

# Ecosystem Benefits of UK Oyster Farms



## How do oysters help the marine environment?

Surveys were carried out in the summer of 2023 to measure biodiversity and nitrogen cycling in places where oysters grow in English and Welsh waters, including three Pacific oyster farms, one wild Pacific oyster site, and one native oyster farm. Results were compared to control sites where no oysters live, providing new knowledge on how oyster populations may benefit marine ecosystems.



## Surveys at oyster farms found:

- Pacific oyster farms had no demonstrable impact on the marine environment.
- Underwater imagery showed diversity was higher at some locations in the oyster farms than control areas.
- Wildlife such as birds, fish and marine mammals were observed using the oyster farms.
- Ecosystem function tests highlighted the role of oyster farms in nitrogen cycling processes, which are essential for maintaining ecological balance in coastal environments.

## Surveys at native oyster restoration sites showed:

- No consistent differences in sediment or diversity were found between the oyster site and control areas.
- The young small oysters used to restock the site were not found during the current surveys.
- Larger native oysters were found that had been re-laid as part of a native oyster restoration trial 10 years ago.
- Restoration efforts are important to ensure the survival and development of native oyster populations.

This information is now available for oyster lovers, the seafood industry, the conservation sector and government to understand more about oysters - a low carbon sustainable seafood resource - from [MEDIN](#) and the report can be downloaded here:

[envision.uk.com/eco-oysters](https://envision.uk.com/eco-oysters)

# Wildlife seen using the oyster farms:



Seafloor Life



Fish



Birds



Seals



## Who's involved

### Partnership carrying out project:

Tethys Oysters Ltd, Envision Marine Ltd. & University of Essex.



The project is being funded by the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships (FISP) scheme, with matched funding from the Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust.



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

The **FISP** scheme is managed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and sits under the £100 million **UK Seafood Fund** which was set up to support the long-term future and sustainability of the UK fisheries and seafood sector. The FISP scheme aims to improve and share knowledge of fisheries and aquaculture by funding data collection and research to support sustainable fisheries management. All projects are delivered in collaboration between researchers and the fishing and seafood industry.

The Fishmongers' Company's Fisheries Charitable Trust is a charity whose principal aim is to develop sustainable interaction with, and conservation of, the UK's marine environment, supporting both conservation and sustainable aquaculture activities in the UK.