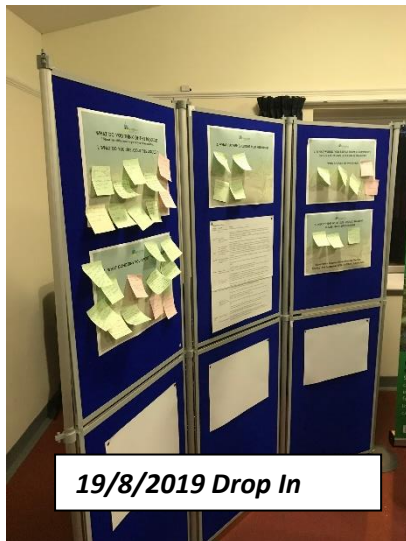


Existing Stakeholder engagement

Throughout the summer period of 2019, the Seagrass Ocean Rescue project has undertaken a range of stakeholder engagement activities about the proposed habitat restoration. Since being appointed in July 2019, this has been led by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum in conjunction with Swansea University and the Special Area of Conservation.



26/7/2019 Fete



19/8/2019 Drop In



2/9/2019 Shore Site Visit



11/10/2019 Presentation, Q&A



24/9/2019 Drop In

The following provides a complete list of these activities:

Date	Nature of engagement	Category	Attendees
06/12/2018	Enquiry	Statutory Meeting	WG
	Enquiry	Statutory Meeting	
07/03/2019	Regulatory meeting	Statutory Meeting	SAC, POMH
03/04/2019	Landowner license enquiry	Email correspondence	TCE
17/04/2019	VCB licence engagement	Statutory Meeting	Dale Yacht Club
	Meeting with fisher	Community Meeting	1
23/07/2019	Presentation at the Pembrokeshire SAC Joint Relevant Authorities / Welsh Government Marine & Fisheries Division meeting	Statutory Meeting	WG, NRW, PNPA, POMH
08/07/2019	Project Presentation	Community Meeting	Dale Community Council
26/07/2019	Information stand at Village Fete	Public Event	10
31/07/2019	Site visit via boat to site Project Presentation	Community Meeting	15
19/08/2019	Information session with information boards and displays	Community Drop In	50
24/08/2019	Information Stand at Dale Village Festival	Public Event	10
02/09/2019	Shore visit at low spring tide	Community Meeting	10
	Meeting discussion alternative locations	Small group meeting	Dale Yacht Club officers 3
	Project Presentation; included an extensive question and answer session	Community Meeting	23
24/09/2019	Information session with information boards and displays and one to one meeting with a local fisher	Community Drop In	22
26/09/2019	Dale Fort Schools Activity	School Event	20
07/10/2019	Project Presentation & Q&A, including one to one meeting with a local fisher	Community Meeting	22
		Total directly engagements*	172

**Please note that this is approximately 63 individuals who may have attended more than one event*

Information Dissemination

In support of these public engagement events a number of information sources and methodologies were set up or circulated in order to promulgate accurate information about the project and to ensure transparency of concerns and proposed solutions. These were as follows:

Creation of a project specific webpage for the general public to learn more about the project, provide feedback and as a collation point for all concerns raised.

- The project information website, hosted by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum: <https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/seagrassoceanrescue/>
- outlines the scope of the project and its benefits.
- All communicated concerns have been collated (updated after each event) to identify questions and provide answers, reassurances and justification in the [FAQs](#) section
- This includes a feedback form seeking views on the nature of the project, its location, ongoing engagement and information requirements.

Direct engagement with local stakeholders

- Invites via email (and post when someone expressed not being on email) to mailing list (90 people) for all public events listed, these included a link to information page on PCF website.
 - Site visit by boat and community presentation 31 July
 - Drop in Meeting 19 August
 - Shore visit and community meeting 2 September
 - Drop in event 24 September
 - Community meeting 7 October
 - Updates on key communications – revised planting options
- Three hardcopy letters have been sent out in order to contact particular stakeholders not engaged through online or email forums.
- Poster invites to all meetings/events on village noticeboard next to the community hall, in the Dale Yacht Club building, on the pub wall.
- Articles in Peninsular Papers, the local community newsletter
- Feedback received from Dale Community Council (Appendix 3)
- Feedback received from Dale Yacht Club (Appendix 4)

Direct responses to 13 emails from local stakeholders (anonymised versions included in appendix 1)

Direct contact with 5 individual stakeholders (phone or meeting if requested)

- One to one meeting with the principal fisher in April 2019 and on three occasions since
- Phone calls followed by one to one meeting with main mooring servicing organisation and local business



Seagrass Ocean Rescue – Restoring Seagrass in Dale

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation are in the early stages of a project working with Dale Ocean Rescue, WIP and Swansea University to restore seagrass meadows in Dale, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation. Our aims are to ensure that local users and the community are properly involved, so that those who enjoy or work in the sea around Dale have an opportunity to share their views and help decide on the location for this exciting new project.

The project plans to restore seagrass in a small experimental two hectare area (approximately two rugby pitches) in collaboration with local people in Dale. We want to ensure that those who enjoy or work in the sea around Dale have an opportunity to share their views about this exciting new project.

As much as 82% of the UK's seagrass has been lost, restoring it is vital for ocean health. Seagrass has huge benefits: it can protect coasts, improve water filtration and plays the following important roles:

- **Fisheries Support** – 20% of the world's oyster fisheries are supported by seagrass meadows as fish nurseries.
- **Biodiversity Support** – 50 species of fish live in or visit UK seagrass, supporting 30 times more animals than nearby meadows.
- **Fight Climate Change** – Seagrasses store carbon 30 times faster than forests. Restoring them traps carbon dioxide.

[Read the full press release about the project here](#)

FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED

The next meeting (Options Choices workshop) will be on 22nd October 7-9pm at Dale Pen Field Studies Centre, in the Library, see invite [here](#).

Please see information from events held below:

- 7th October – view presentation by Dr Richard Unsworth and click here for notes from the meeting
- 24th September – please see options presented and provide your feedback.
- 2nd September – see presentation slides and minutes.

- Telecon contact with community councillor, fisher, commercial boat operators to update and engage directly

As of 02/09/2019 significant revision of the project area was deemed necessary due to local stakeholder pushback (see section below). In parallel to this a number of activities were undertaken to further interrogate local opinion of the options. These included:

Revised options (six total) for planting locations

- Revised options were sent to Dale Yacht Club and Dale Community Council on 6/9/2019 for review in committee meetings/ wider consultation by these bodies.

Site visit and stakeholder discussion session at an existing seagrass site – Porthdinllaen

- Attended by Dale Yacht Club Commodore and reported back in Community meeting 7/10/19

Feedback via Survey form on PCF website:

- To date (4th October 2019) 13 responses received (see appendices)

Key Issues raised through stakeholder engagement

A range of issues have been raised by stakeholders both in the local community of Dale and the wider area, these can be grouped into six main points:

- **Insufficient initial consultation**
 - Many stakeholders felt that the period of consultation around this proposed project was too short and that early consultation was insufficient. Some individuals were aggrieved that Swansea University had applied for a band 1 marine licence without first consulting with members of the community. In addition, some members of the local community felt that the early presentation to the Dale Yacht Club only engaged the yachting community (many whom were not felt to be local to Dale) and not people who actually live in the village of Dale. As a result of the insufficient engagement, many people who live locally felt there was insufficient information available about the project.
- **Future conservation management**
 - The majority of local stakeholders, including the local Dale Community Council, many mooring holders, fishermen and local residents share a sense of fear about the consequences of seagrass being planted in Dale Bay on the future conservation management of the area. These fears emanate from the unsuccessful 2012 Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zone consultation led by the Welsh Government within which the whole of Dale Bay was proposed as a candidate MCZ.
- **Damage to fisheries activities**
 - The exact footprint of the previous band 1 marine licence (DEML1925) for a proposed seagrass meadow in Dale Bay was considered by local fishers (and many other local people in their support) to be within an area of high fishing activity. Such activity is from 'keep pots', gill netting and shrimp potting. In addition, some people have raised the point that the intertidal area is highly utilised for recreational shellfish collections (mainly razor clams).
 - In addition to the concerns with respect to effects on local fisheries, some individuals have questioned the rationale for planting seagrass given the continued use of the area by a local bottom trawler.
- **Concerns about boating**

The boating focussed stakeholders of Dale Bay raised a series of concerns with respect to their physical ability to continue mooring boats in Dale Bay and using Dale bay as a site for boating activity. These concerns focus around four main points:

 - *Navigation*
 - Some boaters were concerned that the growth of seagrass in the bay would lead to a reduction in the ability of boats to navigate and obtain safe passage.
 - *Winterizing of moorings*
 - Some yacht mooring holders raised the concern that were seagrass to spread throughout the moorings area the oxidising effect this has on sediments would prevent the traditional process of winterizing of the mooring.
 - *Clogging of engines*

- A range of fears were presented that seagrass in the water column would clog up the coolant water intake on engines or become sucked up and block the impeller.
 - *Propeller damage and entanglement*
 - Fears were described by fishers and boat owners that the potential spread of seagrass in Dale could lead to boat propellers becoming fouled with seagrass and becoming damaged. One fisherman had taken images of some seagrass from a local patch tangled round his propeller.
- **Water quality concerns**
 - Some individuals have raised concerns that the water quality in Dale Bay is unsuitable for seagrass due to a series of sewage release events witnessed locally.
- **Procedural issues**
 - One concerned individual has questioned the procedural adequacy of the project and the quality of the project management of the activities. The same concerned local resident raised a series of concerns with respect to whether the project is a 'restoration' or a 'planting' project due to inadequate and contradictory information about historical seagrass presence in Dale, concerns about the parking of project vehicles, and the inadequacy about details of past experiments.
- **What are the benefits for Dale community?**
 - A number of individuals have questioned whether the project would have any benefits for local people.

Response to stakeholder concerns

This period of consultation has led Swansea University to undertake the following revisions to their initial proposal outlined in DEML1925 resulting in this new proposal for a band 2 marine licence and the provision of the following information:

- ***In response to the points raised regards 'Insufficient initial consultation'***
 - Project lead, Richard Unsworth gave a public apology to attendees at the public meeting on 2nd September about the delayed stakeholder engagement during the early part of 2019, however since the start of July 2019 there has been extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders to make up for this delay - as documented above. This includes the creation of a Frequently Asked Questions list. The project has received many important questions from the general public, both through direct responses using the project online feedback page or via questions at events and meetings. In response to this, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and their responses have been posted online.
 - Planting was originally hoped to occur this October/November, but the team are willing to delay this linked around the new application for a band 2 marine licence. The delay is a result in particular of the letter from the Dale Community Council on 19th September to put the project on hold whilst there are outstanding issues of concern and to provide additional time for further consultation with the community stakeholders.

- Richard Unsworth gave a renewed 'back to basics' talk about the proposed project at the Dale Fort on the 7th October 2019. This has been recorded and is available to view at https://youtu.be/88qzlnk_h2l
- ***In response to the points raised regards 'Future conservation management'***
 - Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have been approached to provide reassurances regarding future conservation action of the proposed new seagrass meadow. An email recently received from NRW is included within this application. This was received just prior to the public drop-in on 24th September and displayed and discussed with attendees. The team will continue to seek further information and reassurances to pass on. In addition to this, Swansea University have obtained letters of support for the project from a range of stakeholders, these are attached. The focus of these letters is the support for the approach of the project that seeks to restore seagrass without impacting local livelihoods (Milford haven port Authority, Pembrokeshire National Park Authority). In addition to these letters of support we have also obtained letters of support for the project and the long-term support for the view that any future MCZ designation should respect the ethos of the proposed project and respect the livelihoods and activities of local people.
- ***In response to the points raised regards 'damage to fisheries activities'***
 - Upon realisation from community feedback that the proposed footprint of the original marine licence application was unsuitable due to fishing and mooring interactions, Swansea University reconsidered the site design. After liaising with fishing and mooring interests and undertaking further field surveys, Swansea University came up with a total of 6 potential revised options for planting all of which are within the proposed search area applied for within this current band 2 marine licence application. In addition, a small area in Castle Bay potentially able to take a small section of the proposed planting has been proposed by a local fisher to be viable and is therefore included in this application.
- ***In response to the points raised regards 'Concerns about boating'***
 - During the public meeting on the 2nd of September and during the public drop in session on the 24th September, information was provided to stakeholders about the presence of seagrass in harbours and ports throughout the world and including many in the UK. In those locations seagrass is not known to prevent winterizing of moorings, reduce navigation, clog engines or result in propeller entanglement. Specific sites such as Porthdinllaen, Studland bay, Fowey River, Cawsand in Plymouth and the Helford River were mentioned as examples of such. In response to these concerns, the project team at Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum organised a trip to Porthdinllaen for any interested parties to visit an active boating harbour where seagrass is highly abundant to witness that the seagrass does not impede upon boating activities. The Commodore of the Yacht club visited Porthdinllaen and was able to speak with a range of local boaters to verify these claims. In addition to this information we have included with this application a series of statements from organisations operating boating activities without difficulty in areas of seagrass in the UK.

- ***In response to the points raised regards 'Water quality concerns'***
 - Although water quality is an issue in the Milford Haven waterway due to elevated levels of nutrients (predominantly from land run-off), levels of nutrients (N and P) in Dale Bay (within existing small seagrass patches) were recorded to be lower than at other sites in the Haven and throughout the UK. Dale was specifically chosen, over and above other potential seagrass sites in the waterway, due to the lower levels of nutrient pollution here.
 - In addition, we have raised the fact with a number of these stakeholders that seagrass helps to remove nitrogen from the water column. If the proposed meadow is planted this could lead to the locking up of 70kg of nitrogen into the sediments or Dale Bay each year (based on studies on restored seagrass in the US).
- ***In response to the points raised regards 'procedural issues'***

Richard Unsworth explained during the public meeting on the 2nd Sept and the Public drop in session on the 24th September that records of seagrass in Dale Bay exist from the 1950's. This information was also reiterated on the 7th October at the 'back to basics' presentation. This information is present within a report written by Quentin Kay in 1997 and extracts from the relevant pages are included with this present application. This indicates seagrass was once present in Dale Bay and in addition a small patch of seagrass has recently been found to exist once more.
- ***In response to the points raised regards 'What are the benefits for Dale community?'***

Seagrass provides extensive benefits to humans known as ecosystem services. At a local level the benefits are increased biodiversity and potentially associated improved fisheries productivity. This is because seagrass provides an important habitat for animals to hide within and catch prey.

Seagrasses also hold sediments together, and their presence baffles wave energy reducing coastal erosion and helping sea defence. This is especially important given the current and proposed future sea-level rise in Milford Haven Waterway.

By trapping particles and absorbing nutrients seagrasses planted in Dale have the potential to improve water quality.

Future Stakeholder engagement

- This proposal seeks to obtain approval for the planting of 2 hectares of seagrass within a general search area of Dale Bay. We propose to undertake further engagement activities with local stakeholders in order to determine a suitable exact footprint of the proposed 2 hectares within this general area.
- Once a site has been agreed a Seagrass Community Project Group will be formed to manage the community's interests. As agreed in previous community meetings this group needs to comprise representatives from the community and all user groups as well as statutory organisations.

APPENDIX 1: Direct responses feedback from local stakeholders

Email feedback to PCF:

Fishers

These fishers, who have fished for shellfish for 24 years from Dale, and store catch in allotted store pot area of Frenchmans Bay, in 5 store pots. They believe to be outside depth restrictions for seagrass. They wrote expressing support for project. When speaking to them 1-1 it was expressed that only really concerned about future protection measures and ability to store keep pots there.

Mooring holders:

- A) (14/8) Requesting further info, followed by email (25/8) stating support for seagrass meadows thriving along Welsh coast, but that Dale Bay is a bad place to start. The proposed original site is close to this person's mooring, concern on 'sewage plume travelling through area' affecting any seagrass planting, and concern about successful seagrass leading to further regulation, or prohibiting lure fishing in future. (29/8) further questions about sewage outflow and Welsh Water's response to this query. Also concern about timing of consultation of community after Licence Band 1 application. Questions around site selection, prop fouling and spreading of seagrass and restrictions in future. These were answered in FAQ document and communicated. Follow up email (6/9) expressed concern about sewage issue. Concern of planting area being in mooring area. Concern about timing and whether mooring holders have been 'kept ignorant' until they vacate the moorings. Concern about protection of seagrass meadow sites by Countryside and Wildlife Act and DEFRA. Concern about Poole removing moorings in seagrass meadows. Question about Port Authority in relation to restrictions. Concern that if seagrass area is thriving restrictions may occur for leisure and commercial fishers. Further expression that they still think this is a good and essential project, but in the wrong place and not delivered in the correct manner.
- B) Mooring holder (20/8) expressing strong feelings that project should go ahead, but to ensure fishing activity can continue, asking whether seagrass will be deep enough to never have to be in contact with props, expression that the Steering Group that is set up must make considerable efforts to get the "powers that be" to reassure the Community that small scale fishermen and the Dale VCB will be protected from any legislation arising from conservation issues that a seagrass plantation may provoke".
- C) (5/9) Appreciation that the future of our own lives and the lives of future generations is absolutely threatened by the current approach to the environment and how the successful increase in areas of the growth of seagrass is extremely positive. Also expression that not causing disruption to current use of waterway is important, and concern about lack of future plan when seagrass is successful in terms of current activity threatening seagrass. This is causing distress with the writers. The timing of the projected planting dates (as stated in autumn 2019) make discussions difficult. They see as paramount that a plan is facilitated that works for both seagrass and local area.
- D) (21/9) expression of whole-hearted support to the project and noting that they see no evidence that seagrass would negatively effect the use of the harbour. The long term benefits to those using harbour and the environment mean they feel project should go ahead. Whilst expressing that concerns should be explored by project team and those involved in conservation and environmental protection in the area.

E) (7/10) Expression 'wholeheartedly support this experiment and I know several other Yacht Club members and mooring holders who do so as well'. We all need to support anything that can hopefully counter the effect of what we have done to our planet.

F) (7/10) Expressed disappointment at the response from both the Community Council and Yacht Club (note -both requested further information addressing concerns before being able to support the project) and the expression of the feeling that both organisations do not truly represent the opinions of the Dale community and Yacht Club members. The person expressed that since the Yacht Club meeting, where seagrass was discussed, information has been sent to members and mooring holders so they are now better informed but suggested a further way is facilitated to feed back on the project and proposed locations options.

Wider community:

G) Expression of support for the project

H) Expression of support for the project, specifically in relation to climate mitigation

I) Communications with one of the mooring servicing organisations regarding methodology of those servicing their own moorings, in relation to 'dragging moorings to service' concerns.

J) Expression from Community Councillor to meet and clarify position going forward. Followed up with email offering meeting between Councillor and Project Lead.

APPENDIX 2: Survey Responses

APPENDIX 3: Feedback from Dale Yacht Club following their meeting 9/9/2019:

Dear Pembrokeshire Coastal forum,

The Sea Grass Project was discussed at the Community Council meeting held on Monday the 9th September. Several residents of Dale were also present.

Although the project seems to be very interesting the Council and residents feel that there has not been enough information, collaboration, or discussion. Many issues about the project have not been addressed, importantly no safeguarding concerning the lively hoods or recreational interests have been given.

The initial trial of the sea grass began before there had been any involvement or discussion with the community, fishermen or boat owners.

The Council have great concerns over the project and are all in agreement for the project to be put on hold.

Yours sincerely,

Dale Community Council Clerk

APPENDIX 4: Feedback from Dale Yacht Club following their meeting 11/9/2019:

We had a very detailed discussion on Wednesday night.

Everyone was in favour of the principle of the project.

Three members were unequivocally in favour of the project going ahead.

Six out of 9 members recommended delaying until more information was forthcoming about experience of seagrass meadows among moorings in other places such as Porthdinllaen and Poole Harbour viz. its spread and any consequences of this, its effect on mooring management, the possibilities of propeller fouling or water intake or impeller blocking. So this is the Yacht Club's position at present.

There is still an underlying concern about a possible conservation order in the future preventing fishing if the meadow is very successful.

Overall Dale YC very much hopes that ultimately you will be able to proceed with the project in Dale.

As many of the mooring holders are not members of the Yacht Club, we will be circulating your information to them separately and asking them to comment directly to you.

Best wishes

Commodore DYC