

MASTS Marine Planning & Governance Forum Bursary
Sea Scotland Conference 2024 Report

Fund Utilization

The funds kindly provided by the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland (MASTS) Marine Planning and Governance Forum Bursary were instrumental in facilitating my attendance at the Sea Scotland 2024 Conference on the 3rd and 4th of June. The funding covered my travel expenses from Orkney to Stirling and accommodation for one night at the Stirling Court Hotel. Through this support, I was able to participate fully in the conference, including attending the youth pre-event, dinner and networking sessions, which were invaluable for building connections and engaging in insightful, in-depth discussions.

Benefits Gained from Attendance

Attending Sea Scotland 2024 was an enriching experience that significantly contributed to my professional and academic development. The conference began with a youth pre-event organised by Young Sea Changers Scotland titled "Making Waves: Sea Scotland Youth Voices." This workshop addressed key barriers young people face in engaging with marine policy landscapes, such as complex policy jargon and policy frameworks. The sessions on jargon-busting, understanding key policy concepts, and navigating a marine conference were particularly enlightening. As a PhD student researching youth engagement in marine policy, this workshop provided me with new insights and practical tools that will enhance my research and advocacy efforts.

Throughout the conference, the theme of "Sharing Our Blue Space" was explored in depth. The keynote speech on ocean optimism resonated deeply with me, emphasising the importance of maintaining a positive outlook amidst the challenges of marine policy and conservation. This perspective is crucial for my research and personal motivation, reminding me of the broader impact and potential of our collective efforts in marine planning.

During the conference sessions, we tackled pressing challenges in marine policy, including the increasing competition for sea space, the urgency of implementing effective changes, and the roles of public and private investment. These discussions highlighted the complex interplay of factors that influence marine spatial planning and underscored the necessity of collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches.

Relevance to Marine Planning

The content of Sea Scotland 2024 is highly relevant to marine planning. The question, "How do we do everything, all at once, together?" as concluded at the conference, encapsulates the core dilemma of marine spatial planning: balancing various interests and activities within the marine environment in a sustainable manner. The sessions provided insights into the practicalities of marine planning, such as the need for swift and decisive action and the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement. These themes are directly applicable to my research on youth involvement in marine policy, as they highlight the need for inclusive and dynamic approaches to planning and decision-making. The networking opportunities facilitated by the conference were also crucial. Engaging with peers, experts, and stakeholders allowed me to exchange ideas and gain new perspectives, further enriching my understanding of marine planning and expanding my research network.