



# Seagrass Ocean Rescue in North Wales

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How did you select these sites?

The 7 sites across North Wales that we included in our final marine licence (Natural Resources Wales licence number DEML2248) have been selected as a result of input from local stakeholders and biological considerations. These include direct feedback from stakeholders, ecological knowledge provided by local community members, discussions with the Gwynedd Council's Maritime Unit, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. As well as this feedback, we have also used information from our scientific surveys of the selected sites' ecological conditions, scientific computer models that predict where seagrass could theoretically grow, and the results from our seagrass planting experiments in early 2022. The specific reasons for selecting these sites are explained in detail below.

Pen-Ychain 1: Our computer model initially showed that this area would be well-suited for seagrass. We tested this with a seagrass planting experiment in 2022 at a nearby site and found that the ecological conditions indeed seem suitable for seagrass to grow. Furthermore, small patches of seagrass have previously been observed in this area. In addition, a major adjacent tourist resort was supportive of us working at this location.

Pen-Ychain 2: Our computer model initially showed that this area would be well-suited for seagrass and local environmental experts shared their ecological knowledge with us and suggested that this could be good for seagrass restoration based on their decades-long experience in this area.

Pwllheli: The shelter of the coast, combined with initial site assessments in 2021 and predictions of computer models indicated that this would be a suitable location for seagrass to grow. Small patches of seagrass have also been previously recorded by divers at the site. After submitting the proposed area to Natural Resources Wales, we were informed by Gwynedd Council Maritime Officers that a small portion of the area overlapped with the Pwllheli Harbour Jurisdiction. Hence, after engaging with the Gwynedd Council's Maritime Unit, we adjusted the proposed area to ensure that there is no overlap with the Harbour Jurisdiction.

Y Gamlas: The coastal morphology at Y Gamlas provides very sheltered conditions, increasing the chances that seagrass could grow. Local knowledge suggests that seagrass was previously present in nearby areas. A few hundred meters offshore, there is a natural pebble bank which provides shelter from storms for the inshore portion of Y Gamlas, and site assessments in 2022 showed that the inshore portion of Y Gamlas would be well-suited for seagrass restoration. The area we selected was further adjusted by local ecological knowledge provided by a local environmental expert, and we made sure that our proposed area excludes protected marine habitats.

Abersoch: Site assessments in 2021 and our computer models indicated that ecological conditions would be suitable for seagrass to grow and some seagrass is still known to be present in Abersoch. An initial seagrass planting experiment was successful, showing that seagrass can indeed grow here. Following local consultations the area we included in our marine licence was adjusted to prevent any overlap with

mooring zones and channel and speed markers. All future decisions on planting at the site will be done in discussion with Gwynedd Council Maritime Officers to ensure no overlap occurs.

Traeth Yr Ora (Moelfre): Similar to Abersoch, our site assessments in 2021 and computer models suggested that seagrass might be able to grow in this area. This was supported by several local community observations of subtidal seagrass growing in the area. When drawing our area of interest, we ensured that we overlap with neither protected marine habitats, nor Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

## 2. When and where will you plant seagrass this spring?

Our planting of a total of 10 hectares of seagrass in North Wales will start with small plots, between 19 and 24 February. We will be planting seagrass during the afternoon low tides at Pen-Ychain 1 and Y Gamlas. Based on our additional site assessments during 21-26 January, we may add a third site for planting activities during 19 and 24 February.

## 3. Why is there currently no planting scheduled at Anglesey?

During 2023, we will focus our efforts on Pen Llŷn, which makes the logistics of our planting activities easier. In 2024, we will start planting seagrass on Anglesey, at Traeth Yr Ora; as well as continuing our plantings at the Pen Llŷn sites. The lessons we will learn from our seagrass planting in February will inform our future activities, and so we aim to start planting seagrass at Traeth Yr Ora with more knowledge than we currently have.

## 4. Are the sites where you will plant in February 2023 the only sites where you will plant seagrass?

The sites where we will plant in February will mark the start of our planting activities in North Wales. Depending on the results, we may (i) increase our planting efforts at these sites in 2024 and later years, (ii) attempt seagrass restoration at other sites permitted under our marine licence, or (iii) continue our planting efforts at these sites and include other sites of our marine licence in our planting activities. When restoring seagrass ecosystems, it is essential to learn from your restoration activities and experiences, and to adapt and optimise the restoration strategy accordingly to successfully restore the seagrass.

## 5. Why do the sites included in your marine licence add up to more than 10 hectares, if you want to restore 10 hectares of seagrass?

This is an important part of our approach to restoration: the sites we included in the marine licence are so-called *seagrass search areas*. They are larger than 10 hectares in total, this approach gives us flexibility to find locations where we have (i) the support of local communities to restore seagrass and (ii) ecological conditions that are suitable for seagrass to grow. In total, we will plant 10 hectares of seagrass distributed across these *seagrass search areas*. Depending on ecological conditions and the support of local communities, this may mean that we end up planting at one, a few, or at all sites. Our coasts and seas are much less well known than the land, which requires us to be flexible in finding the right locations for seagrass.

## 6. What are the next steps for the project?

After assessing the sites during 21-26 January, and planting seagrass during 19-24 February, we will monitor the seagrass in subsequent months to see whether it germinates and establishes. In August 2023, we will be at Porthdinllaen to collect seagrass seeds that we will plant in the spring of 2024. We also hope that during 2023 we will plant some mature plants, using either plants collected from healthy meadows nearby or plants grown at our nursery in Carmarthenshire.