recommended MCZ . Photo: JNCC

Landings obligation

Current implementation

‘Chokes’

‘Big bang’ 2019

Could chokes give whitefish stock a chance to breathe?

Overfishing continues

Plaice quota **152%** ↑
scientific advice

Haddock quota **61%** ↑
scientific advice

Quota continues given for
cod, whiting & sole

Moving towards MSY



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Protecting the prawn fishery – is it worth the cost?



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Sustainability of the fishery

Sustainability of market

Cost to industry

Cost to society

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Opportunities: time for a new approach



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Wider management needed

Reduced bycatch

Reduced seabed impact

Real-time closures

Opportunities: wider recovery



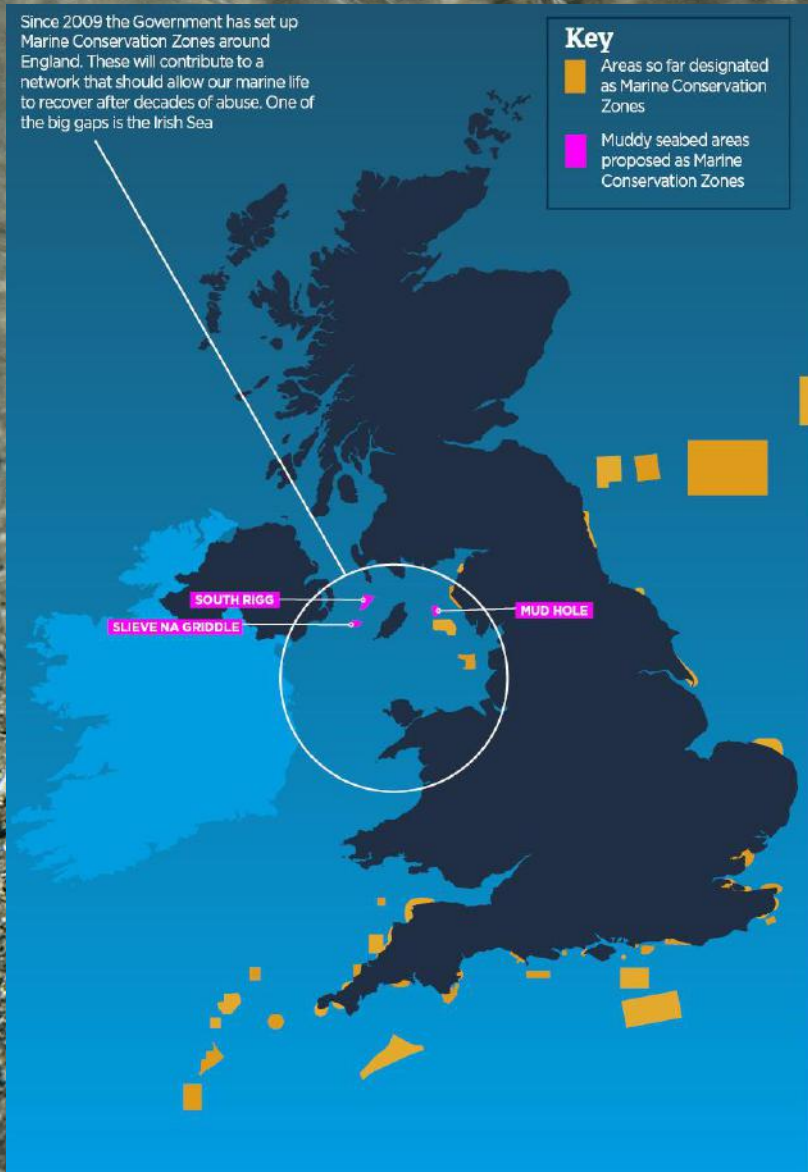
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Since 2009 the Government has set up Marine Conservation Zones around England. These will contribute to a network that should allow our marine life to recover after decades of abuse. One of the big gaps is the Irish Sea

Key

Areas so far designated as Marine Conservation Zones

Muddy seabed areas proposed as Marine Conservation Zones



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Opportunities: wider recovery

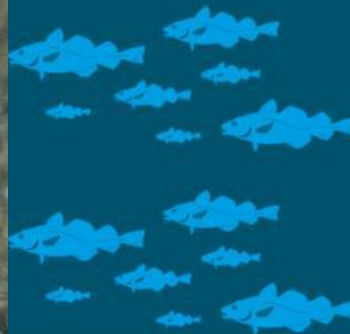
It's a
drop in
the ocean
Only 4%

Fishing would only be
restricted in 4% of
prawn grounds

Healthy
habitats



And cod stocks
recover



=
more profit
& higher
wages

Good news

THE DAILY PLANET

WORLD'S
LONGEST-LIVED
ANIMAL SAVED!



Paul Kay



More seabirds,
whales and
dolphins



More coastal tourism



Conclusions

- Mud habitats and fisheries in the Irish Sea are under intense pressure
- We are protecting unsustainable and damaging fisheries at the price of fish stocks and the marine environment
- Significant political will and drastic changes in setting quotas and management are required
- Or will 'chokes' be the last resort that give whitefish fisheries a chance to breathe?
- Designating protected areas will help to kick-start recovery and are unlikely to have a significant impact on prawn fisheries



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Thank
you!

Find our **#MarineMudness** campaign at: www.irishsea.org

