

# Seabed Conservation Project Receives Boost from Valeport



The largest seagrass restoration, education and innovation project in England, LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES, will receive support from environmental sensor manufacturer Valeport for the project's final two years.

The marine conservation project – led by Natural England – focuses on five Special Areas of Conservation along England's south coast and Valeport's sponsorship

announcement coincides with an extension to the project which will now run until October 2024. The newly extended five-year [ReMEDIES project](#) seeks to protect and restore sensitive seabed habitats which are at risk and aims to plant a total of eight hectares of seagrass meadows – four hectares in Plymouth Sound and four hectares in the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation.

## Carbon Capture Abilities

Seagrass meadows are increasingly being recognized for their essential carbon capture abilities – seagrass can be as effective at absorbing and storing carbon as woodlands. It also provides a vital nursery bed for juvenile fish and protected creatures like seahorses and stalked jellyfish, cleans surrounding seawater and helps stabilize the seabed which can help to reduce coastal erosion.

However, seagrass meadows are a globally threatened ecosystem – with estimates suggesting the planet loses an area of seagrass the same size as two football pitches every hour. At least 44% of the UK's seagrass has been lost since 1936. The delicate and endangered seagrass meadows in the UK are vulnerable to factors including wasting disease, pollution and physical disturbance such as anchoring, mooring and launching of leisure boats, as well as other shore-based and water-based activities. In addition to planting new seagrass meadows, ReMEDIES is working to protect existing meadows by helping recreational users to minimize impacts on these sensitive habitats. The project is trialling advanced mooring systems that help reduce impacts from recreational boating on the seabed, producing best practice guidance for boaters, seagrass location maps and conducting seagrass monitoring.

## Precision Marine Instruments

Commenting on the announcement of Valeport as a sponsor and the extension to the project timeline, ReMEDIES project manager Fiona Crouch said: "We are delighted that [Valeport](#) has recognized the valuable work that the partnership is undertaking to restore and conserve our seabed through their sponsorship of the project. It's going to be a busy two years, we still have much to do, so it's great to have Valeport supporting our efforts, thank you."

Joining forces with the conservation project is a natural fit for the designer and manufacturer of high-quality hydrographic and oceanographic instruments, Guy Frankland, Valeport's head of marketing, said: "The precision marine instruments we make are used for many purposes, including environmental monitoring, and we're proud to announce our sponsorship of such a crucial conservation project. We're delighted to be on board to support this project until its conclusion in October 2024. Alongside assisting ReMEDIES' Save Our Seabed programme with funding, Valeport is looking forward to getting involved in various activities as the partnership grows."

## Changing the Way Seagrass Meadows Are Monitored

For a number of years, Valeport has been involved in supporting seagrass conservation, previously sponsoring a two-year seagrass protection and restoration project in Tor Bay and more recently collaborating on a new, non-invasive method to monitor seagrass biomass on the seabed around England's South West coast. The new technique, developed in partnership with Natural England, HydroSurv and the University of Plymouth, is set to change the way seagrass meadows are monitored in the future, as the cost-effective platform allows surveys to cover much larger areas and enables rapid re-survey work as required.

LIFE Recreation ReMEDIES partnership to 'Save Our Seabed' is funded by the [LIFE programme](#) and led by Natural England in partnership with the [Marine Conservation Society](#), Ocean Conservation Trust, Plymouth City Council/Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum and Royal Yachting Association/The Green Blue.

The project, which launched in July 2019, has already achieved a number of significant milestones; 3.5 hectares of seabed has now been planted (comprising 2.5 hectares in Plymouth Sound and 1 hectare in Solent Maritime) with approximately 70,000 seagrass seed bags. During July and August this summer, seagrass seeds were collected by divers from healthy seagrass meadows in the Solent and

Cornwall. These seeds have been extracted and are being stored in the ReMEDIES cultivation laboratory at the National Marine Aquarium (NMA) in Plymouth until they are ready to plant. As part of ReMEDIES, the [Ocean Conservation Trust](#) (OCT) is also trialling the planting of seedlings directly onto the seabed. They are currently growing square 'pillows' of multiple seedlings in the lab at the NMA that will be transferred to the seabed within the Voluntary No Anchor Zone in Jennycliff Bay, Plymouth Sound.



Guy Frankland from Valeport joins ReMEDIES project manager Fiona Crouch to announce Valeport's sponsorship of the vital ReMEDIES project.

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