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Thompson, R; Graham-Jones, J; Burton, A; Gadd, E

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Developing a Circular Economy for Fishing Gear in Wales and South West SW
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Abstract

The Net Regeneration Scheme to Offer Free Recycling of Fishing Gear to the Welsh Fishing Community

- [The Net Regeneration Scheme](#) is the first of its kind and has seen fishermen in the UK's South West region recycle a wide array of fishing gear for free over the past 6 years. So far, the scheme has recovered and recycled over 200,000 kilograms of fishing gear.

-The Net Regeneration Scheme, one of 3 recycling schemes offered by [Odyssey Innovation](#) is aimed at harbours, fishermen, fisheries and net makers across the UK and aims to promote behavioural change by supporting stakeholders through

offering preventative measures in order for them to be part of the solution to cleaner and safer seas

- The Welsh government along with Odyssey Innovation Ltd. will be implementing a small-scale replica of the Net Regeneration Scheme to serve as a pilot project focused on creating free port reception facilities in selected Welsh harbours to recycle fishing gear and in doing so will help support the fishing community in tackling marine plastic

-The pilot project will also be engaging with several Welsh stakeholders such as fishing gear manufacturers, charities and beach-clean communities to maximise the benefit of the scheme to the local community and environment

-Part of the ocean-bound plastic coming through this scheme is then processed to be used by Odyssey innovation's own award-winning eco-friendly products, the latest of which is a [body surfing handplane](#).

-Participating harbours are Milford Haven, Fishguard, Cardigan, Amlwch and Holyhead; members of the community include [Surfers Against Sewage](#) and [Keep Wales Tidy](#) amongst others (tbc).

Globally only 9% of plastic waste is recycled; 12% is incinerated, whilst the remaining 79% is either sent to landfill, stockpiled in developing countries or dumped on land or in the marine environment. The UN expects the amount of plastic in oceans to treble in the next 20 years. All this is not due to the lack of recyclability but a lack of recycling infrastructure and consumer demand. For this reason, Odyssey Innovation has been pioneering new solutions to prevent further ocean plastic pollution by offering support to the fishing community, beach clean groups, governmental bodies and eco-warriors alike through various free sustainable incentives.

In response to the threat caused by the marine litter crisis Welsh Government has teamed up with the marine waste specialist firm Odyssey Innovation Ltd, creators of the Net Regeneration Scheme, in an unprecedented project for the Welsh fishing communities to offer a sustainable solution for end of life fishing gear such as whelk pots, buoys, ropes, net, floating pontoons and any other recyclable plastics.

Odyssey Innovation's Net Regeneration Scheme is the only scheme in the UK that offers free net recycling solutions of Polyethylene trawl, Nylon and other plastic generated and recovered by the fishing industry. Everything that can be recycled in the UK is recycled locally and we use specialist recyclers in Europe to recycle any problematic materials. To date, the scheme supports the ambitions of more than 60 stakeholders (companies, harbours, fisherfolk and charities) to adopt a best practice approach to waste disposal which is fully traceable and [award-winning](#).

The Net Regeneration Scheme has additional benefits in reducing CO2 by putting recycled plastic back into the economy, which has a significant CO2 saving over using new virgin plastic. It covers the cost of transporting the gear to plastics recyclers and closes the 'recycling loop' by converting the plastic waste back into products such as kayaks, surfing handplanes, tote boxes and recycling bins.

Throughout the years, and thanks to the support of several grants, Odyssey Innovation has been able to invest in the appropriate infrastructure (skips, bins, salaries, marketing, logistics) to scale its operations that were once restricted to a few harbours in Cornwall. The desire for positive change, particularly amongst the fishing industry, has been palpable in most cases. A strategic long term partnership with Exeter City Council's Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) has also broadened Odyssey Innovation's horizons by providing excellent collections services, state-of-the-art premises with facilities for processing and storing vast amounts of waste and most recently a part-investment in an industrial shredder to produce a marine plastic granulate which is now for sale and has an infinite and exciting amount of applications.

To date one can find 3 large skips placed at Exeter City Council, Trevisker Garden Centre and Newlyn further supplemented by 15 large wheelie bins at Circular & Co -Perranporth, Surfers Against Sewage-St Agnes, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Ilfracombe, Milford Haven, Fishguard, Holyhead, Cardigan, Weymouth x3, Sutton x 2, Newquay, Mevagissey, Looe and Falmouth for community members to use, free of charge.

With funding from the Welsh Government, Odyssey Innovation are rolling out a pilot Net Regeneration Scheme along the Welsh coastline and would like to invite members of the fishing community and harbours interested in participating to get in touch. Implementation dates are set to Tuesday 12th October for bin drop offs in Holyhead, Cardigan and Amlwch whilst Milford Haven and Fishguard will see their facilities dropped off on Wednesday 13th October.

Seafish, the public body that supports the seafood industry in the UK, has offered in-kind support on behalf of Welsh Government and the Welsh fishing industry to help facilitate the project. Having previously worked in the South West with Odyssey Innovation, the organisation is delighted to be supporting this new initiative.

Other recent illustrious news includes the Net Regeneration Scheme being chosen as a major data providing partner in the EU Interreg project 'INDiGO' whilst also winning a government tender to carry out recycling schemes across Wales. It was selected by BVRIO from 214 recycling ventures around the world to initiate a plastic credits scheme and was consulted by MRAG and the European Commission to assist in developing a framework for extended producer responsibility schemes.

To date, Odyssey Innovation has successfully recovered and/or diverted over 200,000 kilograms of plastic from landfill and incineration and from entering into the marine environment; all of which have been recycled successfully. The scheme also ticks 8 of the UN's Goals for Sustainable Development.

Personal Statements:

Mr. Rob Thompson, Managing Director at Odyssey Innovation says: "The Net Regeneration Scheme has only been made possible through collaboration, primarily between the fishing sector and conservation groups, further supported by universities and the government. This collaborative project between us, Welsh Government and fishing communities will showcase exemplary best practice in a sector where it is immensely needed; furthermore the quality of our seas and the aquatic flora and fauna within it will also benefit tremendously."

A Welsh Government spokesman says: “Welsh Government are pleased to be working with Odyssey Innovation to introduce the pilot scheme in Wales. Disposal options for end of life fishing gear continue to be an issue for the fishing industry in Wales and we hope this scheme will offer a solution. This scheme will be the first of its kind in Wales and will support our commitment for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and moving towards Good Environmental Status.”

Dr. Holly Whiteley, Welsh Regional Manager at Seafish says: “Seafish has been supporting gear recycling initiatives around the UK, so it’s great to see this new initiative being rolled out for Welsh fishermen. Providing facilities to recycle old fishing gear will assist the sector to further improve its sustainability credentials and help it thrive.”