



**Crown Estate
Scotland**
Oighreachd a' Chrùin Alba

Approach to Marine Enhancement Proposals

November 2025

Photo by Benjamin L Jones on Unsplash

Contents

Introduction	3
When is Permission Required?	3
How do I apply?	3
Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence	4
How much does a Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence cost?	4

Introduction

Marine enhancement projects can contribute toward the recovery and enhancement of the marine environment - and can provide a range of benefits to society through the ecosystem services they provide.

Proposals for marine enhancement projects may come forward in many different forms. Native oyster projects and seagrass meadows are currently the two main types of marine enhancement projects in Scotland.

This document provides an overview of the process involved in securing any necessary seabed rights from CES. The exact requirements will depend on the nature of the proposed activity development.

Please direct any enquiries to our managing agents at scotland-marine@bidwells.co.uk who will be happy to discuss the details with you.

When is Permission Required?

Permission is required from Crown Estate Scotland for the following activities on seabed forming part of the Scottish Crown Estate:

- the planting of seagrass meadows;
- the growing of shellfish¹ for the purpose of marine enhancement projects;
- any changes to extensions/changes to existing projects;
- any marine enhancement proposal that results in financial gain for the proposer;
- any invasive surveys or sampling;
- any physical works to the seabed.

How do I apply?

First, download the '**General marine works' application form** from the Crown Estate Scotland website.

Please read the guidance note carefully, answer all relevant questions and return it with supporting information to: scotland-marine@bidwells.co.uk.

Note: tick 'other' for marine enhancement proposals. 'Deployment of research equipment' or 'Intrusive research works' should also be ticked where relevant.

It is very important that applications detail the precise location of the works and the boundaries within which the enhancement activity will take place. Ideally this will be in the form of GIS² shapefiles, but if this is not possible applicants should use Ordnance Survey plans and/or provide coordinates of the proposed location(s).

Please note that the application process is likely to take 8-12 weeks and you should timetable this into

project plans.

The form of agreement will be dependent on the precise details of the proposal, and our Managing Agents (Bidwells) will discuss this with you, but it is likely that most marine enhancement proposals will be facilitated via a 'Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence' which is explained further below.

1 Relates to proposals on the seabed as opposed to, for example, scattering of shellfish into the sea from boats

2 Geographic Information System

Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence

In Crown Estate Scotland's role as a responsible landlord, it is important for us to be aware of marine enhancement activities³ happening on land forming any part of the Scottish Crown Estate.

The Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence is intended to provide a 'light touch' form of agreement, avoiding the time and expense of more complicated occupation agreements.

One of the benefits of having a seabed licence in place is that it allows Crown Estate Scotland to facilitate engagement between different seabed users as and when conflicting activities might arise, however it is important to note the following:

- The licence would be subject to all necessary statutory consents being in place;

- The licence does not form part of any statutory regulatory process e.g. planning permission, marine consenting undertaken by MS-LOT;
- The licence does not offer exclusive rights to the seabed;
- The licence does not override public rights (e.g. fishing, access, recreation).

Note that the Licence is for non-commercial projects only and excludes projects that involve natural capital markets i.e. credit schemes. Crown Estate Scotland does not permit the use of the seabed for commercial gain from marine natural capital without prior consent.

Currently there is no framework or process for this type of commercial activity. CES will keep this position under review.

How much does a Non-Commercial Enhancement Licence cost?

Crown Estate Scotland has a statutory duty to generate income from the Scottish Crown Estate, in line with the requirements of the Crown Estate Scotland Act 2019. This means we charge a fee proportionate to the use of the land and recover costs for providing the Licence. This applies to all licensable seabed activities, regardless of the nature of the applicant.

The exact cost will depend on many factors, and our managing agents will discuss this with you but for budgeting purposes we would recommend you include a cost in the range £500-£1,000 for the licence.

Note that where intrusive sampling e.g. coring of sediments is required in advance of the enhancement licence, some additional costs may be incurred. This should be discussed with our managing agents but for budgeting purposes we would recommend you include a cost of c.£500.

³ This concerns 'active restoration / enhancement' i.e. where specific actions are taken on Crown land that aim to improve the quality, size or geographic distribution of a marine habitat as opposed to 'passive restoration/enhancement' which involves removing pressures and allowing the habitat to repair naturally. [Registers of Scotland](#) is a good source of information on land ownership.

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