



South and West Wales
De a Gorllewin Cymru

Sue Burton
SAC Officer
Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation
Suite 5 Cedar Court
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire, SA73 3LS

16 October 2019

Dear Sue,

Seagrass Ocean Rescue – a proposed seagrass restoration project in Dale Bay.

I am writing in my capacity as Conservation Manager for The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW), to support the above proposal.

WTSWW is a local conservation charity working to conserve all forms of wildlife. In this part of Wales we have been protecting wildlife for over 80 years. We manage over 100 nature reserves and work in partnership with many other local organisations. As well as managing nature reserves for wildlife and people, we campaign against damaging development, provide land management advice and help people of all ages to understand, appreciate and enjoy their local wildlife. We also have a Living Seas team based in New Quay, Cardigan Bay, who undertake marine monitoring, education and advocacy work.

In close proximity to this proposed project, we manage Skomer Island NNR, and own and manage Skokholm Island NNR. On Skomer we work closely with Natural Resources Wales' staff team who care for the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Wales' only MCZ. The seagrass bed in North Haven, Skomer, is one of the MCZ features and it is actually protected from boats' anchors in that location by the provision of visitor moorings just outside the bed.

We fully support the aim to restore seagrass beds to the Dale area of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. Both the proposed project and our two islands fall within this same SAC. As a Wildlife Trust we are also a voluntary organisation and fully support the aim to involve the local community in this initiative; in our experience this is essential to gaining local support and sustainability for project outcomes in the long run.

Conservation initiatives are most successful when they are able to accommodate multiple stakeholder groups and activities. These proposals include habitat creation and restoration in an area used for existing activities such as mooring, and do not propose to alter current recreational and business use. Successful delivery of this project could provide an invaluable model for future initiatives elsewhere. Skomer has shown that seagrass and recreational mooring can co-exist in close proximity. The proposed project offers more opportunities to develop transferrable knowledge in seagrass

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bed creation. With seagrass beds having suffered up to 92% losses in extent across the UK, and with the beds supporting many other mobile species (including some of commercial interest), this is a high priority for conservation action that also has the potential to provide multiple benefits for other stakeholders.

At the time of writing we have seen the recently released *State of Nature* report document net declines in average species' abundance and distribution, with 15% of the species documented being categorised as 'threatened', alongside a prediction that 2020 biodiversity targets will be missed. The twin extinction and climate crises are finally making headlines. It is clear that to address declines, novel solutions will need to be tested and we will have to find ways to allow wildlife to thrive alongside our busy lives.

As such we fully support the intentions of this project and wish it every success.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LW', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lizzie Wilberforce
Conservation Manager