

Call for Proposals from Early Career Researchers: Nature Enhancement at Marine Offshore Energy Sites (NEMOES)

We are seeking a highly motivated Early Career Researcher to lead research on the theme of “Nature enhancement at marine offshore energy sites”. The research will provide an opportunity to lead on an exciting and developing area and to collaborate with academic, industry, public sector, and Scottish Government partners to deliver an outcome that can influence decision-making.

Anyone interested in completing this research should submit a completed application form to masts@st-andrews.ac.uk by the deadline.

The deadline for submission of proposals is **Friday 9th June at 12:00 local time**. The deadline for the submission of questions is 17:00 on 23/05/2023. All questions must be submitted by email to the email address above, and all answers will be publicly displayed on the relevant MASTS webpage.

TERM: up to 9 months – Part time options welcomed
START DATE: Negotiable, but before end October 2023
FUNDING: Up to £50,000
Early Career Researcher requirement: up to 7 years post-PhD

Background

Nature enhancement is moving up the agenda with targets such as ‘*substantially restored and regenerated biodiversity across our seas by 2045*’ drafted in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, and other nature positive government commitments. Seascape-scale modifications to the physical and biological environment as a result of the scaling-up of offshore renewables has the potential to contribute towards nature enhancement. It is expected that this will occur incidentally (e.g. the introduction of artificial structures has the potential to increase biodiversity) and through more active interventions (e.g. offshore wind farms have been identified as potential locations for native oyster restoration). To more fully realise the potential for offshore renewables for marine enhancement, evidence is required to understand where, when, and how both incidental and active enhancement could take place for measurable nature-positive trends. As such, the NEMOES programme has been established to facilitate research in this area. It is expected this project will be the first in a rolling programme of work to improve the marine enhancement evidence base.

Project Description

This desk-based research project will investigate the role offshore renewables could play in scaling up restoration and contribute to enhancement in Scottish waters, through assessing the ecological potential of habitat and species recovery within planned and future marine renewable sites. This research will be supported by a small project advisory group of industry, government, and public sector partners.

Research Objectives

1. Assess the potential for habitat recovery and restoration in relation to planned and constructed renewable sites in Scottish waters, including what 'success' looks like, the timescales for expected recoverability/restoration, and the necessary spatial scales required. This could include modelling habitat suitability for the relevant species or habitats (e.g. native oyster) at renewable sites.
2. Discuss the likely impact of benthic biodiversity changes on relevant ecosystem function and services within and near to the renewables sites in the context of the outputs from objective 1.

It is expected this research will provide a report suitable for publication (such as on the MASTS website) which can be logged with a DOI on the MASTS repository, together with mapped outputs in a format suitable for [National Marine Plan interactive](#). This does not preclude the successful researcher(s) from submitting peer review publications, and this can be discussed.

The funding will be administered by St Andrews, but the project itself will be administered through MASTS and therefore must be housed at a MASTS [partner institute](#). As a desk-based study, part time and flexible working options are welcomed. There is also the optional opportunity for a placement at Marine Scotland at a later stage of the work programme.