



The
Wildlife
Trusts

Temperate Rainforest Restoration Programme

in partnership with Aviva

Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
Aviva Impact Report 2023-2024



Foreword

In Britain, we started the Industrial Revolution. Great wealth was created, and for many, agricultural poverty was swapped for relative industrial prosperity. But, unseen and at the beginning, misunderstood by burning coal and oil and releasing carbon into the atmosphere, we have paid a great price – climate chaos – and we have to get that carbon out of the atmosphere and back into the natural world. How?

The answer in part is simple: restore our woodlands, peatbogs, soils, and seas to take carbon out of the atmosphere. The conundrum is how to make it happen. How can we pay to lock up carbon? Much talk and some dubious actions later, we still have few actual deals in which companies pay significant sums to do that here in the UK.

Yet Aviva have shown real leadership, investing £100m into nature-based solutions for climate change, of which £38.9m will create new nature reserves to grow new temperate rainforests through this programme. This is where the magic of natural transformation starts. Land is transformed to suck carbon back out of the atmosphere into the soil and trees of new rainforests, but also becomes part of what makes those communities fabulous places to live. Aviva is funding new rainforests to store carbon but will also clean up water pollution and reduce flooding, creating havens for wildlife and great places to visit and live near. This is programme of community prosperity – this is the post-industrial revolution.

Rob Stoneman

Director of Landscape Recovery

Seeing this vital work move forward has been a highlight of the last 12 months for us at Aviva. The sites that have been announced so far will help to restore these incredibly rare and beautiful rainforests, showing how biodiversity reduces the impacts of climate change while also supporting wellbeing. They will also have a positive impact locally- providing flood resilience to homes and businesses as well as green jobs and volunteering opportunities in the community.

Henrietta Stock

Senior Sustainability Manager, Aviva

Temperate Rainforest Restoration Programme Timeline

2022

DECEMBER

Partnership formed

Following extensive due diligence from both sides and legal contracting support provided pro bono by Hogan Lovells, a unique partnership was formed between Aviva and The Wildlife Trusts to help meet Aviva's Net Zero ambition, create new Wildlife Trust nature reserves, and increase the area of temperate rainforest across the UK and Isle of Man.

2023

MARCH

First three sites secured

Three individual Wildlife Trusts came forward with new sites even before the programme was fully underway, meaning a flying start in Devon, North Wales and on the Isle of Man.

JULY

Programme team in place

Four team members were recruited to The Wildlife Trusts to get the programme fully up and running.



Stan Smith
Programme Manager



Tara Cummins
Programme Coordinator



Ruth Swetnam
Carbon and Research Manager



Delyth Phillipps
Rural Advocacy Officer - Wales

JANUARY

The Wildlife Trusts registered with S&P Global

The Woodland Carbon Code is used to verify the carbon units generated by the programme, and The Wildlife Trusts registered as project developers under this scheme.

APRIL

Manx Wildlife Trust host Aviva colleagues on the Isle of Man

Information about the new site at Creg y Cowin was shared live with colleagues across The Wildlife Trusts federation.

JULY

UK rainforest network joined

A UK wide network was established to support joined up efforts to restore temperate rainforest. Members include five major conservation NGOs, plus representatives from regional rainforest alliances such as the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest.

OCTOBER

Partnership staff visit Bryn Ifan

Staff from The Wildlife Trusts and Aviva were joined by people from Hogan Lovells for a site visit in North Wales to see the exciting opportunity presented by Bryn Ifan.

DECEMBER

Further sites proposed

All 15 trusts within the oceanic climate zone came forward to get involved in the programme, with new sites proposed across all eligible regions

2024

OCTOBER

First research project commissioned

Professor Nigel Arnell of Reading University embarked upon climate modelling of how the oceanic climate zone may change under different global warming scenarios. This research will help to inform future restoration efforts.

JANUARY

Historical research of Bowden Pillars underway

Working with King's College London, a master's student undertook historical research into the past uses of Bowden Pillars, including looking at old field names and maps from The National Archives, all helping to build up a picture of land use change over time.

FEBRUARY

First site on Markit registry

Bowden Pillars in Devon became the first site to be registered with the Woodland Carbon Code, a crucial step for each site, demonstrating commitment to transparency within the programme.

APRIL

Kate Freegard joins

Recognising the need to support the trusts with consistent monitoring across all sites a new member of the team is recruited to increase our impact and provide an excellent foundation for the research programme.



Kate Freegard
Monitoring Office

APRIL

2024 onwards

Several exciting new site acquisitions in the pipeline, and the launch of the research programme happening in the next few months further increasing the programme's impact.

So far, six new jobs have been created as a direct result of the demands of the programme. This figure will increase as local trusts continue to take on new reserves for rainforest creation.

Site acquisitions

Whilst rainforest creation is the goal, the sites being acquired always have other features and areas which are unsuitable for tree planting. This programme is therefore allowing the protection and restoration of a whole host of other habitats as well as temperate rainforest.

To date, the programme has acquired 152.2 hectares (ha) for rainforest creation plus an additional 158.6 ha of other habitats including peatlands, species rich grasslands, heathlands and existing woodlands. In addition to the four live sites there are another seven sites in the process of acquisition, totalling 464.5 ha of rainforest creation area and a whopping 1054 ha of other habitats (so once these sales complete there will be a grand total of new nature reserve area of 1829.3 ha).

One of the first sites acquired through the programme was Bowden Pillars in Devon. The diagram opposite demonstrates how the farm will be split between two other organisations, The Apricot Centre and ReSet, showcasing what can be done in and for local communities when they are given support.

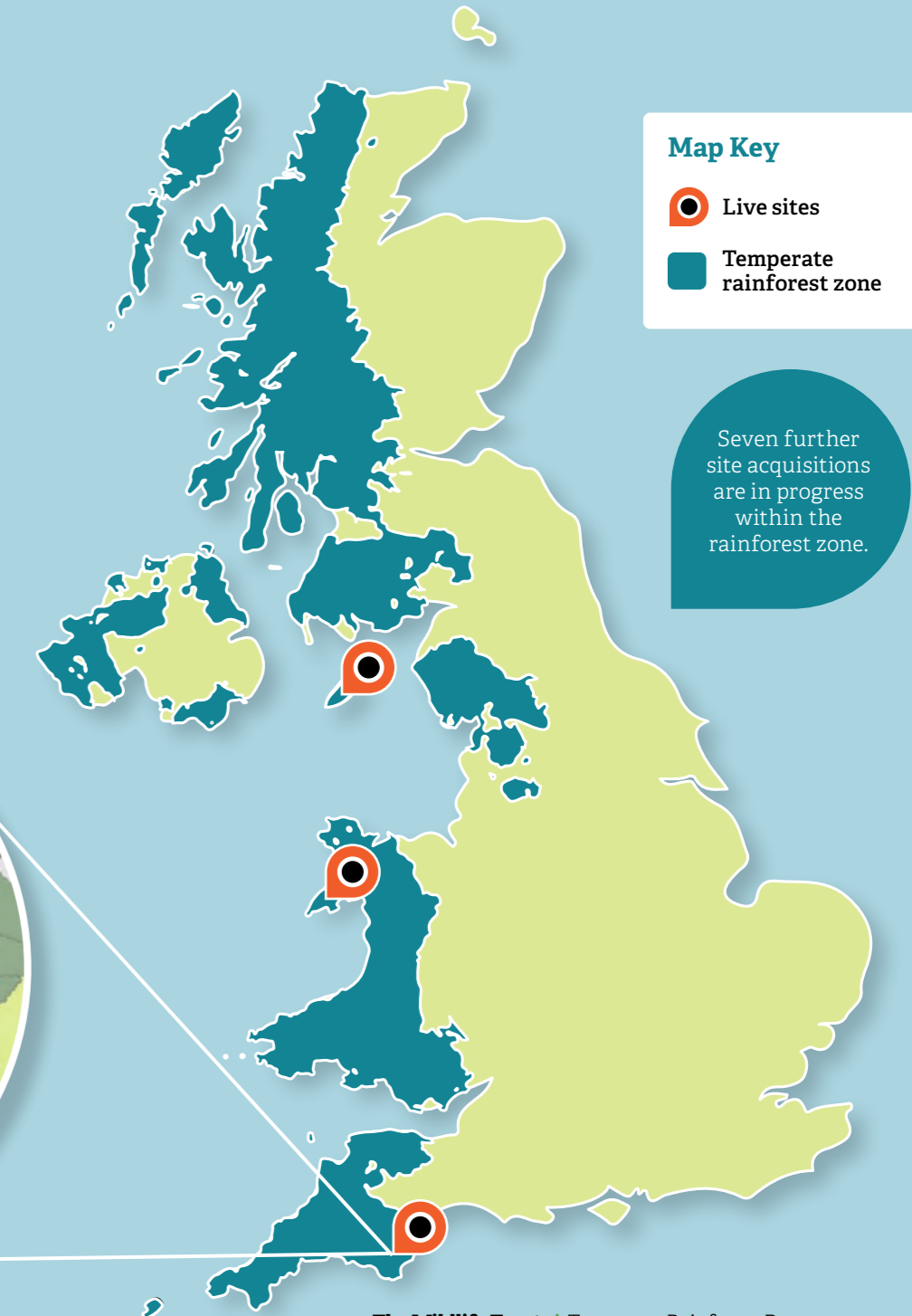
Note: figures subject to change, accurate at the time of writing

Bowden Pillars 125 acre farm near Totnes

Regenerative village
For 30-50 households, living low-impact lifestyles

Biodiverse forest
Open to the public

Regenerative farm
Growing organic wheat and market vegetables



Site impacts

Impacts for Nature

Bowden Pillars

Trees are already being grown in a local nursery which is using seed sourced from Devon Wildlife Trust reserves and existing temperate rainforests in the area.

The site was purchased on a 100 year lease which enabled a social enterprise called Bowden Pillars future to secure a larger parcel of land. They plan to set up a regenerative farm and build an eco-village in addition to restoring rainforest. All this right on the edge of Totnes, and so bringing the community into the heart of the project.

Although it is too early to say what economic impacts this is having, the site is clearly supporting local enterprise through the Bowden Pillars Future.

Economic Impacts

Bryn Ifan

Extensive site surveys have been carried out by local naturalists. This has identified some important grassland and wetland areas and now the planting plans will avoid planting on these sensitive habitats, enhancing them instead with suitable species.

Two large volunteer parties have helped gap up the hedges in the lower fields with native tree whips. These volunteers have therefore been honing their tree planting skills which will come in very useful when full scale planting commences next winter.

The purchase of this site was from a local farmer who has retained some of the land to create a glamping operation, this means they were able to release some capital to start this business and the new reserve will be a fantastic selling point for visitors. Next door, a regenerative farmer is running guided tours which encompass the new reserve. Linking messages of how nature can work hand in hand with regenerative farming.

Creg Y Cowin

8000 trees, covering 6.6 hectares have been planted onsite during the first planting season. In addition, woodland understory plants have been locally grown and planted out to enhance the newly created woodland. This includes 50 juniper trees around wetland areas which are a very rare plant today.

All the planting has so far been carried out by dedicated volunteers. 25 planting days have been hosted with more than 400 people attending.

Due to this site and others coming online on the Isle of Man, there is an increased demand for locally grown trees. Manx Wildlife Trust have secured additional funding to build a new tree nursery which will employ a full-time site manager for two years at least.



Progress on carbon work

Fundamental to the success of the Aviva Programme is the use of an accredited, internationally recognised carbon accounting scheme.

The UK Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) forms the basis of our work, and it is through this that we record, register, verify and eventually assign all the sequestered carbon in our rainforest sites to Aviva. RSWT are the project developers and were registered with the MK Environmental Registry (S&P Global) in early spring 2023.

As part of the purchase procedure for each new site, WCC calculations are needed to estimate the carbon likely to be sequestered at the site. These have been completed for the four sites where the purchase has been announced (Bowden Pillars in Devon, Bryn Ifan in North Wales and Creg y Cowin and Glion Darragh on the Isle of Man) plus four other English sites in the final stages of purchase. Bowden Pillars in Devon was successfully registered on the MK Environmental Registry in January 2024. The timing of registration impacts on project delivery as validation must be completed within three years of this date. All trees must be planted by this time. For some of our larger projects, this will equate to hundreds of thousands of saplings, so it is a material consideration in project planning and an open discussion with our site managers.

Processing the first tranche of sites has increased our understanding of the WCC significantly but it is worth noting a few tensions between it and successful rainforest establishment. Firstly, the WCC was primarily developed for commercial forestry rather than conservation or biodiversity planting. The growth rate and subsequent carbon sequestration of conifers is well understood and easier to predict than

that of native, deciduous woodlands. This means that at the point of registration, the code may undervalue the likely amount of carbon that will be sequestered over the lifespan of heterogenous, deciduous woodland. However, as our Aviva sites are subject to ongoing and periodic verification, any 'under-reporting' will be corrected. Our carbon predictions are therefore quite conservative at this stage but should improve over the course of 40 -100 years.

Secondly, our sites will use a combination of planting and natural regeneration where appropriate. The WCC has a method to incorporate natural regeneration within the carbon calculation, but it is less well understood and relies on a fairly rudimentary mathematical adjustment which requires improvement. In addition, there are rules about where natural regeneration can be used on a WCC site, including a hard limit of 50m distance from an existing seed source. Through conversations with the managers of the WCC we have confirmed that seed sources can be existing standard trees as well as existing woodlands. There remain some inconsistencies – for example mature hedgerows do not count as seed sources when in truth they can be very diverse. Ancient hedges which are managed appropriately can provide enormous seed reserves. The 50m limit also directly conflicts with existing guidance in the English Woodland Creation Offer where the distance is 75m. On a more positive note, we have fostered supportive contacts in Forestry Research who are keen to learn from us as we take these sites forward.

Initial validation (by Year 3) and subsequent verification (Year 5, 15, 25 etc) is undertaken by an independent external body. There are currently two accredited institutions in the UK to support this work: the Soil Association and the Organic Farmers Growers. Quotations have been received from both bodies with costs heavily dependent on the number of registered sites and

how they are grouped by date. Once the next group of sites are registered, we will appoint as necessary, to begin the process of validation which will start from June 2025 (18 month lead in time required).

As noted previously, we have two sites on the Isle of Man (IOM) which now belong to the Manx Wildlife Trust with other potential sites under consideration. Being outside of the UK, the IOM is not currently part of the WCC so a bespoke solution is needed. Our approach within the Aviva programme has always been to treat these sites in the same manner as the others – using the WCC tools to model carbon sequestration and the same rigorous approach to validation and verification. Stan and Ruth met Alys Lewin (Head of Programme Delivery and Climate Change Transformation) and Steven Hull (Finance and Business, Climate Change) both from DEFA IOM Government on the 30th October 2023. During this meeting we discussed the possible adoption of WCC by the IOM Government and wider green financing issues of relevance. Steve Hull has since confirmed that their forestry standards align with the UK and is seeking discussion with the WCC to cover the IOM. In addition, The Soil Association have confirmed that they can validate and verify WCC aligned projects on the IOM. This means that although the WCC is not officially adopted there, every aspect of the process including independent verification is being followed. The only remaining element that is missing is a public registry of projects akin to Markit. Theoretically The Wildlife Trusts could host a register of IOM projects which would make the whole process transparent and fully auditable. This presents a way forward for credits on the Isle of Man. As an interim measure, Manx Wildlife Trust are developing a simple carbon registry for their projects to be hosted on their website. The WCC are discussing this at their next board meeting.

Research and Monitoring

Key Points

- Research strategy written, key questions identified.
- Research programme is £450K with two research calls (in 2024 & 2027).
- Research call will open in July with final submissions early Autumn. First projects to start April 2025.
- Programme documentation (guidance, application forms) drafted.
- Peer review network built and research outreach undertaken.
- Key actors, universities, contractors and other environmental NGOs consulted.
- Aviva rainforest programme embedded within a range of rainforest research networks. We co-chair the rainforest research sub-group.
- Active discussions with Defra - our thinking has shaped their research programme.
- Climate modelling of rainforest zone commissioned, findings inform both acquisitions and main research call.
- Monitoring programme in development.

The Aviva programme represents a unique opportunity for research across both the environmental and social sphere, and a fund has been established to support our research objectives.

The overall purpose of the research programme is to further our understanding of the status, management, and restoration of temperate rainforest in the changing climate of the UK. We seek to improve our understanding of what restoration works, how local communities can be engaged in this process and the benefits that result from restored, functioning rainforests.

During the early summer of 2023, the research manager (Ruth Swetnam) reviewed published research on UK rainforests and spoke to a range of researchers including: Dominic Spracklen (Leeds University), Yadvinder Malhi (Oxford University), Julia Jones (Bangor), Chris Ellis (Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh) as well as consultants active in the field such as Ben Averis, Treeconomy (lidar remote sensing), Nature Metrics (eDNA) and UKCEH (insect monitoring). Ruth also consulted with nature conservation partners through the Rainforest Network and Scottish Rainforest Alliance (including The National Trust, The Woodland Trust, RSPB, Plantlife). These discussions helped to inform our own thinking and to clarify The Wildlife Trusts research position.

SHORT TERM

Understanding the Baseline

- A. Where will temperate rainforest establish effectively both now and over the next century?
- B. What does the public know about temperate rainforest? How do we engage effectively?

SHORT-MEDIUM TERM

Understanding the Restoration Process

- C. What are the critical factors determining 'success'?
- D. What methods of monitoring should we use?
- E. How do we embed environmental resilience?
- F. Do residents and visitors like the new forest?

MEDIUM-LONG TERM

Understanding the Restoration Impact

- G. What impact are our 'new' temperate rainforest having on biodiversity and landscape functioning?
- H. Have our restored temperate rainforest contributed to net-zero?
- I. Does restored temperate rainforest offer wider socio-economic benefit?
- J. How do restored sites contribute to health and wellbeing?

Figure 1.



The programme research strategy was drafted in summer 2023 by Ruth Swetnam, and an internal workshop was convened to review and refine it.

The following programme objectives were defined at that meeting:

1. To provide evidence-informed guidance on how to restore a diverse temperate rainforest habitat. What works, how and why?
2. To understand existing bioclimatic constraints to temperate rainforest restoration and to predict potential changes to their possible extent under a range of climate scenarios for the British Isles through to 2100.
3. To increase understanding of ecology, hydrology and soils of regenerating temperate rainforest.
4. To increase understanding of Green House Gas (GHG) exchange between the pedosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere of developing temperate rainforest habitats.
5. To measure the resilience of restored temperate rainforest in response to a range of threats both climatic, biotic and social.
6. To measure the economic, cultural and social co-benefits of the Aviva programme.
7. To establish The Wildlife Trusts as a Centre of Excellence for the restoration of temperate rainforest in the British Isles.

We now have three priority areas

1. Understanding of the **Baseline**- where we are now, ensuring we have something to measure against.
2. Understanding the restoration **Process**- how we restore rainforest and manage adaptively?
3. Understanding the **Impact** of restoration- what services do these rainforests provide both as they grow and as they establish? Associated with these three priorities are ten themes of specific interest (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Wildlife Trusts Aviva Rainforest Research Programme priority areas and key research themes.

The Aviva temperate rainforest research programme is now in the final planning phase, but key components include:

- £450,000 budget distributed in two research calls (2024 / 2027). It is likely that research funding will be front-loaded into the first call (£220,000 +) though the exact amount will depend on the nature and quality of the submissions. If we receive excellent projects and wish to award more in the first phase, we will.
- All applications must align to the programme priorities and identify which themes their research will address. We would seek to spread activity across our research themes to ensure a balance between environmental and socio-economic activity.
- Our new Aviva sites must be a focus- all applicants must identify where they wish to work and how the individual Wildlife Trust will be involved. This will be facilitated by the research manager.

- A two-stage review process with a 'light-touch' expression of interest (EOI) forming the first submission. This will be reviewed in-house with expertise from across the Federation used where appropriate. Shortlisted projects will then be invited to submit a full application. At this stage we will seek external peer review from the research community. A stakeholder database has been constructed identifying key experts in rainforest science to facilitate this and we already have a number of experts keen to assist. We will operate a flexible peer-review network identifying appropriate expertise in response to the applications we receive. A standardised review process will be undertaken (managed online by our Grants Team) and final decisions will be made by the internal RSWT review team.
- Match funding will be strongly encouraged to maximise the impact of the Aviva component of the funding.

One of the unique components of this programme will be the Aviva Rainforest Scholars Programme designed to address some of the skills shortages that we face in terms of rainforest expertise. We wish to support several early career researchers (ECRs) with smaller (circa £12K), shorter (12-18 months) grants. Our aim is to build a cohort of new rainforest researchers who are mentored by both their universities and institutes but also by The Wildlife Trusts research manager. We wish to encourage a socially diverse range of applications from candidates who are currently under-represented in UK wildlife conservation. With permission from Aviva, we hope to call them '**Aviva Rainforest Scholars**' – a prestigious early career award.

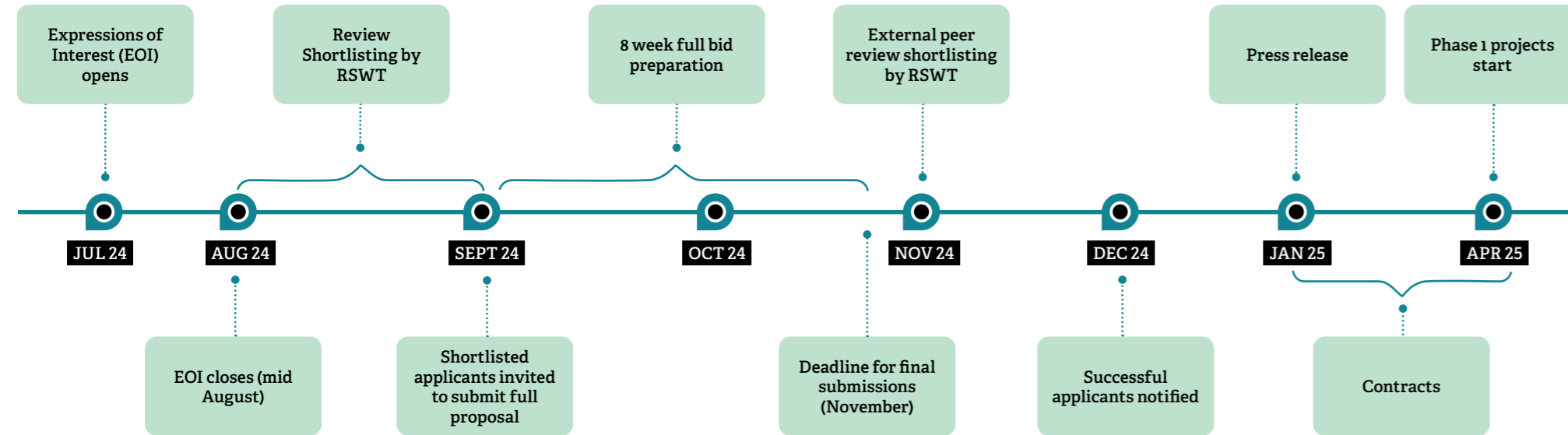


Figure 2. The first research call is in the final stages of planning and the indicative timeline

One useful output of this thinking has been our timely opportunity to contribute to the development of the Government's rainforest research programme which sits within Defra.

This forms a key strand in the **Temperate Rainforest Strategy** that was published in late November 2023 by the UK Government, which committed £750,000 of funding to support research development in rainforest recovery. Ruth and Stan have been proactive in establishing a link to the Defra team leading this research programme. Our research priorities, themes and questions have been shared with Defra and have directly informed their research goals. We are in active discussions with the managers of this programme to ensure that we work collaboratively and maximise the impact of our shared goals.

Further capacity building has been undertaken through our active involvement in the UK Rainforest Network which is a collective of land-owning environmental NGOs working in this area. Ruth helped to set up and now co-chairs the Rainforest Research sub-group of the Rainforest Alliance. We have combined our respective research agendas and have just completed a prioritisation exercise which has highlighted shared interests as well as expertise. Our hope is to use this platform to channel research activity to appropriate sites, launch joint funding bids, support students and researchers keen to work on rainforest sites and identify critical gaps in knowledge. These activities demonstrate how The Wildlife Trusts' Aviva team are raising the profile of the Aviva programme with external partners.

As a precursor to the main research programme, Professor Nigel Arnell (Reading University) was commissioned to undertake climate modelling work examining the impact of a range of UK climate scenarios on the extent of the existing oceanic climate zone. This zone is defined through a combination of climate metrics concerning temperature and moisture availability across the year. We know that our temperate forests are threatened by a drying, warming climate especially in the summer months but do not fully understand their microclimatic dynamics. His work showed that many of the existing temperate rainforests occur outside the core of the Alaback criteria which have been traditionally used to define their extent, so local topography (narrow river valleys) and the presence of running water are important.



The summer temperature limit is shown by his climate modelling work to be particularly problematic under a range of future climate scenarios. In response we organised a discussion between Nigel Arnell, **Ben Averis** (rainforest ecologist) and **Chris Ellis** (RBGE - lichen specialist and ecologist) to evaluate the initial climate mapping outputs. Prof. Arnell has subsequently been given a steer on a few of the climate assumptions which he is interested in revisiting. We know that temperate rainforest exists elsewhere across the globe in warmer climates which implies that as long as the humidity remains high, microclimate effects appear to be key. Final outputs of this research will directly influence both our site acquisition programme as well as the rest of the research programme.

Finally, in addition to the activity concerning the research programme, a **site monitoring framework** is now in development. A draft was worked up before a dedicated monitoring officer was appointed in April 2024 (Kate Freegard). She is now working with our site managers and the RSWT team to establish a common monitoring framework. Factors to be monitored include new woodland creation (e.g.

hydrological and temperature changes, wildlife response, carbon sequestered, and woodland created), volunteering (numbers, hours, training sessions), biodiversity (e.g. habitat creation, plant indicator species, birds, insects and mammals), and social impact (e.g. school visits, organisations engaged, visitor numbers and infrastructure, and press coverage). Our aim is to develop a monitoring framework which meets the criteria for the programme, but also allows individual trusts to innovate and pursue partnerships on topics of interest. For example, Cumbria Wildlife Trust are working with the University of Cumbria on remote sensing techniques. Early discussions with the **Ecological Continuity Trust** have also been held to host one of their long term monitoring plots on our establishing rainforest sites.

In Wales, the Alliance for Wales' Rainforests and the State of Wales' Rainforest Report will be officially launched at the Senedd in Cardiff during National Tree Week in November.

SPOTLIGHT ON
Bowden Pillars

“Bowden Pillars Future Ltd is the community benefit society that was set up to buy Bowden Pillars farm on the edge of Totnes. Devon Wildlife Trust are a founding partner, and have leased 75 acres of the land for their inspiring Temperate Rainforest Project.

The farm came into our stewardship on 31 May 2023, and we marked the anniversary by inviting our supporters to join us, and spent time swapping ideas about how the project might develop. We finished with a ceremony under three ancient beech trees with the tors of Dartmoor in the distance. As well as expressing our gratitude for all the help we’ve received so far, it was a chance to feel our feet on the ground and remember our place in the wider web of life and our responsibilities towards it.

Our wider aim is to live the question **“How can we create a neighbourhood in relationship with the Land, where nature, community and farming grow together?”** We’re working on plans for a new eco-village and 30 acres of regenerative farming that will grow in harmony with the new nature reserve. We’ll be offering many benefits to the local community – low-carbon affordable living, new livelihoods, opportunities for everyone to be on the land, organic local food – and have spent much of the first year finding out how best we can do this.

The farm includes an old quarry located right on the edge of the town and by the old bridleway that climbs through the DWT reserve and towards the farm. We’re consulting with the neighbours about how they would want to use the space – for small gatherings, for sessions with schools, for natural crafts, for bat-spotting and listening out for birdsong, for just sitting – and are collating the responses from an open day to help us choose our next steps.”

Ian Hague
 Project Coordinator, Bowden Pillars Future

“We are thrilled to be a part of this exciting project and partnership - our new temperate rainforest creation site Bowden Pillars sits within a wider landholding acquired by Bowden Pillars Future, where we will see the development of a regenerative farm and ecovillage which will sit alongside our reforested site.

The vision is to create a truly holistic approach built on principles of living in balance with the natural environment.

We want Bowden Pillars to act as a key conservation space within the local landscape, and an exemplar site for biodiverse woodland creation

and wildlife restoration whilst sitting at the heart of the local community.

This will be such an important asset to the people of Totnes, through our regular partnership meetings and public outreach events we have already received so much positive feedback about our plans for the site which is fantastic. Residents are showing much enthusiasm and interest in being involved with opportunities including volunteering to tree planting and nurturing. Our recent guided walks have been really popular and have allowed us to share our plans, vision and aims, whilst being an encouraging forum for discussion about all elements of the Bowden Pillars project.”

Claire Inglis
 Reserves Officer, Devon Wildlife Trust



©CLAIRE INGLIS

SPOTLIGHT ON
Bryn Ifan

“I was thrilled to be appointed as the project officer for Bryn Ifan, a 450 acre site near Clynog Fawr. I live on a farm a few miles away and know the area very well. I’ve always had a passion for nature and land management and luckily for me this job combines the two. Working in harmony with nature yields so many benefits, and we hope to demonstrate this at Bryn Ifan. Having the opportunity to work on a site with such a variety of different habitats is fantastic!

There are two parcels of land; an upland area on the slopes of Bwlch Mawr where we will be planting native trees to create a new temperate rainforest and a lower area which contains productive farmland and wetland areas. Bryn Ifan presents a rare opportunity to restore nature and provide wider benefits for local communities. Working closely with local farmers and the wider community our intention is to restore habitats for rare butterflies, birds, ferns and flowers whilst supporting sustainable and regenerative farming.

Over the past year, I have been spending a lot of time on site getting to know the land and how it fares through the different seasons. We have been carrying out a lot of survey work to get a clearer picture of what’s already here. We’ve held a few volunteering days to clear and open up access points and to do some hedge planting. Guided walks and community open days have been a great way to discuss our plans and we’ve been very encouraged to see so much support and interest in the Bryn Ifan project with people eager to get involved!”

Dafydd Thomas
 Bryn Ifan Project Officer, North Wales Wildlife Trust



SPOTLIGHT ON
Creg y Cowin

“We all loved being out in the hills in glorious early spring weather. It was inspiring to see how many trees had already been planted and that really spurred us on to plant as many as we possibly could.

We were thrilled to think that “our” trees would become part of a wild and majestic temperate rainforest one day. Our girls were especially pleased because they knew they’d see a real difference within their lifetimes.”

Madelaine K and family
 Creg y Cowin Volunteers, Isle of Man



Advocacy

Since this programme's inception we have strived to amplify the importance of temperate rainforests. To do this requires working in partnership with other organisations committed to rainforest restoration so that we can speak with one voice and ensure our messages are heard.

This is why The Wildlife Trusts have helped to form a UK-wide Rainforest Network. This is made up of five conservation NGOs including Plantlife, the RSPB, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust and The Wildlife Trusts. In addition to these members we have representation from each of the regional Rainforest Alliances. Regional Alliances have been established in several parts of the UK as a way to bring together partners working on rainforest issues. The first of these was the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest but they now cover Wales and the South West of England, with another being looked at in the North West of England. Through this network we have been able to share information and align activities such as research and policy asks.

The English government recently published 'A plan to recover England's temperate rainforests', this is the first time this habitat type has received specific political attention, and provides a powerful tool with which to build the ambition for the restoration of temperate rainforests. This programme is specifically referenced. Within this the government committed to £750,000 for research; we have been able to influence the shape of this research by aligning on research priorities with the collective weight of the organisations in the network. This will make this research more impactful and a great extension to our own research activities.

We have also worked to engage the business community. The Nature Markets Principles document was published in October of 2023 by The Wildlife Trusts in partnership with a number of NGOs and financial institutions, and sets out a case for what 'good' looks like in natural capital finance. The Aviva programme has really helped to shape the thinking in this document and the example of best practice given in this document mirrors this programme exactly.

This programme is also giving a platform from which we are able to shape and guide woodland policy for the betterment of nature recovery and temperate rainforest expansion. That has included helping to progress the use of the Woodland Carbon Code on the Isle of Man, highlighting the importance of natural regeneration in woodland creation and engaging with the Government's Arm's Length Bodies on woodland grant funding.

As well as having a good understanding of rural and farming issues, it is also very important to understand the cultural context when working with rural communities particularly in Wales. Around 90% of land in Wales is farmed, and 43% of those who are employed in agriculture are Welsh speakers.

The climate and landscape of Wales, especially along the western seaboard, offers ideal conditions for the lower plant communities found in temperate rainforests to thrive. Although tales in Welsh folklore, such as the Mabinogion, are mythical, the places and environments they describe are very real and offer insights into how people interacted and managed the land in ancient times.

The Wildlife Trusts in Wales are working alongside other eNGOs to protect the fragments of rainforest that remain and to expand them. We are also drawing attention to their importance and aim to make the term 'Celtic Rainforest' something Welsh communities can recognise and be proud of.

Our advocacy role in Wales is to inspire Senedd Members about our amazing Celtic Rainforest. The project has enabled the invigorating of the Alliance for Wales' Rainforest which is aligning the work of partners. This has resulted in a State of Rainforest Report that will be launched in the Senedd. This will show why Wales is globally significant for rainforest and therefore a need for a Rainforest Strategy to restore Celtic Rainforest throughout Wales.




Rachel Sharp
Director, Wildlife Trust Wales





The
Wildlife
Trusts

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The Wildlife Trusts are a federation made up of 46 Wildlife Trusts and a central charity (the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts). Each is an independent charity with a shared mission.

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Thank you

The programme owes its thanks to a great number of individuals and organisations, chief amongst which is Aviva. Without this partnership none of this would be possible.

We would also like to thank Hogan Lovells for their huge contribution in ensuring the contracting of this partnership was managed effectively plus the other NGOs and regional alliances working on rainforest restoration across the UK including Plantlife, RSPB, the National Trust and the Woodland Trust.



AVIVA

Together we will see a return of temperate rainforest to many more parts of the UK and Isle of Man.