

# **Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan**

## **Consultation**

**July 2025**

# Scotland's First

## Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan | Draft

### Introduction

Thriving marine and coastal ecosystems provide many benefits, both to the people who interact with them and to the wider natural world. Scotland has an incredibly rich and diverse marine environment, which is one of the most important assets to our ecological and economic prosperity. Yet we are facing a twin climate and biodiversity crisis and our marine and coastal ecosystems are under increasing pressure from climate change, pollution, and historic degradation. To combat this decline, there is growing interest in undertaking marine and coastal nature restoration across Scotland, especially through activities that can be described as active restoration: the creation or reintroduction of habitats and species. Examples of this are restoring seagrass meadows, seeding native oysters and other shellfish, saltmarsh planting, replenishing sand dunes, planting trees along rivers to support salmon populations, seabird reintroduction, and many others.

Restoration can provide a range of benefits:

**Ecologically** it supports ecosystem resilience through increased biodiversity and habitat provision e.g. nursery and feeding grounds. It could also contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation through supporting habitats that absorb and store carbon, and by improving coastal resilience and reducing flood risks.

**Socially and economically**, restoration can create local opportunities for volunteering, education, community access to and engagement with the marine and coastal environment, hospitality, and green jobs. These are all beneficial for supporting coastal communities and a just transition to a more sustainable marine economy; Scotland is unique in that most restoration projects currently taking place are community-led.

### Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045

#### Objective 1: To accelerate restoration and regeneration

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) recognises that we urgently need to accelerate and scale up efforts to drive landscape and seascape scale recovery. Active restoration can make a contribution to this recovery, which is why under the SBS Delivery Plan we have committed to publishing a Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan that will set out how we intend to accelerate marine and coastal in Scotland, including identifying actions to help prioritise habitats and locations suitable for restoration.

# The Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan

## Aims, scope and definitions

This is the first plan of its kind in Scotland with a dedicated focus on restoration in the marine and coastal environment and reflects the pioneering nature of the work that restoration groups are doing. We will review and update the plan over a five year cycle, to ensure we keep up with scientific and ecological developments in this growing sector and dynamic environment.

The plan is part of a broad programme of policy work to address the growing pressures on our marine environment and it is important to note that no single measure by itself will be enough to halt and reverse environmental decline. That said, accelerating active restoration in Scotland's marine and coastal areas has the potential to enhance the resilience of our environment and support livelihoods of people in rural communities.

The actions set out in this first plan will be delivered over the lifespan of the plan and work towards three overarching aims, which are to:

- achieve a better understanding across marine users of where active restoration can best take place and how we can prioritise species and habitats
- maximise ecological benefits and social and economic opportunities from active restoration
- support community-led restoration and enable investment in restoration efforts

## Our approach to developing the plan

Policy development for the plan has been informed by discussions with a cross-sectoral stakeholder advisory group who brought a wide range of perspectives to the table. A series of workshops held with this advisory group in February and March 2025 allowed us to explore complex issues, test assumptions, consider diverse standpoints, and inform our current understanding of the issues, challenges and opportunities relating to marine and coastal restoration with the full breadth of interests in mind.

We want to thank all those who took part in the advisory group workshops for their vital insights and constructive approach to the sessions. In recognition of the valuable space these workshops have provided for engagement with and between stakeholders, we would like to explore whether and how this group could have a continued role in implementation of the plan. A list of organisations that attended the advisory group workshops is provided at the end of this document.

## Geographic scope

The draft plan covers coastal, inshore (0-12 nautical miles) and offshore (12 – 200 nautical miles), and terrestrial restoration where it directly benefits marine and coastal habitats, or species that spend at least part of their life cycle in the marine environment. In some areas objectives proposed may involve working with devolved administrations and UK Government, where the devolution settlement requires.

## What do we mean by active restoration?

The plan will focus primarily on supporting and enabling active restoration. Throughout the plan we use the following definitions:-

**Active restoration** is habitat (re)creation and species (re)introduction, and examples include those noted in the introduction like seagrass or saltmarsh planting, native oyster restoration and sand dune replenishment.

**Pressure management**, which is sometimes referred to as passive restoration. This can include restricting human activities or otherwise managing how they are carried out, or measures such as management of predators and invasive, non-native species.

Active restoration and pressure management are both vital in supporting nature recovery. However, there are currently many policy programmes either already underway or upcoming that will deliver measures relating to pressure management, i.e. that seek to protect, recover and regenerate marine and coastal habitats and species. These include Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Priority Marine Features (PMF) management measures, Scottish Seabird Action Plan, the Marine Litter Strategy, the UK Dolphin and Porpoise Strategy, the Fisheries Management Strategy, and the UK Marine Strategy programme of measures.

The policy landscape in this space is busy, and as a result we consider that this plan can add the most value by focussing on active restoration while recognising that this is one part of a bigger picture. That is not to say pressure management is completely outwith the remit of this plan: we consider that it is included where it is needed to directly support active restoration efforts, and that it may become a priority for actions under future restoration plans in line with the five year review cycle noted above.

## Historic presence

We have also considered whether active restoration should focus on areas where there is evidence a habitat or species was present at some time in the past. Evidence of historic presence of habitats and species can be a helpful consideration for identifying where suitable conditions for restoration might be present. However, historical data is not always available, complete or reliable, and environmental conditions within an area

may have changed since observations were made. Focussing solely on areas with historic presence would unnecessarily limit opportunities to undertake restoration activity and generate its associated benefits. Historic presence does remain an important factor that should be considered where possible in the development of restoration projects.

## Restoration baselines and targets

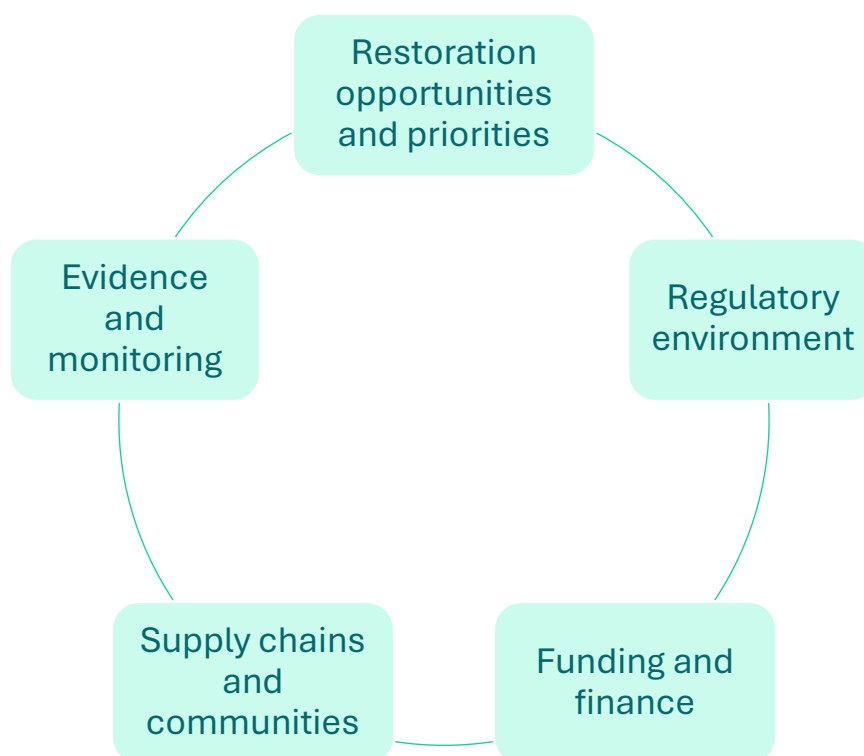
In line with our position on the role of historic presence, the plan will not look to a historical baseline(s) to stipulate what state we are restoring habitats or species to. Historic baselines, for example the emissions reduction target to reduce emissions against 1990 levels, can be useful in cases where data is available to support such an approach. However, this is not a feasible approach in relation to restoring marine habitats and species because of the complexity and variety of ecological factors and lack of historic data in the marine environment. The restoration plan will instead take a forward-looking approach towards improving our marine environment to contribute to achieving Good Environmental Status.

In February 2025 we introduced the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament, which is seeking powers to set biodiversity targets. Any future targets brought forward under this legislation, if passed, will need to be considered when the plan is reviewed and updated in future. For now, the Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan will not set targets for restoration nor be prescriptive in setting out specific areas or features to be restored. Instead, the plan will provide tools to improve understanding of what could be restored and where.

## Plan structure

The draft plan is structured into five themes, each of which tackles a different aspect of what is needed to accelerate restoration in Scotland's coast and waters (Figure 1).

For each theme we have developed objectives that we are looking to achieve through this first Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan, underpinned by the actions we will take to deliver those objectives.



**Figure 1.** The five themes for the Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan

**Restoration opportunities and priorities** focusses on improving our understanding of where restoration could happen and what is in need of restoration most urgently.

**Regulatory environment** explores ways to ensure regulations, licenses and other oversight procedures support those interested in undertaking restoration and protect habitats and species undergoing restoration, while safeguarding the environment and considering impacts on other sea users.

**Funding and finance** looks at how we can address funding gaps, leverage private sector investment, and channel funding streams so that the benefits of restoration are felt and seen in local communities.

**Supply chains and communities** tackles some of the more practical aspects of restoration and how we can support and scale up community-led restoration.

**Evidence and monitoring** sets out how we can improve knowledge gaps about restoration in the Scottish marine environment, both in terms of understanding of where it can happen, but also how restoration supports and contributes to Good Environmental Status of our marine environment, as well as the social and economic impacts.

# Theme 1 – Restoration opportunities and priorities

## Overview

### Objectives

1. Establish a rolling programme of opportunity maps to highlight where suitable ecological conditions for restoration may exist
2. Develop criteria to prioritise habitats and species most urgently in need of restoration
3. Support and enable landscape scale restoration
4. Promote the importance of a place-based approach and baseline surveys

### Cross-over with other themes

Improve evidence and monitoring

### Actions for each objective

1. Opportunity maps
  - Develop opportunity maps for habitats and species, taking into account restoration priorities
  - Gather and incorporate further data to refine maps and develop new layers.
  - Explore appetite for more localised and/or regional maps
2. Criteria for restoration priorities
  - Set out priorities at a national scale, while supporting regional partnerships and other local coalitions to identify regional priorities
  - Review and update priorities using the criteria established to ensure action is targeted where it is most urgently needed
3. Support and enable landscape scale restoration
  - Improve understanding of connections between habitats and species to generate ecosystem level benefits
  - Encourage landscape scale funding
  - Enable join-up between projects
4. Promote the importance of baseline surveys and localised approach

## In detail

### **Objective 1 - Establish a rolling programme of opportunity maps to highlight where suitable ecological conditions for restoration may exist**

Opportunity maps are a useful tool to understand where ecological conditions might be suitable for restoration of different habitats and species.

We have worked with Marine Directorate Science and NatureScot to develop a proof of concept opportunity map for native oysters (see Figure 2.), to demonstrate what these maps could look like and give an idea of how they can be used. Using this example as a basis, we plan to develop further maps over the lifespan of this plan for other habitats and species that may be suitable for restoration.

It is not intended that the opportunity maps produced for the restoration plan will be in any way prescriptive, or define areas where restoration *should* happen. Nor will it be the case that restoration can only happen in these areas. They are developed to help anyone interested in undertaking restoration - as well as other sea users - to better understand where around Scotland restoration of different types of habitats and species might be possible.

The native oyster map is based on habitat suitability modelling, which uses existing data about ecological conditions to build a picture. In this case, the modelling has used data

about factors like depth or current to highlight where conditions are most likely *not* suitable for restoration. This is because there is still a lot we don't know about the marine environment and marine species, for example the temperature range at which native oysters spawn in Scotland, and there is often local variation as well as incomplete data.

Because of their reliance on modelled data, opportunity maps provide a starting point but not the full picture. It is extremely important to conduct local baseline surveys to validate the modelled information. Before selecting a site, projects should investigate the local conditions in their area of interest to decide what, if any, restoration is most suitable for that location.

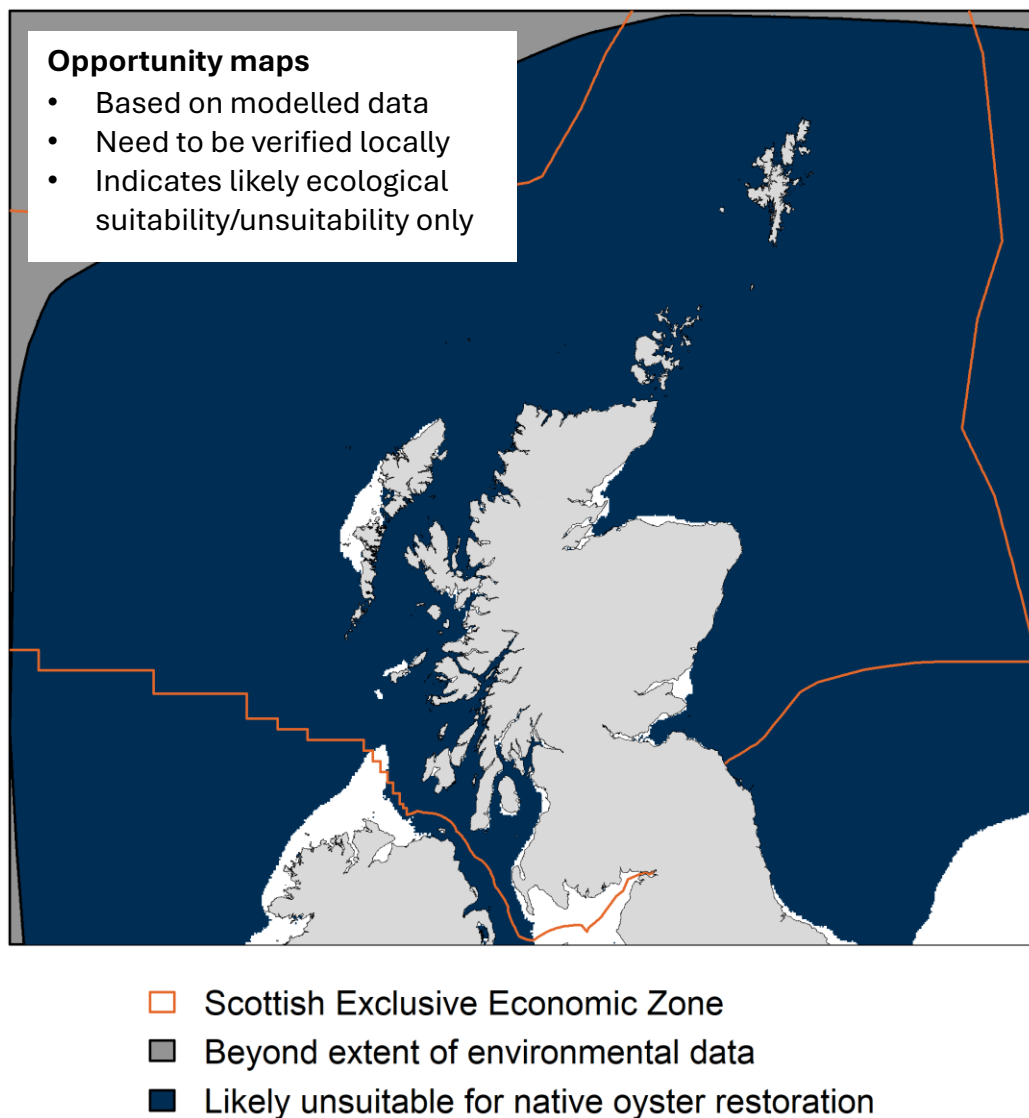
Similarly, it is important to recognise that environmental conditions are not the only factors which need to be considered in identifying restoration opportunities and designing restoration projects. Engagement with local sea users in the early stages of a project is critical to understand where restoration can be best located to minimise disruption to and from other activities.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to identify what other data layers would be useful in refining these maps. This could include: climate change modelling to understand where shifts in conditions might occur and help future-proof restoration; mapping historic presence of species and



habitats; modelling around connectivity and habitat fragmentation; incorporating data on areas where pressure management is in place, for example marine protected areas and priority marine features; and linking in with information about existing sea uses.

During discussions with the stakeholder advisory group we also explored whether we should develop finer-grained, more local or regional maps. There was some interest in this, but no strong feeling that this is something that should be developed for the whole of Scotland. We will work with Local Authorities and others to explore whether and where more localised maps might be helpful.



**Figure 2.** Illustration of proof of concept opportunity map for native oysters

**Objective 2 - Develop criteria to prioritise habitats and species most urgently in need of restoration**

Identifying where in Scotland there are restoration opportunities is an important step, but there is also a need to consider how we prioritise habitats and species for restoration.

This will help focus delivery of wider actions and objectives within the plan, for example by indicating where further opportunity maps would be beneficial, or ensuring that investment can be targeted to support restoration priorities.

Currently only a handful of species and habitats are targeted for active restoration, based largely on technological feasibility and local interest. But to drive scaling up of restoration and innovation in the sector, we need a better understanding of which habitats and species need to be restored most urgently; for example because they are the most under threat of extinction, or because of the long timescales involved in their restoration.

In Scotland we do not currently have a robust policy or scientific framework to articulate these priorities, so a key objective for this plan is to develop a set of criteria to help us identify what the key priorities should be.

There are many examples of ‘priority lists’ in conservation, including our own list of [Priority Marine Features](#) in Scotland, the [IUCN Red List](#) and the [OSPAR List of Threatened and Declining Species and Habitats](#). These are all based on carefully developed criteria, or metrics, to compare different aspects of

habitats, species, landscapes or ecosystems.

We are working with NatureScot to develop something similar for active restoration. In the marine environment such a framework could include consideration of factors like

- conservation priority: what is the current status of the habitat or species?
- restoration potential: do restoration methods currently exist or might they in future?
- potential benefits: how can restoration support the habitat/species, the wider ecosystem or people and communities?

Applying these kinds of criteria will allow us to signal what we consider to be priorities for active restoration. Criteria like this will also help to identify priorities which are not necessarily the focus of current activity, thereby driving innovation and the piloting of new approaches.

The intention is that, once developed, we can re-use such a framework to review the priorities as the Restoration Plan is updated over time. This will make sure that priorities keep pace with advances in restoration methods as well as changing pressures and the state of the marine environment.

**Objective 3 - Support and enable landscape and ecosystem scale restoration**

Currently restoration projects often focus on one, sometimes two habitats or species (combining for example native oysters and seagrass). It is clear however from engagement with the sector and academic community that there is growing interest in driving forward landscape and ecosystem scale initiatives. Working at this scale, for example focusing on a river catchment or an estuary, can multiply environmental benefits across ecosystems and recognises that natural systems are connected and do not operate or thrive in isolation.

Discussions at the stakeholder advisory group highlighted this type of work should be a key priority for the Restoration Plan and we want to explore opportunities for more projects - individually or in partnership with others - to develop at landscape scale and working across the land sea divide.

There are objectives and actions throughout the plan that will support this ambition, but specifically we want to:

- improve understanding of connections between habitats and species to generate ecosystem level benefits, including terrestrial and marine linkages (source to sea)
- encourage landscape scale funding
- improve strategic oversight of where restoration is happening and tap into existing restoration networks to encourage join-up between projects

- encourage existing groups, for example local coastal partnerships, Regional Land Use Partnerships, and local planning partnerships (terrestrial and marine where they exist), to identify regional priorities for restoration, supported by more localised opportunity maps.

**Objective 4 - Promote the importance of a place-based approach and baseline surveys**

Ensuring that the right activities are carried out in the right places is critical to the success of restoration projects. Taking a place-based approach to conservation and restoration means understanding the specific environmental, economic and cultural context of a place or region, to decide what activities or measures are most appropriate and to avoid any unintended negative consequences. This includes information on habitat and species presence, wider environmental characteristics and condition (and how these might change over time) as well as what other activities are taking place.

Making sure that information on local (and historic, where available) environmental conditions is easily accessible, including local knowledge from a range of sources, and supporting transparency and collaboration across sectors are all ways to embed place-based perspectives in restoration.

As part of this first Restoration Plan, we will promote place-based approaches in restoration guidance. We say more about this under Theme 5: Evidence and monitoring.

**Question 1: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you prioritise each of the objectives in this theme?**

1 = This objective is not at all important

2 = This objective is not very important

3 = Neutral

4 = This objective is quite important

5 = This objective is very important

0 = I am unsure

	1	2	3	4	5	0
Establish a rolling programme of opportunity maps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop criteria for priority habitats and species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support and enable landscape scale restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote the importance of a place-based approach and baseline surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 2: Please choose for each action set out in this theme whether it should be:** Included in this plan, reserved for the future, or not included.

	Include in this plan	Reserve for future plan(s)	Do not include	Unsure
Develop opportunity maps for habitats and species, taking into account restoration priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gather and incorporate further data to refine opportunity maps and develop new layers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore appetite for more localised and/or regional opportunity maps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set out priorities at national scale, while supporting regional partnerships and other local coalitions to identify regional priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review and update priorities using the criteria once established to ensure action is targeted where it is most urgently needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve understanding of connections between habitats and species to generate and ecosystem level benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage landscape scale funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable join-up between projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 3: Is there any further information you would like to share with us on the objectives or actions in this theme?**

This could include your reasons for selecting the answers to the previous two questions, or any further reflections on the overall content of the theme.

## Theme 2 – Regulatory environment

### Overview

#### Objectives

1. Support restoration projects navigating the regulatory environment
2. Encourage better join-up, transparency and information sharing across regulators and public bodies
3. Establish protection mechanisms for habitats and species undergoing restoration

#### Cross-over with other themes

Improve evidence and monitoring

Create a database of restoration projects

#### Actions for each objective

1. Support for meeting regulatory requirements
  - Identify opportunities to create and fund a support post(s) to help projects navigate regulatory requirements
  - Update and produce further guidance on regulatory requirements, including mapping what is needed and when
  - Create a ‘one-stop-shop’ for guidance, information and knowledge exchange, including a database of projects, to improve oversight of where restoration is happening
2. Encourage better join-up across regulators and public bodies
  - Set up a forum for relevant bodies to share regular updates
  - Invite Local Authorities to information workshops to raise awareness of restoration
  - Work with regulatory bodies to ensure support for restoration is a key priority
3. Establish protection mechanisms
  - Explore how to best implement a protection mechanism, in law, for habitats and species undergoing restoration
  - Set out clear monitoring requirements, as well as procedures for cases where restoration is not successful
  - Encourage early engagement with local communities and other sea users to consider voluntary arrangements for example codes of conduct
  - Include policies in the National Marine Plan 2 (NMP2) to support active restoration

## In detail

### **Objective 1 – Support restoration projects navigating the regulatory environment**

Active restoration projects face a complex patchwork of regulatory requirements, often requiring multiple different types of licenses, permits and assessments.

Feedback from restoration groups for a number of years has been that the existing regulatory framework governing activity in our marine environment is not well suited to activities whose principal aim is to improve and benefit the natural environment.

In Spring 2024 we [consulted on regulatory reforms](#) that would have simplified some of the requirements related to restoration projects. While there was broad support for these proposals, views on how the proposals would have been implemented and worked in practice were less clear. There was also understandable nervousness on the part of some sea users around ensuring all marine sectors are subject to proportionate safeguards.

Over the course of discussions with stakeholders in the development of this plan, it has become clear that while processes can be difficult to navigate, there is acknowledgement in the restoration sector that the system is complicated for a reason (namely that the marine environment is a complex and busy place and that regulation of active restoration is important to ensure it is carried out appropriately).

Instead, there was a steer that clearer guidance and greater support for projects would be of great benefit.

On that basis, we have concluded that for now, the priority should be to explore opportunities to create and fund a support post (or posts) to help projects navigate the current system. However, the option to consider regulatory changes in future remains and we will keep a watching brief for opportunities.

### **Funded post and one-stop-shop**

A funded post(s) would provide a single point of contact and expertise for projects to guide them through the regulatory requirements. This could include responding to queries, sign-posting guidance and supporting the completion of applications.

A range of guidance already exists to support restoration projects. However, there are opportunities to provide updates and improvements, particularly in relation to potential costs, timelines and interdependencies.

We also recognise that while there are many sources of helpful information on restoration – for example the [NatureScot handbooks](#), [SMEEF toolkit](#), and [licensing guidance](#), [Crown Estate Scotland information on leases](#), [Fish Health Inspectorate](#), these are hosted across the websites of several public bodies which can make it hard to piece together a coherent picture of what projects need to do.

Therefore we will also look to establish a one-stop-shop for information and guidance that can act as a platform for queries, knowledge exchange and sharing best practice.



### **Database of restoration projects**

We also envision this one-stop-shop will include a database of restoration projects. This is intended to provide a better strategic overview of where, and what projects are happening without adding administrative burden to projects through a registration requirement.

A database of projects will allow restoration groups and other sea users to easily access information about existing or planned activities, which can then be factored into project planning or used to make links with wider initiatives.

### **Objective 2 – Encourage better join-up across regulators**

Providing more support to projects and community groups looking to undertake restoration is only one side of the regulatory coin. As part of their restoration journey, projects are likely to come into contact with a range of governmental bodies and regulators, for example: Crown Estate Scotland, NatureScot, Marine Directorate's Licensing Operation team (MD-LOT), Local Authorities, Fish Health Inspectorate, Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

As is often the case where different bodies administer different aspects of governance and regulation, information sharing and joined-up working across bodies can be challenging.

To improve the experience of projects dealing with the regulatory environment and ensure regulators can carry out their duties effectively and efficiently, we will work with bodies to encourage more transparency and information

sharing. This could be achieved through the one-stop-shop referenced above, or other options such as developing a working group or forum of representative bodies that would meet regularly to share updates and promote effective ways of working.

We will also explore whether there is appetite among local authorities to take part in information sessions and workshops that raise awareness of restoration, its benefits and processes in an effort to improve the linkages between terrestrial and marine planning.

### **Objective 3 – Establish protection mechanisms for habitats and species undergoing restoration**

Active restoration is often compatible with a range of other activities, depending on the specifics of the project and local conditions. Through the plan, we want to encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and particularly opportunities for co-location of restoration projects with other activities. This should be considered as early as possible in the planning stages for restoration projects.

However, there will be cases where active restoration efforts may need protection from other activities in order to succeed. There are a variety of ways this could be achieved, both through legislative mechanisms (which may require primary legislation) or alternative means such as codes of conduct or voluntary agreement.

We will encourage restoration projects to engage with wider marine sectors to explore opportunities for non-legislative

measures. However, we also want to explore how best to establish a legislative protection mechanism for habitats and species undergoing restoration, to be used in cases where it is needed.

Not only will this ensure longer term security for habitats and species undergoing restoration (and therefore help maximise active restoration's contribution to a healthy marine environment), it will also build confidence in restoration projects and unlock other actions in the plan including in relation to funding.

The 2024 consultation on legislative proposals for restoration invited views on using existing powers available to implement Marine Conservation Orders (MCOs) for this purpose. This would have involved adapting an existing and well-used mechanism, which provides a good level of flexibility in terms of what measures can be introduced. There was support among most respondents for the idea of protecting habitats and species undergoing restoration. However, there were concerns about the permanency of protections and what would happen if restoration was unsuccessful.

While MCOs remain one route to achieving protection, we want to take a comprehensive look at potential options. Key factors to consider in developing an appropriate mechanism include

- permanency of any measures. One option could be a way to introduce temporary protection – if needed - in the (relatively) earlier phases of restoration, which could then be

converted into more permanent protection if merited, or removed if not

- clarity around monitoring requirements for any protection mechanism, to assess success and therefore the need for protection
- flexibility, both in terms of what such a mechanism could be used for and ensuring that this suits local circumstances, and the ability to adapt or remove measures if needed

Any legislative proposals for a protection mechanism brought forward under this plan will be subject to relevant consultation and assessment of impacts. It is also important to note that the Scottish Ministers' ability to legislate in relation to Scotland's offshore waters is limited, and any protection mechanisms would relate to the inshore area.

Aside from specific protection mechanisms, consideration should also be given to other ways that marine restoration can be integrated into wider frameworks for managing activities in Scotland's marine environment. The focus here should not solely be on restricting or excluding activities to protect habitats and species undergoing restoration, but also on ensuring that restoration is considered by other sectors as they plan and undertake activities. Work is underway to develop an updated NMP2 and we will aim to ensure that NMP2 policies support active restoration. We will also need to consider wider protection measures which are either already in place or planned, such as MPA and PMF management measures.

**Question 4: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you prioritise each of the objectives in this theme?**

1 = This objective is not at all important

2 = This objective is not very important

3 = Neutral

4 = This objective is quite important

5 = This objective is very important

0 = I am unsure

	1	2	3	4	5	0
Support restoration projects navigating the regulatory environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage better join-up, transparency and information sharing across regulators and public bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish protection mechanisms for habitats and species undergoing restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 5: Please choose for each action set out in this theme whether it should be:** Included in this plan, reserved for the future, or not included.

	Include in this plan	Reserve for future plan(s)	Do not include	Unsure
Identify opportunities to create and fund a support post(s) to help projects navigate regulatory requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update and produce further guidance on regulatory requirements, including mapping what is needed and when	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a 'one-stop-shop' for guidance, information and knowledge exchange, including a database of projects to improve oversight of where restoration is happening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up a forum for relevant bodies to share regular updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invite local authorities to information workshops to raise awareness of restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with regulatory bodies to ensure support for restoration is a key priority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore how best to implement a protection mechanism, in law, for habitats and species undergoing restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set out clear monitoring requirements, as well as procedures for cases where restoration is not successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage early engagement with local communities and other sea users to consider voluntary arrangements, for example codes of conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include policies in NMP2 to support active restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 6: Is there any further information you would like to share with us on the objectives or actions in this theme?**

This could include your reasons for selecting the answers to the previous two questions, or any further reflections on the overall content of the theme.

## Theme 3 – Funding and finance

### Overview

#### Objectives

1. Address the funding gap for project development and groundwork phases
2. Continue investment in pipeline of projects
3. Ensure private sector investment can support restoration at scale but does not bypass local communities

#### Cross-over with other themes

Establish protection mechanisms

Identify restoration opportunities and priorities

#### Actions for each objective

1. Address project development funding gap
  - Support to develop innovative funding streams (public and private sector)
  - Highlight existing public and private sector funding streams such as SMEEF that already target this phase
  - Promote the importance of funding project development activities to a wider range of funders
  - Work with regulators and other public bodies to de-risk project development (for example by providing more clarity on costs and timelines for licenses and consents)
2. Continue investment in pipeline of projects
  - Maintain support for SMEEF for duration of this first plan
3. Channel private sector investment to community-led restoration
  - Explore the potential for a matchmaking service linking businesses to projects
  - Use SMEEF to leverage funding into community-led projects

## In detail

### **Objective 1 – Address the funding gap for project development and groundwork phases**

Marine nature restoration is a pioneering sector, which will require public and private investment and funding to continue developing.

From discussions with restoration groups, a clear picture has emerged that there is a funding gap in the initial stages of project development, which presents a key barrier to more initiatives coming forward.

Projects receive support from a range of funders, however these tend to focus on capital and resource funding of ‘on the ground’ restoration. Prior to restoration activity happening, there is often about a two-year period of project development during which site selection, baseline surveys, engagement with local communities, recruitment, and securing appropriate licenses and consents take place. These activities are critical for successful restoration.

Some funding bodies, such as SMEEF, already offer grants that target this project development phase, and we are keen to work with other funders (public and private) to see where there is appetite to develop innovative funding streams. We would particularly welcome initiatives on similar models to the [National Heritage Lottery Grant for Landscape Connections](#), which comprises two year development coupled with eight year project implementation funding.



Scottish  
**Marine  
Environmental  
Enhancement**  
Fund

SMEEF is an innovative nature finance vehicle that facilitates investment in marine and coastal enhancement in Scotland. Through donating to SMEEF, businesses and organisations that operate in Scottish waters are able to voluntarily re-invest in the health and biodiversity of our seas. From these donations, grants are then allocated on a competitive basis to enhancement focused projects.

Formally launched in May 2022, SMEEF has so far secured and distributed more than £3.8 million to around 54 restoration and enhancement projects in Scottish coasts and seas.

The first round of grants from 2022-24 focused on project development and capital needs (such as purchasing equipment). From 2024 onwards, funding is allocated across five different areas: seabed, coastal, wider seas, seabirds and research.

SMEEF receives a core funding contribution for staff costs from Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland and is hosted by (but independent from) NatureScot.

Alongside an ambition to encourage funders to expand and diversify the types of funding available, restoration groups have highlighted that reducing costs (and uncertainty) should be a key part of encouraging more projects to come forward. To support this we will work with regulators and other public bodies to explore ways to ‘de-risk’ project development. More clarity on the costs and timelines for licenses and consents required will enable projects to better plan for these expenses.

Greater transparency will raise potential funders’ awareness of the cost of restoration. We also want to encourage a broader understanding of what ‘success’ looks like, and the value in being able to learn from situations where things do not work out as intended.

### **Objective 2 – Continue investment in pipeline of projects**

To scale up restoration we need a thriving grassroots restoration sector that can present ready-for-investment projects to potential funders, especially private sector funding.

SMEEF is a key pipeline funder of enhancement projects which has leveraged millions in private sector donations at relatively low cost to the public sector.

We recognise the important role the fund is playing in supporting community-led restoration across Scotland, and will maintain an element of core funding for the fund for the next five years (subject to budgetary approvals), or until the next review cycle of the Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan. At its inception, there was an

ambition for SMEEF to become self-sufficient over time, so we will keep the option of tapering core funding over time under review. We will also continue to be an active and engaged partner on the SMEEF Steering Group.

### **Objective 3 – Ensure private sector investment can support restoration at scale but does not bypass local communities**

Restoration can bring ecological benefits and opportunities for green jobs and skills to rural and coastal areas. It has the potential to contribute to local community wealth building, especially when paired with investment.

We are seeing growing interest from the private sector, particularly renewable energy and infrastructure developers, in funding and undertaking restoration. This could offer exciting possibilities in the future for restoration at scale, and it is essential that we match this momentum to the expertise of community-led projects already working in restoration.

We want to encourage private sector organisations and institutions to tap into local projects and existing mechanisms for distributing funding; for example through SMEEF, which already has an established governance structure, grants panel, due diligence and ethical contributions policy.

An idea raised at the advisory group workshop that we are keen to explore is to develop a “match-making service” to connect local and regional businesses with restoration projects. This would ensure benefits and participation in restoration are realised within local



communities. It could also help expand the range of sectors engaging with, and in restoration initiatives.

### **Links with wider areas**

There are several pieces of work underway that, if realised, could open up new avenues for private sector funding towards restoration, through the planning and consenting processes for activities and developments in the marine environment.

In terrestrial planning, the National Planning Framework 4 mandates that all development contributes to enhancing biodiversity, including restoring degraded habitats. For major developments, this means demonstrating that biodiversity will be in a better state post-development than before, including enhancing nature networks. Local development proposals are also required to include measures for conserving, restoring, and enhancing biodiversity.

Work is underway to develop and understand what a nature positive approach could look like for the marine environment and explore approaches to stimulate private investment towards nature positive outcomes.

We will also consider how developing policies relating to strategic compensation and offshore wind could align with this plan.

**Question 7: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you prioritise each of the objectives in this theme?**

1 = This objective is not at all important

2 = This objective is not very important

3 = Neutral

4 = This objective is quite important

5 = This objective is very important

0 = I am unsure

	1	2	3	4	5	0
Address the funding gap for project development and groundwork phases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue investment in pipeline of projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure private sector investment can support restoration at scale but does not bypass local communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 8: Please choose for each action set out in this theme whether it should be:** Included in this plan, reserved for the future, or not included.

	Include in this plan	Reserve for future plan(s)	Do not include	Unsure
Support to develop innovative funding streams (public and private sector)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highlight existing public and private sector funding streams such as SMEEF that already target this phase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote the importance of funding project development activities to a wider range of funders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with regulators and other public bodies to de-risk project development (for example by providing more clarity on costs and timelines for licenses and consents)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain support for SMEEF for duration of this first plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore the potential for a matchmaking service linking businesses to projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use SMEEF to leverage funding into community-led projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 9: Is there any further information you would like to share with us on the objectives or actions in this theme?**

This could include your reasons for selecting the answers to the previous two questions, or any further reflections on the overall content of the theme.

## Theme 4 – Supply chains and communities

### Overview

#### Objectives

1. Support knowledge exchange, data sharing and best practice learning on active restoration, between projects and across the sector
2. Increase participation and engagement of other marine and coastal users in restoration
3. Support more resilient supply chains for restoration while maintaining high standards of biosecurity

#### Cross-over with other themes

Improve evidence and monitoring

Establish a database of projects

Landscape scale restoration

#### Actions for each objective

1. Support knowledge exchange
  - Foster communities of practice, both through existing networks, like Coastal Communities Network and Local Coastal Partnerships, and new networks and platforms where helpful
  - Work with interested institutions to explore the potential for a biennial conference and other workshops or training events for practitioners and academia, with a focus on sharing practical learning
  - Use the one-stop-shop noted in Theme 2 as a platform for knowledge exchange, case studies and data sharing (including citizen science)
  - Explore the potential for a prize for restoration innovation
2. Increase participation and engagement of other marine and coastal users in restoration
  - Encourage early engagement with other marine users in project development
  - Publish case-studies on how restoration activities can benefit multiple marine users and/or where cross-sectoral efforts have been successful
  - Promote the socio-economic development potential of restoration as a sector
3. Support more resilient supply chains while maintaining biosecurity
  - Support new and existing enterprises aimed at developing supply chains
  - Update and expand guidance on supply chain best practice, for example biosecurity and genetic diversity

## In detail

### **Objective 1 - Support knowledge exchange, data sharing and best practice learning on active restoration, between projects and across the sector**

Restoration is a pioneering sector where new methods and approaches are constantly being developed and tried out. Sharing lessons learned from success as well as failures is vital for the translation of science into practice and scaling up restoration.

Yet there is usually little capacity for individual, often volunteer-reliant, projects to organise sector-wide knowledge exchange activities on top of their restoration work. We think there is a role here for government and other public sector bodies to facilitate and offer support, for example in conjunction with the support post and one-stop-shop initiative highlighted in Theme 2.

We recognise the important work already done by established networks and partnerships that promote knowledge exchange. A key outcome for this theme will be to support, build on and expand communities of practice within restoration, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

This could include supporting spaces for sharing knowledge, such as conferences and workshops, and facilitating data sharing, e.g. from surveys, monitoring and citizen science, so that information can be exchanged more often, easily, and rapidly.

### **Objective 2 - Increase participation and engagement of other marine and coastal users in restoration**

We are aware that ‘communities’ are not one group with a single voice, but are made up of complex and diverse groups of people and interest. Collaboration within the restoration sector is only part of the picture, and engagement with other marine users and wider communities of interest is also critical to successful environmental, social and economic outcomes.

At a minimum this should involve early and meaningful engagement with other users to ensure transparency, provide opportunities to identify shared goals and address potential complexities. It may also be possible to identify opportunities for wider sectors to become more actively involved in restoration. This could include contributing to activities such as monitoring or deployment of stock, or resource provision such as access to marine vessels.

Ecological benefits are sometimes presented as being at odds with economic development. However, this obscures the fact that scaling up restoration offers key opportunities for social and economic gains, such as

- diversification of marine and coastal enterprises
- overnight stays by educational and volunteering visitors
- revenue for local hospitality
- year-round and seasonal job opportunities

- building skills (including for young people and students) and talent retention

**Objective 3 - Support more resilient supply chains while maintaining biosecurity**

Stakeholders have raised concerns that bottlenecks in restoration supply chains pose a barrier to scaling up a range of marine and coastal restoration activities. This is particularly acute for the sourcing of seed oysters and sea grass rhizomes and seed. These constraints often limit the availability of key resources and can result in delays, especially as many restoration activities are bound by seasonality when suitable weather conditions prevail.

As part of the Argyll Rural Growth Deal Scottish and UK Government have made available £3.3 million for the development of a Centre for Seaweed and Shellfish Innovation and Development (C-SSIDER) at SAMS in Oban. This facility will foster collaboration between research and industry, including on marine ecological restoration with a focus on sea grass, native bivalves and kelp. The project will support research, innovation and training for the marine restoration sector.

We welcome the critical role that research institutions, private and third sector organisations and restoration projects are already playing in driving forward development in this space. We consider that we can best support this work through guidance and facilitation rather than by Scottish Government taking the lead on actions in this space.

Biosecurity and safeguarding genetic diversity are key considerations when developing restoration proposals and sourcing restoration materials. Biosecurity relates to preventing the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species as well viruses and parasites in the marine environment. The overall risk of negative impacts on the marine environment from restoration activities is generally low, but biosecurity is a critical aspect where unintended consequences can occur.

The restoration sector has pioneered many of the best practices around biosecurity, particularly for native oyster restoration. There are many useful guides online, including some international sources:

- [NatureScot information on marine invasive non-native species](#)
- [European biosecurity handbook for native oysters](#)
- [NatureScot research report on marine and coastal enhancement](#)
- [Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations](#)

We will ensure guidance and information like this is easily available on the one-stop-shop and that continuing to share best practice will be included in knowledge exchange activities set out under Objective 1 in this theme.

**Question 10: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you prioritise each of the objectives in this theme?**

1 = This objective is not at all important

2 = This objective is not very important

3 = Neutral

4 = This objective is quite important

5 = This objective is very important

0 = I am unsure

	1	2	3	4	5	0
Support knowledge exchange, data sharing and best practice learning on active restoration between projects and across the sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase participation and engagement of other marine and coastal users in restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support more resilient supply chains for restoration while maintaining high standards of biosecurity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Question 11: Please choose for each action set out in this theme whether it should be:** Included in this plan, reserved for the future, or not included.

	Include in this plan	Reserve for future plan(s)	Do not include	Unsure
Foster communities of practice, both through existing networks and new networks and platforms where helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with interested institutions to explore the potential for a biennial conference and other workshops or training events for practitioners and academia, with a focus on sharing practical learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the one-stop-shop noted in Theme 2 as a platform for knowledge exchange, case studies and data sharing (including citizen science)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore the potential for a prize for restoration innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage early engagement with other marine users in project development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publish case studies on how restoration activities can benefit multiple marine users and/or where cross-sectoral efforts have been successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote the socio-economic development potential of restoration as a sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support new and existing enterprises aimed at developing supply chains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update and expand guidance on supply chain best practice, for example biosecurity and genetic diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 12: Is there any further information you would like to share with us on the objectives or actions in this theme?**

This could include your reasons for selecting the answers to the previous two questions, or any further reflections on the overall content of the theme.

## Theme 5 – Evidence and monitoring

### Overview

#### Objectives

1. Support improved and more standardised evidence gathering and monitoring for active restoration
2. Improve understanding of how active restoration can contribute to targets and generate environmental, social, and economic benefits
3. Improve the availability of information on restoration projects in Scotland
4. Explore potential contribution of citizen science to data collection and monitoring

#### Cross-over with other themes

Restoration opportunities

Regulatory environment

Supporting community-led restoration

#### Actions for each objective

1. Improved evidence and monitoring
  - Work with projects and research institutions to develop and share user-friendly, standardised data collection best practices for before, during and post-restoration activity.
2. Improved understanding of how active restoration can contribute to environmental, social and economic benefits
  - Develop understanding of ways to measure how restoration efforts contribute towards achieving Good Environmental Status and other targets in our marine coastal environment.
  - Help and encourage projects to capture data on social and economic impacts of active restoration
3. Improve information availability on restoration projects
  - Establish and maintain a database of restoration projects in Scotland, as referred to under Theme 1: Restoration opportunities and priorities
4. Explore potential for citizen science to contribute to data collection and monitoring

## In detail

### **Objective 1 – Support improved and more standardised evidence gathering, monitoring practices and data sharing for active restoration**

There is recognition across the restoration sector as well as among funders and public bodies that evidence gathering and monitoring are vital, before, during and after a restoration project has concluded. At the same time, especially for projects that are community-led, it is important to not smother local enthusiasm with mountains of paperwork.

Evidence gathering and monitoring needs to be proportionate to the scale of the project and resources available, and specific to the habitat, species or ecosystem being restored.

To help make this easier for projects to carry out, we will work with NatureScot and restoration networks to build on the expertise already present in the sector to explore if we can develop robust but user friendly monitoring protocols.

This will be vital to maximising the potential environmental benefits of active restoration, and will support or enable a range of wider objectives and actions under the plan, including promoting a place-based approach, and the development of a protection mechanism for restoration.

It will also be critical to supporting innovation in the sector. We want to encourage piloting of new restoration methods, and this will need to be underpinned by robust approaches to evidence and monitoring.

Finally, we want to consider how data can be shared and fed through to wider systems, such as the [Geodatabase of Marine Features adjacent to Scotland \(GeMS\)](#) and the [Feature Activity Sensitivity Tool \(FeAST\)](#).

### **Objective 2 - Improve our understanding of how active restoration can contribute to targets and generate environmental, social, and economic benefits**

We know from international examples that active restoration can be instrumental in revitalising ecosystems. The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 require the UK and Devolved Governments to put measures in place to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status through the production of a Marine Strategy for all UK marine waters. However, we do not yet have a clear picture of how we can best gather data on restoration to capture if and how it contributes to achievement of this and other targets.

Capturing data on ecological outcomes is an important part of the picture, but restoration can bring many other benefits to local areas. As noted in the previous theme, restoration projects generate jobs and skills, overnight stays and educational opportunities often in rural, coastal and island communities. Capturing quantitative and qualitative data on these wider benefits is essential in understanding restoration's role as part of community wealth building.

**Objective 3 – Improve the availability of information on restoration projects in Scotland**

Under Theme 1: Restoration opportunities and priorities, we set out the benefits of a database of active restoration projects in relation to providing better oversight and enabling place-based approaches to restoration. A database will also improve the availability of information about what and where restoration activities are taking place in Scotland. If this includes information relating to evidence and monitoring, such data can be used to inform wider restoration efforts and contribute to reporting requirements.

**Objective 4 – Explore potential for citizen science to contribute to data collection and monitoring**

As part of the drive to stimulate and build on innovation in the restoration sector, we want to explore how tools like [citizen science](#) can complement existing data collection and monitoring.

With the right guidance and support in place, citizen science could provide valuable data and encourage wider participation in restoration activities.

**Question 13: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you prioritise each of the objectives in this theme?**

1 = This objective is not at all important

2 = This objective is not very important

3 = Neutral

4 = This objective is quite important

5 = This objective is very important

0 = I am unsure

	1	2	3	4	5	0
Support improved and more standardised evidence gathering and monitoring for active restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve understanding of how active restoration can contribute to targets and generate environmental, social and economic benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the availability of information on restoration projects in Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore potential contribution of citizen science to data collection and monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 14: Please choose for each action set out in this theme whether it should be:** Included in this plan, reserved for the future, or not included.

	Include in this plan	Reserve for future plan(s)	Do not include	Unsure
Work with projects and research institutions to develop and share user friendly, standardised data collection best practices for before, during and post-restoration activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop understanding of ways to measure how restoration efforts contribute to achieving Good Environmental Status and other targets in our marine environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help and encourage projects to capture data on social and economic impacts of active restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish and maintain a database of restoration projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 15: Is there any further information you would like to share with us on the objectives or actions in this theme?**

This could include your reasons for selecting the answers to the previous two questions, or any further reflections on the overall content of the theme.



## Plan Implementation, and Review

The restoration plan will be iterative and it is intended this first plan will be implemented over a five year period. Active restoration is a relatively new and rapidly developing area, so it will be important that we can adapt the plan, and actions, to meet changing circumstances.

The objectives and actions set out across the five themes vary significantly in terms of resource requirements and how long they might take to implement. Given the interlinkages between the objectives and actions, a number of actions will support and enable each other. For this reason, the main focus of the consultation will be to seek respondent's views on priorities for the plan.

Scottish Government has an important role to play in setting policy and driving progress. However, marine restoration offers unique opportunities for 'bottom-up' conservation and community leadership. The actions outlined in this plan will involve multiple parties. Some will be government-led; some will be led by others, including regulators and restoration projects themselves; and some will require a combination of government and other parties working together. In the development of the plan we have greatly benefitted from discussions with a broad range of stakeholders through the advisory group, and as implementation commences we will explore if this group can have a continued role in the delivery of the plan.

### **Measures of success**

It is important to monitor and evaluate the success of the actions outlined in the plan, not just to ascertain whether they have been completed but also to build a picture of how effective the actions and plan have been in supporting and accelerating restoration. This would include capturing information about the environmental effects and socio-economic impacts of the actions taken and restoration more generally, while acknowledging that some impacts may be indirect or harder to quantify. As part of the implementation and review cycle of the plan, we will develop a monitoring framework for the success of the plan, while ensuring that the focus in terms of resources stays firmly on delivering real world action and support for restoration across Scotland.

## Questions about the overall approach and content of the plan

**Question 16: Overall, do you think this plan will support acceleration of restoration in Scottish coasts and waters?**

1	2	3	4	5	0
Yes a lot	Yes a little	Neutral	Not a lot	Not at all	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

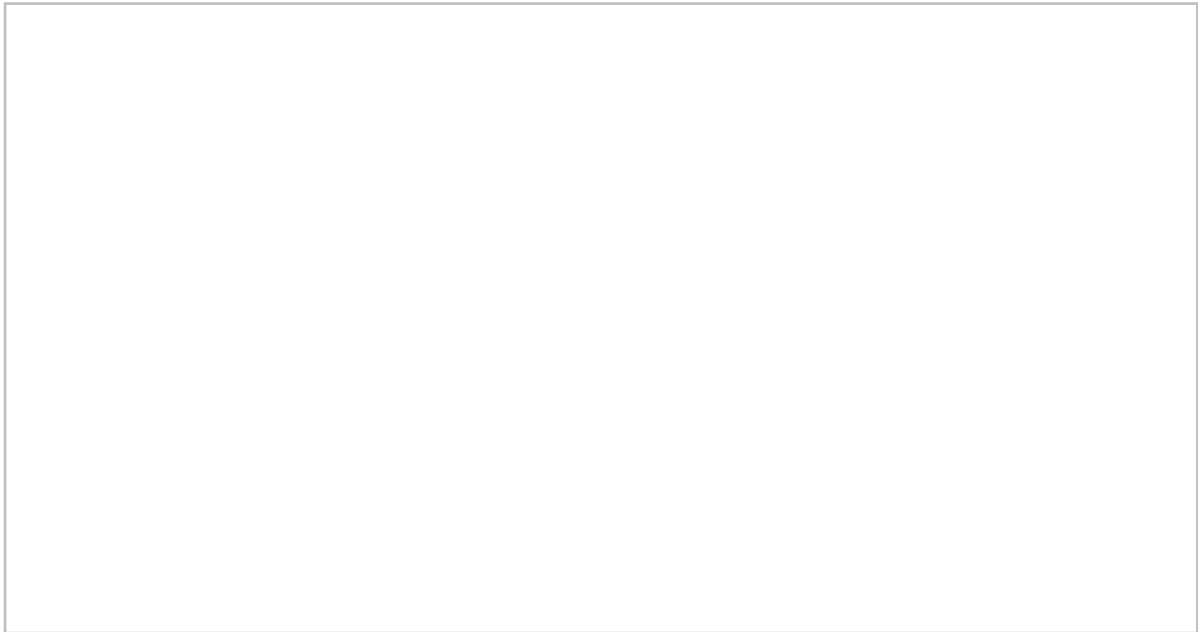
**Question 17: Do you agree with the content of the plan?**

1	2	3	4	5	0
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Question 18: Are there any actions or objectives that you feel are missing and should be included and prioritised for the first Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan?** Please provide detail in below

**Question 19: Noting that we will develop a monitoring and evaluation approach for implementation and review of the plan, do you have any comments you wish us to consider at this stage?**

Please provide any feedback on monitoring and evaluation of the plan below

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for providing feedback on monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

## Impact assessments

In Scotland, public bodies including the Scottish Government are required to assess, consult on and monitor the likely impacts of their plans, programmes and strategies. In this section, we are asking questions to gather evidence and lived experience to inform our impact assessments.

### SEA

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is used to assess, consult on and monitor the likely impacts of plans, programmes and strategies on the environment. We undertook a screening and scoping exercise, which concluded that a SEA was needed in relation to the Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan, given that the plan is intended to support acceleration of active restoration in Scotland. An [Environmental Report](#) has therefore been prepared in relation to the plan. The main conclusions from the report were that any scaling up of active restoration activity resulting from the plan:

- is likely to have beneficial effects on the environment overall
- has the potential for some negative effects due to displacement of other activities, invasive non-native species (INNS) and impacts on existing infrastructure (material assets)
- will overall have a greater positive than negative impact on the environment, as the environmental benefits of active restoration alongside any wellbeing benefits are anticipated to be greater than the potential negative effects

**Question 20: Do you think that the SEA Environmental Report is an accurate representation of the potential impacts (positive or negative) on the environment resulting from the objectives and actions proposed in this plan?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

Please use this space if you would like to expand on your answer, including in relation to any potential impacts discussed in the Environmental Report, or other relevant impacts you feel should be considered

### BRIA

A Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) is used to help assess the costs, benefits and risks of policies on the public, private or third sector, or regulators. We have developed a [partial BRIA](#) for this consultation, to support gathering feedback from stakeholders who may be affected by proposed actions within the plan.

The main conclusions from this impact assessment are as follows:

Due to data constraints, it is challenging to monetise the expected change in costs and benefits. However, it is expected there will be negligible costs implications on business from the outcomes set-out within the plan.

It's estimated that public sector costs will be incurred for some outcomes within the plan: in particular, the opportunity maps, the database of restoration projects, the support post and continuing funding for the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF). These costs have been set-out under Section 3 of the BRIA.

There are likely to be several benefits to business from the plan, such as reducing staff time on identification of suitable restoration locations due to the opportunity maps or navigating the regulatory environment due to the dedicated support post, to name a few. The benefits have been set-out under Section 3 of the BRIA.

It is estimated that the plan will generate benefits to society through additional restoration activity, for example oyster reefs are associated with improvements in water quality and saltmarsh and seagrass' ability to absorb carbon.

**Question 21: Do you think that the partial BRIA is an accurate representation of the potential costs, benefits and risks on the public, private or third sector, and regulators, associated with the objectives and actions proposed in this draft plan?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

Please use this space if you would like to expand on your answer, including in relation to any potential impacts discussed in the partial BRIA, or other relevant impacts you feel should be considered

### Island communities

Scotland's islands face particular challenges around distance, geography, connectivity and demography. It is therefore important that this is considered when developing policy. Section 7 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 states that a relevant authority – which includes Scottish Ministers – must have regard to island communities when carrying out its functions.

Through the consultation, we would like to gather views and experiences relating to whether, and if so how, the plan is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

**Question 22: Do you think that objectives and actions proposed in this draft plan will have an impact that is significantly different (positive or negative) for some or all island communities than for other communities (including other island communities)?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

Please use this space if you would like to expand on your answer. If you answered 'Yes' this could include information on what significantly different impacts you think there may be, and whether these would be positive, negative or both.

## Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is a tool to help anticipate the needs of diverse groups when making decisions about projects, policy or service delivery, and helps us to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010. The EQIA requires that we assess the impacts of the actions in this consultation on protected characteristics, with particular regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and promoting good relations.

We believe that the plan will positively impact promoting good relations due to the intended increase in opportunities in the restoration sector, both through employment and volunteering. We wish to gather views on the potential impacts of the actions set out in this consultation in relation to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

**Question 23: Do you think that the objectives and actions proposed in this draft plan will have an impact (positive or negative) on protected characteristics, with particular regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

Please use this space if you would like to expand on your answer. If you answered 'Yes' this could include information on what impacts you think there may be, and whether these would be positive, negative or both.

### Children's rights

A Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) is used to identify, research, analyse and record the anticipated impact of strategic decisions on children's rights and wellbeing.

We believe that the actions set out in this plan will have a positive impact on the following articles of the UN Children's Rights Charter:

**Article 24** Health and health services - States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

**Article 29** Goals of education - States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: the development of respect for the natural environment.



The UN Committee on Rights of the Child General Comment No.26 (2023) states that “A clean, healthy and sustainable environment is both a human right itself, and necessary for children to enjoy their rights”. In addition, and with specific reference to Article 24 and Article 29:

**Article 24** Children’s physical and mental health should not be affected by climate change, pollution, unhealthy ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity.

**Article 29** Environmental education should support children to connect with, and respect, the environment.

**Question 24: Do you think that the objective and actions proposed in this draft plan will have an impact (positive or negative) on children’s rights and wellbeing?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other

Please use this space if you would like to expand on your answer. If you answered ‘Yes’ this could include information on what impacts you think there may be, and whether these would be positive, negative or both.

### Fairer Duty

The Fairer Duty Scotland, set out in Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, requires that we pay due regard to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. We have concluded that an assessment is not needed in relation to this Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan, as the plan sits under the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, for which a [Fairer Duty Scotland assessment](#) has already been completed.

## Stakeholder Advisory Group Attendee Organisations

Angus Council	Orkney Islands Council
Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers	Orkney Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
City of Edinburgh Council	Salmon Scotland
Coastal Communities Network	Scottish Association for Marine Science
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Scottish Environment LINK
Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Community Association of Lochs and Sounds	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Crown Estate Scotland	Scottish Island Federation
Dumfries and Galloway Council	Scottish Seaweed Industry Association
East Grampian Coastal Partnership	Scottish Whitefish Producers Association
Fauna & Flora	Seawilding
Fife Council	Shetland Islands Council
Fisheries Management Scotland	Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund
Forth Estuary Forum	Solway Firth Partnership
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Southwest Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
Highlands Council	University of Highlands and Islands Shetland
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	William Grant Foundation
Marine Conservation Society	Worldwide Fund for Nature
Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland	Young Sea Changers
Mossy Earth	
North and East Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group	

# Responding to this Consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 19 October 2025.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, [Citizen Space](#). Access and respond to this consultation online: [Draft Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan](#). You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 19 October 2025.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form and send to:

Email: [marinerestoration@gov.scot](mailto:marinerestoration@gov.scot)

By post:

Marine Restoration policy team  
Area 1B North  
Scottish Government  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

## Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form provided alongside this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data you can view the privacy policy here: [Privacy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

## Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at [Citizen Space](#). If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

## Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at [marinerestoration@gov.scot](mailto:marinerestoration@gov.scot).

## Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: [Citizen Space](#). Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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