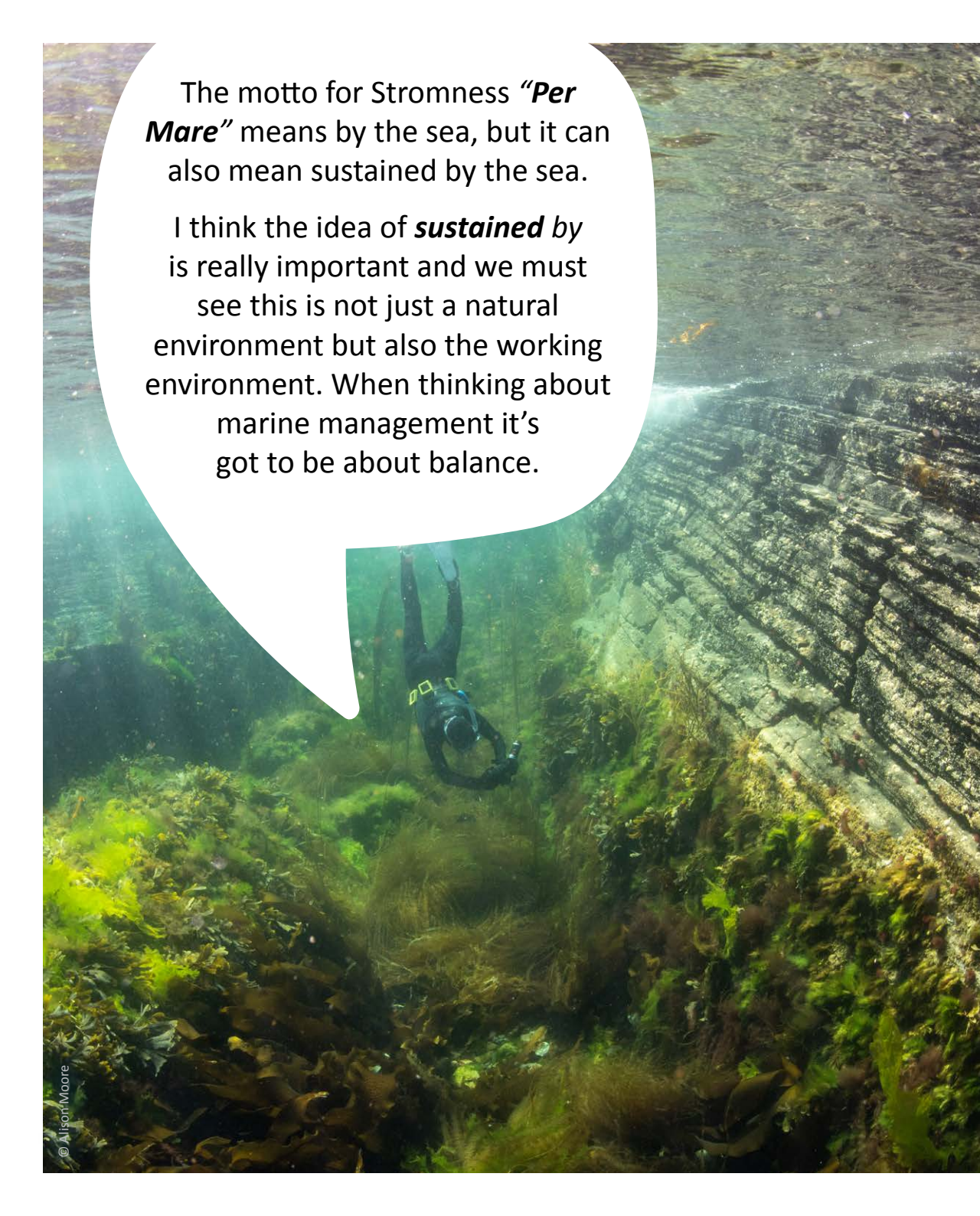




Oceans of Value

Community Voice Method Report 2023

An underwater photograph showing a diver in a dark wetsuit and mask, positioned vertically in the center. The diver is surrounded by a dense field of green and brown seaweed. In the background, a rocky reef structure is visible, with light filtering through the water from above. The overall scene is a vibrant marine environment.

The motto for Stromness “*Per Mare*” means by the sea, but it can also mean sustained by the sea.

I think the idea of *sustained by* is really important and we must see this is not just a natural environment but also the working environment. When thinking about marine management it’s got to be about balance.

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Appendix 1 (Interview Guide), **Appendix 2** (Anonymised Answers from Community Interviews) and **Appendix 3** (Full responses from Community Workshop) are available on our website scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

Summary

“Make it sustainable”

...the final words from the film perfectly encapsulate the themes of the conversations with members of Orkney’s community who kindly took part in our interviews.

Through this project we have been able to explore the relationship that different people have with their seas and coasts, and the values that they place on them. What emerged were suggestions of marine management from a more holistic viewpoint, and the vital importance of the sea to island communities, from livelihoods to mental wellbeing.


This project has provided important insights into how consultation methods can be improved in future to ensure that community voices are at the heart of decision making. An educational program might enthuse people about the fantastic species and habitats in their local waters, and better community consultation could tap into the wealth of knowledge that exists, thereby ensuring that people feel their opinions are being heard and acted upon.

No matter where you are in Orkney, you are never far from the sea and it affects your life completely whether you work on the sea, travel by it, rely on resources from it or go there to enjoy it and feel the wellbeing benefits. While people may place different values on the sea, or differ in opinion on the key issues, it is clear from the conversations had through this project that we all have a common goal - we all want to see clean, healthy, thriving coasts and seas, and to find a balance between human activity and environmental protection.

There was a consensus that the sea is vital to Orkney’s identity and culture, and that we must work together to protect it. It is also essential to life: “without the sea none of us would be here on planet Earth and the variety of sea life in Orkney is just absolutely incredible”.

There is no doubt the marine environment in Orkney, and globally, is facing a myriad of threats and that it is: “absolutely crucial that we safeguard it now for everyone’s sake.” There was optimism as well acknowledging that: “it is never too late” and while: “we cannot undo the past we can certainly make sure we improve things for future generations”.

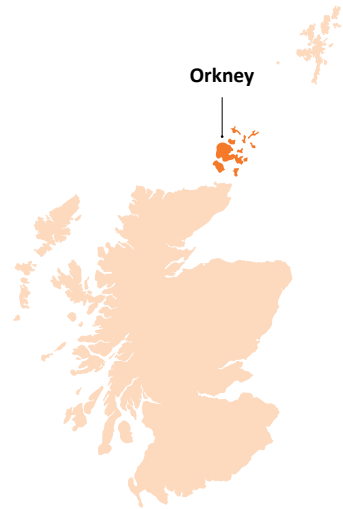
“Fishing has been part of Orkney for perhaps hundreds of years. I think there is a sense of **belonging** when it comes to the marine environment and the sea, and it is just in your DNA living in Orkney.”

An underwater photograph showing a dense field of golden-brown seaweed. The water is clear and blue, with light filtering through from the surface, creating shimmering patterns on the seaweed. A white speech bubble is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing a quote.

“The sound of the sea, or sitting watching the waves coming in. That is the balm for the soul for me. It’s how I get through life’s problems.”

Introduction

The Scottish Wildlife Trust's Oceans of Value project has taken an innovative approach to the challenge of capturing the range of values that are placed on the marine environment.



Scotland's marine environment is incredibly diverse and provides a range of services that society benefits from. These benefits to human wellbeing and quality of life are known as ecosystem services. Due to the range of benefits provided, individuals will place different values on the marine environment. These often relate to the direct, more noticeable benefits people experience, such as food, employment, recreation and wellbeing.

There are also many indirect, 'hidden' benefits that must be considered. These include carbon capture by blue carbon habitats, nursery grounds for fish and other organisms, and coastal protection.

Capturing the range of values that are placed on the marine environment can be challenging. The Trust's Oceans of Value project set out to compare two different approaches to identifying key values associated with the marine environment:

1. a [Natural Capital Assessment of the Orkney Marine Region](#) (published January 2022)
2. the Community Voice Method which is the focus of this report

Community Voice Method (CVM) was used to capture the different values members of Orkneys community place on the marine environment, and was the first CVM project based solely in Scotland.

CVM was originally developed in 2001 in South East USA by Drs Gabe Cumming and Carla Norwood to encourage local dialogue about land-use conflict issues affecting communities. CVM combines a range of social science research techniques, including film analysis and structured workshops, and aims to provide a more in-depth, inclusive and accurate understanding of local people's values and opinions to inform conservation interventions. CVM was pioneered in the UK, and the UK Overseas Territories, by the [Marine Conservation Society](#) working with regulators and communities on a range of issues including MPA management, fisheries reform, species conservation, inshore marine management and coastal access.

This project focused on the seas surrounding the Orkney Islands, which is one of the most well-studied marine environments in Scotland. The aim of Oceans of Value was to create greater awareness and understanding among local stakeholders of the values placed on the marine environment, and feed into the development of Orkney's Regional Marine Plan. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 set out provisions for marine management and resulted in the National Marine Plan (2015) which set out a requirement for regional marine planning in Scotland.




Introduction (continued)

There are 11 marine regions in Scotland which encompass marine areas out to 12 nautical miles. The function of regional marine plans is to allow for local ownership and decision making in marine management.

Regional marine planning within Orkney waters is being brought forward by Orkney Islands Council and is the third to begin development thus far, following on from Shetland and Clyde. In 2010, a Lessons Learned for Marine Spatial Planning report was produced for the Clyde Region which highlighted the importance of developing mechanisms for public consultation in marine planning and assisted in identifying key issues and developing policy. Early involvement in the planning process by communities, the report states, would also encourage early buy-in or a sense of ownership over the process and provides the rationale for the use of CVM in marine decision-making.

The Orkney Marine Planning Team is currently at the stage of preparing to consult on a draft plan. This will provide a unique opportunity for this project to assist with gathering local people's views on valuing the marine environment. In a wider context, this can also feed into the early discussions that are underway for an update to the National Marine Plan (known as NMP2) which began this year (2023).

An underwater photograph of a kelp forest. The scene is dominated by thick, yellowish-brown kelp blades that are densely packed and appear to be swaying in the water. Interspersed among the yellow kelp are clusters of reddish-brown seaweed. The background is a clear, deep blue-green color, suggesting a healthy underwater environment. A white speech bubble is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

“The sea can look very healthy on the surface but there are increasing complex challenges and we are seeing biodiversity losses.

We need to be working to maintain a healthy environment for the decades and centuries to come, and we’ve got a limited time period in which to achieve that.”

Methodology

The steps in the CVM process are as follows:



1. Community Interviews

The first part of the process was identifying people to interview. This was carried out in several ways including referrals and recommendations from local organisations and through advertising the project publicly. We advertised the project on social media (including Facebook and Twitter) and made use of traditional media including adverts in the local paper and posters on community noticeboards. It was important to interview a range of people who have different relationships with the sea, whether that was through work, recreation or simply by living within an island community.

In total, 26 people were interviewed for this project between 2019 and 2022 (the interview process was paused during the Covid-19 lockdowns). In terms of demographics there was a 50% split between men and women interviewed, which aligns with the demographics of Orkney as a whole.

Only a quarter of the interviewees were based on the Outer Isles which were Sanday, Papa Westray and North Ronaldsay. Interviews were recorded using film and audio equipment, mostly in person (with one completed over Zoom) and tended to last between 40 minutes to two hours.

An interview guide (see **Appendix 1**) was produced to break the process down into five main categories, including a mapping exercise. The interviews were semi-structured, as per the CVM process, whereby interviewees were able to choose which questions they would like to answer, or not, and to allow more freedom to explore certain topics of their choosing in more depth. All interviewees were asked to sign a consent form in order to use film to record discussions.



Methodology (continued)



2. Interview Analysis

Transcripts were created from the recordings of the interviews and analysis was conducted using a qualitative software system called

NVIVO 12 plus. NVIVO 12 plus allows for the answers in the transcripts to be coded or categorised by topic or perspective. By examining the opinions and perspectives across multiple interviews it is then possible to assess the relative range and weight of different opinions.

This informs the content to be chosen for inclusion in the final film, and given that it would be impossible to include all the recorded footage, a social-science-based process was used to avoid any unconscious bias.



3. Film Production

In April 2022, a tender was put out for a company to produce the film, along with other communication materials. The tender was sent to ten different companies/freelance filmmakers and the Trust received five quotes. In May 2022, Speakeasy Productions was contracted to create the film based on the main topics and themes that had been highlighted by the NVIVO analysis, and making use of clips of interview footage that best expressed them.

The opinions expressed by interviewees form the basis of the film in what is known as a “multivocal narrative” that provides a snapshot of the topics explored and opinions expressed. The film company was able to combine the interview footage with B-roll of Orkney’s marine environment kindly provided by local filmmaker Raymond Besant.

Methodology (continued)



4. Focus Group

On the 15th of December 2022 a focus group meeting was held online via Microsoft Teams with local stakeholders. They had been sent a link to the final film and were encouraged to discuss plans for the workshop and any further engagement that could be carried out using the results of the project.



5. Public Screening and Workshop

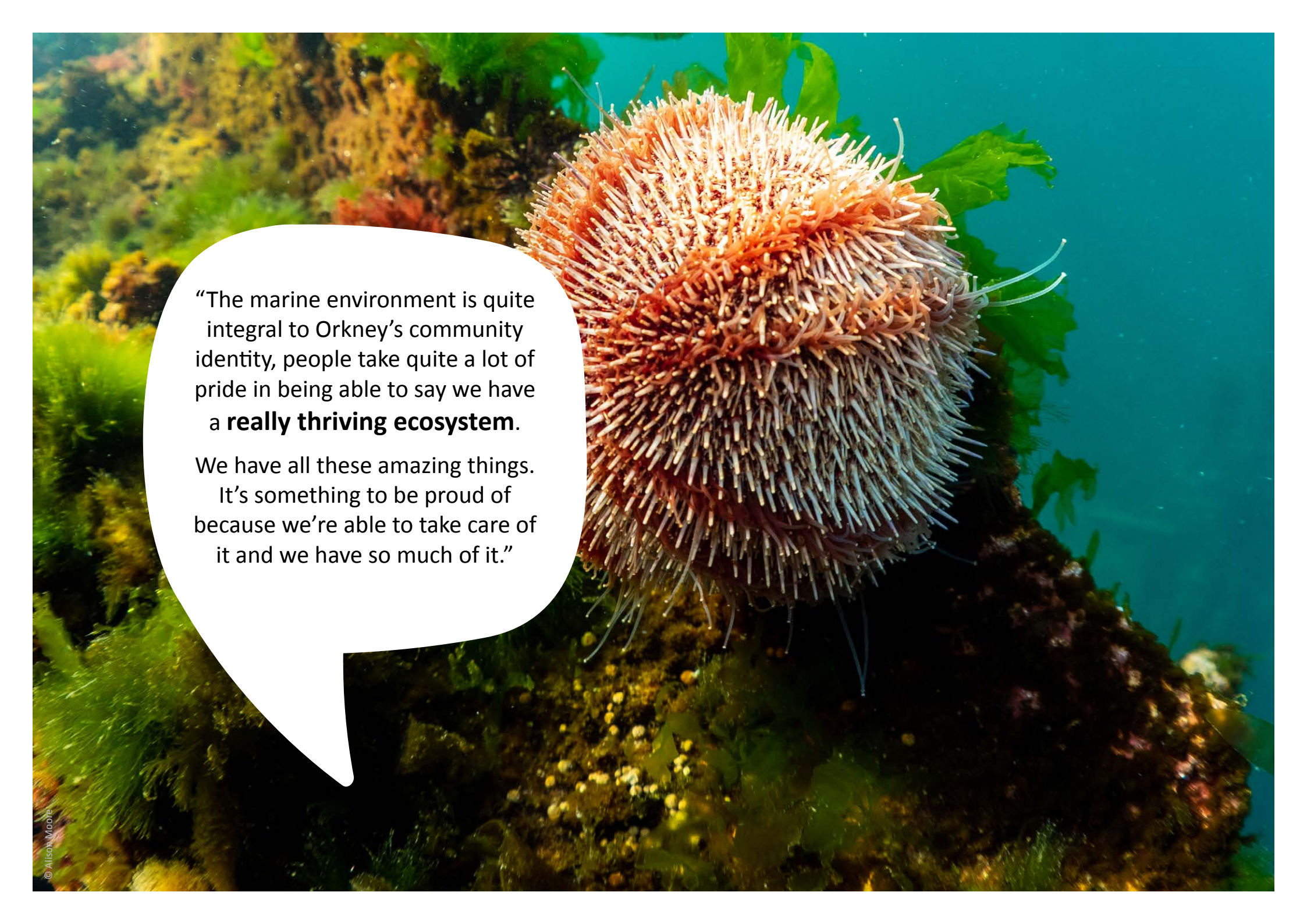
On the 11th of January 2023 a public screening was held at The Pickaquooy Centre in Kirkwall, Orkney, followed by an interactive workshop for 60 people. The event was advertised widely using both social and traditional media, and bookings were managed through Eventbrite. The event was very well attended and was sold out in advance, requiring a waitlist.

During the workshop participants were asked to address the following questions in their groups:

- What was your take-home message and/or initial response to the film?
- What is your relationship with the sea? In what ways does it matter to you?
- What do you think are the key issues facing the marine environment?
- What would be your priorities for management?
- How important is it for local people to be involved in decision making? In what ways?

Participants were then asked to choose someone from their group to read out the main points their group had discussed. All feedback and comments were recorded by Trust staff members at the event to inform future work.



An underwater photograph of a sea urchin with long, thin, light-colored spines, resting on a rocky seabed covered in green and brown seaweed. The water is clear and blue. A white speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“The marine environment is quite integral to Orkney’s community identity, people take quite a lot of pride in being able to say we have a **really thriving ecosystem**.

We have all these amazing things. It’s something to be proud of because we’re able to take care of it and we have so much of it.”

Results



Community Interviews

The content gathered during the interview process was extensive and is available in **Appendix 2**. All answers have been anonymised and paraphrased to remove conversational interjections during the interview, and to make the quotes more readable while retaining the original content of the verbal response.



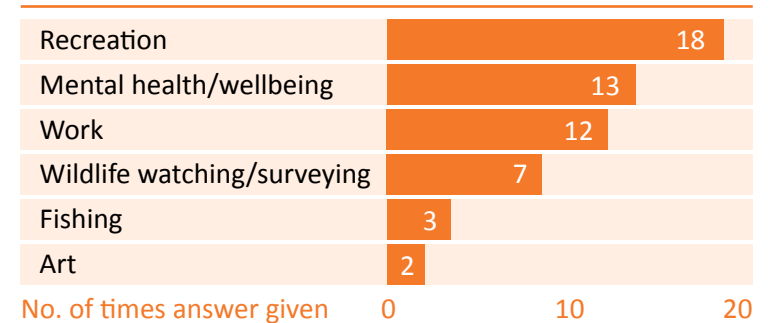
Interview Analysis and Film Production

Based on the analysis using NVIVO, the following four topics were chosen for inclusion in the film:

- 1 Introducing Orkney** – including what it is like living in Orkney, traditions relating to the sea, identity and culture, Orcadian dialect.
- 2 People’s relationship with the sea** – the key themes for this included recreation/enjoyment, mental health/wellbeing, and employment.



Question: How did you, or do you, use the marine environment?

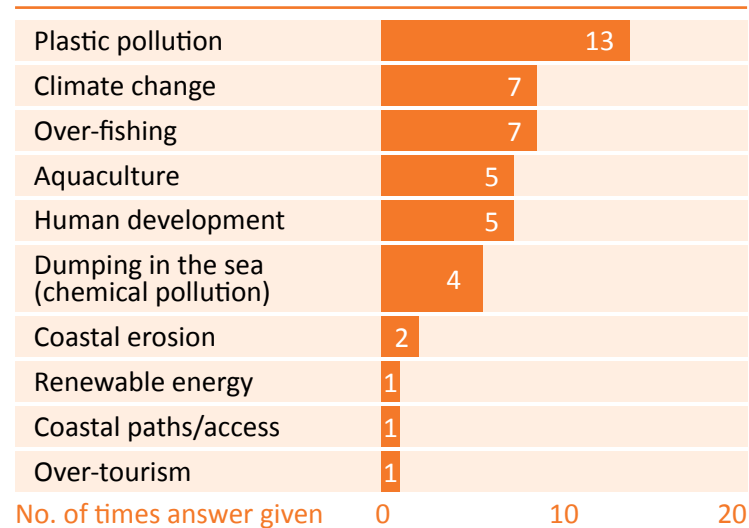


Screening Film at The Phoenix Cinema, Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall, Orkney – January 2023

Results (continued)

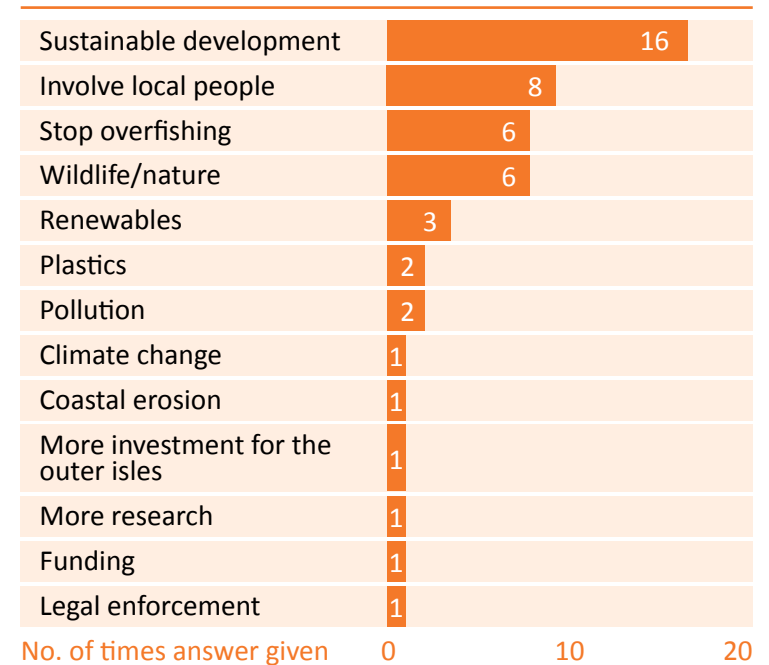
- 3 Key issues and health of the marine environment** – the top three key issues identified in the analysis were plastic, climate change and over-fishing.

? In your opinion what are the key issues facing Orkney's marine environment?



- 4 Marine planning and future management** – the top priorities for managing Orkney's future marine environment were sustainable development and involving local people in decision making.

? What would be your priorities for managing Orkney's future marine environment?



Results (continued)

“The ocean has sounds and the ocean has stories but in this emotive film the ocean’s resonating voice comes from the people whose world view is shaped by their love and passion for the world above and below the waves.”

Sustainable development of the coasts and seas for future generations, as well as a holistic view of what the sea provides in terms of its resources to do with livelihoods, mental health benefits and natural beauty were key topics raised in many of the interviews. A lot of the interviewees felt that it was impossible to separate the marine environment from Orkney’s identity and culture as you see it every day, you’re surrounded by it and it affects all aspects of life from recreation to job creation. These topics were specifically chosen to create a film that is unique to how people feel about living in Orkney, their relationship to the coasts and seas and that “special island feeling” that many people spoke of. Ending the film with people’s views for the future as a sustainable place that’s thriving, relates back to that wider holistic sense that everything is interconnected in terms of traditions, identity, uses of the marine environment and its health.

The Oceans of Value film was released to the public following the screening/workshop in Kirkwall on the 12th of January 2023 and can be viewed at the following link: [Oceans of Value - YouTube](#)

At time of writing the film has 3.4k views.

Since it has been made public the film has had a wonderfully positive reception. Gordon Buchanan MBE, wildlife filmmaker, presenter and Scottish Wildlife Trust ambassador, said: “The ocean has sounds and the ocean has stories but in this emotive film the ocean’s resonating voice comes from the people whose world view is shaped by their love and passion for the world above and below the waves.”

The film has also been streamed on Ecoflix which is the world’s first not-for-profit media group, dedicated to saving animals and the planet. This is a very exciting development as the platform has an international audience, with approximately 4,000 views so far.

The film has become part of the Living Seas Team’s ongoing engagement work with communities and has been shown at a number of events this year including in Skye, Glasgow and North Berwick, with additional showings in Orkney during the Nature Festival in May, totalling approximately 57 additional workshop participants. The feedback that we have received from all workshops will be relayed to members of the Marine Directorate’s planning team to help shape both regional marine planning and the upcoming process for National Marine Plan 2. A clip of the film on plastic pollution was used by Net Zero Scotland to [promote Global Recycling Day](#). The film was also shown to attendees at the Sea Scotland conference in Edinburgh in June and the trailer formed part of the Stromness Museum Summer 2023 Exhibition entitled “Nature in a Changing World”.

Results (continued)



Public Screening and Workshop Kirkwall – January 2023

The following sections provide a summary of the feedback from workshop participants based on the “Blue Sea Thinking” discussion questions. For more detailed responses from the workshop please see **Appendix 3**.

Q: What is your initial response and/or take-home message from the film?

- **Education:** More education is needed, especially in schools as the children go home and tell their parents. We have a high level of knowledge and ocean literacy within the community, we should see the marine environment as a living laboratory and export our knowledge to communicate it more widely. If local communities had more knowledge about the marine environment they could become advocates for their area. It’s important that information on the marine environment is recorded and archived so that it is available for future generations.

- **A good starting point for further discussion:** It was good to see some well known faces (well-known faces) from the community to help share knowledge and information – it feels more impactful when it is coming from people that you know. It highlights the importance of the marine environment for jobs but also for enjoyment/mental health and wellbeing. The film highlighted the importance of the sea to Orkney and its inhabitants and the fragility/vulnerability to over-development and pressures from outwith Orkney.
- **Sustainability:** There was a missed opportunity to define what it is and whether Orkney’s marine environment is sustainable at this time. Also, in defining what the word value means. There was agreement that sustainability is vital. We must find a balance between environment and human “need”. It is important to have a joined-up approach – a strategy needs to be developed for all the key players and populace as a whole.
- **Community Voice Method:** There were discussions around how representative the selection of interviewees were and some folk missing from the film included young people, harbourmasters, someone from the fossil fuel industry, renewables, tourism and aquaculture.



Community Workshop at The Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall - January 2023

Results (continued)



Q: What is your relationship with the sea? In what ways does it matter to you?

- **Recreation:** Sailing, kayaking, walking, Shorewatch, swimming, diving.
- **Mental health and wellbeing:** You leave the sea feeling better than when you arrived, it makes you feel alive.
- **Cultural and artistic significance:** Majestic, a sense of place and perspective, beauty and serenity.
- **Resource:** Food, employment.

Q: What do you think are the key issues facing the marine environment?

- **Overfishing:** Destructive methods, factory fishing vessels.
- **Climate change:** Erosion due to climate change a major concern. Lack of sand eels for puffins and other seabirds.
- **Plastics:** We need to be looking upstream to tackle plastic.
- **Over-development:** Increase in all activities including shipping, renewables, fishing and aquaculture. Concerns about pollution from increasing activities and demand for space. Incredible amount of change in Orkney over the last few decades.
- **Governance:** Lack of communication and action. You don't always know who your representatives are or who's responsible for what.

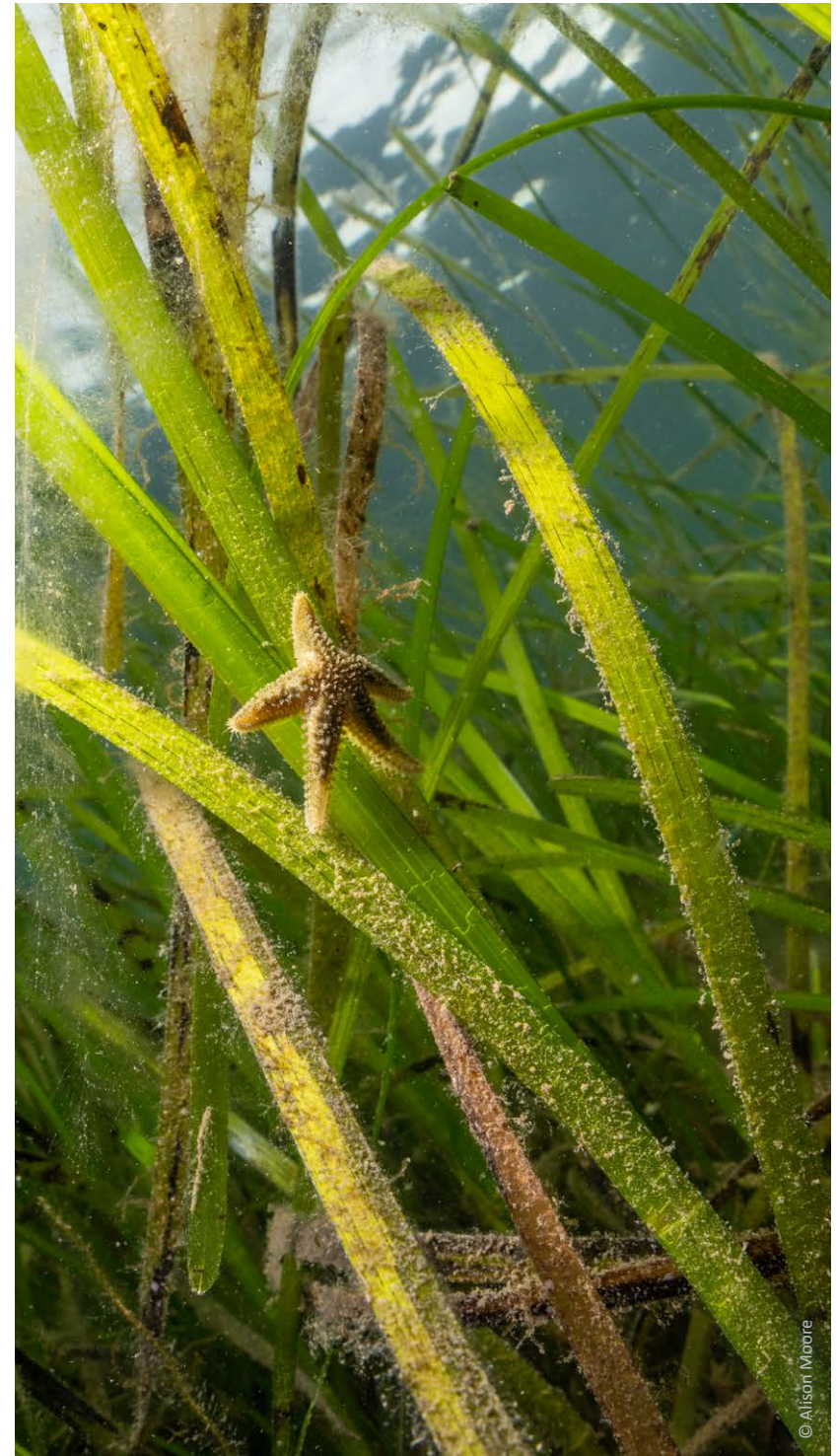
Q: What would be your priorities for management?

- **Governance:** Being able to hold corporate companies accountable for pollution. Have clearer channels of communication so you can contact the right person.
- **Education and research:** Research should be integrated with experience to achieve the goal of sustainable development. This should include frequent reporting and recording of data onboard vessels and it should also involve local communities. We need more data on what is happening in the marine environment in order to have achievable and prescriptive goals.
- **Consultations:** Management based on data with environment at the top of the agenda and early consultation with communities. Surveys and EIAs should use local experts with the local knowledge as well as include folk working the sea – tap local knowledge!
- **Pollution:** More efficient and accessible ways to dispose of marine waste and a more circular economy. Find an alternative to plastic rope.
- **Future thinking:** More research into hydrogen and alternative industries such as seaweed harvesting. Consideration of damage to seabed by dredgers and the impacts of over-tourism.

Results (continued)

Q: How important is it for local people to be involved in decision making? In what ways?

- **Inclusivity:** Everyone needs to be involved in the process - all voices and opinions matter. There needs to be more accessibility and visibility - just and fair for everybody.
- **Consultations can often feel like a tick-box exercise:** Don't talk at us, we don't often feel we are heard. We often feel the decision has already been made. Really important that planners and decision makers listen to local communities and organisations rather than just talk at them and preach about what they are going to do.
- **Empowerment:** In terms of your personal voice it feels like it only goes so far, e.g. if you're concerned about something from an EIA in terms of development, then who do you speak to directly about your concerns? Will those concerns be just papered over by developers in terms of "mitigation" that is acceptable to the "powers that be". Feel that there is often a problem with getting marine issues up the chain to government.





“You need to be looking at the environment, ecosystem services, wildlife and the future economy of Orkney, but making that sustainable so that they are still there for future generations.

It’s very easy to go for growth but then you lose something that defines what makes Orkney a special place to live.”

Discussion

CVM is a very involved process requiring a lot of groundwork at the beginning to find interviewees, making sure that there is a balance of different people, then conducting and analysing the interviews before developing the film and running the workshops. However, the intensity of the process and the associated costs do have an obvious benefit which is shown by the fantastic reception the film has had since it was made public, and the wealth of local knowledge that potentially would have otherwise gone unheard.

The response to the workshop highlights that CVM can be a useful method for engagement in overcoming “consultation fatigue” which can often make it difficult to encourage people to come to planning workshops. This is particularly shown in comments such as: “the film being a good starting point for further conversations”, and “the importance of capturing local knowledge and sharing it with others”, and “using Orkney as a living laboratory”. Workshop participants also commented positively on the use of “weel kent” (well known) people in the film and how that might make you engage more with the content and issues discussed. This shows the value of using a method like CVM that focuses on speaking to local people.

As part of the interview, participants were asked if they would want to be involved in the development of a marine plan and there were quite a few responses that conveyed not feeling confident or not having enough expertise or knowledge to be involved.

This ties in with the feedback we received at the workshops that consultations must be more inclusive so members of the community do see themselves as stakeholders in the process of decision making and have the confidence to participate.

In addition, participants of the workshop told us it felt good to be heard and to have a chance to voice their opinions. A common concern raised in the workshop is that local people don't feel that their opinions are taken into consideration in decision making processes. These themes were also present in the interviews where it was made clear that early consultation with communities is key to making sure that local people are able to take part in decision making, rather than feeling that the consultation is a “tick-box exercise” with the decision having already been made. It is also clear that more should be done to feed local knowledge into consultation processes, as well as seeking expert advice, and that communities want to see new and innovative ways of engaging. Marine planning beach barbecues was one such example that has been popular across our workshops.

Workshop participants highlighted some of the potential flaws in CVM such as potential biases when selecting people to interview or certain viewpoints being missed. Care was taken by project staff to try to provide a range of views and the analysis process goes some way to providing a balance in the final film.



Discussion (continued)

Even with a small range of personal views reflected, the resulting film can still be a useful tool for opening up dialogues between those with opposing views, whilst also showing where there may be common ground. Some workshop participants also questioned what the film set out to achieve and what the goals of the project were. This is a learning to take forward into future projects to ensure both objectives and outcomes are clear.

In terms of problems faced, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns in Scotland were a key issue for the project. Interviews began in 2019 with some also being carried out in early 2020. After the first lockdown was initiated, the project had to be paused as no in-person interviews could take place. One interview was conducted over Zoom during 2020, and some others were conducted outside, however in-person interviews were deemed to be preferable due to the poor video quality on Zoom and the difficulty in filming outside due to weather and audio quality. There was a changeover in staff mid-way through the project, and in early 2022 interviews resumed with COVID-19 mitigations in place.

Between 2019 and 2022 there were a lot of changes in the policy landscape of Scotland, such as the effects of Brexit and developments in Regional Marine Planning in Orkney. This may have affected answers given between interviews conducted earlier and then later in the project.

It is also worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns may have caused differences between interviews pre- and post-2020. Some interviewees spoke about their joy at being able to return to recreational activities at the coast once restrictions eased.

“I think because of COVID-19 and the travel restrictions, people were missing being able to visit beaches on Orkney. Especially on the mainland, perhaps the beach wasn’t within the five-mile travel restrictions.

So, some people may have been using the beaches less during restrictions but also really happy to get back to the environment once the restrictions lifted. I hope that because they had missed it, they respected it more when they could enjoy it again”.

Discussion (continued)

A lack of youth representation in the film was highlighted by some participants at the workshop in Kirkwall which was also a result of COVID-19 restrictions. The Trust will be incorporating the CVM film into our wider marine community engagement work and hope to be able to engage particularly with our young leaders network. The Trust is also keen to explore ways we can share our experiences of the different methods, share the expertise from this project and use social research methods in future work.

The outcomes of this project will feed directly into marine planning within Orkney waters. James Green at Orkney Islands Council said:

“Oceans of Value has significantly raised awareness of marine conservation and planning issues in Orkney... and has managed to raise the profile of marine conservation... and engage new stakeholders in the debate around future sustainable management.”

Learnings from the project will be incorporated into future responses by the Trust to consultations on the second iteration of the National Marine Plan (NMP2) in Scotland.

There is no doubt that the CVM process has highlighted the importance that communities place on the marine environment in Orkney. It is clear that people do care about sustainability in our coasts and seas, and want to see innovative thinking from decision makers as they tackle key issues. The project has been able to capture that unique experience of living within an island community, the feeling that you are so connected to the sea, and the reasons it is most important to people whether that’s for employment, wellbeing, recreation, as a space for nature, or of course all those reasons combined! There have been many positive and heartening reactions to the film and to the project, it only feels right to end on one such comment:

“a beautiful film that spoke into my heart... I love the way you have captured the importance of the sea, the beauty of the island folk who depend on the sea, and the joy of a community who are attempting to live in harmony and with respect to its surroundings. Maybe we can all learn a lot from Orkney.”

LinkedIn User

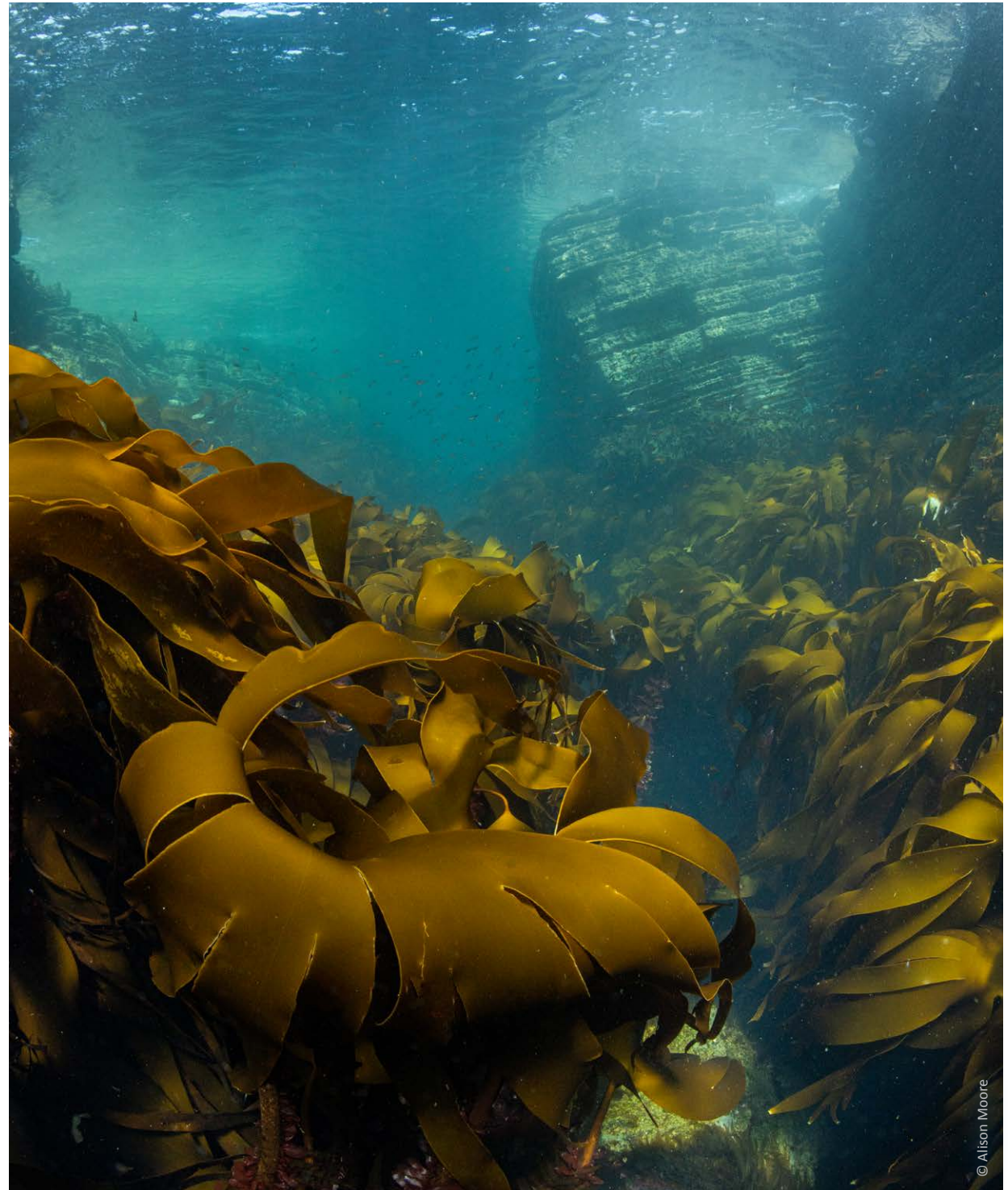
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Any opinions shown in the film or contained in this report are the individuals own personal opinions and not of any organisation.





Oceans of Value

Find out more about our work!

livingseas@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

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