

What are the threats to Seagrass?

Seagrass can be seriously damaged by coastal development and pollution; people also damage the seagrass by:

- Mooring in it - anchors pull up roots, allowing storms and currents to wash away large areas
- Travelling at high speed over it - boat propellers, keels and jet ski jets can cut through the leaves and roots, scarring and killing the seagrass
- Discharging waste and rubbish over it - waste in the water cuts out light and allows algae to smother the seagrass
- Fishing with scallop dredges and other mobile fishing gear through it - this breaks up the seagrass bed
- Using gill and tangle nets in the seagrass - the footropes, weights and anchors can damage the seagrass
- Walking on the seagrass - this tramples the plants and breaks the leaves

How you can help

- Don't anchor over the seagrass beds - anchor on sand or raft up
- Don't travel at high speed with speedboats or jet skis over shallow seagrass areas at low tide - watch out for seagrass and observe speed restrictions
- Don't discharge waste or rubbish into the sea - use proper disposal sites
- Don't use scallop dredges or other mobile fishing gear in seagrass areas - observe voluntary 'no scalloping' areas
- Don't set nets over the seagrass - set nets outside the seagrass beds; this also avoids overwintering diving bird areas
- Don't walk on the seagrass or dig for bait in it - keep to the sand

What visits or lives amongst the Seagrass?

Torbay's seagrass beds are home to unusual species like seahorses, pipefish and cuttlefish.

We have seen:

- young Bass, Pollock and flatfish
- many types of spider crabs and swimming crabs
- sea hares and sea slugs
- shelled molluscs and sea worms

Many birds including Black-Necked and Slavonian Grebes can be seen diving and feeding over the seagrass especially during the winter

The Torbay Seagrass Project

- The marine surveys and mapping of the seagrass beds has been carried out by the Torbay Seagrass Project. This project is managed by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust with the support of Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, Natural England, and Torbay Council. Considerable support and assistance has also been provided by Torbay Harbour Authority.
- The Torbay Seagrass Project is funded by the SITA Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund www.sitatrust.org.uk



How to get in contact with us

If you would like more information about the Torbay Seagrass Project and how Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust is helping to protect the marine environment, or are interested in helping us with marine surveys as a volunteer, please contact:
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info@countryside-trust.org.uk

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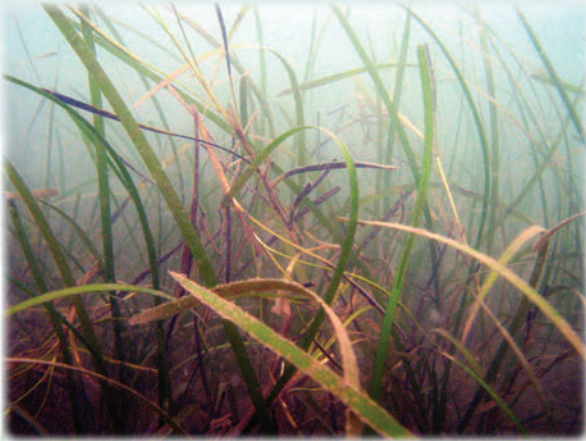
TORBAY
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Torbay's Seagrass Beds

A hidden world

What is Seagrass?

Seagrasses are not seaweeds but flowering plants that can live fully immersed in seawater. They are found in a few shallow sheltered bays and estuaries around our coasts. They have long grass-like leaves that can be over a metre (3 feet) in length and form vast dense green meadows under the sea. Because they grow in the shallows close to the shore they are very vulnerable to damage by human activities.



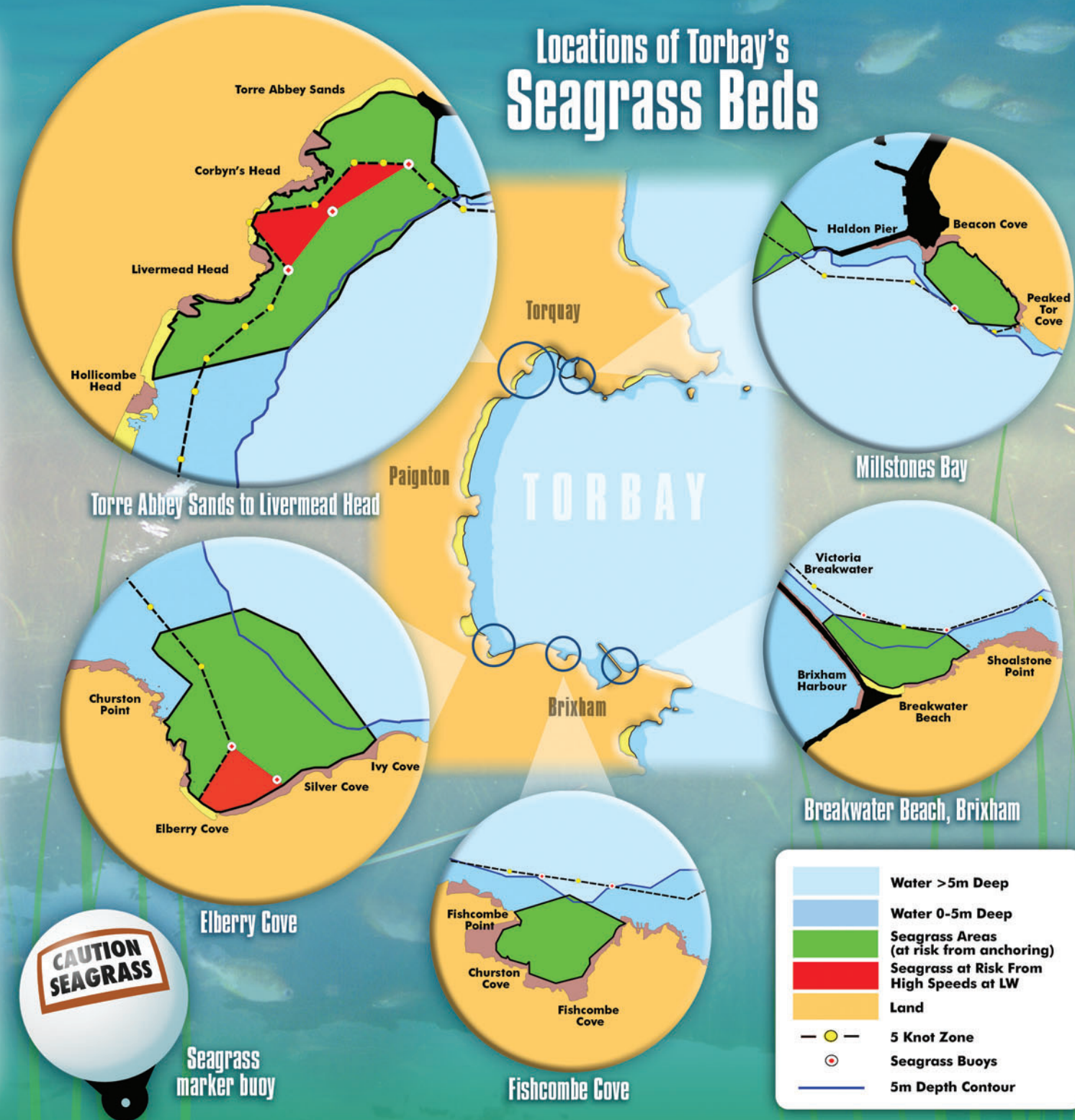
Why is Seagrass important?

Torbay's seagrass beds are home to hundreds of marine animals and plants. Many commercially valuable fish species breed in the seagrass beds. Young fish and animals live and grow amongst the seagrass where the dense leaves provide protection from strong currents and predators. This abundance of life provides a valuable food source for larger fish and diving birds like grebes. Seagrass helps the environment and improves water quality by filtering out pollutants, producing oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide. It also stabilises sediments making the water clearer and protecting the shore from coastal erosion.

Where does Seagrass grow in Torbay?

Torbay contains a total area of over 80 hectares of the seagrass *Zostera marina* - equivalent to the area of 110 football pitches! This represents 30% of all of Devon's Seagrass beds. The seagrass beds are most easily seen during the summer and the largest are shown in this map.

Locations of Torbay's Seagrass Beds



Seagrass marker buoy

Elberry Cove

Fishcombe Cove

- Water >5m Deep
- Water 0-5m Deep
- Seagrass Areas (at risk from anchoring)
- Seagrass at Risk From High Speeds at LW
- Land
- 5 Knot Zone
- Seagrass Buoys
- 5m Depth Contour