



CASE STUDY

Providing vital policy advice to mitigate the effects of the Port of Holyhead closure on industry and the public



The Marine Institute's Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) provided vital advice to the Department of Transport in relation to the closure of the Port of Holyhead following storm damage in late 2024/early 2025.

This advice provided a series of actions that had a profound and immediate impact on the creation of alternative shipping services and routings on the Irish Sea, thus helping to support a vital sector in Ireland's Blue Economy.



In mid-December 2024, the Port of Holyhead in North Wales was forced to close due to severe storm damage to a mooring dolphin that enables vessels to berth in the port. As a result, the services offered by both Irish Ferries and Stena Line from Dublin to Holyhead, amounting to 102 sailings per week, were cancelled.





This affected passenger traffic during the busy Christmas and New Year period and also had a huge impact on freight traffic – many goods being shipped between Holyhead and Dublin were delayed as vessels couldn't dock.



The IMDO provided policy advice to the Department of Transport in relation to the closure of Holyhead Port due to the storm damage. The advice was compiled in real time and delivered through a Ministerial Taskforce as the full ramifications of the closure of the port unfolded, and was central to the mitigation and recovery measures that were put in place.





The impacts of this work carried out by the IMDO were enormous for Irish industry and for tourism traffic. The policy advice provided to the Department of Transport provided a series of actions that had an immediate impact on the creation of alternative shipping services and routings on the Irish Sea. Connectivity was maintained for freight and passenger traffic throughout one of the busiest periods of the year.





The policy advice had national impact by directly informing recommendations from the IMDO in its Port Network report. These recommendations sought to formalise contingency planning for high-impact maritime disruptions, pre-identify substitutable routes, and coordinate activation procedures.





It also reinforced the need to address Dublin Port's long-term capacity constraints, as overflow traffic will likely redistribute along similar patterns observed in this event.





The Holyhead Port closure became an empirical stress-test for Ireland's maritime freight network, offering insights that have reshaped national policy thinking on resilience, infrastructure planning, and strategic risk management.



Want to learn more about
the impact of this project?



Read the Marine Institute's **Annual Impact Report**
to see how we are supporting Ireland's Blue Economy.