



Oyster Heaven creates the first scalable solution to regenerate lost oyster reefs

Rotterdam-based startup raises €800,000 from Orange Wings Investments

ROTTERDAM, 27 June 2023 - **Oyster Heaven, a Rotterdam-based startup founded by George Birch, has raised €800,000 in funding from Orange Wings Investments to facilitate the next stage in their growth. The investment will support the startup's goals toward marine restoration, offering the first cost-effective solution to sustainably restore native oyster reefs around the world.**

Oyster reefs play an important role in the marine ecosystem. They form a habitat for hundreds of species, filter water, and are one of the most natural and cost-effective ways to manage excess nitrogen from the ocean and help fight climate change.

20-30% of the North Sea used to be covered by oyster reefs, but 150 years ago they were considered cheap food and were overharvested to near extinction without realising the damage that would cause. Now, 95% of these reefs are gone, and much of the ocean floor is a marine desert not suitable for oysters to grow on.

The first scalable solution to regrow lost oyster reefs: The Mother Reef Founded in 2021 by George Birch, 32, Oyster Heaven is turning the tide by regenerating oyster reefs at a large scale. With extensive scientific research, the startup is able to unlock the biggest bottleneck for oyster restoration by creating a low-cost and efficient substrate for oysters: the Mother Reef. This natural reef system made of clay is a scaffolding pre-loaded with baby oysters essential for repopulating the deserted sea floor.

After successful lab and field testing to prove the efficiency of the Mother Reef over the last two years, on-land tests continue at Stichting Zeeschelp in Zeeland in order to prove beyond a doubt the effectiveness of the technology. So far, 10,000s of baby oysters (spats) have attached to the Mother Reefs and are thriving.

Ocean conservation meets financial scalability

Oyster Heaven was born out of a desire to combine ocean conservation with financially scalable models that are independent of philanthropy. With his unusual background, a mix of both marine and terrestrial conservation and financial management, Birch is well-prepared to lead the startup to success.

“Sustainability has been the sole ambition of my career. I have been obsessed with finding a way to get mainstream finance to invest in the health of our oceans. Oyster Heaven is the opportunity to make this happen. Today, countries are in various stages of recognizing the value



of ecosystem services. Oyster Heaven is leading the way, preparing for a society willing to pay for the services oyster reefs can provide.” says George.

By partnering with local fishing communities to plant the Mother Reefs into the ocean and protect the new marine oases, the startup anticipates a boon to the new circular economy.

Support from Orange Wings Investments

The €800,000 investment in Oyster Heaven is backed by Orange Wings Investments, an early-stage VC supporting changemakers with brilliant ideas and giving wings to future champions. “Our operations should bring back millions of oysters and other marine life to the seas,” according to Orange Wings Investments founder Shawn Harris. “We are really excited about investing in a cost-effective solution that can reverse the losses we are having in the seas globally.”

The most impactful oyster restoration project in Europe

The startup is positioned to deploy 5 million oysters in Europe and the US in 2024, and aims to have regenerated 100 million oysters by 2027, anticipating significant improvement in marine biodiversity, water quality and waste management in various industries.

Their success will be the first financially sustainable solution to help our oceans by restoring marine life, making them the most scalable and impactful oyster restoration force in Europe.

About Oyster Heaven

The Rotterdam startup and nature conservation organization Oyster Heaven - founded in 2021 by George Birch - is a regeneration first organization whose central mission is to regenerate oyster reefs on a large scale. Birch obtained his MBA from Erasmus in Rotterdam and has worked at Blue Marine Foundation and Janus Henderson, among others. Oyster Heaven's vision is a society where people can continue to live comfortably by helping the environment and vital industries, such as housing and food suppliers, continue to exist in the future. The company is supported by Blue Oyster Environmental, DTU Aqua, Newcastle University, Mantis Consulting, Metabolic, Rewilding Britain, Stichting Zeeschelp, WWF, and a scientific advisory board.

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