

# Restoration of seagrass beds in Scotland

Katie Gillham

Head of Marine Ecosystems

11 February 2025



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



All images © NatureScot unless stated otherwise



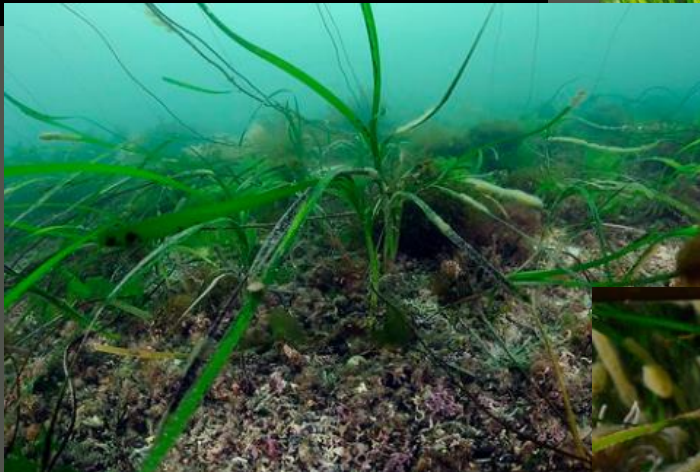
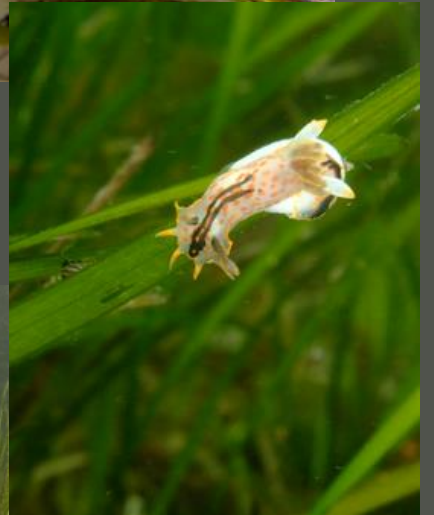
**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# Introduction

- Protection of seagrass beds in Scotland
- Current habitat restoration work
- Funding and other support

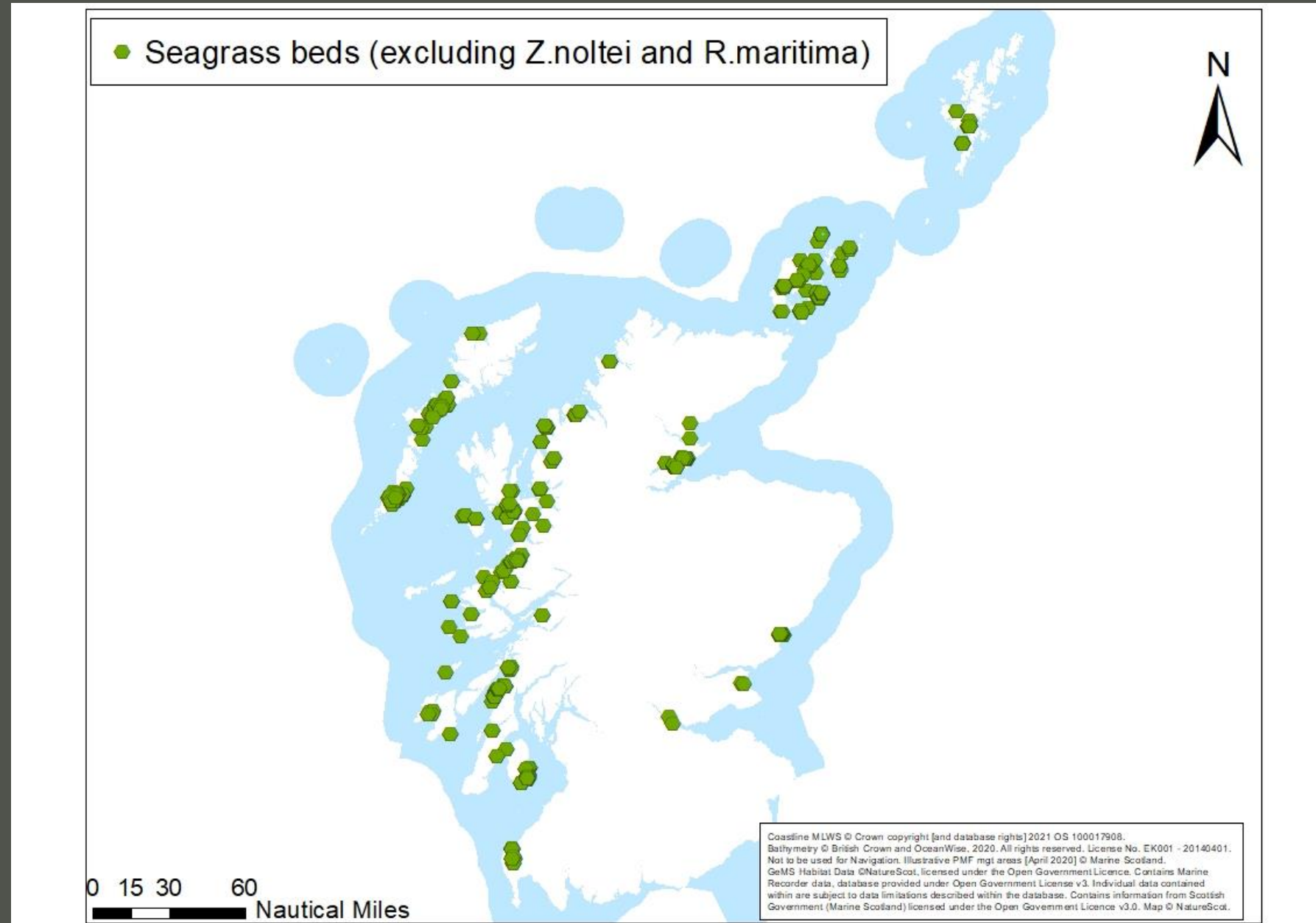


**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

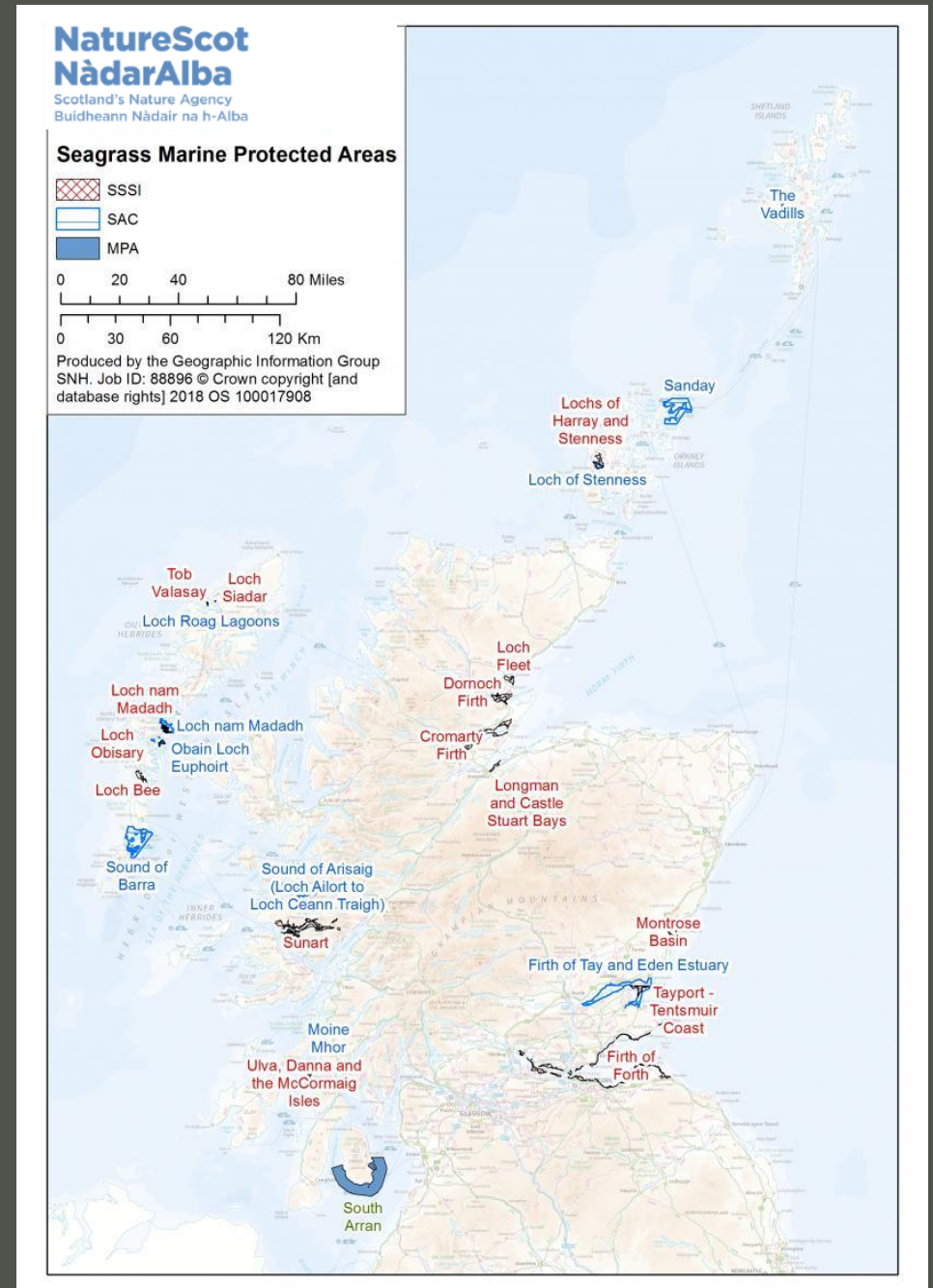


- Mainly recorded on west coast and islands.
- There are large intertidal beds in some of the east coast firths and sounds in Orkney and Outer Hebrides.
- Declines caused by wasting disease in 1930s



# Marine Protected Areas for seagrass beds

- 45 Marine Protected Areas include seagrass beds
- 2016: 1<sup>st</sup> management measures for fishing activity for subtidal seagrass in 2 MPAs
- Current: working on management measures for 6 more subtidal seagrass beds



# Improving protection outside the Scottish MPA network: Priority Marine Features

- Aim: avoid significant impacts on the national status of 11 sensitive seabed habitats
- Example: Seagrass on the west coast of Scotland
- Identified broad areas for management consideration (green dashed boxes)
- Through detailed review of evidence and discussion with stakeholders, identifying more focussed management areas



**NatureScot**

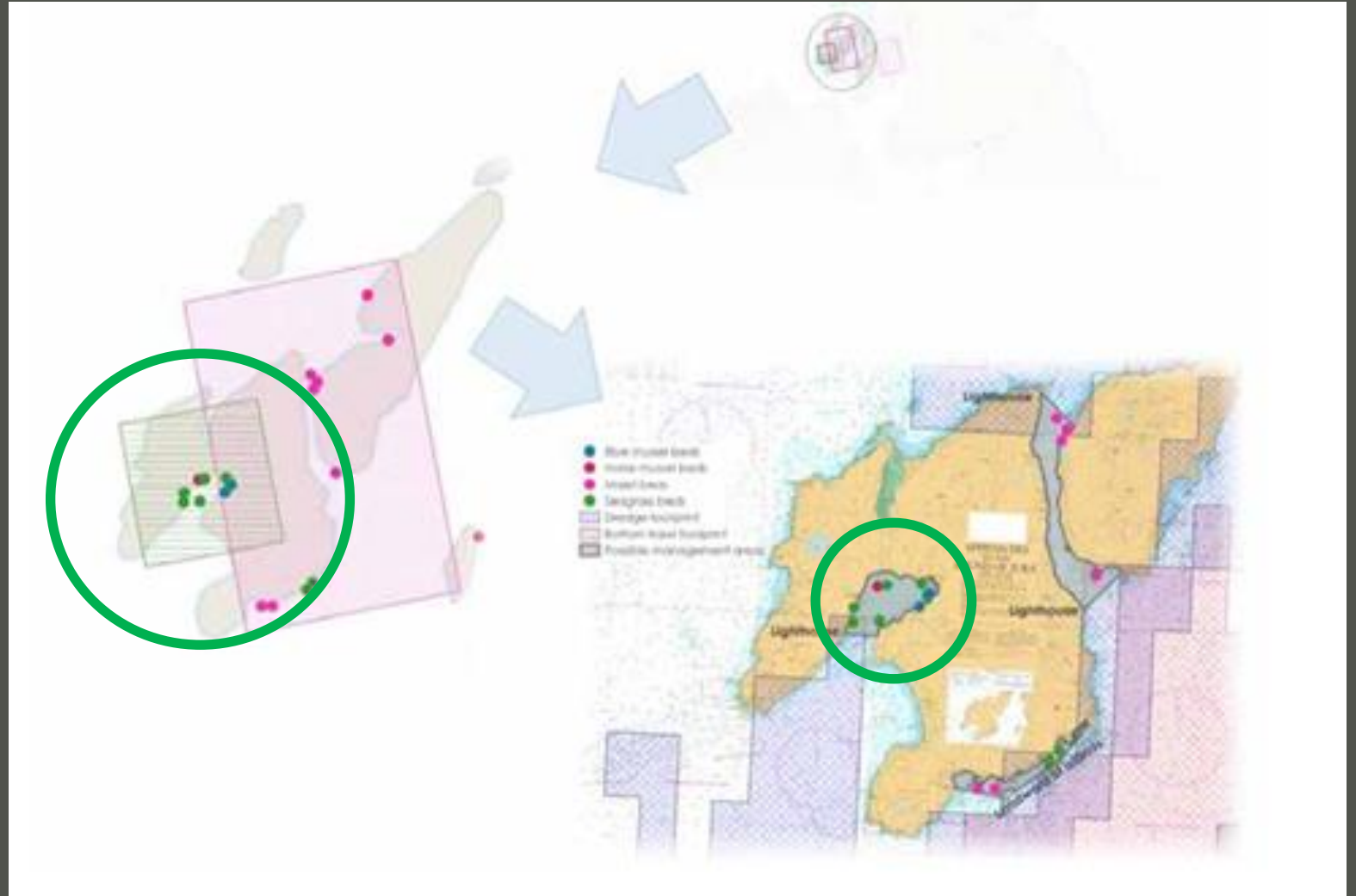
Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



# Improving protection outside the Scottish MPA network

Example of detailed management area for seagrass.

Will be included in a joint public consultation: Marine Protected Area and Priority Marine Feature management measures.



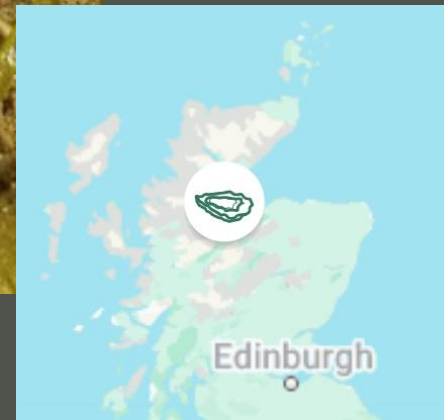
**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# Seagrass restoration projects

Web image: Marine Conservation Society; Map: Project Seagrass

- 3 active restoration projects
- Approx 10 projects in development
- eNGOs, community-based organisations, academic institutes, private companies



# SEAWILDING

Community-led marine habitat restoration



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Source: SeaWilding website



A seagrass



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Early days: This is about *trailing* restoration of seagrass beds

Source: SeaWilding website

# Funding and other support

- Guidance
- Advice
- Research
- Public funding
- Other finance initiatives

## Scottish agency announces largest-ever initiative to tackle climate crisis with seagrass

AN INVERNESS-based nature agency announced a new partnership to protect and restore sea ecosystems in Scotland.

The agency, NatureScot said £2m in funding will be utilised to restore Scottish seagrass meadows.

Seagrass is considered the 'only true flowering plant in the sea' with meadows created by seagrass home to a variety of marine wildlife to the same degree as a rainforest with the food and shelter the habitat holds.



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



## Marine Restoration and Enhancement

### NatureScot Research Report 1286 - Seagrass restoration in Scotland - handbook and guidance



Professional advice



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

- Dedicated members of staff for marine habitat restoration and enhancement
- Opportunities mapping to identify and guide towards suitable locations
- Research on eDNA and better understanding declines



## Nature Restoration Fund - Contacts and Resources



Funding and Projects



Nature Restoration Fund



Contacts and Resources

NRF covers terrestrial and marine projects – but seagrass habitat restoration has been a major focus.

# Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund

An investment in the future of Scotland's seas and coasts

03.10.2022

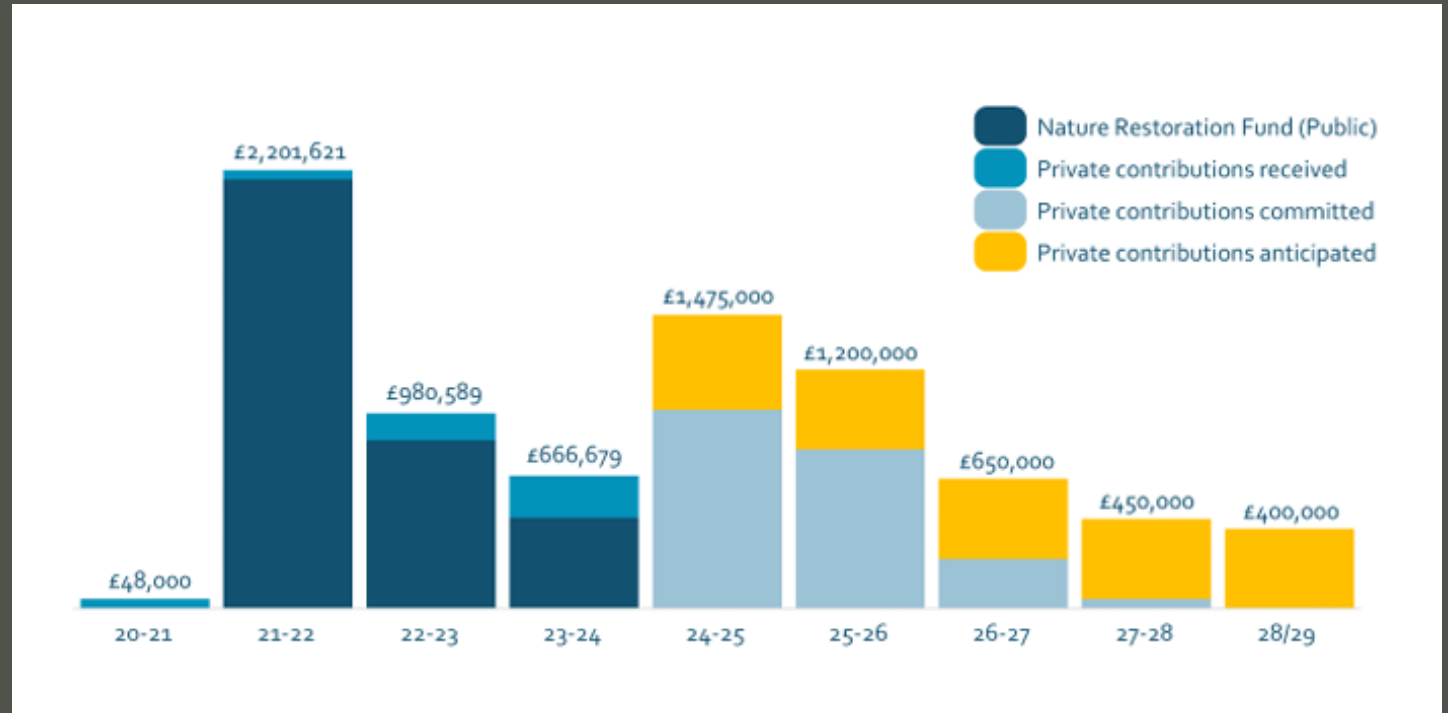


**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund

- Designed to help bridge the nature finance gap.
- Accepts voluntary contributions and redistributes through grants.
- Steering group managed by NatureScot, Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland.



On World Seagrass Day in 2024 launched £2.1M investment in Scottish seagrass meadows, working with SSEN Distribution...

...more news coming soon!



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



# Relevant links

2018 consultation on improving protection to Priority Marine Features outside the MPA network: <https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/priority-marine-features/>

NatureScot seagrass web page: <https://www.nature.scot/landscapes-and-habitats/habitat-types/coast-and-seas/marine-habitats/seagrass>

NatureScot SiteLink (for more detailed information on individual MPAs): <https://sitelink.nature.scot/home>

Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund: <https://smeeef.scot/>

Restoration Forth: <https://www.projectseagrass.org/restoration-forth/>

SeaWilding: <https://www.seawilding.org/>

Cromarty Seascape (Mossy Earth): <https://www.mossy.earth/projects/cromarty-seascape>

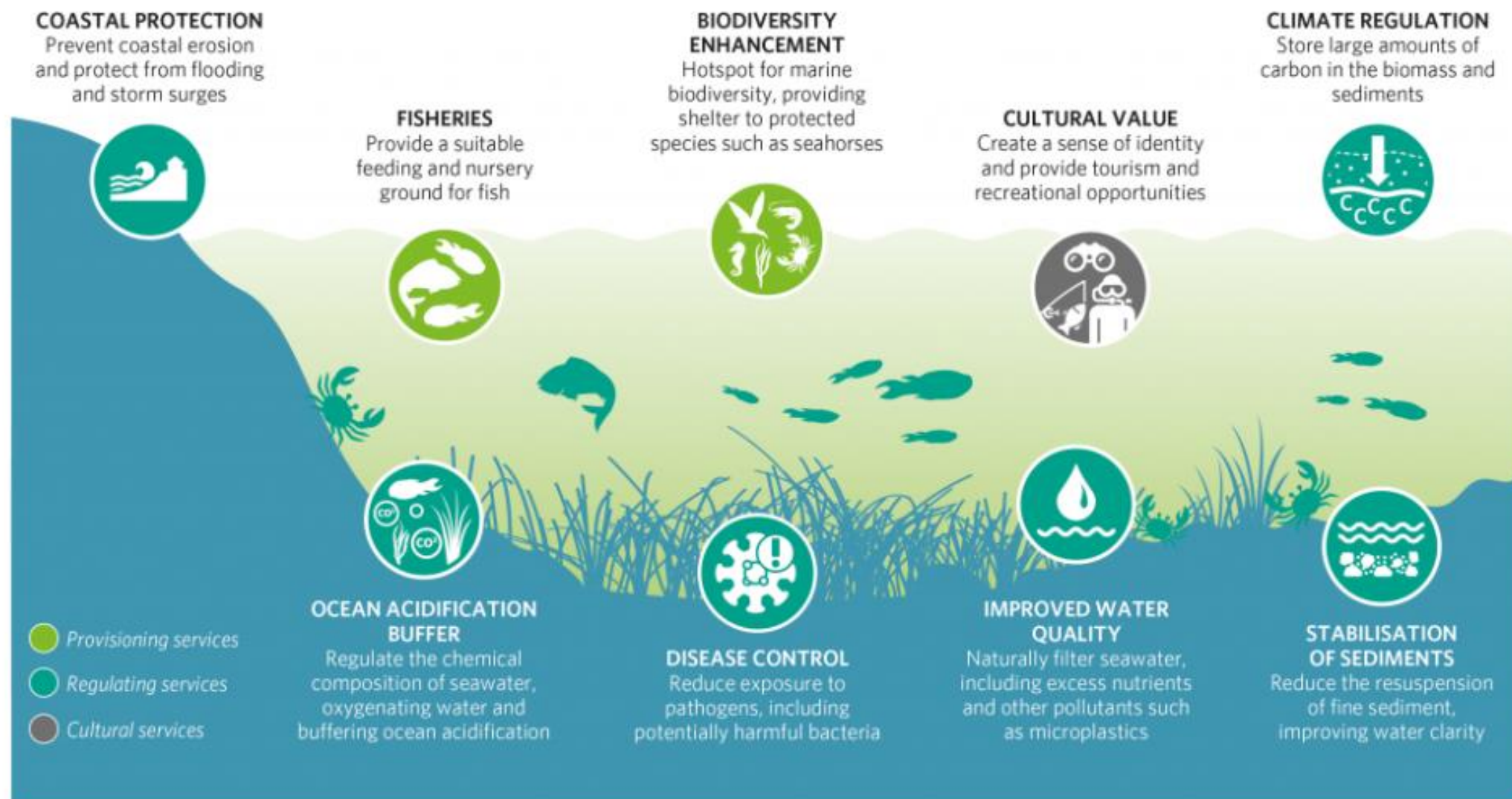
Project Seagrass: <https://www.projectseagrass.org/>



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROVIDED BY SEAGRASS BEDS



Modified from UNEP (2020) and Potouroglou, M., Westerveld, L. and Fylakis, G. (2020).