

Press Release: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## **Local marine partnership receives funding to deliver innovative conservation projects in Studland Bay, Dorset**

The [Studland Bay Marine Partnership](#) has been awarded £186,000 from the Marine Management Organisation's Fisheries and Seafood Scheme to support the conservation of Studland Bay's precious marine ecosystems.

Studland Bay is home to Dorset's most extensive seagrass meadow and provides a unique habitat for lots of important species like the Spiny Seahorse and the endangered undulate ray.

The new funding, which has been secured following a successful funding bid with Dorset Council, will contribute to a larger £248,000 conservation project to support this special site, the wildlife that live there, and the water users who enjoy it.

The project, which will see an additional 57 eco-moorings installed in the bay, and the continuation of the partnership's research and monitoring programme, will be delivered by the Studland Bay Marine Partnership.

This partnership was formed in 2021 to help make sure the Studland Bay area is protected for nature whilst meeting the needs of water and boat users and is made up of local stakeholders like conservation and boating groups, academics, community groups, and local businesses.

Funds from the award will also be used to complete the formulisation of the partnership, provide more information for boat users in the Studland and Poole harbour marina areas, and continue an engagement programme, led by the Dorset Coast Forum, throughout 2024 and beyond.

### **David Brown, Chair of the Studland Bay Marine Partnership (SBMP), said:**

"This is fantastic news for residents, visitors, boaters, and the environment! Receiving this funding supports the Studland Bay Marine Partnership to continue the important work of conserving and preserving Studland Bay for future generations to enjoy.

"Hundreds of waterborne visitors to Studland Bay are already taking a pro-active approach to conservation by using the 31 eco-moorings already installed and we are delighted that we will now be able to install a further 57 in 2024."

These activities will support the voluntary no anchor zone (VNAZ) already in place within in Studland Bay. The VNAZ was established in 2021 by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) with the support of the local community to protect the bay's seagrass meadow.

### **Michelle Willis, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, MMO, said:**

"The Fisheries and Seafood Scheme has been designed specifically to support these types of innovative projects.

"In Studland Bay, the seagrass plays a vital role in the marine ecosystem, providing a safe nursery and breeding ground for range of marine wildlife, including rare species of Spiny

Seahorse, pipefish and rays, as well as those of significant commercial value such as seabream, bass and flat fish.

“By supporting projects which will help to protect and recover Studland’s seagrass beds for the future we’re delivering on our commitment to protect our precious marine environment, support economic growth and enable sustainable marine development.”

Funds for the project were secured as part of a bid submitted by Dorset Council on behalf of the partnership.

**Councillor Ray Bryan, Dorset Council’s Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment, said:**

“Protecting our unique coastline and the habitats it supports is vitally important, which is why we are thrilled to hear we have been successful in securing funds to support conservation efforts in Studland Bay.

“The bay is not only important to our county’s wildlife, but also highly valued by our local communities, businesses, and water users. And this funding will further help Studland Bay Marine Partnership in their efforts to manage the area in a way that is collaborative and sustainable.”

Dorset Coast Forum, a Dorset Council hosted programme, will continue to lead on the community engagement of this marine conservation project. The forum has already been working with partnership organisations throughout 2023 to raise awareness of the Voluntary No Anchor Zone and Studland’s precious marine habitats. Future engagement events will continue to offer boaters and the public the opportunity to view the partnership’s display eco-mooring which featured on the BBC’s Springwatch programme earlier in the year.

**Sara Parker, Dorset Coast Forum’s project officer, said:**

“Receiving this funding award offers the partnership a real opportunity to continue to develop our engagement activities and reach wider audiences. Preserving the natural beauty and health of the unique marine habitat beneath the water in the bay is what we are all working together to achieve. This is brilliant news for residents and visitors alike!”

You can find out more about the Studland Bay Marine Partnership and the conservation project at Studland Bay on the [Dorset Coast Forum website](#).

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Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

## Notes to editors

- **Photo 1:** Eco-mooring in use at Studland Bay (credit boatfolk)
- **Photo 2:** Dorset Coast Forum engagement event at Studland Bay (credit Sara Parker, DCF)
- **Photo 3:** Eco-mooring at Studland Bay (credit boatfolk)
- **Pictures and picture credits can be made available if required.**
- **Eco-moorings** are a tried and tested alternative to traditional anchoring, each eco-mooring has a helical screw anchor which is driven into the seabed and attached to the mooring buoy via an elastic rode. The elastic rode stretches at higher tides and contracts at lower tides, avoiding scouring the seabed and disturbing the seagrass.
- **Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS)** – FaSS grant funding is administered by the [Marine Management Organisation's \(MMO\)](#) and is available to businesses from across the catching (including recreational fishing), aquaculture and processing sectors – as well as charities and public and semi-public organisations in England.

It provides financial assistance for projects that support the development of the catching, processing, and aquaculture sectors, and for projects that enhance the marine environment. FaSS is currently closed for new applications. A modified version of the scheme is expected to commence in 2024.

Find out more: [www.gov.uk/guidance/fisheries-and-seafood-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/fisheries-and-seafood-scheme)

- **Studland Bay Marine Partnership** - The Studland Bay Marine Partnership is a partnership of stakeholders including conservation and boating organisations, academics, grassroots community groups and supporting local businesses formed to devise a solution that meets the needs of the public and recreational boaters to continue to enjoy the bay, whilst protecting and restoring the sensitive seagrass habitat at Studland. Find out more here: <https://www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/studland-bay-marine-partnership>
- **Dorset Coast Forum** is an independent neutral partnership organisation hosted by Dorset Council who work to promote the social, economic and environmental benefits of the Dorset coast and the surrounding seas.

The Dorset Coast Forum (DCF) has been established for 25 years and has a wealth of experience in delivering local stakeholder and community orientated projects on issues such as beach safety, marine planning, coastal change, marine and beach litter and coastal regeneration. In all of their projects the DCF utilises their neutrality, facilitation and behavioural change experience to deliver highly successful and output orientated projects using the systems thinking approach. In addition, the DCF team's ability to build reciprocal relationships with stakeholders and empower communities to be part of the solution means that the impacts of the projects they coordinate are long lasting. Find out more here: <https://www.dorsetcoast.com/>

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