

## Alignment with Local Development Plans

### CORK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

This project supports the County's objectives for sustainable tourism by offering a unique attraction that respects and preserves the environment. By fostering conservation-oriented tourism, the Sanctuary supports goals for local economic growth that aligns with ecological protection.

### FÁILTE IRELAND'S WEST CORK DESTINATION AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DEDP)

The Sanctuary exemplifies the DEDP's focus on 'slow tourism' and sustainable attractions that immerse visitors in local heritage. By integrating art, science, and conservation, the project meets DEDP's objectives for deep, meaningful engagement with Ireland's natural landscape and maritime heritage.

### LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

By attracting eco-conscious visitors, the project will support local businesses that provide responsible, low-impact experiences, such as kayak and snorkel rentals, scuba diving, and guided boat tours. Hotels and guesthouses will also benefit from increased year-round tourism, as the Sanctuary's virtual and in-water activities cater to diverse interests across seasons.

## Seabed Sanctuary Collective

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## Sounds of Water and Land – Glór Uisce agus Tallamh

A pivotal part of our research efforts is the 'Sounds of Water and Land – Glór Uisce agus Tallamh' project. This initiative uses eco-acoustic monitoring systems to gather baseline data about the biodiversity of the seabed and the surrounding environment. Installed in spring 2024, these monitoring devices record audio from marine life, along with key environmental parameters such as salinity and water temperature. The data collected helps us understand how biodiversity evolves in protected areas and how climate change, including the weakening of the Gulf Stream, is affecting coastal ecosystems.

This interdisciplinary project blends scientific research with artistic interpretation, encouraging new ways of thinking about the environment. By documenting the sounds and rhythms of marine life, we aim to raise awareness of the subtle but critical changes occurring in our ocean ecosystems due to climate change. This research will continue to inform our conservation strategies while also inspiring artistic creations that communicate the importance of marine biodiversity.

# SEABED SANCTUARY COLLECTIVE

*Tearmann faoi dTonn*

Business Plan

## The Sanctuary A Confluence of Art and Ecology

The Seabed Sanctuary Collective is a not-for-profit group of independent practitioners, including environmentalists, artists, marine professionals, and enthusiasts. We are currently in the research and development stage of an exciting project—creating an underwater sculpture garden between the island of Illauncreeveen and Gun Point, in Bantry Bay. By establishing this underwater sculpture park, the Seabed Sanctuary seeks to address the ecological challenges posed by climate change and human activity, while also providing a space for creative expression and scientific research. Our goal is to foster a unique intersection of art and environmental stewardship that inspires awareness and action for marine conservation.



### Our Vision

The Seabed Sanctuary will become a model of eco-conscious marine conservation, where art and science converge to protect and celebrate the unique marine ecosystems of Bantry Bay. Our goal is to establish an underwater sculpture garden which will be the first of its kind in Ireland, and an island nature reserve; together forming a sanctuary that balances ecological integrity with public engagement. With educational and aesthetic aspirations this will be a cultural and conservatory innovation which will be key, as have other global installations, in helping to draw attention to the biodiversity of our waters, by helping to preserve our native underwater environment. Symbiotic connections between marine and land stewardship will be demonstrated and understood by extending enquiries to the island of Illauncreeveen, documenting the interactions between land and sea.

### Our Mission

At the heart of this project is the intersection of art and science, aiming to preserve and rejuvenate the marine habitat while promoting awareness of ocean conservation through: research; remote access education; and low-impact tourism. By engaging local communities and eco-tourists, the Sanctuary will become a vital part of both marine stewardship and West Cork's sustainable tourism economy.

## The Sculpture Garden

The planned underwater sculpture garden is designed to act both as a sanctuary for marine wildlife and as an immersive educational attraction.

Sculptures created by artists from across the country will not only serve as works of art but also as integral components of the marine habitat, creating spaces for biodiversity to flourish while preventing harmful activities such as trawling. Visitors, whether they swim, dive, or use glass-bottomed boats, will have the opportunity to explore this unique underwater world, experiencing the synergy of art and nature first-hand.



## Our Objectives

### MARINE CONSERVATION

To create a protected area of the seabed to encourage natural regeneration of marine wildlife, where biodiversity is supported by sculptures designed to create habitats which will grow into reef colonies.

### RESEARCH AND EDUCATION:

To use eco-acoustic and visual monitoring to gather data, and real-time video footage to educate the public on marine ecology; also highlighting the potential of art practice as a discipline for environmental stewardship.

### POSITIVE TOURISM IMPACT

To boost the local tourism economy by promoting partnerships with providers of kayak rental, boat charters, and other sustainable tourism services, for visitors to experience the Sanctuary's art and nature without negative impact to the natural environment. Created on land in artists' studios, sculptures will be transported by boat from working quays in the area, and after installation there will be sea access only, to the sculpture site, ensuring minimal impact on local residents

## Environmental Protection

Through this sanctuary, we aim to protect and rejuvenate the local marine ecosystem while educating visitors about the crucial role that biodiversity plays in maintaining the health of our oceans. This project balances environmental protection with cultural enrichment, highlighting the beauty and fragility of the underwater world.



## Project Description

### THE UNDERWATER SCULPTURE SANCTUARY

The underwater garden will feature sculptures between Illauncreeveen and Gun Point in Bantry Bay, designed to act as artificial reefs, blending aesthetics with function. These sculptures support biodiversity by creating protected habitats for marine species, while engaging viewers with the beauty and fragility of marine life.

### INTERSECTION OF ART AND SCIENCE

This project is innovative in its integration of art with scientific research. Sculptures will be crafted to foster marine life, while eco-acoustic and visual monitoring devices capture data on biodiversity and environmental changes; artistic creation supporting marine regeneration.

### REMOTE ACCESS AND LIVE-STREAMING

Underwater and land-based live-stream cameras will provide continuous access to the Sanctuary, underwater and on the island of Illauncreeveen. Through global networking viewers will be able to witness the habitat in its natural state without physical disruption, observing art, marine life, and the rhythms of nature while learning about conservation.

### ARTISTIC LINKS

Ongoing collaboration has been initiated with MTU Crawford College of Art & Design; University College Cork; Cork Film Centre; TU Dublin's Sherkin Island MA in Art; and Uillinn/West Cork Arts Centre.

### SCIENTIFIC MONITORING AND RESEARCH

The Sounds of Water and Land – *Glór Uisce agus Tallamh* project, initiated by the University of Zurich, utilises eco-acoustic sensors to monitor biodiversity and environmental factors such as microclimate, water salinity and temperature. This data informs conservation strategies and adds a scientific depth to the artistic installations, allowing viewers and researchers alike to see and understand the impact of environmental protection efforts.



**top** Sounds of Water & Land researcher Marcus Maeder

**bottom** Starfish examining an underwater monitor

GLENGARRIFF  
HARBOUR

Gun Point

Illauncreeveen  
Island

12 HA area  
proposed  
for Seabed  
Sanctuary

