

Terms used in Wales for marine and coastal enhancement

Guidance Note

Reference number: GN 069

Document Owner: Head of Business, Natural Resource Management

What is this document about?

This document defines the terminology that we use around marine and coastal enhancement projects.

Who is this document for?

The intended audience is internal staff and external stakeholders involved or interested in marine and coastal enhancement activities.

Contact for queries and feedback

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Version History

Document Version	Date Published	Summary of Changes
1.0	12-2022	Document published
1.1	03-2025	Minor amendments to terminology.

Review Date: [12-2024]

To report issues or problems with this guidance contact [Guidance Development](#)

Introduction

The enhancement of marine and coastal environments is currently receiving growing attention from a wide range of stakeholders who recognise the opportunities to deliver multiple environmental and societal benefits.

Wales has a rich and diverse marine environment that supports an extensive variety of species and habitats. To meet the needs of present and future generations, we need to maintain and [enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems](#) and the benefits they provide.

What is enhancement?

Enhancement is an umbrella term we use to describe various activities that aim to **improve the quality or extent of a habitat** or **increase the population size or range of a species**.

Given the emerging interest in marine and coastal enhancement, we have identified the need to develop evidence, advice and guidance to support enhancement activities.

The terminology around enhancement can vary amongst individuals and groups leading to confusion. Therefore, we have defined and are promoting the following terminology to enable clearer discussion and effective delivery of enhancement activities in Wales.

The terms we use for marine and coastal enhancement

Enhancement

Enhancement is an umbrella term to describe various activities that aim to **improve the quality or extent of a habitat** or **increase the population size or range of a species**.

The terms below are examples of different enhancement activities.

Recovery

To be used in relation to actions taken to enable a habitat or species to overcome damage, or other disturbance, and reach a better state rather than trying to “turn the clock back”. This generally involves removing pressures and allowing the habitat or species to recover naturally.

Example: A harbour that has existing seagrass habitat which is damaged by mooring scars has become a voluntary no-anchor zone. This removes the pressure of moorings and anchors from damaging the seagrass to enable the habitat to naturally recover.

Restoration

Restoration describes projects entailing a level of intervention. Restoration projects involve rebuilding habitats or reintroducing species where they have **historically** been found but are either functionally extinct now or where re-establishment could not occur without assistance.

Example: A site that used to be abundant in native oysters, but populations are seriously depleted with individuals rarely found now. A project is proposing to lay cultch and spat and conduct monitoring for several years to evaluate the restoration of the population.

Restoration of multiple habitats concurrently or sequentially to restore functionality and connectivity across the mosaic of habitats in a marine ecosystem is referred to as **seascape restoration**.

Creation or introduction

Similar to restoration, creation and introduction involve a level of intervention to establish habitats or introduce species. The fundamental difference between restoration and habitat creation/species introduction is that this term refers to instances where there has been **no known historical presence** of the habitat(s) or species prior to the intervention.

Example: An area has no historic records of seagrass, but site surveys have found that the environmental conditions could sustain seagrass meadows. A local university is proposing to harvest seagrass seeds from a nearby meadow and deposit at the site.

Indirect enhancement or benefit

Any project whose primary objective is not to enhance biodiversity, but which may result in enhancement of nearby areas as a by-product.

Example: An individual is wishing to set up an aquaculture facility where they will rear native oysters in broodstock cages. The oysters in the cages will be harvested but this will only be after they have reached breeding size. As there is suitable substrate nearby it is hoped the larvae produced may naturally settle in the area.

Other terms used in the sector

We are aware that other terms are used more widely in conservation, but the terms defined in this document are the most relevant for discussions about marine and coastal enhancement in Wales.

Further information on Marine and Coastal Enhancement

We have a number of documents available that can support initial considerations of marine and coastal enhancement activities including:

- [NRW Evidence Reports](#) that help identify what and where the key opportunities are for delivering nature recovery.
 - Restoring marine and coastal habitats in Wales: identifying spatial opportunities and benefits (554)
 - Supporting the implementation of the Welsh National Marine Plan: Enhancing marine ecosystems (357)
- [NRW Evidence Reports](#) that have developed our understanding of the range of benefits derived from marine natural resources, which are underpinned by biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
 - Estimating the Carbon Sink Potential of the Welsh Marine Environment (428)
 - The Blue Carbon Potential of the Marine Protected Area Network in Wales (631)
 - Understanding how management of the Welsh MPA network can contribute to the protection and enhancement of blue carbon (630)
- NRW guidance to support the the use of ecological enhancement features on coastal defence structures and assets. You can find this on our website: [Natural Resources Wales / Nature-based solutions for coastal management](#).
- NRW guidance “Principles supporting restoration and enhancement in a marine or coastal development proposal”. Contact library@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk to request a copy.
- Restoration Handbooks for specific habitats that we have developed with our partners. You can find them on the [Catchment Based Approach website](#)
 - Saltmarsh Restoration Handbook: UK and Ireland
 - Seagrass Restoration Handbook: UK and Ireland
 - Restoring Estuarine and Coastal Habitats with Dredged Sediment: A Handbook
 - European Native Oyster Restoration Handbook: UK and Ireland

We also provide advice and support delivery of projects focused on enhancing marine and coastal ecosystems in Wales, engaging with Welsh and UK partners to develop evidence and best practice.