

## **Towards a Pan-European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary**

The Environmental Pillar calls upon the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Member States to work together to establish a European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary throughout European waters. In this regard the Environmental Pillar calls upon the Irish Government to highlight the 21 year success story that began with the 1991 Sanctuary Declaration and to work to promote the establishment of a European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary.

### **Historical Context**

On 7 June 1991, the then Taoiseach Charles Haughey declared Ireland a ***Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary*** in recognition of the importance of Irish waters “for these magnificent creatures”.

The Sanctuary Declaration was unique in Europe and no EU Member State had made such an unequivocal statement about the importance of their waters for cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoise). The Sanctuary Declaration set a number of important precedents, it covered the Irish EEZ, which extends up to 200 nmls (350km) offshore and acknowledged the importance of habitat protection.

Since its announcement, the Sanctuary Declaration helped to raise awareness and interest in cetaceans in Ireland and ultimately led to increased research and knowledge, which in turn has resulted in conservation actions, benefitting biodiversity and the environment. Moreover it led to a clearer understanding of the responsibility Ireland had to cetaceans and their habitat including offshore waters. The Declaration was also a precursor to action leading to protection in Irish waters and the success of the Sanctuary Declaration. This proposal now seeks to build on that success and share the benefits across Europe.

### ***The Establishment of a European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary***

As part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Sanctuary Declaration, the Environmental Pillar is proposing the extension of this sanctuary concept throughout European waters to create a ***European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary***.

We are promoting this idea with our colleagues in Europe and encouraging them to lobby for their own countries to make such a clear and unequivocal statement on cetacean conservation. The Environmental Pillar is confident a pan-European Whale and Dolphin Sanctuary, supported by citizens and governments across Europe, will help to place cetaceans, and the threats they face, on the political agenda leading to the delivery of effective conservation policies.

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