

**WWF-UK**

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To the Dale Community,

WWF has a long and deep experience of working on ocean issues across the globe. We work with communities, governments and businesses to end support for damaging activities and invest in creating a healthy marine environment that is productive and provides benefits for people that depend on it for their livelihoods and wellbeing. In February of this year WWF, Sky Ocean Rescue and Swansea University formed a 2 year partnership with the ambition of demonstrating that seagrass restoration is both feasible at large scale and important for the health and productivity of our seas and coasts, providing benefits to people in the area, as well as a tool to help tackle climate change. With more than 92% of UK's seagrass already gone we hope to develop a model that others can use to restore seagrass and ocean health and productivity in their area.

Based on the research of Swansea University, Dale was selected as an ideal location for seagrass restoration and to showcase that seagrass and local activities can exist in harmony. The project partners believe that for the project to be successful local stakeholders need to be consulted and involved in the project design, which is why Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum are involved to facilitate that process with awareness and consultation activities underway. This consultation is important, as an objective of the project is to ensure seagrass restoration does not negatively impact local livelihoods nor recreational activities, but instead show how it is beneficial to people in the area.

WWF, along with our partners, have listened to the feedback provided by the Dale community from consultations to date and are working to provide answers to questions and solutions to concerns. One such example being Swansea University's exploration of alternative location options for the seagrass in Dale to minimise the concern over any chance of negative impacts to local users of the area. Another is to provide more time for consultation. We understand that one of the principal sources of concern within the local community relates to the possibility of a retrospective increase in marine conservation designation to the Dale area in order to protect the new seagrass. The project hopes to show as its founding principle that communities will support seagrass restoration as they recognise the benefits it provides without impact on their daily activities. It is our view in this instance that government authorities would not need to enact conservation legislation where human use and important habitats are in harmony. This is recognised by the Welsh Government and NRW, and is evident in the NRW correspondence from the Marine and Coastal Policy and Planning Team Leader on 24th September 2019. At WWF we also recognise the importance of having the Special Area of Conservation, the Milford Haven Port Authority and the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority in support of the principles of this project and the need for it to support local livelihoods. If stakeholders remain anxious about future limitations to activities due to a new seagrass bed, they will be able to seek further reassurances directly from NRW during the new marine tier 2 license process that the project needs for alternate sites, which requires a period of formal public consultation.

WWF will support the community in ensuring that existing activity (particularly moorings and fishing) are not negatively impacted by the seagrass, and in following-up with NRW and Welsh Government to secure this, both now and in the future. WWF is committed to ensuring this project is supported by local community and user groups and will continue to support partner work to find solutions to concerns raised. The users and Dale community are an important part of this project, and we genuinely believe that many positive spin-offs will result from the seagrass work which will not only benefit the local community in terms of local tourism and the commitment to the local natural environment on which that depends, but also the important contribution to global climate change upon which all our livelihoods and interests lie.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ricardo', is centered on a light blue rectangular background.

Ricardo Zanre
WWF UK Marine Programme Manager