

SEAWILDING

Community-led Marine Habitat Restoration

Scottish Charity No: SC050126

Outreach Report 2024



Summary

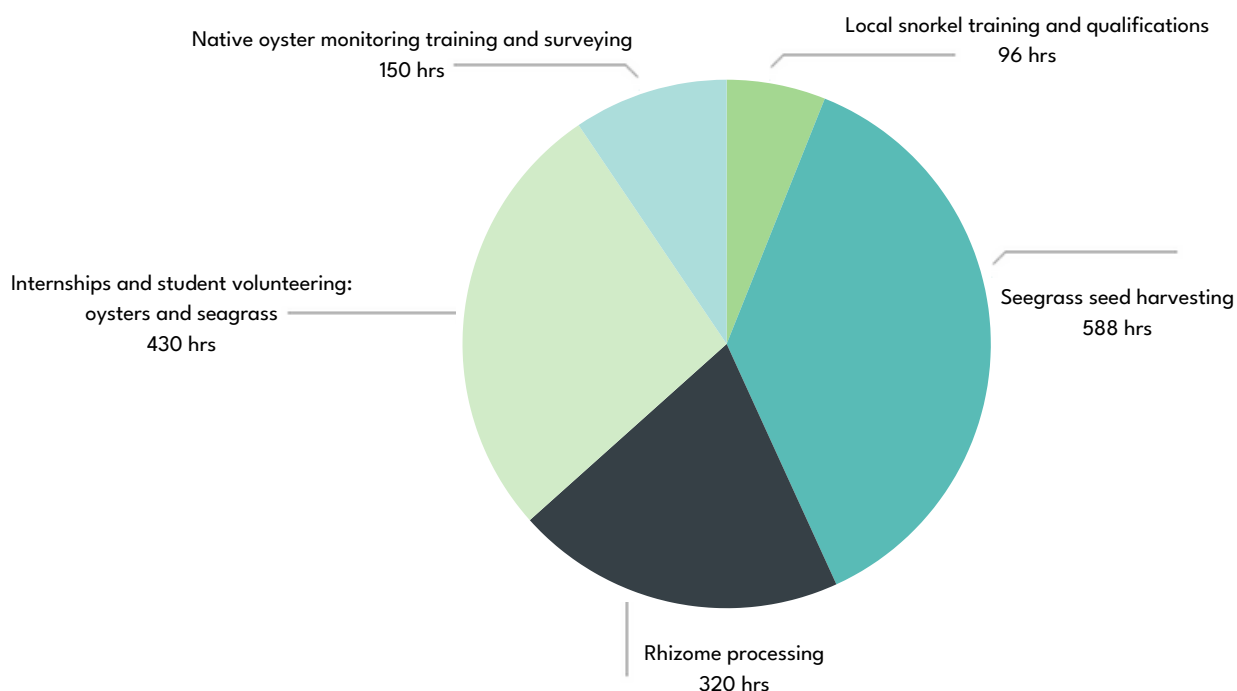
It's been another busy year for Seawilding and we are grateful for the numerous community helpers, volunteers and students who have worked with us to deliver our seagrass and native oyster projects. Many aspects of our labour-intensive projects rely on volunteer assistance, without which our attempts to deliver marine habitat restoration at scale would be all the more difficult.

Volunteering with Seawilding is a two-way learning process; our volunteers learn about marine habitat restoration while we pick up ideas and tips from them. It's fun and instructive. Slowly we are building a community of like-minded restorers, and as time passes, we realise the power of community-action and volunteering should never be under-estimated. Small actions, even by remote community groups, can have a global impact. By putting restoration in the hands of those most connected to their coastline, we're not only repairing ecosystems but also building a movement that ensures long-term stewardship of our seas.

Volunteering

In total, across the Loch Craignish projects we have been assisted by 178 people during the year, equating to 1,594 hours of voluntary time, a 20% increase on last year. Volunteers from all over UK, Europe and even the U.S. have assisted with seagrass rhizome, seagrass seed harvesting & processing and native oyster surveying.

Volunteer hours according to activity



Seagrass Processing

In the summer months, our team of snorkelers/divers harvested 8,000 seagrass plants from our donor bed to translocate to a restoration area in Loch Craignish. Each of these plants are individually processed by volunteers who separate them and attach washers to the roots so they have purchase on the seabed. The plants are grouped into bundles of 10 which are then replanted in a grid pattern by the Seawilding team. The work is labour intensive and would not be possible without the scores of local community volunteers as well as those who travelled from afar to help us during these busy days. The additional support that we needed for our seagrass processing activities also led to the creation of 5 seasonal part-time jobs for local community members.



Seagrass Seed Harvest

In the late summer, nearly 30 volunteers from all over the UK and even the U.S. joined us for two weekends of seagrass seed harvesting at Loch Craignish. In all 200,000 seeds were harvested. These are currently being stored in a chiller unit until they are ready for replanting in the Spring of 2025. During this time, we were also joined by ten seed harvest volunteers from Dutch Marine Construction company, Van Oord. Seawilding has partnered with Van Oord to trial sand-capping in the loch, whereby a thin layer of sand, mixed with seagrass seed will be used in an area affected by anoxic mud in an attempt to improve germination rates.



Volunteer Training

In 2024 Seawilding trained 6 local volunteers from the Craignish Community to Snorkel Diver level and in Spring 2025, we will be holding ongoing sessions so they can continue to up skill to Advanced Snorkel Level. The training is invaluable in many ways. Firstly, by investing in our volunteers we secure a level of ongoing commitment from them which helps integrate the project into the heart of the community; secondly, it creates vital extra capacity for Seawilding as these qualifications allow the volunteers to safely and competently survey seagrass and restored native oyster beds by snorkel and to assist us in harvesting seagrass seeds without the need for supervision by Seawilding employees.



Additionally, local volunteers have been active with native oyster restoration surveying at Loch Craignish and in October, they joined 20 other volunteers from across Scotland for an annual training weekend when the beach at Kintraw was surveyed.



We have continued our efforts to help other native oyster restoration projects and to refine and share survey methodologies so each project can produce comparable data. In 2024 Seawilding trained volunteers from the Kilchoan Estate, CAOLAS, Lochaline and Restoration Forth.



Seagrass rhizome volunteers came from all parts of the UK - and beyond

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“It’s been great fun connecting with the team and witnessing the process of rewilding the peninsula.”

“A beautiful adventure and a wonderful project. Thank you!”

“These days totally made my heart sing, becoming a reference for other times in life when I draw on moments where I feel most aligned and alive.”

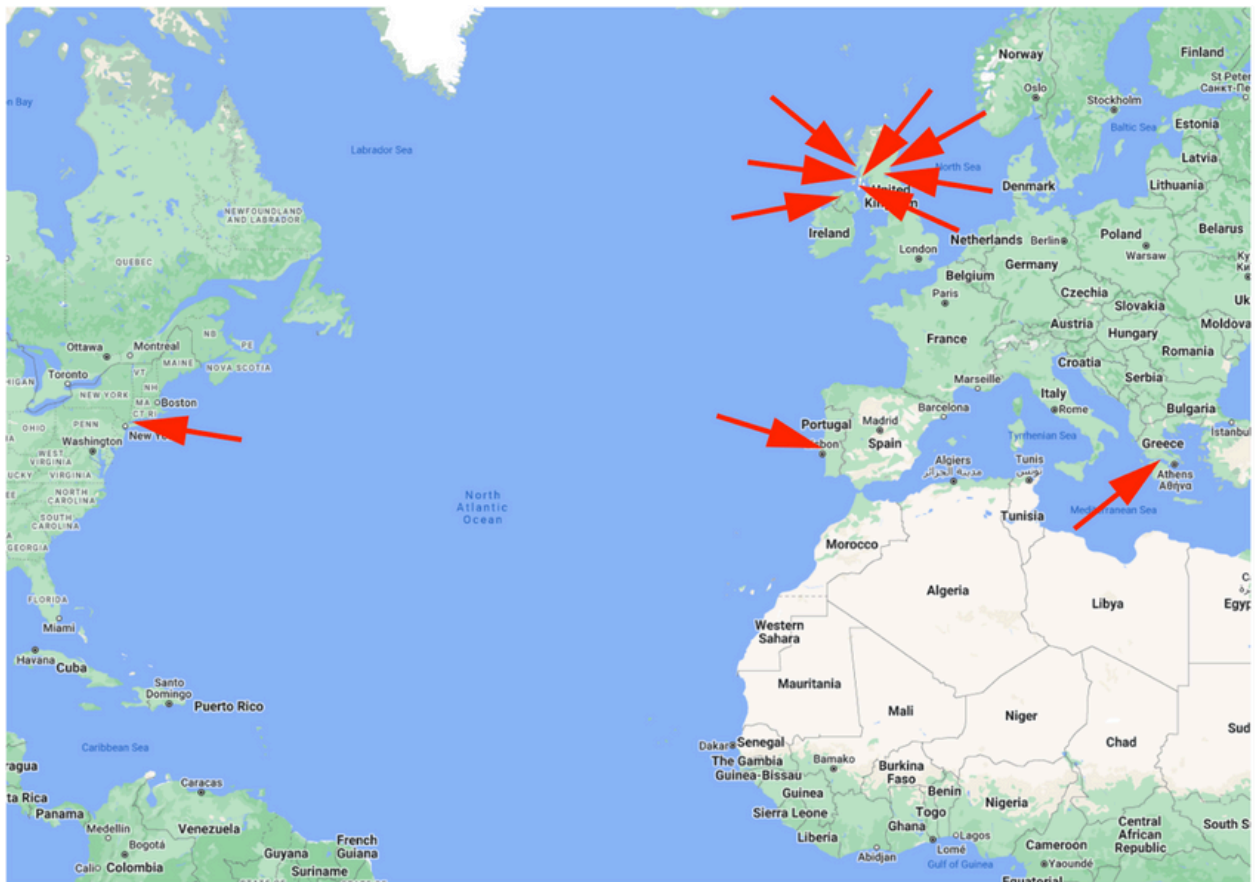
“It’s so empowering contributing to seagrass restoration. I loved being on the shore watching the seagrass being planted.”

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Outreach

Seawilding gets many requests for advice and assistance with restoration projects. While the team is small and hard-pressed with work, we do what we can to help. Over the course of 2024 we have advised community projects, researchers, policy-makers, University graduates and PhD students, delivered presentations to community groups, rewilding forums and Universities; hosted fact-finding delegations and work-days for Nature Scot, and taken part in multiple government consultations to do with marine habitat restoration and management of inshore fisheries. Additionally, we have hosted journalists and gratifyingly, Seawilding has received a lot of favourable media attention.

Projects across the world that Seawilding has trained, given advice or shared best practice with in 2024.



These include Reclam the Bay in New Jersey, Rewilding Portugal, start-ups in Northern Ireland and St Andrews, a new community group in Kintyre, many UK based communities and organisations and a marina in Greece

Interns

In 2024, we ran another successful interns programme, our second to date. The programme imparts valuable skills and knowledge to graduates who're keen to work in the field of marine conservation. During their time with Seawilding, the interns learned the fundamentals of native oyster and seagrass restoration on a practical and administrative level, and assist with multiple hands-on tasks such as seagrass processing, deployment of oyster spat collectors, coordinating volunteers and collecting survey data. We're learning there is so much appetite from young people to restore our seas, and these internships are a helpful leg-up to gain further employment. Furthermore, Seawilding learns from the interns – they give us new insights and help us develop and refine our ways of doing things.



Seawilding interns, summer 2024

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“It has been one of the most rewarding, hands-on, and inspiring experiences working with Seawilding.”

“The career experience from the internship was first class and it was a pleasure and a privilege to get to work with Seawilding.”

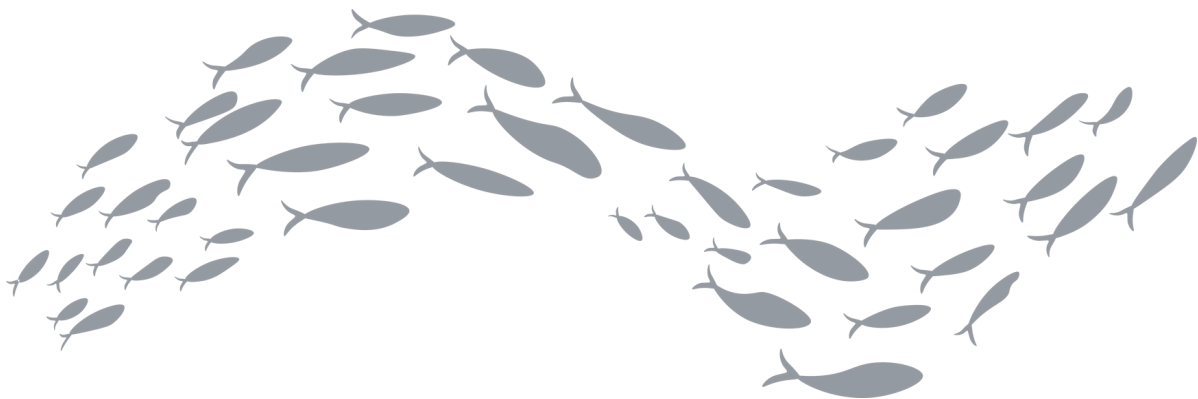
“I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have participated in this summer internship with Seawilding. It's been an invaluable experience that's not only expanded my knowledge of marine ecosystems but has also significantly boosted my employability in this field.”

“I created Instagram reels about our conservation work, allowing me to share this incredible experience with a wider audience, hopefully inspiring others to appreciate and support this remarkable community-led charity.”

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Socio-economic Impact

Seawilding's activities provide a quantifiable economic boost to the community. Five local full-time jobs have been created, and the project provides part-time employment for six local seasonal workers. Additionally, hundreds of volunteers, students and academics, community groups, journalists, civil servants and other interested parties have visited the project over the years and attended Wild Seas activity weekends and community training sessions at Loch Craignish. Many stay and eat locally – in 2024, we logged 308 overnight stays - bringing significant revenue to hospitality businesses. The fact that so many people make the effort to reach us, despite what is often a complicated journey, is truly humbling.





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