**PROTECTING SEAHORSES**

These underwater meadows of seagrass provide a vital habitat, teeming with wildlife. And it’s where you can find the spiny seahorse. It’s a protected species and Studland Bay [UK] is a marine conservation zone. But boats visiting this popular area off the Dorset coast can create problems.

*Neil Garrick-Maidment, The Seahorse Trust*

“We’ve counted up to 450 boats here in one day. It’s the noise, the anchors, the general movement of everything seems to affect the seahorses. They’re very prone to stress. If they have a lot of stress, then they move back out to sea.”

The wildlife presenter Steve Backshall has dived here and says boat anchors and mooring chains can damage the seabed.

*Steve Backshall, naturalist*

“They completely destroy all the substrate around it, which means that all the seagrass dies. And it gets rid of that, that binding substrate, which then washes away as sand. And so, you just end up with these big barren circles around all the moorings. And within that nothing can live, and particularly not seahorses”.

So, here’s a solution. The Seahorse Trust is installing this environmentally friendly design. Instead of a chain, the mooring is attached to a fixed point in the seabed via a large elasticated rope that stretches with the tide and minimises damage.

And if beneficial, it will mean seafarers and seahorses can coexist successfully.

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