

Dale Seagrass Stakeholder Meeting

Wednesday 3rd March 7-8.30pm on Zoom

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of last meeting on 23rd November 2020 and actions
3. Seagrass update
4. Visitor moorings arrangements
5. Signage
6. Any other business.

1. Welcome

Fil welcomed all to the meeting. Attendees were as below.

CHAIR and Moorings Officer	Fil	Marshall	Present
Dale Yacht Club Commodore	Kevin	Rogers	Present
Dale Yacht Club (DYC)	John	Walmsley	Present
Dale Yacht Club (DYC)	John	Mecklenburgh	Present
Dale Yacht Club (DYC)	John	Bramley	Present
Dale Community Council (DCC)	Peter	Morgan	
Community	Fr Andrew	Johnson	
Community	Tina	Rogers	Present
Community/fishers	Wyn	Hopkins	Present
FSC Dale Fort	Fiona	Day	
Pembrokeshire Marine SAC	Sue	Burton	Present
Swansea University	Richard	Unsworth	Present
WWF	Ricardo	Zanre	Present
Port of Milford Haven	Brian	MacFarlane	Present
NRW*	Anne	Bunker	

*NRW is to be a corresponding member, unless specifically requested to join a meeting. Otherwise, representation for NRW will be via the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer (likewise National Park, County Council). Sue will keep the Relevant Authorities Group for the Special Area of Conservation informed on the work of the Dale Seagrass Stakeholder Group (DSSG).

2. Minutes of last meeting on 23rd November 2020 and actions

Richard's update covered content from the last meeting. Sue ran through the actions arising at the end of the meeting. These were either completed or ongoing in which case they were carried forward. Since the last meeting members had agreed that Sue take on the role of secretary.

3. Seagrass update (Dr Richard Unsworth, Swansea University)

There wasn't too much to report since the last meeting, but Richard ran through a few points.

Richard responded to a question posed following the last meeting about the number of seeds planted and the license. He confirmed that original planting comprised 750,000 seeds. A further 450,000 were planted in the autumn 2020 to infill gaps in the bed so an excess of one million seeds had been planted in the restoration plot. All seed numbers were estimates and not all seeds would be viable. The license did not stipulate how many seeds could be planted. Conditions within the method statement had been met. In fact, the infrastructure (ropes) were less than in the license as many had been removed post planting. In addition, the second phase of planting had used finer thread (1/3 the diameter of the original rope as this had not rotted as quickly as anticipated) and many seed bags had been planted directly into the sediment by divers. The “one million seeds” had been picked up and promoted in public relations as an attractive target to capture the public’s attention.

Some members of the research team had visited Dale in recent days to check a light logger and take samples from the original research plots. They had noticed missing buoyage from the restoration plot but weren’t able to check this due to the state of tide. Richard would check with them which buoys were missing, but as they were due to be replaced soon it was not too important. The seagrass from the old research plots would be moved into the restoration plot in May as long as circumstances allowed. Ropes within this area would be removed then too. Fil mentioned that fishers had recently commented on these.

It was intended to have a quick look at the restoration plot hopefully in May, but the main monitoring visit would be in the autumn at which point a detailed assessment of seagrass growth would be made.

The three visitor moorings and the signage buoys were due to be deployed by Rudders during the next good low tide at the end of the month. The signage buoys may need to be added to post deployment as the company that was making them had gone bust.

Richard had discussed the Seagrass Ecosystem Responsible Fisher Award (SERF) with Mark Gainfort. This will be a one-fisher pilot scheme initially. Mark was keen to develop a logo associated with this; this was being done by Wyn’s daughter and wife. Richard and Wyn would get in touch after the meeting to share ideas and progress this. Richard would further discuss details of the pilot with Fil and Sue, drawing particularly on Fil’s fisheries management experience. The launch of the pilot is hoped to take place by the end of the month.

Richard informed members that the experience and learning from Dale was being shared with others to aid restoration elsewhere, and also to help inform stakeholder engagement for all project work whether seagrass related or not. A Welsh Seagrass Network was being facilitated by Project Seagrass. Sue mentioned that she had had the Marine Management Organisation in England in touch to seek advice in relation to management of seagrass in Studland Bay. The Dale trial was always intended to help inform the wider picture for seagrass conservation and it was good to see that this was happening.

4. Visitor moorings arrangements

Discussion was needed and a group decision over whether to consider charging for use of visitor moorings and if so how.

Kevin commented that if there was a possibility of revenue from use of the moorings then it was worth exploring. He had been considering options and felt that physical collection of fees would be onerous, and an online mechanism would be best, especially considering that users of visitor buoys would not

always come ashore. Kevin's personal suggestion was to consider a voluntary contribution/donation of £10 per night. Information to assist this could be placed on a tag on the buoy/pick-up which would include a website address (he had registered daleseagrass.org) and then payment could perhaps be made using PayPal or similar. Such a set-up would require very little overheads.

Members discussed the idea and it was felt that such a pragmatic simple idea would be the best way forward (aided by the new phone mast which should ensure good signal coverage in the bay). Honesty boxes were discussed as was potential abuse of the moorings by overlong stays although it was felt that gentle persuasion by locals would help users to show consideration to others. Monitoring use would be advantageous, but it was felt that even if half of users made a contribution it was still better than nothing.

The proposal for a voluntary contribution for use of visitor moorings (suggested donation of £10 per night) supported by an online mechanism was made by John B. Donations would go towards future maintenance of the buoys as required. The proposal was unanimously accepted by all members present.

Richard confirmed that funds were currently available to maintain the buoys for at least the next 5 years possibly longer. Sue added that she had been exploring means to extend this support via other means. Maintenance was not cheap however and as it was hoped that the visitor buoys would be a useful facility in the long-term, any means of ensuring their continued existence would be sensible to pursue.

Kevin offered to provide a technical proposal to outline the requirements/options to support online donations. This was welcomed by the Group.

Following discussion about the practicalities of handling funds, and the possibilities for charitable status to avoid tax and the potential of community interest companies, Tina offered to explore the best means for the Group. Richard offered Project Seagrass as an established charity as an option if that was needed. John M added that the Dale Forum had a bank account that local Groups made use of. It was felt that a separate independent entity might be preferable. This would need to display charitable aims and possibly incorporate a means of enabling any funds excess to mooring maintenance requirements to be used for the benefit of the local community.

5. Signage

Sue informed all that funds were available through Project Seagrass that could be used to place some signage about seagrass in the village. She had been in touch with Dale Community Council and a suggestion had been put forward to replace the old sign by the starting hut. The board could contain seagrass information (which could be changed over time as required) but would also contain space available for council/community notices as required. The main council notice board was at the top of the slipway and this area was felt to be a better location for signage visible to most visitors, but the starting hut did directly overlook the seagrass area. Sue added that there could be potential for additional signage near the watersports/café complex but replacing the old sign by the starting hut would avoid any planning issues with the National Park. Sue would check any restrictions/conditions with the National Parks and also Myrddin Dennis Pembrokeshire County Council Beach Warden.

There was enthusiasm from members for signage to raise awareness of the seagrass with visitors to the area.

6. AOB

Fil brought up the subject of membership of the Group. With the changes to water sports activity provision in Dale did members feel that Celtic Sea Watersports (Rhys and Max) and Windswept (Sarah Bagley) should be invited to sit on the Group? Members were very happy for invitations to be extended. Sue agreed to write and invite them to the Group. It was felt that they would be good ambassadors for the seagrass whilst out on the water. John M added that Celtic Sea Watersports were keen to offer snorkelling too. Richard commented that, through funding from Sky, there was a lot of educational and activity seagrass related material that could be of interest and he would be happy to pass that on. Sue offered to include mention of the information when she contacted them.

Summary of actions:

Action	Who	When
Share ideas on SERF logo	Richard /Wyn	After meeting
Finalise details of SERF trial	Richard/ Fil / Sue	By the end of March
Share a technical proposal for collection of donations for visitor moorings	Kevin	After meeting
Share information/option(s) for practical means of handling funds into the future	Tina	After meeting
Agree on mechanisms for accepting/managing donations	Fil / All members	Asap
Add agreed mooring arrangement details to visitor buoys	Richard	Asap as buoys due to be deployed end March (can be added afterwards if necessary)
Check on signage with PCNPA and PCC and progress	Sue	After meeting (to be sorted by end of March)
Invite Celtic Sea Watersports and Windswept onto the DSSG	Sue	After meeting
Agree update for Peninsular Papers	Sue to circulate to DSSG group	By 21 March
Update https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/seagrassoceanrescue/ with latest update/ minutes from DSSG meeting	Sue to send to Jetske, PCF	When content agreed
Date of next meeting (generally quarterly) - to be agreed and arranged	Fil / Sue	June?