



ReMeMaRe conference 2026

Restoring estuarine, marine & coastal habitats

Delegate Notes



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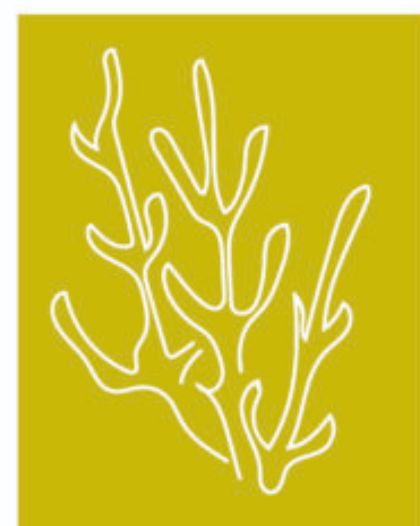


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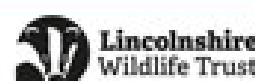
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Conference details



Wi-Fi: NYC_Events, **Password:** 9876543210

Social Media: Please use #ReMeMaRe26 and tag us on the relevant pages:

Linkedin: Environment Agency, Instagram: @envagency

LinkedIn: Ocean and Coastal Futures, Instagram: @oceanandcoastalfutures

Registration: Registration opens at 08.30 on day one and from 08:00 on day two.

Access to the lecture theatre: The main doors into the lecture theatre will close just before the conference starts just before the beginning of each session. If you arrive late or wish to re-enter the theatre after this time, you can still enter but please be mindful of the session taking place.

Timing: A bell will ring 10 minutes before the start of each session and a final reminder will be 3 minutes before the doors close.

Refreshment Breaks: Tea and coffee will be served **during registration on day one and all breaks**. To enable attendees to be seated in the auditorium on time, we will **not** be serving teas/coffee upon arrival on **day 2**.

There are two main refreshment breaks, with savoury food at the first break and refreshments and biscuits in the second. All food is vegetarian or vegan. No food is allowed in the theatre. We recommend that you bring a water bottle.

Wednesday 8th evening reception: Wine and soft drinks will be served from 17:30 - 19:00. The building must be vacated by 19:30.

Networking: A delegate list is available on our website and has been provided in the joining instructions email. There is also a casual pre-conference mixer July 7, [more details here](#).

Photography & filming: Please note that photography and filming is taking place at this event. The photographs and videos may appear on our website or other promotional material. If you would prefer not to be photographed or on video, please let the camera operators or registration desk know.

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Conference details



Q&A: We will be using the Slido app for Q&A. Instructions will be given on the day.

Quiet Space: The allocated quiet space is on the groundfloor of the Scarborough Spa hotel, flanking the Sun Court Enclosure – see the [floor plan](#). You can ask for further details at registration or from one of our dedicated staff.

Comfort: If you need more regular breaks or are uncomfortable sitting for too long, please let a member of our team know at registration – we can provide a holding card that allows you to reserve your preferred seating in the Ocean Room during the sessions, so you can select a space according to your needs. If you need fresh air during the day, you can access the promenade via the foyer. If you leave the venue, remember to take your conference pass with you for re-entrance. The Scarborough Spa is a non-smoking venue.

Feedback: Shortly after the event you will be sent a link to an online evaluation survey.

Conference outputs: The ReMeMaRe online archive will host the programme and delegate notes. The conference keynote presentations and sessions will be recorded.

Valuables: You may store bags and equipment in the Scarborough Spa cloakroom. This room will be kept locked and manned by a Scarborough Spa team member throughout the conference, but we cannot take responsibility or guarantee the safety of your items.

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Venue & accessibility

The conference will once again take place next to the waves, overlooking the beach, at the historic Scarborough Spa. A reception for delegates at the end of the first day will allow an opportunity for informal and lively discussions, as well as a chance to meet with old and new colleagues.

Throughout the two days, you will also have the chance to meet our sponsors and view the posters on display. The town is served by regular trains running between London & Edinburgh, changing at York, and lines from Birmingham, Manchester and the South West.

The event will be held at: Scarborough Spa, Scarborough Spa, South Bay, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 2HD.

A [virtual tour of the venue's main spaces](#) is available on the Scarborough Spa website to help you familiarise yourself with the layout of our public spaces before you arrive.

For all visitor information including venue, how to get there, accessibility, accommodation and local restaurants – [view our summary document here](#)

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ReMeMaRe

ReMeMaRe 2026

We look forward to welcoming you to the Restoring Meadow Marsh and Reef Conference 2026 on 8-9th July. We return to Scarborough to unite restoration practitioners, government leaders, industry innovators, academia and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under a single mission: the large-scale recovery of our coastal and marine environments.

We hope the conference will help you share knowledge, spark new partnerships, and grow the momentum and action to restore our estuaries and seas. The conference provides an energetic space to discuss and exchange knowledge with those at the forefront of the latest developments in coastal restoration science, practice and policy. We hope you will join us.

*Your safety and comfort matter to us. If anything is giving you pause about joining us in person, please get in touch and we'll be happy to talk it through or explore what support we can offer – francesca@coastms.co.uk

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ReMeMaRe 2026

About

ReMeMaRe Restoring Meadow, Marsh and Reef (ReMeMaRe) (pronounced “re-memory”), is an ambitious habitat restoration initiative, which aims to address baseline shift and reverse centuries of decline of three of our priority estuarine and coastal habitats: seagrass meadows, saltmarshes and European native oyster reefs. By restoring these precious estuarine and coastal ecosystems, we are enhancing society's connection to the natural world, whilst delivering Nature-based Solutions (NbS) that address issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, sustainable food, health and well-being, as well as the socio-economic benefits of recreation and tourism that can help to alleviate deprivation in coastal towns.

Ocean and Coastal Futures is on a mission to improve coastal and ocean management. We do this through convening, connecting and spreading knowledge. We are the home of OCF news, jobs and events, including the long-running Coastal Futures conference, which have been focal points for the UK ocean, coastal and water sectors for over three decades. Together with the Environment Agency, we have hosted the annual ocean restoration conference series since 2019.

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Day 1 - Wednesday 8th July 2026: Session 1

8:30	Registration opens	
10:00	Welcome	Roger Proudfoot , Head of Estuaries and CoastThe Environment Agency
		Professor Clare Fitzsimmons , co-chair of Natural England’s Science Advisory Committee (NESAC)
10:10	Video address & panel discussion	Followed by a conversation with: Caroline Price , Head of Environment & Nature (Marine), The Crown Estate Jenni Balmer , Deputy Director for Nature Recovery, The Environment Agency

POLICY IN PRACTICE: ENABLING SCALED-UP RESTORATION

Regularly identified as one of the main hurdles to restoration project delivery, this session takes a deep dive into the current policy and regulation landscape across the UK. Speakers will take a close look at current frameworks across the UK, examining where new policies and regulations are genuinely enabling progress and helping to unlock the scale of restoration required.

10:55	Chair: Eve Leegwater , Senior Advisor in the National Estuaries and Coasts Team: The Environment Agency
	• Matt Uttley, Blue Marine Foundation; Coastal Comeback: Overcoming Policy Challenges to Restoration at Scale • Ness Smith, Our Future Coast/Ness Smith Marine Consulting; Navigating the challenges of abandoned boats in tidal estuaries • Fern Skeldon, Marine Management Organisation; Supporting NBS through ways of working in Marine Licensing • Tara Hooper, Natural England; Exploring options for strategic, spatial marine recovery planning at local scales • Kerry Holbrook, Cornwall Council; Fal Rivers to Reef: Nature Recovery from Source to Sea

Please note that all timings are subject to change

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Day 1 - Wednesday 8th July 2026: Session 2

12:20 **Lunch**

RESTORATION IN ACTION

Highlighting practical experiences and lessons learned from hands on restoration projects across the UK and beyond, this session brings forward case studies that demonstrate restoration in practice, highlighting innovative approaches within individual habitats as well as projects working across the wider seascape or spanning multiple habitats.

Chair: **Alison Debney**, Conservation Lead for UK Nature Recovery: Zoological Society of London

13:30

- **Alexandra Bulgakova**, Marine Conservation Society; Building Regenerative Seascapes with Communities: Early lessons from the Atlantic Coast Programme
- **Milo Oliver**, Mossy Earth; Wilder Firths: Large-scale intertidal seagrass restoration in Scotland
- **Femke van Toor**, Oyster Heaven; Working Towards Scalable Restoration: Experiences from the Field
- **Thea Cox**, Zoological Society of London; Transforming the Thames: Planning and Delivery of a Seascape Recovery Project
- **Jenny Wright**, Solway Firth Partnership and **Barbara Seel**, RSPB; Scaling Saltmarsh Reinforcement in Dumfries & Galloway: A Collaborative SCAMP Approach
- **Jess Sennett-Seale**, Ulster Wildlife; Native oyster restoration in Northern Ireland, working towards ecosystem-scale restoration.

Please note that all timings are subject to change

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Day 1 - Wednesday 8th July 2026: Session 3

15:10 **Refreshment break**

THE ARTS AS A TOOL FOR MARINE RESTORATION

Chair: **Penny Nelson**, The Environment Agency

Interwoven throughout this year's conference is a strong emphasis on the use of the arts as a communication tool and the role creative practice can play in restoration projects, especially in raising awareness and engaging coastal communities.

15:45

By showcasing and celebrating some of these examples across the two day conference, ReMeMaRe 2026 aims to highlight how creativity can open doors, spark conversations and connect with different audiences.

Live showcase featuring; music, short films, dance performances and more.

Panel discussion:

- **Simon Read**, Deben Estuary Partnership
- **Heather Davison-Smith**, Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership
- **Angus Garbutt**, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- **Rhianna Parry**, Bangor University

Closing remarks

17:30 Reception with poster and arts exhibition

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Day 2 - Thursday 9th July 2026: Session 4

8:00 **Registration opens**

9:00 **Welcome** The Environment Agency

ACCELERATING RESTORATION THROUGH INDUSTRY: INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

Marine industries offer unique opportunities for strategic restoration planning and delivery at scale. Bringing an industry perspective to restoration, this session explores how sectors such as offshore wind, ports and navigation, as well as fisheries and aquaculture, can play a pivotal role in driving forward effective, sustainable marine restoration.

Chair: **Jennifer Godwin**, CEO: Seabed User Developer Group (SUDG)

- 9:10
- **Jim Warner**, Harwich Haven Authority; Ports and Habitat Restoration (where coastal dreams and reality meet)
 - **Audrey Jones**, Howell Marine Consulting; Developing a fund to help fast track Marine Nature Recovery
 - **Peter Barham**, Seabed Users and Developers Group; Marine Net Gain - a template for delivering real restoration through partnership
 - **Jacques Villemot**, Rewilding Britain; Harnessing offshore wind to enable rewilding in practice
 - **Frits van den Boogaard**, Royal Smals - Smals Dredging UK Ltd; Saltmarsh Restoration Langstone Harbour; the Next Step
 - **Samir Whitaker**, Ørsted - Delivering towards strategic nature targets through offshore wind

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Day 2 - Thursday 9th July 2026: Session 5

10:40 **Refreshment break**

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN FOCUS: FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

Understanding the benefits and services provided by our marine habitats is essential evidence to attract investment, reduce uncertainty, and communicate future change with local communities. This session will spotlight on the latest science and evidence documenting the key ecosystem services delivered by estuarine and coastal habitats, examining how to turn the latest evidence into a roadmap for recovery.

Chair: Bill Sanderson, Professor of Marine Biodiversity, Heriot-Watt University

- 11:10
- **Charlotte Worrall**, University of Essex; Seasonal variability in CO₂ and CH₄ fluxes for a restored saltmarsh chronosequence
 - **Laura Robinson**, Seagrown: Title TBC
 - **Anita Franco**, International Estuarine and Coastal Specialists Ltd, UK; Harnessing Inshore Fish Data for Natural Capital Valuation: Maintaining and Restoring Ecology
 - **Louise Martin**, Natural England; Wrecks, Reefs, and Nature Recovery: Exploring the Natural Capital Value of Marine Heritage
 - **Nigel Pontee**, Jacobs; Unlocking Managed Realignment: Practical Funding Pathways for SMP Policy Delivery

12:35 **Lunch**

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Day 2 - Thursday 9th July 2026: Session 6

FUTURE-PROOFING RESTORATION: DESIGNING FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINED PROTECTION

This session explores the different measures needed to ensure the restoration efforts remain protected and resilient in the years ahead. We'll dive into the dual toolkit of formal protection using legislation, byelaws, and regulatory tools and adaptive design restoration planning. How do we locate and build habitats that don't just survive today, but thrive in the environment of 2050 and beyond?

Chair: Maija Marsh, Marine Ecology Principal Specialist: Natural England

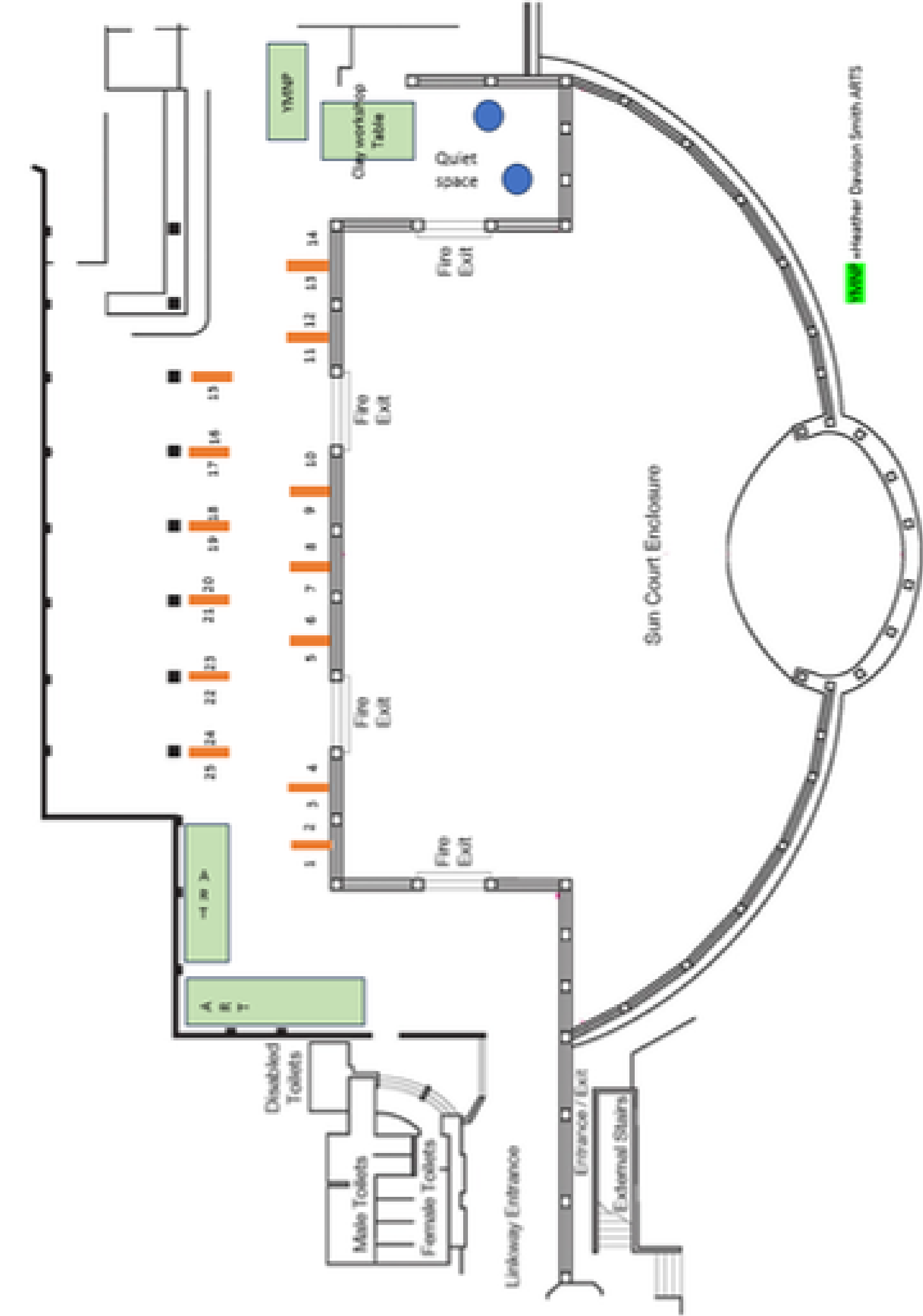
13:30

- **Oli Burns**, Environment Agency; Making the most of our changing coast: Applying geomorphology to optimise coastal habitat restoration
- **Edmund McManus**, The Crown Estate; The Crown Estate: Strategic Opportunities Map
- **James Tempest**, Moffatt & Nichol; No Room to Retreat: Where are UK saltmarshes most vulnerable to sea level rise and alternative restoration pathways
- **Bill Sanderson**, Heriot-Watt University; Shifting shellfish goalposts: restoration with a 'window on the past' and a 'window on the future'
- **Joanne Preston**, University of Portsmouth; Prioritising waterbodies in England for Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) restoration

15:00 **Closing remarks**

15:15 **Conference close**

Please note that all timings are subject to change



#	Name
1	Jane Pettit (Historic England)
2	Gemma Smith (ICES)
3	Carl Green (Our Future Coast)
4	Monica Smieja (Yorkshire WT)
5	Alison Debnay ZSL (roadmap to scaling up NO)
6	Martha McKee (NO)
7	Rachael Collins (CEA)
8	Adam Bounce (Mussels)
9	Cecilia Laverly (Athena blue)
10	Maria Hayden-Hughes (Bangor Uni)
11	Tori Moore (Ulster WT)
12	Lucas Miglen (HMAJ)
13	SHAEE
14	Matt Machouli (GroundWork NI)
15	Matthew Surgeon Hull Uni (plus banner)
16	Tafara Gomba (Newcastle uni) Tees
17	Chris Hood (Oscar Brown) EA Tees
18	Ben Green (Nat. Grid)
19	Rhys Bowen (Project SG)
20	Alasdair O'Dell (JAMMs)
21	Emma Wright (Lancashire WT)
22	Colin Scott (AHPmer)
23	Luke Jackson (Durham uni)
24	Jemima Wong (Orsted)
25	Lucy Stainthorpe (Flux towers)



Posters

Abstract #	Name	Surname	Organisation	Title
1	Jane	Pettitt	Historic England	Introducing the new ReMeMaRe Heritage Group
2	Gemma	Smith	International Estuarine and Coastal Specialists Ltd.	Marine Environments as Shared Social-Ecological Systems: A Case Study of Seagrass Restoration in the Tuscan Archipelago
3	Carl	Green	Our Future Coast – Wyre Council	Fleetwood Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Trial
4	Monika	Smieja	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust	Future-Proofing Oyster Restoration: Spat-on-Shell as a Resilient Approach in a Dynamic Estuary
5	Alison	Debney	Zoological Society of London	Roadmap to scaling up Ostrea edulis hatchery production in Europe
6	Martha	McKee	Queen's University Belfast	Back from the brink: Restoring the native European oyster in modified water bodies
7	Rachael	Collins	Collaborative Environmental Advisers (CEA)	Increasing restoration possibilities for compensation by overcoming consenting barriers
8	Adam	Rounce	Tees Rivers Trust	Mussel Restoration Network: raising the national profile of mussel restoration



Posters

Location	First	Surname	Organisation	Title
9	Cecilia	Laverty	Athena Blue	Investment for Seagrass Recovery: Exploring viable pathways to finance seagrass restoration in Wales
10	Maria	Hayden-Hughes	Bangor University	Insights and results from the Connecting Conwy project: assessing the potential for seascape-scale recovery in North Wales
11	Tori	Moore	Ulster Wildlife	Coastal Monitoring and Adaptation Planning (CMAP)
14	Matt	Machouki	Groundwork North East	B.E.A.C.H.Esk project (Better Estuaries & Coastal Habitats) – Improving water quality and habitat in the River Esk
15	Jon	Bolland	University of Hull / British and Irish Tracking (BIT) hub	British and Irish Tracking (BIT) hub; unlocking the potential of aquatic animal telemetry research to advance marine management and conservation
16	Tafara	Gomba	Newcastle University	Building a Digital Twin of the Tees Estuary to evaluate the resilience of nature-based solutions for nutrient (N & P) capture
17	Oscar	Brown	Environment agency	Tees Tidelands: Future Proofing an Industrial Estuary Through Nature Led Design.

Posters

Abstract #	Name	Surname	Organisation	Title
18	Ben	Green	National Grid	AMPERES: Automating Marine Plant Ecosystem Restoration for Energy Supply.
19	Rhys	Bowen	Project Seagrass and North Wales Wildlife Trust	Developing a tiered citizen science framework for seagrass monitoring in Wales.
20	Alasdair	O'Dell	Scottish Association for Marine Science	Higher germination rates and extended growth of cotyledons in <i>Zostera marina</i> nursery trials
21	Emma	Wright	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	Citizen science and changing perceptions of saltmarsh on the Fylde coast
22	Colin	Scott	ABPmer	Wallasea Island: Showing why and how to rewild the coast
23	Luke	Jackson	Durham University	Saltmarsh sensitivity to short-term sedimentation rates and multi-annual sea-level change: using a high-resolution database to assess future marsh resilience.
24	Jemima	Wong	Orsted	Restoration of Saltmarsh using Biodegradable Elements for Starting Ecosystems
25	Lucy	Stainthorpe	The Environment Agency	Flux Tower Network for Quantifying Saltmarsh Greenhouse Gas Flux

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Speaker Abstracts

Wednesday 8th of July

Video Address

Professor Clare Fitzsimmons

Clare Fitzsimmons is Professor of Marine Ecosystems and Governance at Newcastle University. With commercial experience gained in defence and consultancy sectors, she is Director of Business, Innovation and Skills in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, chairs the External Advisory Board and is a Marine Management Organisation-appointed member of the North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

Her research has two main aims: developing a strategic understanding of marine ecosystems governance and management at multiple-scales, from global to local, and providing evidence in support of conservation-based management of marine habitats, species and biodiversity. Her teaching introduces students to spatial analyses and remote sensing methods, to help them explore ecology and conservation issues at scale, and supports solutions for the sustainable exploitation of the marine environment.

She is co-chair of Natural England's Science Advisory Committee (NESAC) where this experience supports multi-disciplinary experts to ensure the best available scientific advice is used to underpin decision-making for nature recovery.



Speaker Abstracts

Wednesday 8th of July

Session 1 – Policy in Practice: Enabling Scaled-Up Restoration

How can policies and regulations genuinely enable progress and help to unlock the scale of restoration required?

Regularly identified as one of the main hurdles to restoration project delivery, this session takes a deep dive into the current policy and regulation landscape across the UK.

Chair: Eve Leegwater, Senior Advisor in the National Estuaries and Coasts Team: The Environment Agency

Coastal Comeback: Overcoming Policy Challenges to Restoration at Scale

Matt Uttley, Blue Marine Foundation
Matt@bluemarinefoundation.com

Marine restoration is critical to addressing the biodiversity and climate crises. To date, efforts have largely been small-scale and focused on individual habitats. However, achieving national and global biodiversity commitments will require restoration at a much larger, seascape scale. In the UK, progress is currently constrained by policy and regulatory barriers that must be addressed as a priority to enable effective scale-up.

This project aimed to identify and evidence these challenges and develop practical policy recommendations to overcome them. A steering committee of UK government regulators was established at the outset to ensure a coordinated and realistic approach to regulatory reform, aligning recommendations with current and planned policy developments.

The project team conducted a series of interviews with restoration practitioners to identify the most significant policy and regulatory challenges. Through a workshop these were refined into priority themes, highlighting challenges including environmental permitting processes and costs, complexity within marine licensing, and constraints associated with marine protected area management.

Drawing on input from regulators and practitioners, Blue Marine produced a set of policy recommendations alongside a roadmap for implementation to support large-scale marine restoration. A complementary report provides a detailed overview of the UK regulatory framework, identifying areas of good practice and where improvement is needed, supported by case studies from across the UK. The recommendations focus on amendments to environmental permitting, reforming the marine licensing system with improved guidance, and legislative changes around marine protected areas, management plans and exemptions.

Together, these outputs provide a practical and actionable framework to support regulators and practitioners in accelerating marine restoration at scale.

Additional authors

David Tudor (OCF), Sam Fanshawe, Jenny Murray, Aisling McGarrigle

Acknowledgements

Funded by The Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme (ELSP) under an Advancing Restoration Knowledge grant

Navigating the challenges of abandoned boats in tidal estuaries

Ness Smith, Our Future Coasts/ Ness Smith Consulting

nessiesmith@hotmail.com

The issue of abandoned, or 'end of life', vessels is increasingly recognised as a significant challenge in the restoration of saltmarsh. Such vessels directly impede saltmarsh restoration through physical scouring of the seabed, habitat loss, and the leaching of toxic chemicals and microplastics into sensitive ecosystems, as well as making access for active restoration activities extremely difficult. Our Future Coast site leads are facing a complex legal and policy landscape in their attempts to remove abandoned vessels to reduce environmental pressures and enable active restoration work to begin. Tensions between local communities and vessel owners in some cases increases the complexity. Trade-offs between culture and heritage values of some abandoned vessels, and the environmental impacts of newer fibreglass vessels must also be carefully considered. Over the summer of 2025, the MMO consulted on changes to fees, exemptions and self-service licences, which included a potential exemption which would permit any person (i.e. not just owners or public bodies) to remove abandoned vessels from the marine environment without a licence. If adopted this will remove a critical bottleneck for saltmarsh restoration, but there is a risk that unregulated removal may lead to the loss of non-designated but significant heritage assets. Our Future Coast is currently conducting a systematic review to identify scalable solutions and recommendations that will enable policy makers and practitioners to successfully navigate their way through this complexity. By presenting our initial findings, we aim to encourage shared learning and ongoing discourse.

Acknowledgements

This work, through Our Future Coast, is funded by Defra as part of the £200 million Flood and Coastal Innovation Programmes which is managed by the Environment Agency. The programmes will drive innovation in flood and coastal resilience and adaptation to a changing climate. The work is also supported by, and will inform, the Coastal Wildbelt project which is funded by Defra via the Protected Landscapes Partnership.

Supporting NBS through ways of working in Marine Licensing

Fern Skeldon, MMO

fern.skeldon@marinemanagement.org.uk

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are central to reversing biodiversity decline and building climate resilience in the marine environment. Yet, despite strong policy ambition, delivery of marine restoration at scale has often been impeded by regulatory complexity, inconsistent decision-making, and uncertainty within the marine licensing process. This presentation examines how changes in ways of working within the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) are supporting NbS by actively removing barriers to restoration while maintaining robust environmental protections. Drawing on evidence from the Removing Barriers to Restoration review of marine licence applications (2018–2024) and recommendations for embedding the Marine Enhancement Directory (MEnD) into regulatory practice, the presentation highlights how licensing reform can move from a transactional process to an enabling function for restoration. Practitioner feedback and internal analysis have informed a suite of practical “quick win” actions, including clearer guidance, improved early engagement, greater consistency across case teams, and more proportionate approaches to monitoring and assessment. A central theme is the role of MEnD as both a regulatory and knowledge-sharing tool. Integrating MEnD into marine licensing supports transparency, reduces duplication, and strengthens the evidence base for decision-making, while also enabling better tracking of restoration outcomes and progress against national and international biodiversity targets. By capturing where, how, and why restoration is occurring, MEnD helps connect individual projects to wider NbS objectives. The presentation concludes by reflecting on the importance of adaptive, collaborative regulatory practice. It demonstrates how evolving ways of working within marine licensing can build trust with practitioners, support innovation, and position regulation as a key enabler of effective, scalable NbS in the marine environment.

Exploring options for strategic, spatial marine recovery planning at local scales

Tara Hooper, Natural England

tara.hooper@naturalengland.org.uk

An increasing number of policy drivers aim to support marine recovery (including Good Environmental Status, Marine Protected Area condition targets, the Marine Recovery Fund and emerging Marine Net Gain), which combine with stakeholder- and developer-led efforts. However, clear direction on where to implement which projects in order to achieve efficient and effective recovery is lacking, because strategic, spatial plans for nature recovery in marine areas do not yet exist. Following the model of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) on land, Local Marine Recovery Plans (LMRPs) are proposed as a mechanism for filling that gap and empowering local delivery of recovery and restoration actions that collectively meet national objectives. This phase of work:

- Collected stakeholder views on the need for, and purpose of, LMRPs, their spatial extent, possible boundaries, and governance options.

- Compiled a catalogue of publicly-available marine data, and reviewed existing visualisation tools.
- Compiled information from LNRS on species and habitat priorities and proposed recovery actions for coastal and intertidal areas.

- Developed an initial Marine and Coastal Recovery Actions Catalogue, considering how individual actions link to national targets, and explored nesting with Protected Site Strategies.

This presentation will summarise the main findings from those activities, and outline recommendations and proposed next steps. The work focussed on North West and South West England, with elements delivered in partnership with the Marine Management Organisation and the Coastal Partnerships Network. Additional case studies also within those regions were delivered by partners including Coastal and Estuary Partnerships and Wildlife Trusts.

Fal Rivers to Reef: Nature Recovery from Source to Sea

Kerry Holbrook, Cornwall Council

kerry.holbrook@cornwall.gov.uk

The Fal Rivers to Reef programme is a source to sea ecosystem restoration initiative in Cornwall that seeks to deliver landscape and seascape scale recovery across the Fal and Helford catchment. Through partnership and collaboration, the programme aims to regenerate over 22,000 hectares of interconnected freshwater, terrestrial, estuarine, and marine habitat. Via a combination of habitat creation, regenerative agriculture, and terrestrial and marine pollution interventions, the initiative strengthens ecological function and reduce water quality pressure that have degraded the River Fal and surrounds. As a component of Cornwall Council's wider climate and nature strategy, the programme also provides a living laboratory through which we can demonstrate the benefits of taking an integrated approach to deliver both the Cornwall and Isles Nature Recovery Strategy and the CIOS Marine Nature Recovery Framework (MNRF), both spatial strategies which will drive more coordinated and collaborative action for nature's recovery, enabling us to reach our goal of 30% of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly being well managed for nature by 2030. The programme's focus on reducing land based pollution sources, reconnecting rivers with floodplains, restoring natural hydrology, and protecting and restoring sensitive marine ecosystems directly supports CIOS MNRF objectives. By linking upstream interventions with downstream marine outcomes, the programme demonstrates a scalable, finance ready model for coordinated terrestrial marine nature recovery. In doing so, it exemplifies how local authority led, cross sector collaboration can operationalise marine nature recovery commitments through catchment integrated action, positioning the Fal Rivers to Reef programme as a flagship example of whole system restoration.

Additional information

<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/hub-page/nature-recovery>

Session 2 – Restoration in Action

What lessons have we learned from hands on restoration projects and experience across the UK and beyond?

This session brings forward case studies that demonstrate restoration in practice, highlighting innovative approaches within individual habitats as well as projects working across the wider seascape or spanning multiple habitats.

Chair: Alison Debney, Conservation Lead for UK Nature Recovery: Zoological Society of London

Building Regenerative Seascapes with Communities: Early lessons from the Atlantic Coast Programme

Alexandra Bulgakova, Marine Conservation Society
alexandra.bulgakova@mcsuk.org

Building climate-resilient coastal and estuarine ecosystems requires more than ecological expertise; it demands governance models and project approaches that centre equity, shared power, and long-term community stewardship (Blythe et al., 2026). The Marine Conservation Society's Atlantic Coast Programme seeks to ground these principles in seascape-scale regeneration across the UK's west coast to strengthen both ecological and social resilience. We will share hands-on experiences from early project development, highlighting what has worked, key challenges, and lessons for wider application. Working alongside coastal communities and grassroots organisations, we have been testing practical methods to rebalance power dynamics that often limit participation in marine governance and, in turn, constrain sustainable habitat regeneration (Pound et al., 2025).

Key early lessons include the value of co-designing project priorities from the outset, remaining adaptable, creating clear and transparent processes, and recognising local knowledge as critical to site selection, delivery, and long-term stewardship. These approaches have helped move projects beyond initial consultation toward co-creation and strengthened local ownership of regeneration outcomes. This talk or poster will explore practical tools and experiences that have supported trust-building and place-based stewardship of seascape recovery. It will also reflect on the challenges, such as navigating institutional constraints, differing expectations of “success,” and the time required to build equitable partnerships alongside ecological work. These experiences provide practical insights for practitioners delivering restoration projects, demonstrating how community-centred approaches can improve both ecological outcomes and the long-term sustainability of regeneration efforts.

Additional Authors

Ffion Mitchell-Langford, Chris Graham, Beth Ford & Marcelina Lekawska

Acknowledgements

With special thanks to our community partners the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and Action West Loch, and to FatFace and the FatFace Foundation, founding funders of the Atlantic Coast Programme.

Scaling Saltmarsh Reinforcement in Dumfries & Galloway: A Collaborative SCAMP Approach

Jenny Wright, Solway Firth and **Barbara Seele**, RSPB

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Saltmarsh habitats play a critical role in coastal resilience, biodiversity recovery and carbon sequestration, yet remain under significant pressure across the UK. This presentation brings together partners from Dumfries & Galloway Council, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and the Solway Firth Partnership to showcase a collaborative, place-based approach to saltmarsh reinforcement through the Solway Coast and Marine Project (SCAMP). The session will begin with an overview of SCAMP, outlining its strategic vision to deliver ecosystem restoration at scale across the Solway Firth. Building on this, RSPB will present current saltmarsh restoration and management activities in Dumfries & Galloway, highlighting practical challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities for enhancement. The Solway Firth Partnership will then introduce the SCAMP Innovation in Restoration project, focusing on emerging approaches to saltmarsh enhancement. This includes exploring nature-based solutions, partnership delivery models, and opportunities to scale restoration through innovation, funding mechanisms, and cross-sector collaboration. Together, this joint presentation will demonstrate how coordinated action across organisations can accelerate restoration outcomes, bridge the gap between policy and practice, and support resilient coastal ecosystems. The session will offer insights for practitioners and policymakers seeking to deliver saltmarsh reinforcement at landscape scale, contributing to wider UK ambitions for habitat recovery and climate adaptation.

Additional Authors

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Acknowledgements

Funders: - Heritage Lottery - Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

Wilder Firths: Large-scale intertidal seagrass restoration in Scotland

Milo Oliver, Mossy Earth- Wilder Firths hub.

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The Cromarty, Beaulay & Inverness Firths contain extensive, highly reproductive intertidal seagrass meadows, as well as areas where seagrass is currently absent that appear suitable. Our project, funded by the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund, aims to plant 4.2 hectares of intertidal seagrass over 3 years. In our attempt to support the upscaling of seagrass restoration in Scotland, we have developed scientific rationale of intervention, methods of core transplanting, seed collection, processing and storage. Alongside this we have been surveying and mapping intertidal areas using QGIS/ QField to efficiently collect data, map seagrass meadows, record and monitor our physical impact and map planted areas. Overcoming logistical and regulatory challenges while maintaining the pace required to meet planting targets has generated valuable insights into large scale restoration. From this, we hope to inform and advance coastal restoration efforts.

So far, we have found planting core clusters has yielded 99% persistence after 4 months of winter in the ground, covering 0.3 Ha. Using QField and digital data collection has proved invaluable to increasing the capacity of seagrass restoration, facilitating efficient data transfer, synthesis, and thoroughly understanding intertidal seagrass meadows reproduction and health. Our seeds appear to be viable after months of processing and storage in hypersaline water, with no signs of mold or seed breakdown. Our project actively engages with local communities through volunteering opportunities in seed collection, seed processing and core planting. These activities have facilitated positive engagement on coastal/marine conservation, integrating delivery and scalability through community inclusion.

Additional authors

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Additional information

<https://youtu.be/BniwJrxJhcw?si=wObKNBlaYWBj4krv> <https://smeef.scot/projects/seagrass-mossy-earth-wilder-firths-linneachan-nas-fhiadhaiche/>

Acknowledgements

Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund

Native oyster restoration in Northern Ireland, working towards ecosystem-scale restoration

Jess Sennett-Seale, Ulster Wildlife

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Once abundant across Northern Ireland, native oysters were driven to local extinction in Belfast Lough by anthropogenic factors, such as overfishing and pollution. In 2020, oysters were found for the first time in over 100 years on the shores of the Lough suggesting re-establishment of native oysters was possible. Northern Ireland's native oyster restoration is part of a blue recovery project funded by DAERA running until 2028. The main goal of the project is to restore native oysters in Belfast Lough and other Northern Irish waters. Firstly, the project focused on building a network of oyster nurseries to create a broodstock of larvae producing adults around Belfast Lough to support recruitment in the wild population, and to facilitate public engagement and education of oysters. The nurseries run thanks to the help of a community of 50 active volunteers across our four nurseries. Within our nurseries we also keep cages of spat on scallop shells supplied by The Oyster Restoration Company (TORC). These shells have been in for over a year and had recently been found with further settlement from our broodstock on the shells. Last year we made a strategic shift towards early-stage ecosystem-scale restoration with Northern Ireland's first seabed deployment of 30,000 spat-on-shell and 2,000 adult oysters. Following monitoring of its success, we have since increased its scale with additional 10,000 spat-on-shell being deployed. The project continues to grow, with collaborations with local academics and wider industry, the project aims to scale up the restoration efforts through research and larger seabed deployments.

Additional authors

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Working Towards Scalable Restoration: Experiences from the Field

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Rebuilding oyster reefs is increasingly seen as an effective approach to restore coastal ecosystem functions. Oysters are keystone species: they form complex, three-dimensional reef structures that provide shelter for a wide range of marine species, help stabilise the seabed, and protect coastlines from erosion. Their natural filtration capacity also improves water quality by reducing excess nutrients. In the North Sea, however, native oyster populations have functionally disappeared, making natural recovery unlikely without intervention. To address this, restoration efforts focus on seeding hard substrates with juvenile oysters to overcome early mortality and kick-start reef formation. Oyster Heaven is working to scale up this approach, aiming to create resilient, self-sustaining habitats with measurable ecological impact. This involves improving operational efficiency, building local partnerships, and setting up long-term monitoring to track ecosystem development. Recent projects show what this looks like in practice. In the Netherlands, nearly four million native oysters were deployed between 2024 and 2025, forming the basis of a new reef. In 2025, a second large-scale project began in Norfolk, expanding efforts across Europe. A key part of Oyster Heaven's approach is tailoring each project to local needs and positioning oyster reefs as productive habitats that deliver tangible benefits. The goal is to support long-term growth into thriving, self-sustaining reefs, using a model that can be replicated across coastal areas.

Additional authors

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Additional information

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Transforming the Thames: Planning and Delivery of a Seascape Recovery Project

Thea Cox, Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

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Transforming the Thames is a partnership working across the wider seascape of the Greater Thames Estuary, restoring its ecological function to become a thriving coastal wetland for nature and people. The partnership was founded in 2022 by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), and brings together charities, government bodies, academics, landowners and more, who together share a long-term, 100-year vision. In 2025, Transforming the Thames launched publicly and work on the initial delivery phase (2025-2030) began. This first five years will focus on six goals – to unite people, to restore over 320ha of coastal habitat, to enhance existing habitat through pressure reduction, to build capacity, to inspire, and to enable scale – preparing the next steps beyond 2030 until our vision of a fully functioning and resilient Thames estuary has been realised. Hands-on restoration efforts will span multiple habitats – seagrass meadows, salt- and coastal grazing marshes, oyster reefs, saline lagoons, and sand and shingle for beach nesting birds. Here we will present insights from the project life cycle of Transforming the Thames so far – including creation of the partnership, challenges and insights from planning our first phase of seascape recovery, and the successes and lessons learnt from year one of delivery.

Additional authors

Anna Cucknell (ZSL)

Session 3 - The Arts as a Tool for Marine Restoration

What role can the arts play in restoration projects?

Interwoven throughout this year's conference is a strong emphasis on the use of the arts as a communication tool and the role creative practice can play in restoration projects, especially in raising awareness and engaging coastal communities. By showcasing and celebrating some of these examples across the two day conference, ReMeMaRe 2026 aims to highlight how creativity can open doors, spark conversations and connect with different audiences.

Chair: Penny Nelson, The Environment Agency

Interwoven throughout this year's conference is a strong emphasis on the use of the arts as a communication tool and the role creative practice can play in restoration projects, especially in raising awareness and engaging coastal communities.

By showcasing and celebrating some of these examples across the two day conference, ReMeMaRe 2026 aims to highlight how creativity can open doors, spark conversations and connect with different audiences.

Live showcase featuring; music, short films, dance performances and more - abstracts to be made available w/c July 6

Panel discussion:

- **Simon Read**, Deben Estuary Partnership
- **Heather Davison-Smith**, Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership
- **Angus Garbutt**, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- **Rhianna Parry**, Bangor University

Òran nan Eisirean | Song of the Oysters

Anna McGregor (University of Glasgow), Gillebrìde MacMillan (composer), Darren Gallacher (arranger); Mairi McGillivray, Ryan Johnson & Cameron Duff (performers)

This art was developed as part of Project Eisirean | Native Oyster! restoration of oysters through science and language, that identified locations historically significant for oysters using Gaelic place-names. However, because Gaelic language is in decline, this knowledge of animals within the landscape is in danger of being lost, despite considerable pride and love of the land. Because Gaelic culture is highly linked to oral traditions, the use of song to highlight restoration of these absent animals aligns with the cultural values in these places and communities and should raise awareness of what these animals are and why they need to be left where they are. Because it is a required piece to perform as part of the 2026 National Mod competition in Glasgow, all large Gaelic choirs across Scotland will be learning and performing the piece in October 2026.

Part of this song was based on the Gaelic work song - Iomaraibh Eutrom. The song tells of the dangers of collecting shellfish at high tide and unfortunately in the song, the milkmaid in the song went to the shore but she fell and broke her leg and cut her arm. She then 'suckled salt water' - which gives an idea of her sad state. It is one of the few songs in Gaelic with specific reference to shellfish harvesting. So I wanted to use that song as a basis, but I also researched the ways that oysters were collected on the East coast and the West coast of Scotland and how overfishing had an impact on oyster beds. I composed a new melody, upbeat and with a strong rhythm. The song makes a connection between recovering native oysters and the covering and renewing the Gaelic language and culture that is such a central part of Islay's past, present and future.

This project was co-designed with An Comunn Gàidhealach, an organisation aimed at revitalisation of Gaelic language through arts based approaches, the Islay Gaelic Centre, where the song was launched, the Native Oyster Restoration Alliance and Argyll & Bute Council.

Bathed in sunlight, rooted in the sea: using art to visualise an otherwise 'unseen' marine habitat

Martin Skov (University of Bangor), Craig Robertson, Peter LeB Williams, Dylan Evans, Georgina Rambton

Interactive arts offer opportunity to foster appreciation of restored and threatened habitats, making ecosystems visible within cultural, rather than purely scientific narratives. Building on past experiences of making unseen plankton visible through artistic expression, we engage the north Wales arts community in communicating the beauty and ecology of kelp forests. Through our kelp focused art-science collaboration, we demonstrate how scientific knowledge can actively facilitate creative projects that translate complex ecological processes into accessible, meaningful public experiences.

Through artist residencies in marine laboratories, hands on engagement with live kelp and associated fauna, and co-produced exhibitions, scientists enabled artists to interpret kelp forests as living holdfast to canopy architectures, revealing their role as ecosystem engineers and biodiversity hotspots. The art is beautiful, but the biggest sentiment is how the engagement fosters a sense of appreciation and ownership in the plights of ecosystems on our doorstep.

The art-science approach strengthens ocean literacy by linking knowledge of species interactions, life cycles and human impacts to place based storytelling and sensory experiences. The artistic approach generates social benefits directly relevant to restoration success: increased public support, local stewardship and stronger community ownership of restored sites. We propose that integrating creative partnerships into restoration policy and practice offers a future proofing mechanism for kelp recovery, ensuring ecological interventions are supported by informed, motivated communities. Art-science collaboration should be recognised not as outreach, but as a strategic component of restoration frameworks that seek lasting ecological and societal impact.

She Sells Seashells (Film)

Lily Tiger (Director and Producer), Sion Marshall-Waters (Camera), Edit by Tom Oliver, Score by Camilla Isola

Starring Megan Haines from Câr y Môr and Carol Watts from Swansea Market

She Sells Shellfish is a short doc shot on super 8mm, connecting two Welsh women's lives with those of the archived past. A curious exploration of the female cockle gatherers of South Wales, and the surprising secret shellfish and seaweed hold for our oceans' health.

Amidst the bustle of a day in Swansea Market, Carol recounts memories of her childhood and her great-grandmother who worked on the sand flats until her 80s. Meanwhile, on an ocean farm off the coast of St Davids, Meg harvests rope-grown seaweeds and sorts through oysters, sharing her affinity and intimate understanding of the Welsh coast. Meg and Carol allow the cockle gatherers' feminist legacy to live on, this historical relationship between women, shellfish and seaweed evolving into the present with greater ecological significance.

The documentary was commissioned by WOW Film Festival as part of Bangladesh-Cymru Climate stories 2023, a partnership with Dhaka DocLab funded by the British Council's International Collaborations Grants.

Tides of Collaboration: Art, Ecology and Coastal Restoration (Film)

Dr Saskia Coulson, and Colin Tennant (Creators and Directors), with contributions from Cammy Black, Sandra McDowall, Olly McKie, Payton l'Anson and Lorna Hamilton. Narrative written by Stephen Rutt, and aerial footage captured by Ruairidh Tennant.

This film explores the diverse network of habitats that shape the Solway coast, from saltmarshes and mudflats to dunes, woodlands and estuarine landscapes. Through striking aerial footage and on-the-ground perspectives, it highlights the ecological importance of these interconnected environments, the wildlife they support, and the people who care for them. The film celebrates both the natural beauty of the coastline and the collective efforts being made to understand, protect and enhance these valuable habitats for future generations.

A key part of the film's approach was the inclusion of local voices from across the coastal habitats featured. By working with people who live, work and engage with these landscapes every day, the film is rooted in the stories of the communities that know them best, ensuring it reflects authentic experiences, local knowledge and a genuine sense of connection to place.

The film was commissioned by the Solway Coast and Marine Partnership as part of the Landscape Connections project.

Clown Dance Seagrass Project

Katie Kelsey and Amanda Schofield

Started in January 2025, Katie and Amanda are on a mission to save the world through dance and contemporary clown! Based in Nottingham, they have been gathering momentum with a group of Clowns, Dancers and Community members and more recently virtual fans too. Some of you may have seen them at the Seagrass Symposium in Cardiff last November. They went on to make a splash with their group at the National Aquarium in Plymouth on world seagrass day, thanks to an invitation from the Blue Meadows project. That Instagram post went viral and to date has had nearly 1.4 million views. They deliver workshops in person and online.

Salt of The Earth Venice

Sophie Hunter (Artist and Director), monologue written by Megan Hunter and performed by Olwen Fouéré, movement by choreographer Imogen Knight, costumes by Simone Rocha and Samuel Wyer and a choral piece composed by Isobel Waller-Bridge.

Salt of The Earth is a performance installation and artistic reflection on what it means to actively bear witness to our climate emergency. Through a radical reimagining of the tale of Lot's Wife, Salt of The Earth explores one powerful act of resistance: a woman's refusal to look away from the destruction of her world. Set amongst salt marshes, at its core, Salt of The Earth is a love letter to the Salt Marshes of the world.

The production premiered in Venice in September 2024.

Salt of The Earth is a core delivery partner to the global UN Saltmarsh Breakthrough.

Hands to Habitat

Nigel George (Artecology CoCreate)

Nigel George is Co-founder and Director of Artecology. Over the past 40 years, he has worked at the intersection of people, place, and nature, developing creative approaches to environmental restoration and community engagement. His work combines creativity, science, engineering, and systems thinking to challenge conventional approaches and explore new ways of reconnecting people with the natural world. Through Artecology CoCreate, Nigel has developed participatory methodologies that transform community creativity into tangible habitat creation and ecological enhancement.

In person delegates will be able to get hands on experience at ReMeMaRe Conference this year downstairs in the Sun Court Suite, during evening reception on day 1, and during lunch on day 2. The sessions are being led by Groundwork North East.

Rafts (Songs of the Solent)

Richard Walters (Singer and Songwriter)

Last autumn, if you'd ventured to the Solent shoreline, you might have seen a man with a guitar perched on a slowly sinking chair in the shallows. He wasn't trying to create a musical version of a famous king of England's story but instead filming a music video to help save nature.

'Rafts' is one of eight songs created by Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter Richard Walters as part of his artist residency with the Solent Seascape Project. Taking inspiration from both the habitats the project is working to restore and the people that interact with the coast, the album he created – Songs from the Solent – shines a light on sometimes overlooked, but vitally important, natural places, to build a deeper, emotional connection to them.

And so, in that spirit, the seabird nesting rafts at Hayling Island Nature Reserve, one of the sites the RSPB has restored, served as inspiration for 'Rafts' – a song celebrating collective change, positive human impact and the importance of home for all.

Speaker Abstracts

Thursday 9th of July

Session 4 – Accelerating Restoration Through Industry: Innovation and Investment

How can marine industries offer unique opportunities for strategic restoration planning and delivery at scale?

Bringing an industry perspective to restoration, this session explores how sectors such as offshore wind, ports and navigation, as well as fisheries and aquaculture, can play a pivotal role in driving forward effective, sustainable marine restoration.

Chair: Jennifer Godwin, CEO, Seabed User Developer Group (SUDG)

Ports and Habitat Restoration (where coastal dreams and reality meet)

Jim Warner, Harwich Haven Authority
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In the last five years, the Harwich Haven Authority has carried out large scale BUDS projects to recharge beaches with sand and gravel and to restore degraded saltmarsh with mud from Harwich harbour. Jim will share the successes and frustrations of these projects and the lessons learnt the hard way. He will also put forward the port industry views on habitat restoration, regulation and propose how ports, regulators and practitioners can work better together to achieve better outcomes for the environment.

Saltmarsh Restoration Langstone Harbour; the Next Step

Frits van den Boogaard, Royal Smals – Smals Dredging UK
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Explore how the Langstone Saltmarsh Restoration project is restoring coastal resilience through an innovative blend of engineering and nature-based solutions based on experiences elsewhere in low- and wetlands. This presentation introduces a 5-step methodology that combines targeted sediment nourishment, beneficial reuse of dredged material, strategic edge protection, and habitat enhancement, all supported by long-term monitoring. By harnessing natural processes and applying

low-impact techniques, the approach will accelerate marsh recovery while delivering multiple benefits—from biodiversity restoration and carbon capture to strengthened coastal defence. Crucially, it also integrates seamlessly with harbour operations, demonstrating how ecological restoration and infrastructure needs can go hand in hand. The methodology’s modular design, use of locally available resources, and adaptive implementation make it highly transferable to other degraded saltmarsh systems. The 5 steps approach serves as a compelling blueprint for how similar environments can be restored efficiently and sustainably. it is the next step in saltmarsh restoration. Join us to discover how these techniques can be applied and scaled, unlocking new opportunities for resilient, future-proof coastal landscapes.

Additional authors

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Additional information

the Brightlingsea Saltmarsh Restoration project gives a very good impression of how we work (cleaning a harbour by low turbidity dredging -CSD technique - and restoring the marshes via pipeline transportation - 1800mtrs - without bringing any harm to nature)

Delivering towards strategic nature targets through offshore wind?

Samir Whitaker, Ørsted

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Offshore wind developers are increasingly making commitments to deliver Net Positive Biodiveristy Impact or contributions towards nature positive outcomes. Individually these are leading to impactful collaborations and important projects, but how do we scale this up to deliver benefits at an ecosystem scale?

Harnessing offshore wind to enable rewilding in practice

Jacques Villemot, Rewilding Britain

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Practitioners from the Rewilding Network have highlighted that barriers to scaling up the restoration of Britain’s marine natural processes are numerous: from funding to policy; from community engagement to ocean literacy. Yet, as the pressures on our seas increase, it becomes more and more urgent to rethink our policy framework and identify how to support practitioners and communities to deliver large scale ecosystem recovery. In this context, the UK cannot afford to treat offshore wind technology as a neutral development. Its rollout is inevitable; how we shape it is not. By acting deliberately now, we have a rare opportunity to ensure it actively contributes to restoring marine ecosystems, supports coastal communities and delivers a wilder, more resilient future for both people and nature. This new research presented here thus paves the way to capitalise on the opportunity presented to us. By identifying isolated case studies of best practices and delving into the impacts and opportunities created by the sector, it supports the development of a virtuous and consistent framework for the roll out of offshore wind. It is a precarious exercise, as highlighted by

some of the examples of poorly planned developments we have seen already, but we have to get it right. When we do, this research shows that we have a chance not only to limit the negative impacts on nature of developments, but we can actively trigger a new system supporting projects to rewild at scale, community regeneration and investment in our coasts.

Additional information

Based on the findings of a research report from Pelagos for Rewilding Britain - Marine Rewilding and Offshore Wind Developments: identifying the role of such structures in a vision for a wilder future.

Marine Net Gain - a template for delivering real restoration through partnership

Peter Barham, Seabed Users and Developers Group (SUDG)

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Target led collaboration for delivering marine net gain Peter Barham, Chair, SUDG Over the past five years, the Strategic Marine Net Gain (SMNG) Task & Finish Group (T&F Group), a coalition of The Crown Estate, The Seabed User and Developer Group, marine industries, conservation organisations, SNCBs, Defra and environmental consultancies, has worked collectively to shape how future marine development can actively contribute to restoring the health, resilience, and biodiversity of our marine environment. The group has developed a comprehensive approach to developing and delivering a clear policy for mandatory net gain (MNG) and our final report provides a practical blueprint for how the UK can implement an effective strategic marine net gain framework. The recommendations in the final report constitute a coherent package, grounded in consensus across diverse marine interests, and are designed to support Government in shaping a statutory MNG policy that is deliverable, strategic, and enduring. This was achieved via the group working closely together and with extensive consultation to gather experience and knowledge from a wide range of stakeholders. The work has culminated in two key outcomes:

1. An understanding from all key marine stakeholders that MNG could and should play an integral part in the restoration of coastal and marine environments
2. A package of recommendations that should assist Defra and Devolved Governments in developing an appropriate process and procedures to apply mandatory MNG to development through a simple, proportionate implementation mechanism that requires minimal regulatory input.

Developing a fund to help fast track Marine Nature Recovery.

Audrey Jones, Howell Marine Consulting

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England is lacking the financial mechanisms needed to deliver marine restoration at the scale and pace required to reverse marine biodiversity decline. Commissioned by Natural England, this project explored how innovative funding models could enable wider marine enhancement, and voluntary Marine Net Gain for English waters. Through a comprehensive review of UK and international nature restoration funds, alongside targeted engagement with developers and nature finance specialists, the project found a critical gap. Existing funding models are typically short term, project specific and

delivery focused, limiting their ability to support enabling actions, long term monitoring and the development of a robust pipeline of projects. This risks only incremental gains, when what is urgently needed are large-scale, coordinated interventions. It also found that no existing fund can be readily adapted to deliver voluntary MNG in England. Instead, the project sets out recommendations for a new, industry led pooled contribution and disbursement fund, drawing inspiration from SMEEF in Scotland and MARINE Fund Cymru in Wales. Such a fund could represent a step change: enabling developers and the government to invest collectively in high impact restoration, supporting long term ecosystem recovery, and delivering measurable biodiversity outcomes with credibility and transparency. Stakeholder workshops demonstrated appetite from marine developers to contribute to a fund, provided governance is robust, outcomes are measurable, and greenwashing risks are avoided. Looking ahead, this project lays the foundations for a future strategic approach to funding nature recovery, moving beyond a piecemeal approach to deliver meaningful, strategic projects that restore marine ecosystems, enable private contributions, and accelerate recovery at scale.

Session 5 - Ecosystem Services in Focus: from Evidence to Action

How can we better our understanding of the benefits and services provided by our marine habitats, and gather essential evidence to attract investment, reduce uncertainty, and communicate future change with local communities.

Speakers will spotlight on the latest science and evidence documenting the key ecosystem services delivered by estuarine and coastal habitats, examining how to turn the latest evidence into a roadmap for recovery.

Chair: Bill Sanderson, Professor of Marine Biodiversity, Heriot-Watt University

Seasonal variability in CO₂ and CH₄ fluxes for a restored saltmarsh chronosequence

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Saltmarshes store and sequester significant amounts of 'blue carbon', making them potential climate mitigators, and their restoration is a potential nature-based solution (NbS). However, any greenhouse gas (GHG) fluxes from restored or natural salt marshes can diminish this potential, but the extent of GHG emissions are largely unknown. This limits our ability to accurately determine on what timeline carbon benefits from salt marsh restoration are achieved. To address this, GHG (CO₂ and CH₄) fluxes were measured for two seasons (winter and summer) using in-situ closed-chambers on a chronosequence of restored (from 2-80 years since restoration) and natural 'reference' saltmarshes in the Colne and Blackwater estuaries, Essex, UK. The flux of CH₄ was highest in newly restored marshes and declined with marsh age since restoration. There were no clear trends in CO₂ exchange with marsh age, but respiration exceeded photosynthetic activity for both seasons and marsh age or state. This study underscores the importance of accounting for seasonal variation in methane emissions and ecosystem respiration to avoid overestimating the climate mitigation potential of restored saltmarshes. Understanding seasonal GHG fluxes, as well establishing carbon stocks, is essential to inform accurate carbon accounting and guide effective coastal restoration from a carbon perspective.

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Acknowledgements

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Harnessing Inshore Fish Data for Natural Capital Valuation: Maintaining and Restoring Ecology

Anita Franco, International Estuarine and Coastal Specialists Ltd, UK

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Fish are a central component of the natural capital of the English inshore (coastal marine and estuarine) environments, supporting ecological processes, multiple ecosystem services and a wide range of societal benefits, and in turn being the focus for maintaining and restoring ecological systems. Building on the Defra mNCEA programme, a tailored natural capital framework was developed to link inshore fish species and life stages to ecosystem-service flows and associated benefits. Thirteen logic chains were identified, spanning regulating services (nursery habitat support, food web control, nutrient cycling/transfer), provisioning of goods (food, bait, aquarium material) and cultural benefits (recreation, education, nature watching, conservation interest). Fish guilds were defined to represent the species groups underpinning each logic chain. The framework was tested using multi-method fish survey data from coastal and estuarine habitats in northeast and southwest England. Multi method sampling broadly represented inshore fish communities but also revealed clear differences in how methods and habitats reflect specific logic chains. Northeast England assemblages were dominated by boreal species (e.g., sandeels, plaice, flounder), contributing strongly to the provision of food for non-human consumption, nursery function, prey provision, education and conservation interest. Southwest assemblages contained more Lusitanian species (e.g., wrasses, grey mullets), contributing mainly to cultural benefits and aquaria/aquaculture. These biogeographic patterns reflect habitat availability and thermal regimes and are discussed in the context of potential climate-driven changes to fish communities and the ecosystem services and societal benefits they support. Maintaining the ecosystem elements is a fundamental requirement of successful and sustainable restoration initiatives.

Additional authors

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Wrecks, Reefs, and Nature Recovery: Exploring the Natural Capital Value of Marine Heritage

Louise Martin, Natural England

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Historic shipwrecks, harbours, and submerged landscapes are not just relics of the past but play a crucial role in supporting our marine habitats. Understanding how conserving our marine and coastal heritage sites provides co-benefits for natural capital was the focus of a newly published report. It was commissioned by Natural England with support from Historic England, as part of Defra's Marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme. This presentation/poster will explore how the evidence gathered has furthered our understanding of the contribution heritage sites make to ecosystem services and natural capital, and how this evidence base could be used to aid nature recovery. Heritage sites can act as important habitats for marine life, becoming artificial reefs, providing shelter and breeding grounds for fish and other marine species, and contributing to carbon sequestration. In some cases, exclusion zones around protected wrecks function as marine reserves, allowing ecosystems to thrive. Despite these benefits, heritage assets are often overlooked in environmental policies and natural capital frameworks. Limited research, policy gaps, and a lack of collaboration between heritage and environmental sectors mean that the full potential of these sites remains untapped. There are key opportunities to bridge these gaps, advocating for an integrated approach that recognises the co-benefits of cultural and natural heritage. This presentation/poster will explore how the evidence gathered has furthered our understanding of the contribution heritage sites make to ecosystem services and natural capital, and how this evidence base could be used to aid nature recovery.

Additional authors

The report was produced by JBA Consultants (Amini, E., Burgess-Gamble, L., Holland, K., Mayer, P., and Wood, N.) and published by Natural England (a collaborative project with support from Historic England).

Additional information

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5351007171903488>

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Unlocking Managed Realignment: Practical Funding Pathways for SMP Policy Delivery.

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Although Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) identify managed realignment as the preferred long term policy across many low lying areas of the UK, implementation has largely occurred through compensatory habitat delivery rather than proactive policy-led action. Consequently, progress is dependent on ad hoc, site specific funding rather than a consistent and sustainable financing framework. These challenges are particularly relevant for farmers, as managed realignment is commonly proposed on low-lying agricultural land. In such settings, farming viability is often dependent on publicly funded seawalls and drainage systems that prevent tidal inundation and remove freshwater from the land. Growing uncertainty over the affordability of maintaining these defences through FCERM funding makes decisions about future land use, compensation, and the timing of realignment increasingly complex for landowners and delivery partners. This paper presents findings from a study assessing whether nature markets, partnership opportunities, and other emerging mechanisms could support future delivery of saltmarsh restoration through managed realignment. Drawing on assessments of several potential managed realignment sites, the analysis considers revenue from nature markets (carbon, BNG and nutrient mitigation) alongside partnership funding opportunities, including the water industry. The paper identifies which natural capital value streams show the greatest potential to support managed realignment, where blended finance may be required, and how far current markets can realistically contribute to scheme delivery. These findings are discussed in the context of competing land use demands, including food production and agricultural support mechanisms, limited land availability, and unclear national priorities for coastal land management.

Additional authors

Valerie Robertson (Jacobs) & Ellie Brown (Our Future Coast)

Session 6 – Future Proofing Restoration: Designing for Climate Resilience and Sustained Protection

How do we locate and build habitats that don't just survive today, but thrive in the environment of 2050 and beyond?

This session explores the different measures needed to ensure the restoration efforts remain protected and resilient in the years ahead. We'll dive into the dual toolkit of formal protection using legislation, byelaws, and regulatory tools and adaptive design restoration planning.

Chair: Maija Marsh, Marine Ecology Principal Specialist: Natural England

Making the most of our changing coast: Applying geomorphology to optimise coastal habitat restoration

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As a discipline, geomorphology is well embedded in the restoration of riverine environments, where process-based restoration and holistic planning is increasingly commonplace. By contrast, the role of geomorphologists in guiding coastal and estuarine restoration is generally less well recognised, despite morphology representing an essential limiting factor affecting a project's likelihood of success. Coastal geomorphologists are more regularly engaged in flood and coastal erosion risk management, where system-scale thinking is arguably more prevalent, for instance through Shoreline Management Plans in England. This talk will explore the ways in which coastal geomorphologists can optimise restoration planning, design and delivery to improve resilience of restored habitats to long-term changes, both natural and anthropogenic. We will outline examples such as screening UK estuaries for native oyster restoration potential and developing the new suite of agri-environment payments for coastal habitats. We aim to encourage restoration practitioners to engage coastal geomorphologists in their work, allowing early identification of underpinning processes and system interlinkages that might otherwise be missed.

Additional authors

Lucy North

No Room to Retreat: Where are UK saltmarshes most vulnerable to sea level rise and alternative restoration pathways

James Tempest, Moffatt & Nichol

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Recent modelling work undertaken by Moffatt & Nichol has identified regions across the UK that may be particularly vulnerable to saltmarsh loss as a result of relatively high projected rates of sea level rise and limited sediment supply. To maintain the extent and diversity of saltmarsh, creation of new habitat through managed realignment is widely employed and expected to increase over the coming decades. However, in some estuaries and embayments, the scale or number of managed realignment schemes required is likely to be insufficient to offset anticipated losses, owing to constraints imposed by infrastructure or unsuitable hinterland topography. Our work identifies locations where saltmarsh losses may be inevitable due to such constraints and explores whether nature based approaches, such as the beneficial use of dredged material, could provide viable alternatives.

Shifting shellfish goalposts: restoration with a ‘window on the past’ and a ‘window on the future’

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Horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*) are a predominantly subtidal habitat forming species that form physically complex habitats that are: ‘biodiversity hotspots’, nursery areas for commercially important species, store carbon and maintain water quality with their filter feeding activities. They are biogeographically distributed from the sub-Arctic to the Bay of Biscay (Spain) but formed dense habitats in the ‘sweet-spot’ of their range, as far south as the Llyn Peninsula in the Irish Sea and the Humber in the North Sea. The European flat oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) is also predominantly a subtidal, habitat forming species that forms physically complex habitats with the same ecosystem services as horse mussel habitats. They were distributed from the south of Norway to the Mediterranean. There is growing evidence that both horse mussel and oyster habitats have and do co-occur. In this work we examine observed biogeographical shifts in commercially important fish in the last thirty years and modelled shifts in the range of horse mussel habitats. We compare these predictions and observations to known declines in horse mussel habitats and present a case for the restoration of oysters into horse mussel beds. This approach challenges the UK’s implementation of MPA legislation and highlights counterproductive absurdities in the way we handle restoration.

Additional authors

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Additional information

<https://www.glenmorangie.com/pages/our-commitments-deep>

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Prioritising waterbodies in England for Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) restoration

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Oyster reefs were once a widespread and ecologically important feature of European coastal waters, often covering tens of hectares to several square kilometres. However, they experienced severe declines due to intensive overfishing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, oyster reefs are among the most threatened marine habitats globally and are the focus of extensive restoration efforts in temperate and subtropical regions.

In England, the European native oyster is recognised as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species, and oyster beds are listed as threatened or declining in the Greater North Sea and Celtic Sea regions. In line with international commitments such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Environment Improvement Plan 2025 includes a target “to create functional oyster reef habitats at ecosystem scales in 5 to 8 suitable English waterbodies”. This is necessary because native oyster reefs are classified as ecologically collapsed across Europe, meaning natural recovery without intervention is unlikely.

This presentation outlines a restoration prioritisation process for English Water Framework Directive (WFD) waterbodies. It represents the first stage of site selection, identifying waterbodies that meet broad environmental criteria and may offer the greatest ecological and social benefits. The presentation also highlights the importance of future-proofing restoration in the context of both connectivity to the wider seascape and projected climate change variables, recommending actions to incorporate these considerations into site selection.

Additional authors

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Additional information

<https://nativeoysternetwork.org/>

The Crown Estate: Strategic Opportunities Map

Edmund McManus, The Crown Estate

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From Evidence to Action: Targeting Marine Nature Recovery Where It Will Last

Why

Not all areas of the seabed offer the same likelihood of delivering durable outcomes under climate change and cumulative pressure. Poorly targeted interventions risk failure, delay and short-lived benefits. Practitioners therefore need tools that help identify where action is most likely to succeed and endure.

What

The Crown Estate is developing a Strategic Nature Opportunities Map (SNOM) to support marine nature recovery. The SNOM integrates ecological importance, opportunity for improvement and risk to success, alongside climate resilience, pressures and human wellbeing. Rather than focusing on single issues, it identifies stacked opportunity areas where multiple benefits align.

How

This presentation will set out how the SNOM methodology combines multiple datasets to reveal high-opportunity and lower-risk locations. The session will demonstrate how spatial tools can move marine nature recovery upstream, and enable more coordinated, place-based delivery for nature and people.



Spotlight on Scarborough

Concrete Coast and the North–South Bay shoreline

Just moments from the conference, Scarborough's coastline offers an inspiring way to experience marine nature up close. The Concrete Coast project in North Bay, near the Sea Life Centre, showcases how coastal structures can be designed to support marine life and strengthen resilience. Delegates can take a leisurely walk between South Bay and North Bay, enjoying ever-changing sea views, rock pooling spots, and opportunities to see seabirds, porpoises, or even dolphins. For a more relaxed option, an open-top bus connects the two bays. Whether on foot or by bus, this route brings together science, design, and the everyday beauty of the Yorkshire coast.

Harbour, heritage, and living marine culture

Scarborough Harbour invites you to explore where past and present meet by the sea. A stroll through the harbour and old town reveals stories of the town's rich maritime heritage, including its 'tunny' fishing past, alongside the rhythms of a busy modern coastline. Wildlife is an ever-present part of the experience, from kittiwakes nesting on Spa Bridge to seasonal sightings of dolphins offshore. Along the way, visitors can discover creative and cultural highlights, including the Rotunda Museum and coastal artworks such as the Sea Oak sculpture. It is an ideal place to experience how community, heritage, and marine life continue to shape one another.

Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs

For those with time to explore further afield, Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs offer an unforgettable coastal escape. Just a short journey from Scarborough, this dramatic stretch of chalk cliffs is home to thriving seabird colonies, with gannets, puffins, and kittiwakes gathering in spectacular numbers. Well-marked walking routes along the cliff tops provide sweeping views of the North Sea and a chance to experience this remarkable landscape at your own pace. It is a powerful reminder of the importance of protecting our coastal environments, and a memorable addition to any visit to the region.

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