



## Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-informed policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*



# Streamlining Fisheries Governance: Addressing Legislative Fragmentation in Shared Irish Marine Waters

**Queens University Belfast**

**Ms Claudia Allen, School of Law**

**Professor Richard Collins, School of Law**

**Dr Heather Ritchie, School of Natural and**

**Built Environment**

**27 May 2026**



# Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series

## Co-existence and Co-location in shared island Marine Governance



The CoCoMar project (Grant-Aid Agreement No. PBA/OLG/23/01) is carried out with the support of the Marine Institute under the Marine Research Programme and funded by the Government of Ireland.





*Foras na Mara*  
*Marine Institute*





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# CoCoMar in brief ...


 **Funder:** Marine Institute, *Ocean Law and Governance*


 **Amount:** €1,449,998

 **Duration:** 60 months (from Nov 24 - Oct 29)

 **UCC Team:** Dr Anne Marie O'Hagan (PI/Co-Ordinator) (MaREI), Prof. Owen McIntyre (Law)

 **QUB Team:** Professor Richard Collins (Law), Dr Heather Ritchie, Prof. Wesley Flannery & Dr Ben McAteer (SNBE)

 3 PhD Researchers (x2 @QUB, x1@UCC)

 **Subcontractor:** Marine Institute – Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Team



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# Research Context

**Evolving Ocean Governance Framework** – shared island of Ireland waters

Examine how **co-location** and **co-existence** can be enabled through more coherent, adaptive, and inclusive marine governance.

Focus on emerging **issues and trends** – evaluate governance implications for spatial squeeze and cross-sectoral conflict

**Key Project aim:** *Develop practical policy advice for government to address future issues*

**Today:** *Reflecting on the challenges and demonstrate how CoCoMar is exploring potential future MSP pathways*



## CoCoMar

Enabling Co-existence and Co-location  
in Shared Island Marine Governance



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# Project overview under 5 Themes

## ***Fisheries Management Post-Brexit***

(Hot-spot mapping research of fishing activity and discarding - analyse management frameworks)

## ***Other Sectors and MSP***

(Aquaculture +ORE both developing rapidly – potential for conflict – examine co-location and co-existence)

## ***Expanding MPA network***

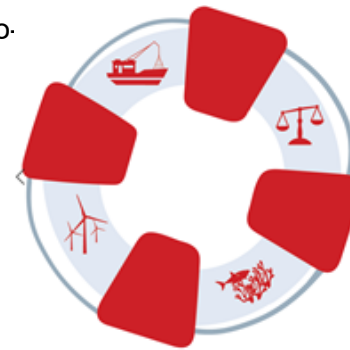
(Explore Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM) – develop dynamic adaptive MPAs)

## ***Nature Restoration***

(Determine what extend NR already considered – look at relationship between Restoration and NBS)

## ***Communicating Transboundary Approaches to Coastal & Marine Governance***

(Facilitate discussion, exchange of ideas to progress policy changes, future-proofing actions and build capacity among the marine policy community)



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# Today's Presentation:

**Claudia Allen** (QUB) – post-Brexit fisheries governance around the island of Ireland highlighting need for a cohesive approach in shared waters



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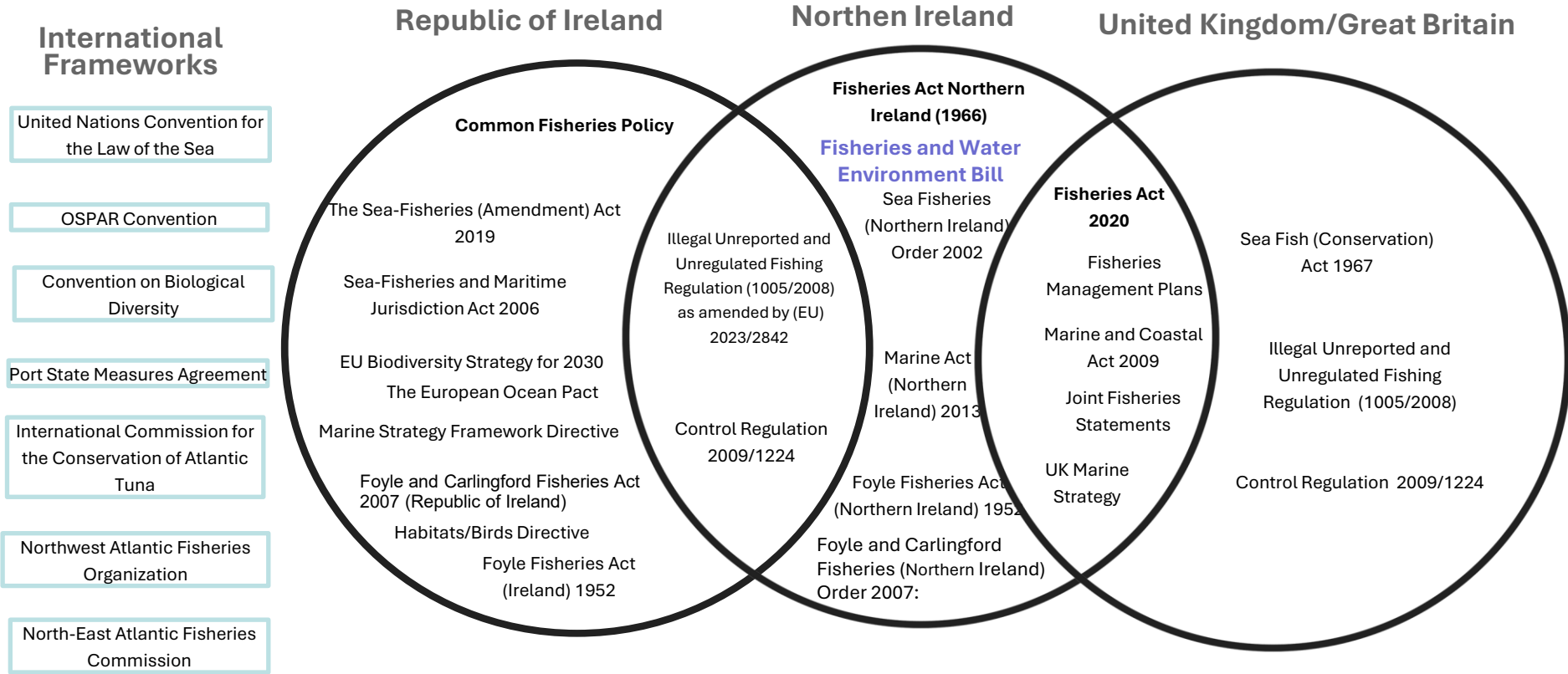


- I Norwegian Sea
- II North Sea
- III Celtic Seas
- IV Bay of Biscay/ Iberian Coast
- V Wider Atlantic High seas



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# GOVERNANCE COMPLEXITY



# Existing Governance Mechanisms

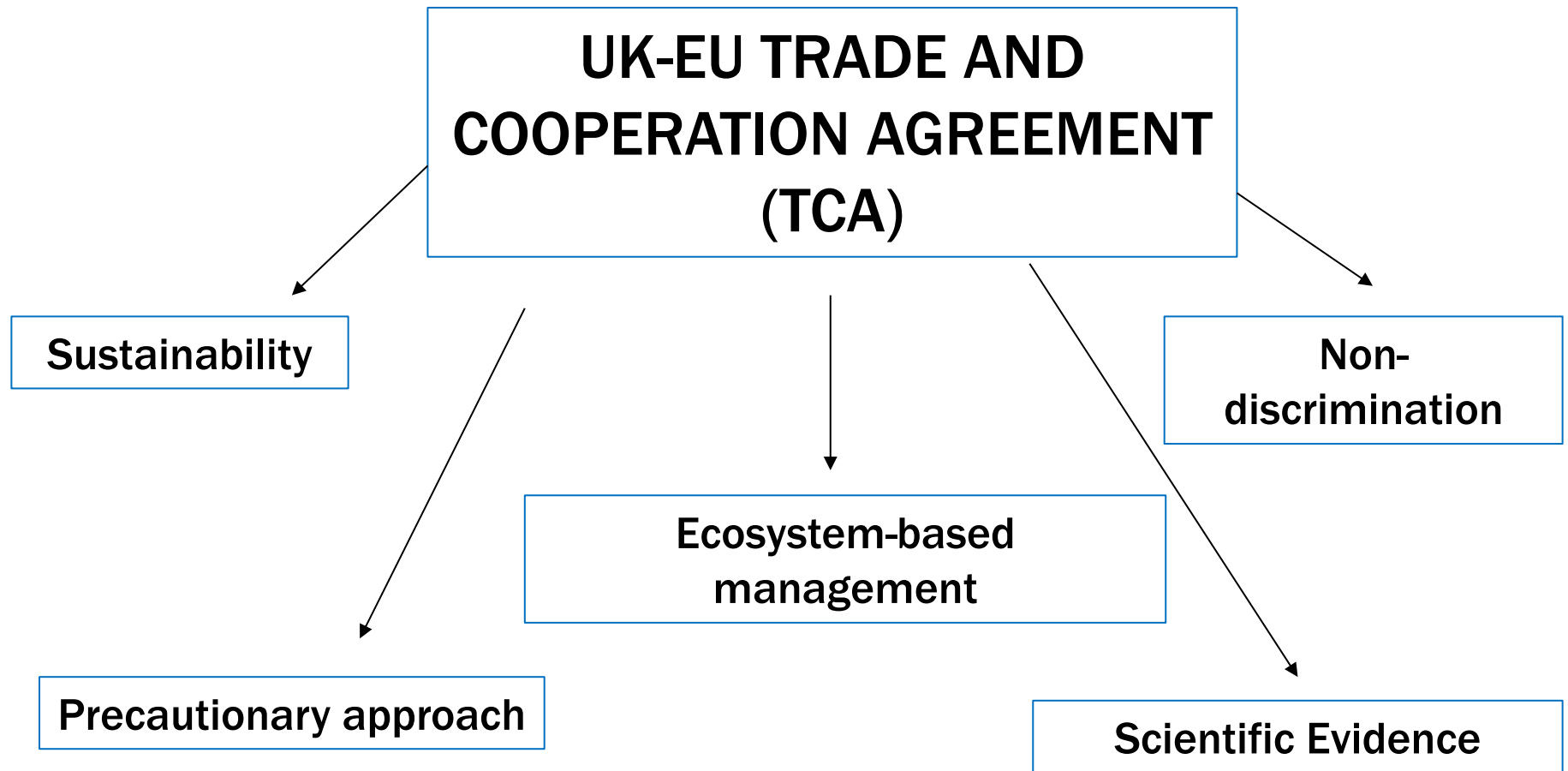
NI Government ↔ Loughs Agency ↔ Irish Government



Fisheries • Conservation • Enforcement

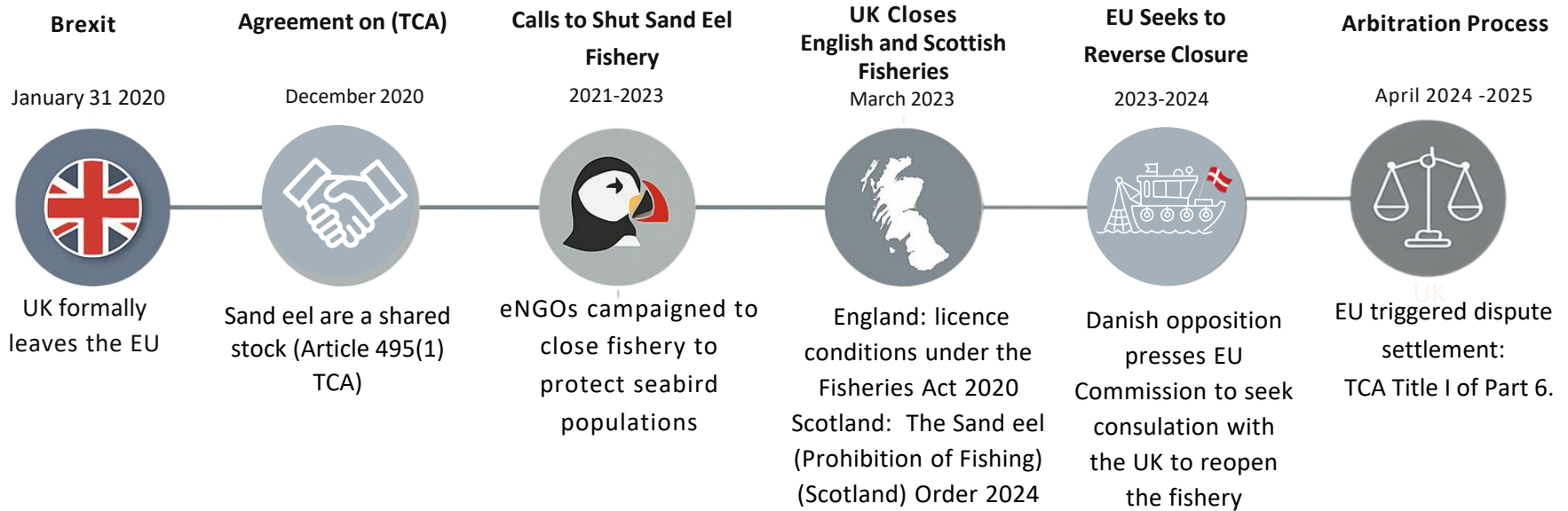


# Existing Governance Mechanisms



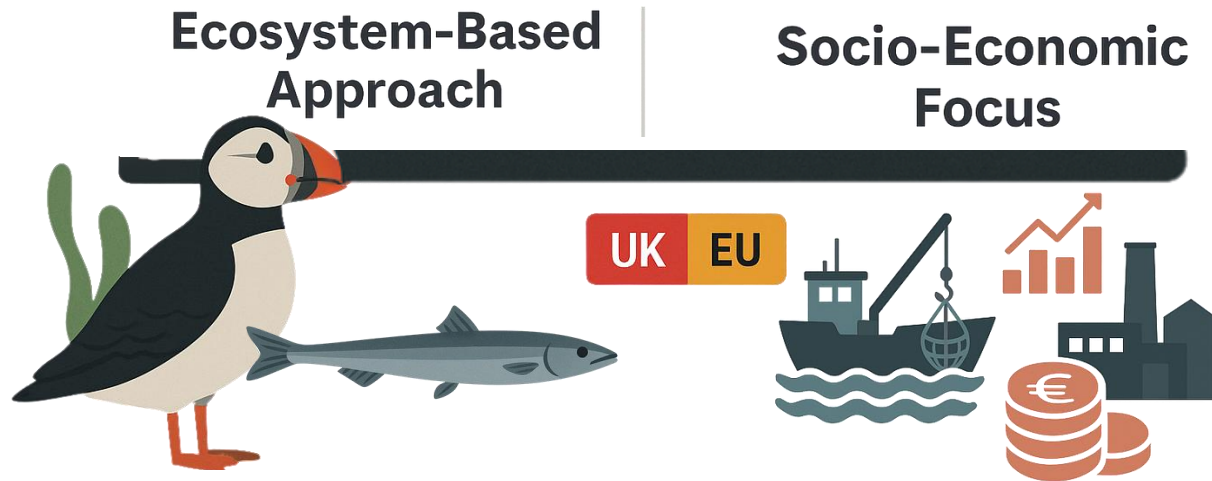
# FROM BREXIT TO ARBITRATION

## CASE-STUDY OF THE UK-EU UK SAND EEL LEGAL DISPUTE



Claim Dismissed 	Claim Dismissed for Scotland ONLY	Claim Dismissed 	Claim Dismissed for Scotland ONLY
Data from ICES. EU provides no alternative	Argued that the UK has regulatory autonomy to take conservation measures under the TCA	Fishery closed for all vessels. UK has sovereign right to close for conservation	Access remains in principle. The closure is a conservation measure which is in the TCA
UK only used one source of data, a scientific model	Data from model overestimates fishing impact	Closure predominantly impacts Danish fishing industry	Pursuant of claims 1 & 2, the UK breached TCA access arrangements
Claim 1: Not based on scientific advice	Claim 2A: Fishing ban was not proportionate	Claim 2B: discriminatory towards EU vessel	Claim 3: Blocking access to UK waters

# Conflicts arise even when there are shared objectives due to divergence in how policy objectives are applied



# Does the Bill Address the Problem?

Governance Challenge	Bill Response	Remaining Limitation
<b>Fragmented enforcement</b>	Aligns NI enforcement powers with GB	Limited cross-border coordination, penalty system differs with the Republic of Ireland
<b>Sustainability objectives</b>	Applies Fisheries Act objectives to inland fisheries	No operational guidance on balancing trade-offs
<b>Ecosystem governance</b>	Ecosystem objective included in inland fisheries management	Weak integration with wider marine planning and consideration for conflicts over space/resource use
<b>Governance fragmentation</b>	Modernises internal legislation	Wider UK-EU fragmentation remains; fisheries governed in silo
<b>Cross-border ambiguity</b>	Limited; reference to Loughs Agency legislation developed separately	Licensing/seabed issues unresolved meaning unregulated unsustainable activity cannot be addressed.

# Policy Recommendations

**1: Develop shared operational guidance on applying ecosystem objectives**

**2: Extend operational functions of cross-border bodies - coordinating licensing, environmental management and enforcement across shared water systems**

**3: Integrate fisheries governance within wider ecosystem governance**

## Next Steps: Research Supporting More Coherent Governance

Recommendation	Research Contribution
Develop shared operational guidance	Stakeholder interviews will identify where sustainability objectives create tensions in practice
Strengthen cross-border coordination	Legal and policy analysis will examine governance gaps across shared systems
Integrate fisheries within wider ecosystem governance	Participatory mapping will identify spatial pressures and interactions between fisheries and other marine uses

# Conclusions

- Fragmentation remains a major governance challenge.
- Existing cooperation mechanisms help but gaps remain.
- The Bill improves aspects of governance coherence.
- Ecosystem governance requires stronger coordination across sectors and jurisdictions.

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