

Report of the Lead Ecologist and the Marine SAC Officer

Subject: Grant Approvals in Accordance With Section 76 of the Financial Standards

Authorisation is required in accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards (2016) which states that where there is a payment of 'Total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £20,000', approval must be obtained from the National Park Authority.

We are seeking approval for a payment of up to £45,000 to Bangor University for the to rearing and restocking of indigenous native oysters to the Milford Haven Waterway. This work is part of an approved programme of work taking place under the Blue Carbon Strand of the Wild Coast! Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) Programme.

Wild Coast!

Wild Coast! Is an approved nature recovery and carbon sequestration project currently being delivered along the coast of the National Park. The project is focussing on the delivering nature recovery and resilience and carbon protection and sequestration along the national trail itself in both the marine and terrestrial environments. Activities to sequester carbon have multiple benefits and will deliver climate change resilience and adaptation, biodiversity enhancement and sustainable recreation alongside carbon protection and sequestration.

Native Oyster Restoration

The payment to Bangor University will cover hatchery costs (including transportation and deployment) for production of native oyster *Ostrea edulis* spat (baby oysters up to 10mm in size) from Milford Haven broodstock, something which has not been done before, but for which proven technology has been demonstrated by the School of Ocean Sciences at Bangor University.

Native oysters used to be abundant within the Milford Haven Waterway. Now they are the focus for restoration, not only to improve the condition of the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) but also for their positive impacts on water quality and carbon storage. Low density scattered existing populations can be aided by the addition of more oysters to boost population growth.

Currently there are very few nursery facilities that can provide native oysters for restoration. To date, native oysters introduced to the waterway have been reared in Morecambe Bay. The status of the waterway as a *Bonamia* (parasitic disease) area places additional restrictions on the movement of oysters and *Bonamia* free locations (and hatcheries) will not receive oysters from here. There is a view that existing old

native oysters may have some resistance to Bonamia. This, and the desire to protect the genetic make-up of local populations which may also provide additional resilience, is why restoration using indigenous stock is so attractive.

This project is supported by the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer and aligns with existing native oyster restoration plans. Bangor University is an existing trusted restoration partner, also within a Bonamia area (so is happy to accept Milford oysters) and is the only known appropriate facility in Wales (keeping transportation to a minimum increases oyster survival rate).

This project offers a unique opportunity to build upon the expertise of Bangor University in successfully rearing native oysters, make use of dedicated facilities, and partner with local interests (the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Relevant Authority Group including PCNPA, with support and advice from Tethys Oysters in Angle Bay). It is expected that up to 200,000 native oyster spat may be produced, but numbers could be significantly more.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are asked to approve this payment.

(For further information contact Sarah Mellor on extension 4829)