



Scottish
**Marine
Environmental
Enhancement**
Fund

Impact Report 4

2025-2026



Foreword

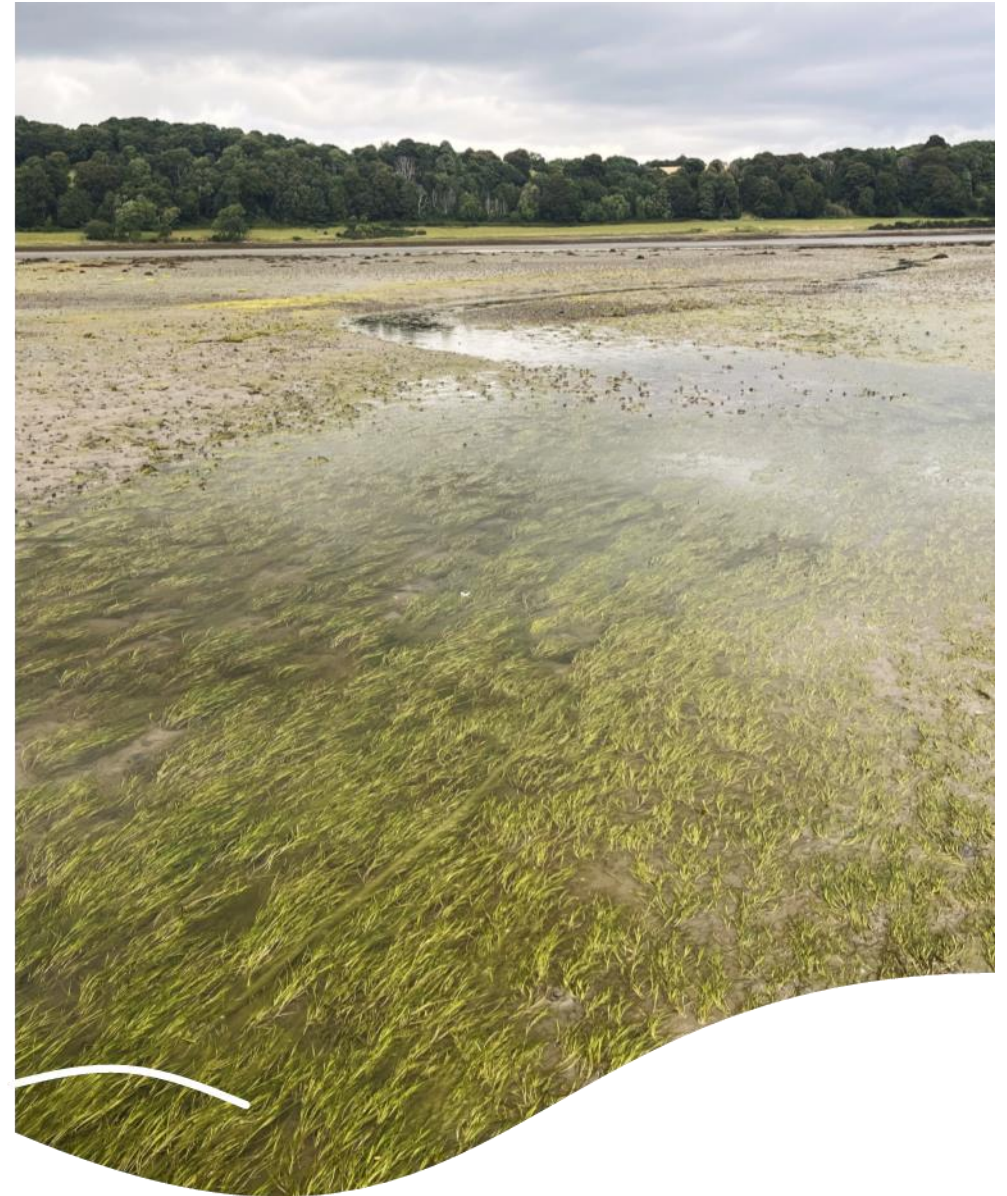


Nick Halfhide
Chief Executive, NatureScot

I am delighted to present the fourth Impact Report of SMEEF's work. As I write more seeds are being prepared for the SSEN-funded seagrass planting programme, and Taking Flight seabird resilience projects, funded by offshore wind developers in the northeast, are indeed gaining altitude!

Restoring nature in our seas is complex. We need both solid, evidence-based advice alongside practical and financial support. And I am pleased to see NatureScot continuing to play these two vital roles both as host of SMEEF, and advisors to their funded projects.

Attracting diverse funding is key to the success of our restoration work, and we continue to be ambitious for what SMEEF can achieve in partnership with businesses across the UK. The following pages give an insight into what is possible when public and private sector work together.



Steering Group



Mike Spain
Director of Aquaculture
and Marine Ecosystem
Services, Crown Estate
Scotland

The impact of SMEEF funding is widening all the time and we're very pleased to have continued our support this year, including an additional contribution to the seabird fund to support delivery of the Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan. SMEEF funding is helping to deliver marine enhancement right around Scotland, including on parts of the Scottish Crown Estate where the pioneering efforts of a number of groups to restore seagrass habitats will serve to greatly enhance the coastline environment for the long-term. We'd encourage any sector looking to make an impact in Scotland to consider SMEEF as a proven model for collaboration and codesign of programmes.



Cathy Tilbrook
Head of Sustainable
Coasts and Seas,
NatureScot
Chair of SMEEF Steering
Group

It's been another busy and rewarding year for SMEEF as we continue to support great enhancement work all around Scotland's shores. A major highlight was our Scottish Parliament reception on 4 February 2026 where we proudly showcased some fantastic SMEEF – funded projects and Cabinet Secretary Gillian Martin gave an inspiring keynote speech to thank all our supporters and encourage new donors to step forward.

Personally speaking, my involvement in SMEEF (from its inception) is one of the best parts of my job, with a great sense of optimism and shared purpose derived from leveraging funding to deliver positive change for nature. My huge thanks to our dedicated and dynamic SMEEF team and for the vital support we receive from wider colleagues, partners and contributors. We're excited about the year ahead and to explore and develop new opportunities to expand SMEEF's valuable work. Please get in touch to find out more and join us in this fulfilling mission!



John Mouat
Deputy Director Marine Planning,
Environment & Corporate
Scottish Government Marine
Directorate

In the face of growing pressures on Scotland's marine and coastal environments, we need to tackle issues head on and deliver positive outcomes at pace. SMEEF is a shining example of how this can be achieved – delivering high impact projects that benefit our environment.

It is also vital that we unlock new streams of investment for delivering positive actions, and SMEEF has demonstrated that it is one of our most successful vehicles for channelling private investment and nature finance into marine and coastal enhancement projects. Scottish Government is pleased to have been able to contribute core funding to SMEEF since its beginning and we continue to be impressed by the scale of private investment generated from our contribution, demonstrating incredible value for money for the public purse.

Through the support of community driven enhancement initiatives, the work of SMEEF will be of real value in supporting the delivery of the recently published Marine and Coastal Restoration Plan – generating social and economic opportunities alongside environmental benefits.

How does SMEEF work?

SMEEF has a robust governance system which aims to give both contributors and grantees confidence. A Steering Group is at the heart of our decision-making structure and is made up of representatives from NatureScot, Crown Estate Scotland and the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate. The Steering Group defines the contributions acceptance policy and ensures that grant giving is aligned with national strategies and policy.

Our Ethical Contributions Board assesses the source of contributions and a separate Grants Panel decides the grant allocations. We also maintain contact with scientific experts through a close partnership with the Scottish Blue Carbon Forum and MASTS; and operate a wider mailing list for anyone with an interest in SMEEF's activities. Finally, there is the Contributor's Forum which meets regularly to be updated on activities and to share experiences.



Fundraising



James Stewart
Independent Chair of ECB
Director, One Planet Consulting

Fundraising is a substantial and important part of SMEEF work. It involves the whole team, with roles for the executive, the Steering Group and the Ethical Contributions Board (ECB). It is not only the life blood of our work, but it is also a key point of scrutiny; where our funding comes from counts and will enhance or undermine our overall work.

The ECB's role in this has continued, assessing and considering new and current sources of contributions and ensuring the risks are understood and remain within the overall appetite for an organisation of our nature. Our role is also to test the efficacy of the approach and we continue to explore how to improve our overall governance (the platform our process stands upon) as well and the process itself. This is essential as credibility in this area of work is only retained if we keep up with the pace of change and learning in blue finance more widely.

Our work relies upon active engagement from those offering funds and key work from the internal term. We continue to be grateful for that engagement and support and look forward to that continuing into the next period.



Credit to 2025/26 donors

SMEEF could not function without the kind and generous support of businesses across Scotland who have made contributions. The donations are made completely voluntarily and not linked to any formal requirement of the development licensing and consenting process.



STROMAR

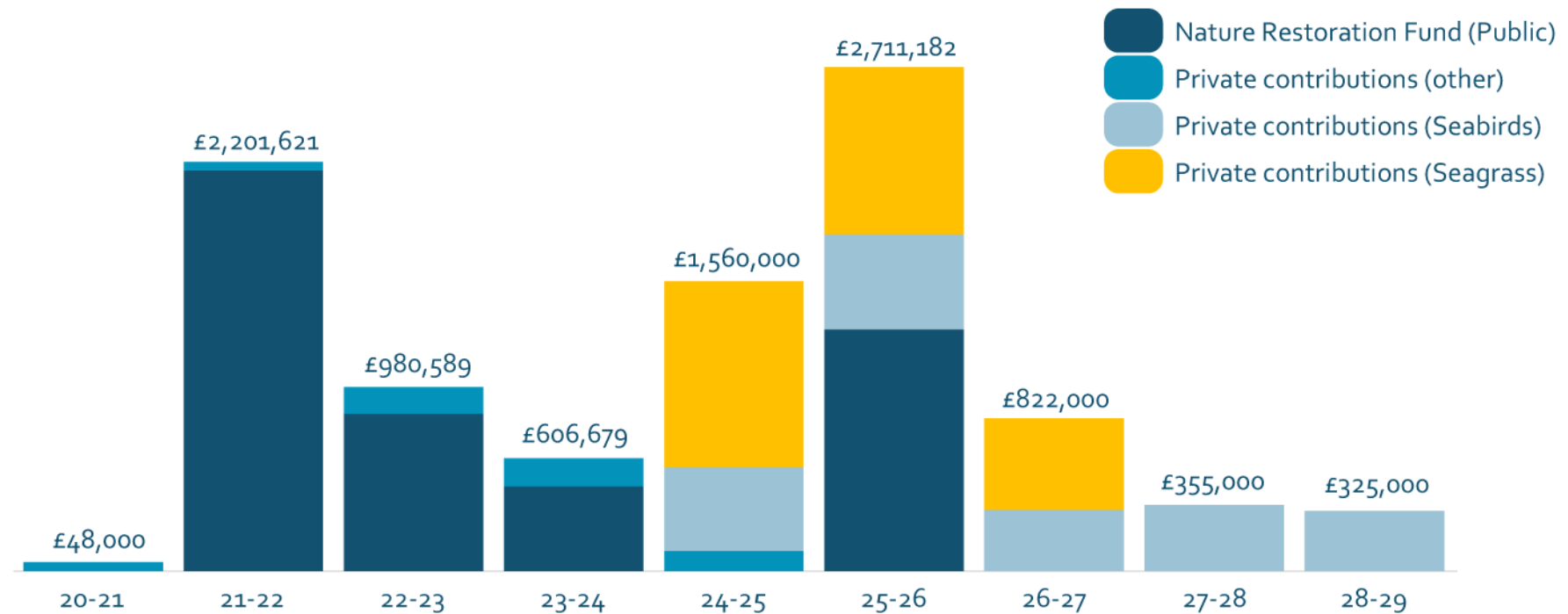


SMEEF funders list

24/25	Ossian Offshore Wind Farm Limited Stromar Offshore Wind Farm Limited Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution Limited Muir Mhor Offshore Wind Farm Limited Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited Broadshore Offshore Wind Farm Limited Thistle Wind Partners Limited Orsted Power (UK) Limited ChampionWind Limited MarramWind Limited Morven Offshore Wind Limited
23/24	Simply Blue Energy (Scotland) Limited Muir Mhor Offshore Wind Farm Limited Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited Broadshore Offshore Wind Farm Limited Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Limited Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution Limited
22/23	Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Limited Orsted Power (UK) Limited Stromar Offshore Wind Farm Limited
21/22	EDF Energy Renewables Limited SB Offshore Energy Limited UK Mainstream Renewable Power Limited Simply Blue Energy (Scotland) Limited RWE Renewables UK SSE Renewables Services (UK) Limited Offshore Wind Power Limited
20/21	Red Rock Power Limited Vattenfall Wind Power Limited Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Limited Ocean Winds UK Limited

Fundraising at a glance

SMEEF was established to pool new finance from a range of sources to form a substantial and long running marine enhancement grant fund. The programme benefits from Nature Restoration Funds and private contributions that are allocated to a wide range of projects.



The SMEEF Grants programme



Susan Davies FRSB
Independent SMEEF Grants Panel Chair

As I reach the end of my four-year term as Chair of the SMEEF Grants Panel, it is a natural moment to reflect on the investment secured, the projects supported, and the progress we have made together. The funding committed to date will, I am certain, leave a strong legacy for Scotland's marine and coastal environment, for the wildlife it sustains, and for the people who care for it.

A particular highlight has been our support for seagrass restoration around Scotland's coastline. With **115 projects** now delivering work, we are beginning to understand both the scale of what is possible and the depth of learning that comes from practical delivery. These projects have strengthened our knowledge of effective restoration techniques in different settings, demonstrated strong value for money, and shown how essential partnerships - from local communities to national organisations - will be in stewarding these areas long after the initial funding ends.

The launch of the **Seabird Resilience Fund – Taking Flight** represents another major milestone. It provides a clear and targeted mechanism for delivering priority actions within the Scottish Government's Seabird Conservation Action Plan, at a time when many species urgently require coordinated intervention at scale.

Progress, however, is not without its challenges. We still need to unlock greater levels of private investment for Scotland's marine environment, and I hope that the impact emerging from SMEEF-supported projects will give others the confidence to contribute. We also need clarity – soon - on which measures will be accepted as Strategic Compensation for Offshore Wind Development. Without this, we risk delaying funding decisions on strong project proposals that could address multiple pressures on seabirds and help reverse some deeply concerning population declines.

There is also a clear need to invest in awareness raising, education, and innovative approaches that support co-existence between our marine environment and people. And, across all our work, we must continue to balance locality, scale, and partnership breadth - ensuring value for money while delivering the level of impact required to restore nature meaningfully.

Despite the challenges, SMEEF continues to provide vital funding that enables action for Scotland's marine and coastal environments that would not otherwise be possible. My sincere thanks go to the SMEEF team for their hard work and commitment, and to our funders for placing their trust in us.



Monitoring and Reporting

Our approach to reporting

As a developing organisation SMEEF has been fine-tuning our approach to reporting, in particular we are linking our work more strongly to relevant policy and have further defined our core themes to guide our approach.

Grant spending is recorded by three factors:

1. Which of our four main funding themes it falls into, and whether they also fall into one of two categories: 'Research' or 'Project Development'.



2. Which Scottish Government priority theme the grant delivers against.

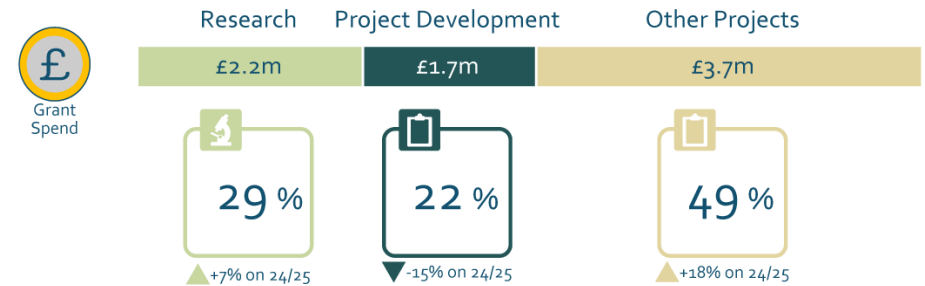
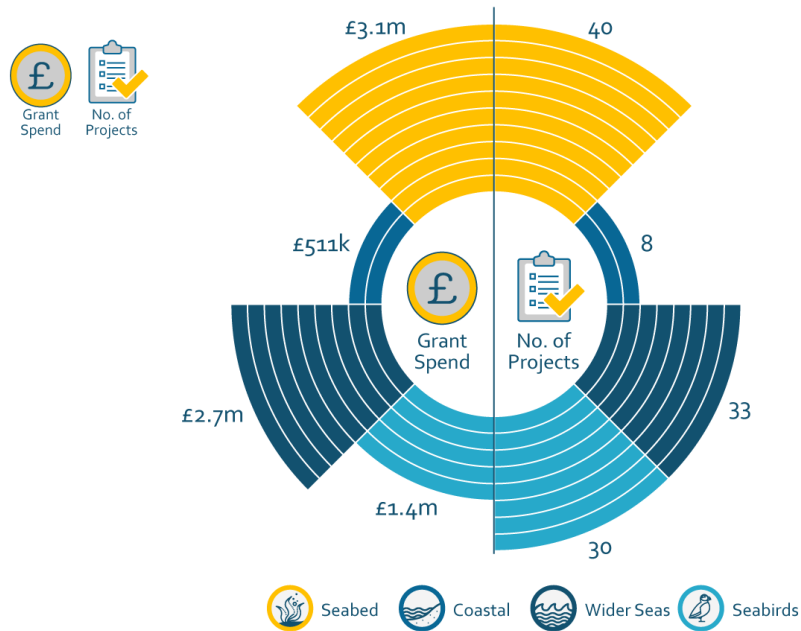


3. Which of the 11 Scottish Marine Regions the grant most applies to. If the grant is widely applicable it will be listed as 'Scotland-wide'.

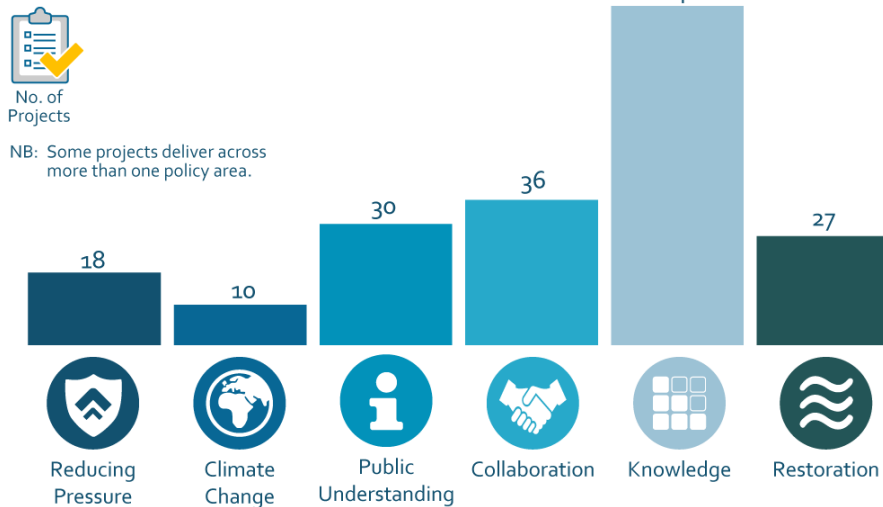


At a glance: 2021-26

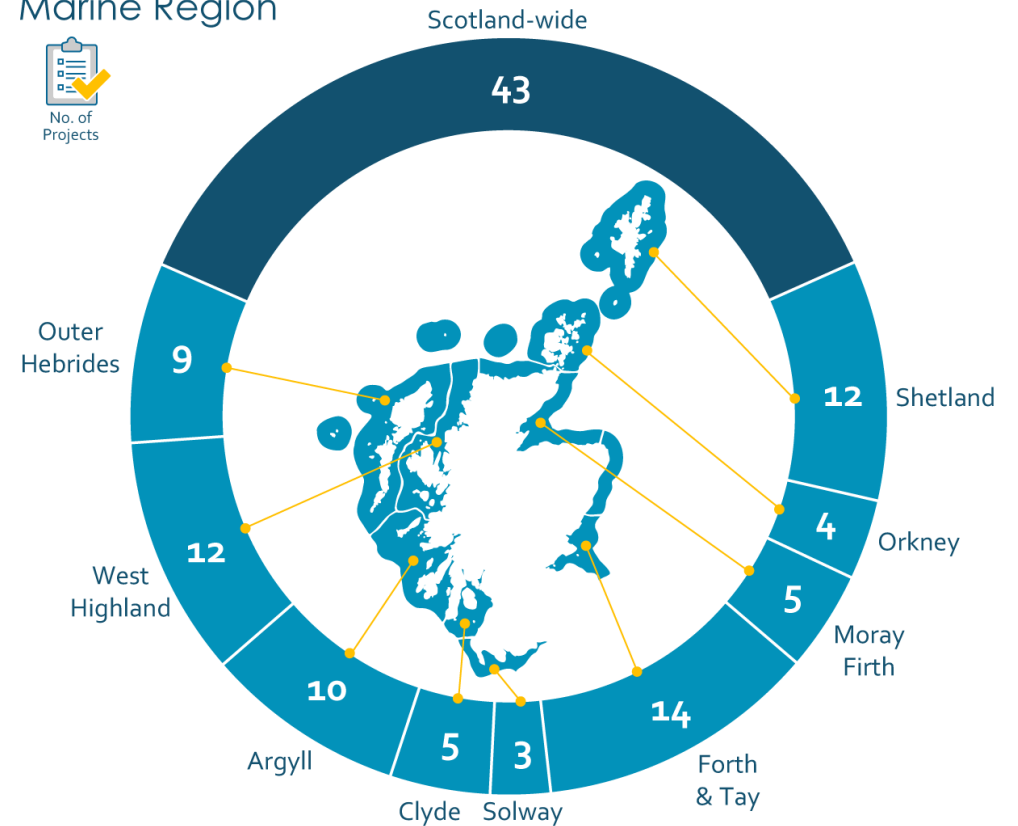
The following two pages give an overview of all grant spending since SMEEF started.



Policy Priorities

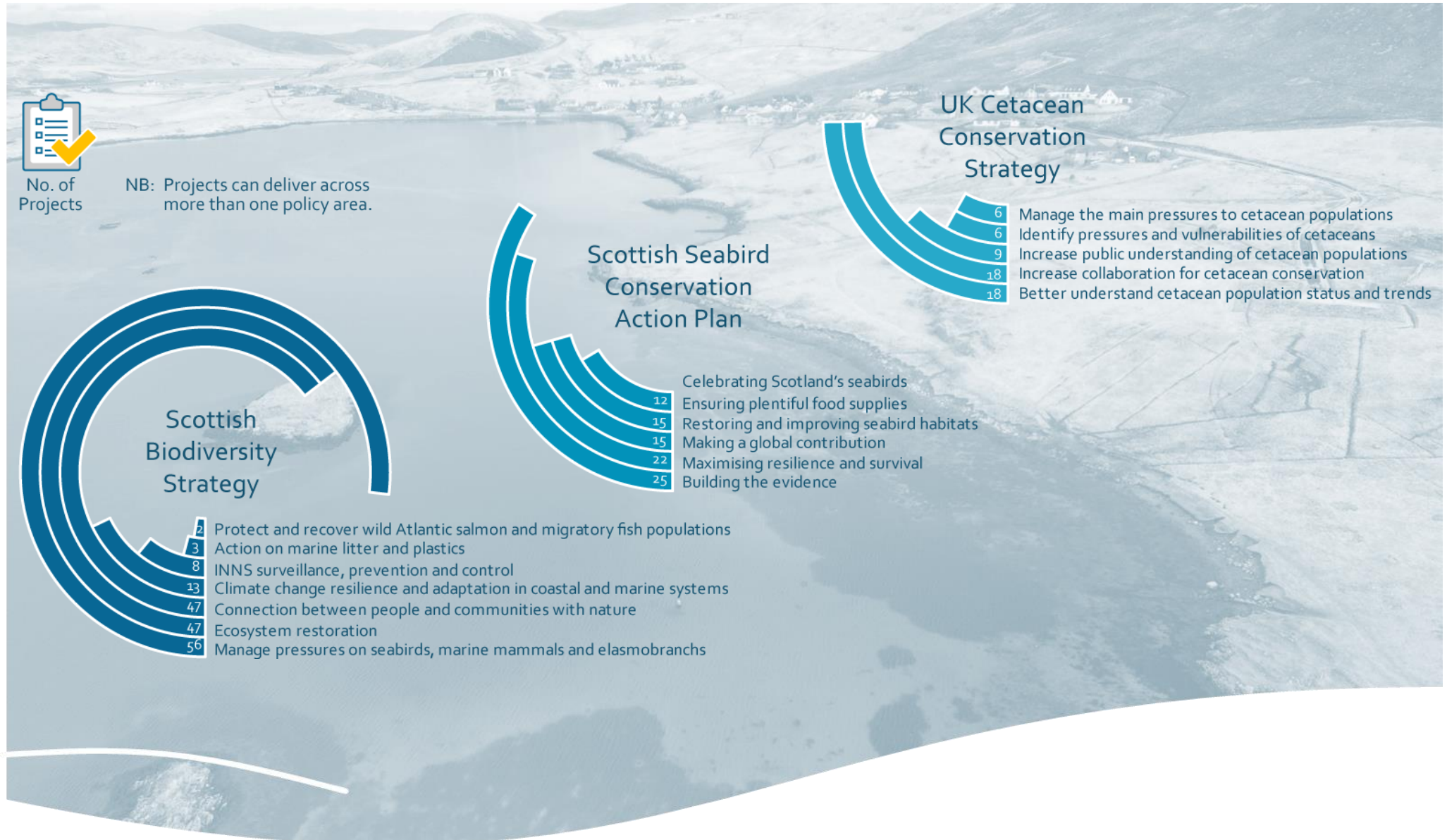


Marine Region



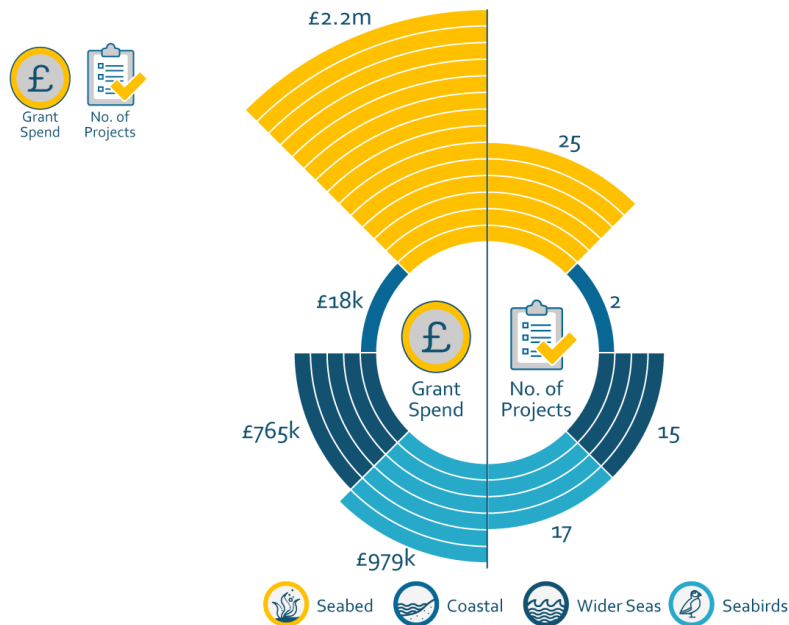
Links to national strategies

The number of SMEEF projects, between 2021 and 2026, that focus on delivering the aims and objectives of key national strategies.



At a glance: 2025-26

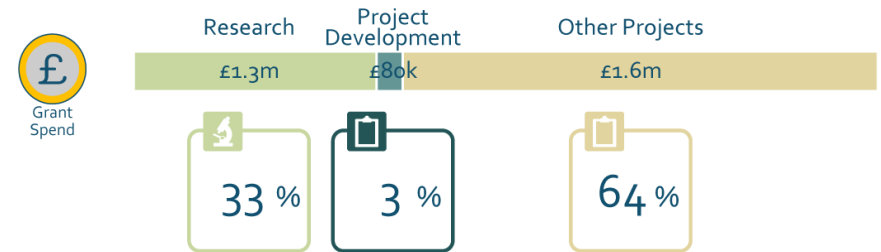
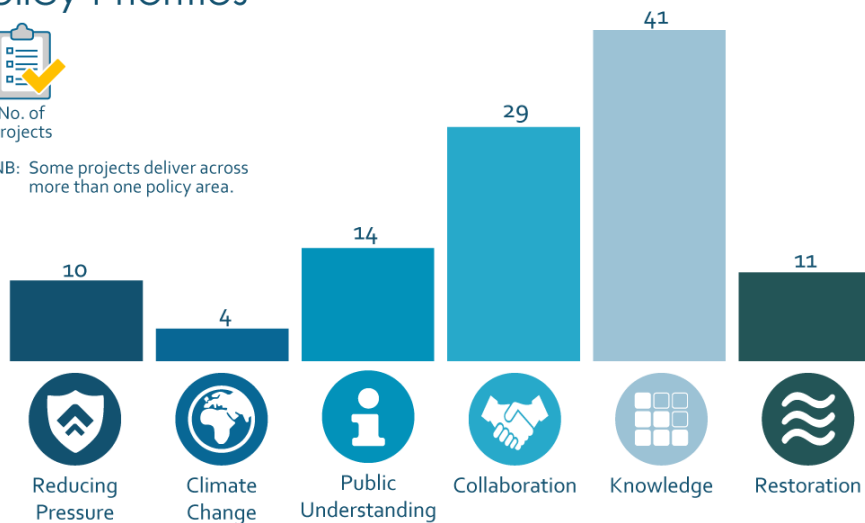
This page gives an overview of grant spending since the 2025 Impact Report.



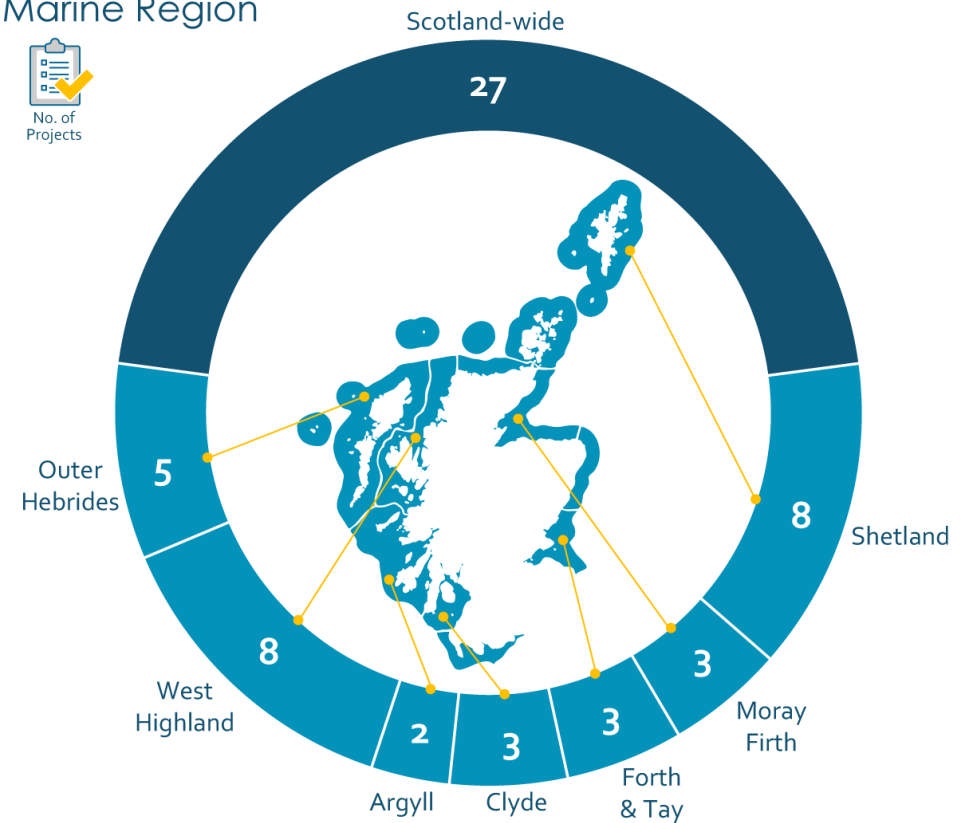
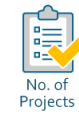
Policy Priorities



NB: Some projects deliver across more than one policy area.



Marine Region



Seabird Resilience Fund open grants round 2025



SMEEF announced a new **Seabird Resilience Fund** to help safeguard the future of Scotland's precious seabirds. This significant £1.6m investment, funded by voluntary donations from a group of offshore renewable energy developers, aims to fund practical projects to protect seabirds from the many threats they face, both at sea and on land.

'Taking Flight' – SMEEF's first open grants round of the Fund – was designed to accelerate progress against the Scottish Seabird Conservation Action Plan and its aim of maximising seabird prospects and building resilience in seabird populations.

Taking Flight was set up within SMEEF and made possible by voluntary contributions from offshore renewable energy developers in the Northeast and East Orkney Group (NEEOG).

The following offshore renewable energy developers provided contributions to the fund:

- Bellrock Offshore Wind Farm Limited
- Broadshore Offshore Wind Farm Limited
- CampionWind Limited
- MarramWind Limited
- Morven Offshore Wind Limited
- Muir Mhor Offshore Wind Farm Limited
- Ossian Offshore Wind Farm Limited
- Thistle Wind Partners Limited
- Stromar Offshore Wind Farm Limited.

More details of all grants funded can be found on the [website](#).



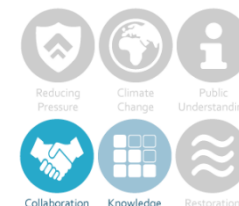
CivTech 10.3 Digital Sniffer Dog – ArcTech Innovation



£131,241



Seabirds



Developing novel technology to monitor puffin burrow health.

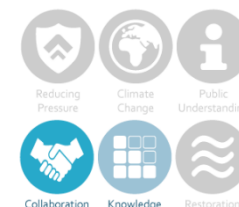
CivTech 10.3 Puffin Monitoring – EOLAS & University of Edinburgh



£135,077



Seabirds



Developing novel technology to map puffin burrows.

Seabird Conservation UK Advisory Science Forum – JNCC

£
£1,712



Seabirds



Inaugural meeting of the Seabird Conservation UK Advisory Science Forum.

Seabird Habitat Resilience – Atlantic 58

£ £ £
£90,924



Seabirds



Building seabird resilience across the Summer Isles.

Scottish Island Remote Surveillance – RSPB

£
£10,000



Seabirds



Increase Scottish island remote surveillance of invasive non-native mammalian predators.

Leaving a Lasting Legacy – RSPB

£ £ £
£138,929



Seabirds



Developing long-term biosecurity for Scotland through best practice collaboration and awareness raising.

Seabird Restoration and Resilience Officer – NatureScot

£ £
£80,000



Seabirds



New role of Seabird Restoration and Resilience Officer.

Rat Threat Feasibility Study – Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust

£ £
£40,481



Seabirds



Conduct a feasibility study for rat eradication on the Isle of Eigg.

Seagrass Meadows Scotland grants programme 2025-28



Seagrass Meadows Scotland



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

SMEEF launched Scotland's most ambitious seagrass planting programme on World Seagrass Day 2025. The unique partnership between SMEEF and SEN Distribution will see £2.4 million distributed to help restore nature in Scotland's seas.

Seagrasses have been declining globally since the 1930s, with estimates that 7% of seagrass meadows are being lost each year. The partnership aims to plant 14 hectares of seagrass by 2028, supporting both nature and coastal communities.

Planting Seagrass – Kintyre Coastal Network



£15,753



Seabed



Supporting community seagrass survey work.

Seagrass Meadows Scotland – Mossy Earth



£544,588



Seabed



Seagrass meadow restoration in the firths near the Black Isle, Highland.

Seagrass Meadows Scotland – UHI Shetland



£302,756



Seabed



Restoring Shetland's marlie meadows - Planting seagrass beds in west Mainland.

Seagrass Meadows Scotland – Wester Ross Fisheries Trust



£134,870



Seabed



Seagrass meadow restoration within the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area.

Seagrass Restoration – Namara Projects Ltd



£203,396



Seabed



Sound of Harris Seagrass Restoration.

Barra and Vatersay Seagrass – Barra & Vatersay Community Ltd



£90,710



Seabed



Seagrass restoration project.

Phase 2 Planting Seagrass – Wester Ross Fisheries Trust



£73,643



Seabed



Seagrass restoration project.

Future Tides, Montrose Basin – Robocean



£187,000



Seabed



Restoring seagrass in Montrose Basin using Robocean's groundbreaking Meadow Maker robot.

SMEEF and Nature Restoration Fund grants round 2025/26

Elasmobranch Survey Drone – Edinburgh Napier University

£ £
£55,001



Automated drones for elasmobranch survey.

Creeling for Sound – Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust

£ £
£29,937



Testing new approaches to data collection with fishers.

Meadow Maker – Robocean

£ £
£79,800



Developing a robot to revolutionise seagrass planting at scale.



Project Fulmar – National Trust for Scotland



Fulmar expert workshop supporting international collaboration.

For the Love of Data – National Trust for Scotland



The creation of a unified, searchable seabird database.

Fair Isle DR MPA Summary & Analysis – Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation



A summary and analysis of research outputs of the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area.

Marine Mammals Workshop – Scottish Association for Marine Science



Reviewing potential compensatory measures for marine mammals in Scottish waters.

Citizen Science Training on Arran – COAST



Growing the number, knowledge and skills of local volunteers engaged with community-led protection.

Remote Predator Monitoring – RSPB



Remote monitoring of mammalian predators on Shetland.

Gannet Population Monitoring – Scottish Seabird Centre



Population monitoring and baseline data analysis of Bass Rock gannet colony.

Shetland Marine Habitat – UHI Shetland



Enhancing data on Shetland's marine habitats.

Leach's Petrel Learning Framework – RSPB



Development of an audio-based deep-learning framework for individual recognition of Leach's Petrel.

Necropsy Data Portal – University of Glasgow



Development of a necropsy data portal as part of the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme (SMASS) database.

Research Needs for Seabed Restoration - Scottish Association for Marine Science



Integrating research and restoration to improve the success and resilience of community driven projects.

Cryo-Preservation of Seagrass Seeds – Scottish Association for Marine Science



Science centred solutions for successful seagrass restoration.

Understanding Shetland's Risso's Dolphins – UHI Shetland



Research collecting data on marine mammals, especially Risso's dolphins.

SMASS Diagnostic Support Kit – University of Glasgow



Equipment for cetacean research.

Species on the Edge – Bumblebee Conservation Trust



Multi-species conservation work on machair and associated habitats.

Project Fulmar (Capital Costs) – National Trust for Scotland



Bespoke fulmar tags for St Kilda and Fair Isle birds.

Marine Mammal Memories – UHI Shetland



Project to collate memories of marine mammals seen around Shetland to help understanding of historic cetacean sightings and distributions.

Biosecurity for Scotland – RSPB



Firth of Forth Rapid Response Hub upgrade.

Modernisation of Cetacean Field Work – National Museums of Scotland



Safely store cetacean specimens held at the National Museums Scotland Collections Centre (NMCC).

Arran: Eyes on the Sea – COAST



Improvement of survey capacity through emerging technologies.

Research Equipment – Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust



Silurian research vessel equipment improvements.

SEA disentanglement kits – Scottish Creel Fisherman's Federation



Support for Scottish Entanglement Alliance (SEA) to purchase specialised disentanglement kits.

Bass Rock 360 Camera Trial – Scottish Seabird Centre



Installation of two 360 degree cameras for Bass Rock gannet monitoring.

Shorewatch – Whale and Dolphin Conservation



Enabling investment in advanced optical equipment for the Shorewatch programme.

Community Research Equipment – Fair Isle Marine Research Organisation



Equipment for the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area.

Thermal Imaging Camera – Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews



New thermal imaging camera and gimbal system for seal surveys.

BlueBoat USV Accelerated Seabed Survey – Seawilding



Purchase of BlueBoat USV – for seagrass mapping and restoration site selection.

Marine Enhancement Equipment – UHI Sheltand



Equipment to support and deliver a range of marine conservation activities.

AquaRestore – Scottish Association for Marine Science



Aquarium facilities for *Zostera marina* growth trials.

Seagrass Nursery – Wester Ross Fisheries Trust



Seagrass nursery improvement and expansion.

Seasearch Scotland – Action West Loch



Benthic survey equipment for use by community volunteers.

Wet Lab Installation – Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews



Wet lab and air system to facilitate understanding of marine mammal diet and trophic interactions.

Habitat Survey Drone – Mossy Earth



Seagrass survey drone to increase capacity within the team to operate drones for ecological monitoring.

SMEEF privately funded grant 2025/26

Sound of Harris Seagrass Survey – Namara Projects Ltd



Sound of Harris Seagrass Survey.

NB: Grants indicated do not necessarily reflect final claim amounts.

Meet the Team



Hettie Pike
Seabird Officer

Grants, stakeholder engagement,
community development

Sarah Brown
Partnerships Manager

Fundraising, strategy, oversight

Katherine Knight
Seabed Officer

Grants, stakeholder engagement,
community development

David Conneely
Grants Manager

Grants, strategy, oversight

Founding Partners



Contact



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Back photos: Seals © Sea Mammal Research Unit, Beach project © Edinburgh Napier University,
Seagrass © UHI Shetland