

Seaweed farming's role in biodiversity gets backing from wind giant

Wind farm developer Orsted has teamed up with a Yorkshire marine farmer to explore the use of seaweed cultivation in improving ocean biodiversity.

The Danish giant, behind the world-leading Hornsea Zone and the Grimsby-based East Coast Hub from where operations are conducted, is working with SeaGrown. The pair will develop biodiversity monitoring and measurement guidelines.

SeaGrown, established in 2018 and based out of Scarborough, already runs a seaweed farm in the North Sea, and with the right species and setup, the partners believe seaweed farms could provide a useful tool to help support native species and habitats.

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Benj Sykes, Orsted's head of UK environment, consents and external affairs, said: "The acceleration of offshore wind deployment is vital in the global shift to a clean energy system, but it must not come at the expense of marine biodiversity. We want offshore wind to be part of the solution, not part of the problem, and getting it right always starts with understanding and measuring our impacts.

"Seaweed farms clearly have the potential to contribute to reducing greenhouse gases, as well as benefiting marine biodiversity. The aim of this new partnership is to look at how we can measure and confirm this, adding another tool to help protect and enhance marine habitats."



Benj Sykes and Dr John Tershack at the launch of Yorkshire Marine Research Centre, as part of an earlier biodiversity project.

(Image: David Lee Photography Ltd)

Trials will include a range of monitoring technologies including eDNA, remote cameras, and sonar.

Recently, seaweed cultivation has been explored as a carbon sink, with the potential to absorb significant amounts of carbon dioxide – perhaps even more efficiently than trees. Farming seaweed is also being considered for its contribution as a substrate for marine organisms to grow on and act as a shelter for juvenile fish.

Seaweed species such as kelp grow rapidly via photosynthesis, so they use only sunlight and the naturally occurring nutrients in the sea. Not only is it fast growing, it is also extremely nutritious and grows in most of our oceans.

Wave Crookes, operations director at SeaGrown, said: “SeaGrown

is very pleased to be working with Orsted on this important biodiversity study. Through this forward-looking project, we are seeking to establish the best way for seaweed farming to assist ecologically-conscious operators such as Orsted to minimise their impact and work in harmony with the marine environment to generate the green, renewable energy we all need.”

It follows a partnership between [Orsted and the WWF](#) being established, with a major initiative to [reintroduce at-scale seagrass in the Humber](#). The company has also worked with [lobster fisheries](#).

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