



Marine Futures North West Internship Programme:

2019-2021

IMPACT REPORT

Contents

Background.....	1
The Need.....	2
The Programme:.....	3
Aims & Activities.....	3
Deliverables & Outcomes.....	4
Impact: The interns.....	7
Who they were.....	7
Skills gaps.....	7
Training undertaken.....	8
Standout skills developed.....	9
Research projects completed.....	10
Impact on the individuals.....	10
Impact: The Partner Organisations.....	12
Lessons learnt:.....	13
Length of programme.....	14
Number of interns.....	14
Timing of the internship.....	14
Increasing diversity.....	15
Legacy	16



▲ Interns exploring the shores of the North West

Introduction

Background

The Marine Futures North West Internship Programme 2019-2021 was a pilot initiative developed by The Crown Estate to provide people interested in a career in the marine environment with a unique opportunity to gain insights and experience across a range of organisations working in the marine sector, with a particular focus on conservation and renewable energy. The aim of the programme was to help develop the diverse and skilled workforce that the marine industry needs for a sustainable future.

The pilot internship programme was designed to build upon the success of the Coast Explorer Internship Programme, established in 2015 in the South East of England, by fostering talent and addressing the skills shortage and skills gap in the North West.

The Marine Futures Internship Programme was funded by The Crown Estate and project managed by the North West Wildlife Trusts. The programme was run in partnership with The Crown Estate, the North West Wildlife Trusts, Ørsted and Natural England. Each partner organisation provided opportunities for the interns to develop skills in specialist areas including: marine conservation, sustainable fisheries, renewable energy development, marine policy, ecological surveying and community engagement.

The Need

One of the aims of the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan is to secure clean, healthy, productive and biodiverse seas and oceans. However, at this moment, both a climate and a biodiversity crisis threaten the environment and humanity. One cannot be tackled without addressing the other.

The UK Government has set emissions targets to achieve Net Zero by 2050 and a 78% reduction from 1990 levels by 2035 (63% relative to 2019). At the core of the strategy to achieve Net Zero, are plans to decarbonise the power sector, much of it through targets to produce 40GW of energy from offshore wind by 2030, including 1GW of energy created by floating offshore wind.



▲ The UK Government has set a target to produce 40GW of energy from offshore wind by 2030

The marine environment also has an incredible ability to capture and store carbon but, in many places, natural carbon stores are damaged, in decline and at high risk of further degradation from both human activities and extreme climatic conditions. As such, a balance must be struck between achieving Net Zero emissions targets with the recovery of the marine environment. One mechanism for achieving this balance will be through taking a new approach to development; by contributing to halting and reversing marine biodiversity loss through Net Gain - where a development leaves the environment in a better state than it was in before.

There is now a growing demand for the skills required to support the protection and restoration of biodiversity, and mitigation against climate change impacts, alongside thriving and sustainable marine industries. Recent evidence demonstrates the demand for a workforce with skills in supporting: the management of natural assets, climate resilience and low carbon industry.

Overcoming the skills shortage in workforce requires the acknowledgement of organisations in the marine sector for the need to recruit more people into the industry. However, there is often a skills gap for young people, recent graduates, or those changing careers, in the training and on-the-job experience required to secure employment in the marine sector. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit in 2020, half way through the pilot programme, only made the situation worse. Many organisations faced economic difficulties as a result of the pandemic, the theoretical and practical learning of university students was significantly impacted, and young people were the worst hit by redundancies or losing new jobs before they started due to COVID-19.

The Programme:

Aims & Activities

The programme was aimed at:

- ❖ Developing a diverse and skilled workforce that the marine industry needs for a sustainable future
- ❖ Providing inclusive and accessible opportunities (outside of London and the South East) for people from different backgrounds and communities, to gain a variety of specialist skills, experience and knowledge across the marine sector such as:
 - Independent and joint research projects addressing current challenges
 - Species identification and ecological habitat surveying
 - GIS and spatial management of the seabed
 - Renewable energy development, including their environmental, social and economic considerations
 - Environmental issues facing UK coasts and seas, especially in North West
 - Casework relating to marine protected areas and sustainable development
 - Sustainable fisheries management
 - Marine awareness and environmental educational
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Team working and networking
 - Application, interview and careers
- ❖ Allowing the interns to play a key role in supporting the delivery of the core objectives and activities of each organisation



▲ The interns learnt a number of key skills such undertaking scientific surveys

Deliverables & Outcomes

Deliverable	Outcome
To identify interested Partner Organisations, such as those involved in offshore renewables and marine conservation, to engage with the programme	Partner Organisations identified and engaged in the programme include: The Crown Estate, The North West Wildlife Trusts, Ørsted, and Natural England to offer varied opportunities, networks and work experiences to the interns.
To advertise and promote the Marine Futures North West Internship	<p>Internships advertised through Partner Organisations' websites and social media, Bob Earll CMS, Environment Job, Indeed, Glassdoor, Conservation Jobs, LinkedIn, universities and alumni communities, Cumbria Local Authority Economic Inclusion Team, Department for Work & Pensions funded providers, Business in The Community network, Youth Unemployment UK</p> <p>Applications received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Year 1: 20 ❖ Year 2: 328* ❖ Year 3: 157 <p>*increase thought to be exacerbated by the impact of the COVID pandemic</p>

<p>To offer three internship positions in marine environment and renewable energy development to communities in the North (ideally North West).</p> <p>Over three years, the programme will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Employ one part-time intern working three days a week for 12 weeks 	<p>A total of five internship positions were offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ One part-time, 12-week internship was taken up in June-September 2019 ❖ Two full-time, 6-month internships were taken up in November 2020-April 2021 ❖ Two full-time, 6-month internships were taken up in June-November 2021
<p>To create bespoke work plans for the interns by working closely with partner organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Co-ordinate office-based experience ❖ Research projects ❖ Survey work ❖ Training ❖ Marine awareness experience 	<p>Each intern completed an initial Skills Audit and followed Learning & Development Plan to shape their internship programme to their training needs and career aspirations.</p> <p>All interns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Split their time/day between Partner Organisations and their relevant teams ❖ Completed at least one research project ❖ Undertook habitat and species surveys including: seagrass, grey seal, intertidal habitats ❖ Undertook training in: GIS; application & interview skills; social media; media interviews; cyber security; equality, diversity & inclusion; and health & safety ❖ Developed and delivered marine awareness events, educational activities & interpretation, and presentations to both the general public & stakeholders <p>Additional training varied between years but included: drone operation for wildlife surveying; wading bird identification; marine biology; campaigns & communication</p>
<p>To support the interns in the delivery of independent and joint research projects</p>	<p>Research projects completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Co-location of offshore windfarms, sustainable fisheries and Marine Protected Areas ❖ Cormorant use of offshore windfarms – investigating bird behaviour, conflict with operations and mitigation options ❖ Improving communication & understanding on decision-making processes between Ørsted & Natural England ❖ Benthic Biodiversity in Offshore Wind Farms: Impact of offshore construction on species richness & abundance in benthic ecosystems ❖ Seagrass restoration potential in Morecambe Bay ❖ Nature Inclusive Design in offshore windfarms ❖ Distribution & extent of seagrass meadows at Snab Sands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Industry Data Pilot Literature Review ❖ Fisheries Background Document: Fishing Activities and Sensitivities at Offshore Windfarm Projects
To manage the interns, foster a positive environment for them to work in, and pay them appropriately to promote inclusion and accessible opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Interns were line-managed by the Programme Manager at the North West Wildlife Trusts and supported by at least one key contact within each Partner Organisation ❖ Interns joined weekly team meetings, team building opportunities, and involved in wider meetings at Partner Organisations where relevant ❖ Interns were paid Real Living Wage and (from year 2) the requirement for a graduate degree and driving licence was removed to promote inclusion and accessibility
To deliver feedback to the intern throughout and at the end of the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Interns had bi-monthly one-to-ones to review their progress against their Learning & Development Plans, address any concerns, questions or emerging training needs, and to provide and receive feedback. ❖ Exit interviews were held with each intern
To organise and document follow-up communication with the interns six months after the end of the programme to monitor the impact of the internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All five interns secured employment in the marine sector within a month of completing their internship



▲ Left to right (clockwise from top left): taking part in fisheries surveys; presentation event at The Crown Estate; exploring the Ørsted Hub; surveying intertidal seagrass beds; undertaking rocky shore surveys

Impact: The Interns

Who They Were

The aims of the programme were to develop a diverse and skilled workforce, and provide inclusive and accessible opportunities (outside of London and the South East) for people from different backgrounds and communities, to gain a variety of specialist skills, experience and knowledge across the marine sector.

The initial plan for the internship programme was to recruit one intern per year. However, due to receiving a very high number and standard of applications after the first year, two interns were recruited in years two and three of the pilot programme (see the Lessons Learnt section for more information).

The varied backgrounds of the interns in years two and three (environmental vs. engineering) gave the interns complementary skills and allowed the interns to broaden their understanding and points of view on the marine sector.

In total, the programme was able to offer five internships to enthusiastic and passionate young people (although there was no target age group) from varying backgrounds outside of the South East and London. Each of them had been struggling to secure employment in the marine sector prior to the internship due to a lack of specialist skills and work-based experience.

Skills Gaps

The interns were asked to undertake a skills audit and complete a Learning and Development Plan on commencement of their internship. The table below summarises the personal skill gaps that the interns felt that they needed to address in order to secure their desired career in the marine sector. Skills gaps in bold were identified by several or all of the interns.

- ❖ **Marine surveys & fieldwork**
- ❖ **Species ID**
- ❖ **Organising & delivering engagement events**
- ❖ **Giving conservation advice**
- ❖ **GIS**
- ❖ **Irish Sea habitat & ecology knowledge**

Qualifications:

- ❖ Five interns were graduates with degrees in subjects covering: Marine Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Environmental Science, Biology, Civil and Coastal Engineering
- ❖ Two interns also held Masters qualifications or integrated Masters degrees

Age:

- ❖ All five interns were aged 23-25

Gender:

- ❖ 3 interns were female
- ❖ 1 intern was non-binary
- ❖ 1 intern was male

Location:

- ❖ 2 interns were from the North West
- ❖ 2 interns were from West Midlands
- ❖ 1 intern was from Yorkshire

Employment history:

- ❖ None of the interns were working in the marine sector before starting the internship
- ❖ Current employment on application to the internship varied from: receptionist at law firm, graduate engineer, unemployed, climbing wall receptionist/instructor, agency work

- ❖ Fundraising
- ❖ Budget management
- ❖ Fisheries management
- ❖ Understanding of EIAs & HRAs
- ❖ Knowledge of marine licencing
- ❖ Decision making

- ❖ Stakeholder engagement
- ❖ Blogs, website content & social media
- ❖ Project management
- ❖ Working with the media
- ❖ Practical conservation skills
- ❖ Handling biological data sets & data analysis
- ❖ Networking
- ❖ Communication – professional & with varied audiences

At the end of their internship, all interns agreed that their previously identified skills gaps had been addressed. One intern commented that more budget management experience would be beneficial but recognised that this would be difficult within the internship due to the level of responsibility.

Training Undertaken

The interns undertook a range of training from taught training courses delivered in-house (by the Partner Organisations) or externally, to on-the-job training developed through working with different colleagues and teams. Most training was offered to, or undertaken by all interns. However, there was the ability for some interns to undertake individual courses dependent on their training needs or learning and development plans.

Training undertaken by all interns:

- ❖ Cyber security
- ❖ Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- ❖ Health & Safety
- ❖ Mental health awareness
- ❖ CV, applications & interview techniques
- ❖ Marketing and media interview
- ❖ Wading bird ID
- ❖ Shoresearch
- ❖ Outdoor outreach & education
- ❖ GIS & marine spatial planning
- ❖ Insights & personality profiling
- ❖ How to complete an HRA
- ❖ Business skills writing
- ❖ Creating blog/website content

Training undertaken by individual interns:

- ❖ Campaign and social change
- ❖ Marine biology diploma course
- ❖ Open University modules – marine ecology
- ❖ Drone operation for wildlife survey

On-the-job training:

- ❖ Species ID
- ❖ Irish Sea habitat & ecology
- ❖ Protected sites knowledge
- ❖ Writing conservation advice
- ❖ Presenting to a range of audiences
- ❖ Fundraising & bid writing
- ❖ Creating engaging
- ❖ Networking
- ❖ Project management
- ❖ Understanding of renewable energy, aggregate & seabed leasing
- ❖ Marine data

Standout Skills Developed

The following skills were identified by the interns as the skills that they considered would be of the most value to them in order to secure a job in the marine sector, along with their reasoning:

❖ Project management

❖ Partnership working

"The most valuable aspect of the internship has been the unique insights into the partner organisations and how they work. This unique knowledge really helps me stand out on job applications."

"These are things I would often see on job adverts but I couldn't get experience of without getting a job first! Having the responsibility of working on a project without lots of supervision and collaborating with multiple partners was really valuable."

"Working with stakeholders and managing their interests is an integral part of any job. Through various projects I have gained experience in working with multiple stakeholders and have become confident delivering projects with conflicting stakeholder opinions."

❖ Stakeholder engagement

❖ Knowledge of marine wildlife & ecology

"Improved species ID and communication skills some of the things I have found the most valuable."

"The internship has opened up a whole new sector of community engagement work, in addition to the work I had previously done engaging people with montane ecology."

❖ GIS mapping skills

"My GIS skills definitely needed refreshing and it was great to use GIS in a very 'real' and useful context."

Research Projects Completed

One of the deliverables of the internship programme was to support the interns in the delivery research projects that would have beneficial outputs to all Partner Organisations. The following research projects were completed (see links for full reports):

- ❖ [Co-location: Assessing the feasibility of a *Nephrops* creel fishery in West of Walney Marine Conservation Zone and Walney Offshore Windfarms](#)
- ❖ Cormorant Roosting in Offshore Wind Farms: An investigation into bird behaviour, conflicts, and mitigation measures at Burbo Bank - [Report 1](#) | [Report 2](#)
- ❖ Improving communication & understanding on decision-making processes between Ørsted & Natural England
- ❖ [Benthic Biodiversity in Offshore Wind Farms: Impact of offshore construction on species richness & abundance in benthic ecosystems](#)
- ❖ [Seagrass meadow recovery in Morecambe Bay: Investigating restoration potential and techniques for a highly tidal environment](#)
- ❖ [Nature Inclusive Design: Challenges and opportunities for Offshore Wind Farms](#)
- ❖ [Distribution and extent of seagrass meadows at Snab Sands, Walney Island, Cumbria](#)
- ❖ Industry Data Pilot
- ❖ Fishing Activities and Sensitivities at Offshore Windfarm Projects

Impact on the Individuals

The programme has contributed to lessening the skills shortage in the UK marine sector and produced 'work-ready' individuals who are committed to a career in the sector. In addition, feedback from interns has demonstrated that, for many of them, it has been life-changing experience:

Lydia Tabrizi, Marine Futures Intern (June 2019 – September 2019) ▼

"This internship was invaluable to me; I was really struggling to find entry level roles when I finished university and this internship was the ideal opportunity. This internship gave me the chance to work with, and for, four different partners and it really helped me figure out which direction I wanted my career to head in. I honestly don't think I would be where I am now without the internship."

Lucy Mather, Marine Futures Intern (November 2020 – April 2021) ▼

"Marine Futures has been an incredible "stepping stone" in my career, allowing me to combine my background in engineering and outdoor education, and apply it in a completely new context for marine conservation! The internship has taught me an enormous variety of skills, including species ID and ecological survey methods, marketing and content creation, events management, and working with partners and volunteers, to name a few! Thanks to this amazing opportunity, I now run a marine awareness project with Cumbria Wildlife Trust, working with coastal communities to improve their understanding of local marine life and the role they can play in protecting it."

Daniele Clifford, Marine Futures Intern (November 2020 – April 2021) ▼

"I loved every minute of the Marine Futures internship! The opportunity to work with the four partner organisations on interesting and valuable projects gave me unique insights into the sectors, increasing my knowledge and experience, and ultimately leading to an amazing job as Marine Conservation Officer in The Wildlife Trusts' central team."

Beth Churn, Marine Futures Intern (June 2021 – November 2021) ▼

"My skills, knowledge and confidence increased massively over a short amount of time and I am really proud of the work I achieved! I had nearly given up on working in the marine sector and now I feel like I have lots of opportunities ahead of me."

Harry Cale, Marine Futures Intern (June 2021 – November 2021) ▼

“Having the opportunity to collaborate and work with each of the internship partners on exciting, current topics provided me with the experience to begin my career in an industry that I am passionate about. A month after finishing the internship, I was offered my dream job with Ørsted, I never thought this would have been possible before the internship.”

The Interns: 2019-2021

Next steps after the internship

**Lydia Tabrizi****Marine Lead
Advisor**

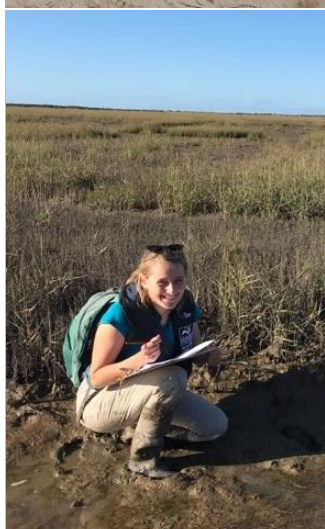
Natural England

**Lucy Mather****Marine Engagement
Officer**

Cumbria Wildlife Trust

**Daniele Clifford****Marine
Conservation
Officer**

The Wildlife Trusts

**Beth Churn****Marine Natural
Capital Officer**

Cumbria Wildlife Trust

**Harry Cale****Environment &
Consents Specialist**

Ørsted

Impact: The Partner Organisations

The core aims of the internship programme were to develop a diverse and skilled workforce, and provide inclusive and accessible opportunities for people gain employment in the marine sector. However, there was also a strong desire across the Partner Organisations to develop closer working relationships, strengthen the impact, and add value to each organisation by working better together. This has certainly been achieved, not only with the help of some of the research projects undertaken by the interns (such as the cross-cutting project on decision-making processes), but also by the partners working together to develop and deliver the programme side-by-side, attending induction sessions and site visits to partner offices, and discrete conversations on external projects that have naturally formed as a result of developing key contact networks within the Partner Organisations.

Dr Emily Baxter, Senior Marine Conservation Officer for the North West Wildlife Trusts and Marine Futures North West Programme Manager ▼

"It has been a privilege to manage the Marine Futures Internship Programme and be able to offer such a fantastic opportunity to the interns; helping them to gain a unique insight into a variety of careers in the marine sector.

It has also been incredibly beneficial for the North West Wildlife Trusts to bring in interns with new ideas, enthusiasm and different perspectives into our organisations. It has increased our capacity to undertake marine research and raise awareness about how important the marine environment is.

In addition, the programme has helped us forge strong working relationships with the Partner Organisations, allowing us to work together on shared interests and issues beyond the internship in a way that would not have been possible without it. The internships are now integral part of our marine programme, which we hope we will be able to continue and build upon over the coming years."

Chelsea Bradbury, Marine Evidence Manager at The Crown Estate ▼

"The marine environment has a critical role to play in supporting a low carbon future through offshore renewable technologies, and supporting a wealth of biodiversity. To deliver Net Zero, we need to invest in people and skills. The Marine Futures Internship Programme has been invaluable in enabling talented individuals to gain a rounded understanding of the emerging opportunities within the marine sector. The unexpected bonuses have been seeing all of the Marine Futures Interns go on to secure roles within the Partner Organisations, and seeing the Marine Futures Alumni developing into a community that is strengthening connections and relationships across the marine sector.

The passion and enthusiasm of the interns is infectious and the different perspectives that they bring to a project has challenged us to think about things differently. Every year, the internship programme leads to new discussions, innovation and a more holistic understanding of the work being carried out by our partners, which is invaluable to breaking down barriers, fostering new ways of working and strengthening relationships."

Gavin Scarff, Operations & Maintenance Manager for UK Consents at Ørsted ▼

"Delivering Net Zero by 2050 will be the challenge of a generation and sustainable development within the marine environment will be fundamental to achieving this. Never before has there been a greater need for those with an interest in the marine environment to work closely together in a constructive manner. The Marine Futures Internship Programme has ensured that there is a clear pathway for those wishing to embark upon a career supporting the transition to Net Zero.

The Marine Futures Internship is having a genuine impact, fostering close working relationships between stakeholders, and providing a critical stepping stone for young professionals. The fact Ørsted now has a former Marine Futures Intern working within the company, having already gained work experience with The Crown Estate, the Wildlife Trusts and Natural England, and with a well-established network of close contacts, is evidence of the impact the programme has and will continue to have in the future."

Laurence Browning, Senior Marine Advisor at Natural England ▼

"The Marine Futures Internship Programme has been of great benefit to Natural England. It has already given several enthusiastic young people the skills, knowledge and connections they need to make real contributions to marine nature conservation.

Interns have gone on to jobs with Natural England and the other Partner Organisations within the marine and conservation sectors, so the positive impact on Natural England's work is tangible. The programme has also provided an opportunity for Natural England to work collaboratively with the partner organisations on shared projects and objectives beyond formal statutory advice, which has helped to develop relationships and communications all round."

Lessons Learnt:

The Crown Estate, North West Wildlife Trusts, Ørsted and Natural England, through delivering the Marine Futures Internship Programme, have developed a very successful model for creating 'work ready' individuals for the marine sector by:

- ❖ Using comprehensive recruitment and selection methods
- ❖ Selecting candidates with career aspirations in varied areas of the marine sector
- ❖ Having a dedicated programme manager to ensure a stimulating and encouraging environment for the interns, and liaise with Partner Organisations to co-ordinate development opportunities and a support network
- ❖ Tailoring the programme to meet the needs of the skills gap in the sector
- ❖ Undertaking a skills assessment at the beginning and end of the internship to demonstrate an increase in knowledge and experience
- ❖ Creating individual Learning & Development Plans with the interns to tailor their experience to meet their development needs
- ❖ Having engaged Partner Organisations and interesting research topics that offer interns real-world work experience on current issues

The North West Wildlife Trusts are experienced in hosting and delivering traineeships, internships and apprenticeships. As a result, the internship programme structure, content and support have been finely tuned to achieve outstanding results. Although newly-formed at the start of the Marine Futures Internship Programme, the relationships between Partners Organisations developed over the years of the pilot initiative and as a result, has offered a stimulating working environment to all of the interns. It is hoped these relationships will continue to develop, supporting strong partnership working in other areas outside of the internship programme.

Whilst the Marine Futures Internship Programme was extremely successful in helping the interns to secure employment in the sector, the programme evolved, and continued to improve, over the course of the pilot initiative. Learnings from the delivery of the programme to date will be taken forward for the continuation of the Marine Futures North West and help to shape future initiatives.

Length of Programme

In the first year, the programme offered a 12-week, part-time internship. Feedback from the intern and the Partner Organisations concluded that there were often too many options of opportunities for the intern to choose between, and limited time that could be spent with each Partner Organisation due to the part-time nature of the internship. It was also felt that if the internship was run over a longer time period, then the intern would be able to undertake a more comprehensive research project. In addition, it was felt that providing a longer-term contract with a full-time wage would make the programme more accessible as for candidates looking to give up paid employment outside the sector and allow flexibility to make the most of the internship programme and opportunities, without having to find a second, part-time, paid job to move to the area. As a result, from year two, the programme was changed to provide a 6-month, full-time internship position.

Number of Interns

As a pilot initiative, the Marine Futures Internship Programme was originally designed to provide an opportunity for one intern per year. In the first year of the programme, 20 applications were received and one candidate was selected. However, the COVID-19 pandemic hit in spring 2020, just as the programme was entering its second year. Many organisations faced economic difficulties as a result of the pandemic and young people were among the worst hit by redundancies or losing new jobs before they started. Furthermore, the learning of university students, particularly in a practical context, was significantly been impacted. Consequently, 328 applications were received for the Marine Futures Internship Programme in the second year with many young people desperately seeking employment or practical skills that they had been unable to gain as a result of the pandemic. Although the recruitment process was initiated with the intention of offering one internship position, the standard of the candidates at interview was so high that even after a second round of interviews, a single candidate could not be selected. Eventually, it was decided to offer internship positions to the two candidates who demonstrated a mixture of the best skills and experience, with the potential to gain the most from the internship. It was also felt to be beneficial that candidates brought different but complimentary skills to the internship, one with a mechanical engineering background, and one with an environmental background.

Due to the nature of the pandemic, much of the internship in the second year had to be adapted to be delivered virtually. The benefits of taking on two interns at the same time were that they able to provide peer-to-peer support to each other (particularly under remote working conditions), approach problems from different perspectives, and undertake joint research projects that were more akin to the professional, collaborative working environment.

Although hybrid and flexible working arrangements opened up slightly by the third year of the internships, the overwhelming benefits of offering two internships concurrently in the second year of the internship programme, convinced all Partner Organisations that the programme should actively look to recruit two interns per year going forwards. In year three, two candidates with experience in different areas (civil engineering and ecology), and with different communication styles were taken on. Again, this collaborative approach was proven not only to be helpful for the interns when communicating with a wide range of stakeholders, but it also helped them to broaden their approach to problem solving, and encouraged them to adapt their working styles to maximum effect.

Timing of the Internship

The internship was initially planned to run during the summer months to make the most of opportunities to participate in community engagement events and undertake ecological surveys. However, again due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the timing of the second year of the internship was delayed, with it eventually taking place between November and April. Nevertheless, the internship remained extremely successful and provided many opportunities for the interns to undertake winter

species surveys, deliver spring events, as well as develop skills in digital content development and desk-based research.

Despite the fact that the internship ran successfully over the winter months, the summer period offers the interns the maximum number of opportunities to engage in practical, on-the-ground work, particularly with the North West Wildlife Trusts and Natural England and so will likely continue to be run over the summer in the future.

Increasing Diversity

One of the key aims of the programme was to provide inclusive and accessible opportunities (outside of London and the South East) for people from different backgrounds and communities, to gain a variety of specialist skills, experience and knowledge across the marine sector. In order to breakdown barriers for entry into the marine sector and enable inclusivity, a number of measures were implemented including during the recruitment process including:

- ❖ Removal of the requirement a degree in a relevant subject – an alternative being to demonstrate relevant experience
- ❖ Simplification of the job description and person specification to a minimum number of criteria
- ❖ Removal of the requirement for a driving licence and access to a car
- ❖ Appointment of candidates on a Real Living Wage salary, rather than minimum wage like many entry-level positions
- ❖ Provision of candidate information packs with more information about the internship programme and what to expect at interview
- ❖ Conducting assessment centre-style interviews to assess skills in a variety of ways rather than just a standard interview, which can be very daunting in early-career stages

Despite the Partner Organisations' best efforts to improve diversity and open up the opportunity to non-graduates or individuals seeking a career change; all interns that passed through the programme were aged between 23 and 25, and possessed a graduate degree in a relevant subject. This is likely due to the fact that graduates might better understand the requirements of the role, be able to demonstrate how they have the skills and experience to succeed on the internship, and also be more aware of different opportunities available to them and where to look for them.

Whilst this programme was not successful in diversifying the sector by helping non-graduates into employment, it is still a belief that there are roles in this sector which can be completed by individuals without degree qualifications. To enable this to happen in the future, more work could be done to raise awareness with career advisers and young people about the rewarding and fulfilling career opportunities available in the marine sector, as well as helping to breakdown barriers for understanding how skills gained elsewhere may be transferrable and applicable to such roles.

Going forward, the Partner Organisations have started to work with Skills Builder, an organisation who has developed a Universal Framework that shows people how to build essential skills at every stage of life. Skills Builder will help the Partner Organisations to reframe the internship job description and person specification to make it easier for people to understand the basic skills required to undertake the role, as well as those that they will gain from the opportunity.

The Universal Framework for Essential Skills includes:

- ❖ Listening
- ❖ Speaking
- ❖ Problem solving
- ❖ Creativity



- ❖ Staying positive
- ❖ Aiming high
- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Leadership

Other steps taken to improve inclusion and diversity will include covering travel expenses to attend interviews, as well as working with colleges and schools to raise awareness about opportunities available in the marine sector, and how to develop the essential skills required to secure entry-level positions such as internships.

Legacy

The major legacy of the Marine Futures Internship Programme has been creating 'work-ready' individuals that are now employed in the marine sector. Through working with a range of different organisations across the marine sector, and taking interns with experience in different areas, it has been possible to diversify the views of the interns as they enter employment. Each intern has gained varied experiences with different stakeholders and learnt from organisations with a range of views on sustainable use and conservation of the marine environment – particularly helping those with engineering expertise to understand more about conservation and ecology, and those with ecological expertise to understand more about technical considerations required in developments.

The success of the Marine Futures Internship Programmes has been recognised throughout the Partner Organisations, from the staff directly involved in supporting the interns, to the directors. There has been a real appreciation that investing in training is a vital way to help equip the next generation of professionals in the marine sector, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment to promote nature's recovery and take action in the fight against climate change. Therefore, there has been a continued commitment by all Partner Organisations to continue to run the Marine Futures North West Internship over the coming years and a desire to expand the programme into other areas of the UK.

Over the final year of the initial pilot programme, the Partner Organisations started conversations about the potential to replicate the internship programme in other areas of the country, particularly to diversify the career opportunities for coastal communities on the east coast of England. There is already a significant amount of offshore wind development occurring in the North Sea and in 2019, Grimsby became the home to the world's largest offshore wind operations and maintenance centre, run by Ørsted. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust are highly engaged in a number of coastal partnerships and are looking to explore coastal restoration projects over the coming years. Natural England also have a significant presence on the east coast due to the number of protected sites and developments occurring in the region. Due to ongoing interest in marine internships from The Crown Estate, The Wildlife Trusts, Ørsted and Natural England, it is hoped that a new east coast programme will run for the first time in 2023, with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust coming on board as the local partner to provide project management for the internship.

It is likely the Marine Futures North West Internship Programme, Coast Explorers Internship Programme and a new east coast internship would be likely to run at the same time of year, therefore providing the added benefit of the interns and partners being able to come together at key moments during the internships (i.e. during induction, training and knowledge sharing). The expansion of the internship programme to other areas of the country, as well as the continuation of both the Coast Explorers and Marine Futures Internship Programmes would provide a significant long-term legacy in developing the diverse and skilled workforce that the marine industry needs for a sustainable future.



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