Seabird Restoration Project



Credit: Alderney Wildlife Trust

Introducing the Seabird Restoration Project

This booklet provides a summary of Ørsted's Seabird Restoration Project (SRP), which is being delivered in partnership with Alderney Wildlife Trust Enterprises (AWTE) and Habitat Assessment & Restoration Ltd (HAR) in the Bailiwick of Guernsey. The SRP supports the delivery of an environmental compensation measure for Ørsted's Hornsea Four Offshore Wind Farm which will be constructed off the east coast of England.

The SRP has been established with the ambitious goal of eradicating rats, which are an invasive non-native predatory species, from L'Etac de Sark (off the southern tip of Little Sark), and the Twin Sisters stacks off the west coast of Alderney. This booklet provides further details on these plans, including an approximate timeline for activities taking place.



Credit: Alderney Wildlife Trust

Overview of our plans

The SRP is being delivered by Ørsted, the world's leading offshore wind company. At Ørsted, we are committed to ensuring that our projects not only provide green energy but also protect and enhance the natural environment.

Ørsted received permission from the UK government to build Hornsea 4 in July 2023, with the requirement that the project deliver ecological measures to compensate for potential impacts of the wind farm on kittiwakes (Rissa tridactyla) and guillemots (Uria aalge) – two legally protected seabirds of the Flamborough and Filey Coast Special Protection Area.

The aim of the SRP is to eradicate rats on the islands to boost the population of guillemots. Working with the biodiversity and seabird habitat experts at HAR and AWTE, we aim to increase the number of rat-free nesting sites that will allow the guillemot population to grow, subsequently adding guillemots to the UK's National Site Network (a network of protected sites designated under the EU Habitats and Birds' Directives).

The selected sites

The SRP will take place across two sites – L'Etac de Sark and The Twin Sisters stacks on Alderney.

The first site for the project is L'Etac de Sark, which is a small uninhabited island located off the south coast of Little Sark. L'Etac was selected after several years of ecological assessments identified rat activity, indicating that an eradication programme could support the restoration of seabird populations nesting on the island.

The Twin Sisters site, which is limited to the 'stacks' (La Nache, Fouruie and Little Sister), is on the west coast of Alderney. This site was chosen after detailed feasibility work with AWTE found that rat eradication measures could be put in place to keep the stacks and a surrounding mainland buffer zone rat-free and prevent reinvasion.

Importantly, guillemots in the Channel Islands belong to the albionis subspecies, the same as those found in the North Sea. This means that while the majority may stay in the Channel Islands, guillemots from colonies potentially affected by Hornsea 4 are likely to migrate through, or disperse to, the Channel Islands. This demonstrates a clear ecological link between the populations of guillemot that may be impacted by the future offshore wind farm, and the location where we aim to improve the seabird population.

Why guillemots?

Guillemots are the SRP's primary focus. These distinctive brown-and-white seabirds spend most of their lives at sea, returning to land only to breed. Like many seabirds, their populations are declining in the UK as a result of climate change and prey shortages.

They are also very vulnerable to new threats, particularly invasive predators like rats that have been introduced into their ecosystems by humans. Rats prey on seabird eggs and chicks, pushing vulnerable species to the brink.

As humans introduced these invasive predatory species in the first place, the responsibility falls on us to remove them from the ecosystem. By doing this, the hope is to restore a more natural balance and create the conditions seabirds need to thrive. While guillemots are the main target species, the project is also expected to benefit other seabirds including puffins, Manx shearwaters, storm petrels and razorbills.

Restoration success in the UK

The UK Government and conservation charities, such as the Natural England and the RSPB, have led several successful campaigns to eradicate invasive non-native species.

For example, 20 years ago a campaign was led by Natural England, RSPB, Landmark Trust and the National Trust to remove rats from the island of Lundy off the coast of North Devon. The island is famous for puffins but had been reduced to just 13 birds before the eradication programme in 2000. Now, 20 years after a determined effort to eradicate rats from the island, puffins have made a dramatic comeback with their numbers swelling to 1,335 in 2026.

How we will deliver the project and measure success

The initial eradication phase on L'Etac is planned for October 2026 to March 2027 and the elimination phase on Alderney from October 2027 to March 2028. These phases involve the use of rodenticide to remove the rats, which will be followed by ongoing monitoring to ensure that no breeding populations remain, and no reinvasion has occurred.

If eradication is not fully successful during the first winter, this phase may be repeated the following year, however the likelihood of this is low. Following the eradication phase will be a two-year period of monitoring after which we hope to declare rat free status.



Credit: Alderney Wildlife Trust

Once rat free status has been achieved, the focus will shift to long-term monitoring and biosecurity. Biosecurity is about preventing rats from re-entering the area where we have removed them from. To do so, there are a variety of monitoring strategies we can use to check that the area is still clear, such as using small wildlife cameras, along with a set of guidelines for people visiting the area to help prevent accidental reintroductions of rats and provide information on the best course of action if one is spotted. This ensures that the seabirds are safe from rats over the long term.

Due to the proximity of the Twin Sisters to mainland Alderney, to maintain the Twin Sisters as rat free, a long-term rat control phase will be required. This will include a network of monitoring devices, such as camera traps and audio recorders, alongside rat suppression measures designed to catch only the target species. Short periods of rodenticide treatment may also be used where necessary.

We anticipate declaring rat free status on L'Etac in early 2029 and on the Twin Sisters site on Alderney in early 2030. From there, our ambition is to keep these locations rat-free for the lifetime of the offshore wind farm. This would provide seabirds with long-term access to safer nesting habitat, while allowing the Channel Islands to realise the benefits of sustained rat control on the wider ecosystem.

Benefits to the local community

The benefits of the SRP extend beyond biodiversity metrics. While our primary focus is to improve the resilience and long-term viability of important seabird colonies, the project also seeks to strengthen connections between local communities and the Channel Islands' important wildlife and natural heritage. Through conservation, restoration and monitoring activities, the project provides opportunities to foster a greater sense of stewardship, helping communities to engage with and take pride in the protection of their unique coastal and island environments.

Investment in restoration and long-term monitoring activities will also support local employment opportunities, capability and skills development, and enable knowledge exchange among local communities.

Looking ahead, we hope the SRP will become a lasting example of how environmental compensation measures can deliver benefits that reach beyond individual species, supporting broader ecosystem recovery while creating enduring value for the communities connected to these landscapes.



Credit: Habitat Assessment and Restoration Limited



Credit: Alderney Wildlife Trust

Credit: Fraser Carter at NIRAS

Indicative timeline

Q3 26
Pre-elimination surveys begin on Alderney

Q4 26
Predator eradication begins on L'Etac

Q2 27
Post eradication monitoring begins on L'Etac

Q3 27
Predator elimination begins on Alderney

Q3 28
Post-elimination monitoring begins on Alderney

Q2 29
Declaration of rat free status on L'Etac

Q2 30
Declaration of rat free status on Alderney

Dates given are indicative only and may be subject to change.

What you might see

As eradication activities progress on L'Etac from October 2026 onwards, you may notice increased vessel traffic to the island and our field team at work. Preparation work on Alderney will also begin in 2026 to help ensure the project is delivered safely and effectively, so you may also see members of our team at work on the island this year.

Once the eradication activities begin on Alderney in 2027, residents or visitors may notice bait boxes and monitoring stations in the area around the Twin Sisters stacks. To minimise visual impact and reduce the risk of disturbance, these devices will be deliberately concealed where practicable.

While they are designed to blend into their surroundings, there may be occasions when a bait box or monitoring station becomes exposed due to weather, vegetation changes or accidental interference. If you come across an exposed device, please report it to us and we will fix it right away.

It is our priority to undertake this programme as safely as possible, and we will be taking particular care to minimise any potential impacts to other wildlife, domestic animals and livestock, and to ensure the safety of people. All bait stations will be secured and direct access to the bait will be difficult. Daily monitoring will take place to ensure that no rodenticide has become loose. Local residents and dog walkers will be able to continue to use these areas as normal.

Should you have any questions or concerns about these activities, you can get in touch with us via the communication channels detailed at the end of this booklet.



Find out more

For further information on the SRP, you can view and download the recently amended Guillemot Compensation and Monitoring Plan. This is available on the Hornsea 4 Offshore Wind Farm project page on the Planning Inspectorate's website[1].

You can also find out more about the Hornsea 4 Offshore Wind Farm and the SRP on our website: hornseaprojects.co.uk/hornsea-project-four

[1]nsip-documents.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/published-documents/EN010098-002442-Amended%20GCIMP%20Final%20V5.pdf

Kittiwake artificial nesting structure

To compensate for potential impacts to kittiwakes, Ørsted built an artificial nesting structure in Hartlepool, north-east England which could be home to more than 1,000 kittiwakes. The nesting site is made up of one tower about 35 ft high and four cabin-like buildings. The nests themselves are around 9 ft off the ground, protecting the seabirds from any predators. The artificial nesting structures currently include around 100 3D-printed artificial kittiwakes, in the hope that this will attract more of the real-life species. The birds which choose to nest at the site will be monitored and observed for the duration of the projects.



Contact us

We aim to provide regular updates on the project through a variety of means, including this booklet.

We value your feedback and are here to answer any questions you may have about the SRP. Please feel free to reach out to us through the following channels:

send us an email:
SRP@AWTE.alderneywildlife.org

send us a letter to:
Seabird Restoration Project, Alderney Wildlife Trust, 48 Victoria Street, St. Anne, Alderney, Channel Islands, GY9 3TA

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