



The
Wildlife
Trusts

Temperate Rainforest Programme

in partnership with Aviva

The Wildlife Trusts

Aviva Impact Report April 2025 - June 2026

Supported by



Foreword



I'm writing this in the midst of an alarmingly long period of drought in the UK. Wildfires are rife both here and across mainland Europe, and our wildlife and species are suffering as a result. And yet... if you go and stand in a temperate rainforest you'd be hard pressed to notice. After all, where better to be on a hot summer's day than under the boughs of a tree?

Beneath the canopy it is cool and shady; mosses still carpet the floor and though the ferns may be looking a little crispy, they are just waiting to unfurl as soon as the rains return. Here lies the power of nature based-solutions.

Now, only three years into a 100-year partnership with Aviva, some of the newly planted trees have reached head height. Every green shoot is silently sequestering carbon, storing it in the woody branches of these future forests. They may not be casting much shade yet, but in summers to come, future visitors to these woods and the wildlife starting to call them home will be glad that Aviva and the Wildlife Trusts embarked on this journey when we did.

Stan Smith

Head of Nature and Species Recovery, The Wildlife Trusts





At Aviva, we recognise that thriving communities, resilient economies and long-term business success all depend on a healthy natural environment. That belief remains at the heart of our partnership with The Wildlife Trusts and our shared ambition to help restore one of the British Isles' most threatened habitats: our temperate rainforest.

Over the past year, we have seen that ambition translated into meaningful action, with new rainforest sites secured, more trees planted and important research launched to deepen understanding of the benefits these habitats can deliver for nature, climate resilience and local communities.

Together, we are helping to restore ecosystems, reconnect people with nature, and demonstrate the vital role that nature-based solutions can play in building resilience for future generations. We are proud of the progress achieved so far and look forward to continuing this long-term journey alongside The Wildlife Trusts.



Leah Ramoutar

Director of Environmental Sustainability



Temperate Rainforest Restoration Programme

Timeline

2024

2025

2026

JUNE

Research projects

First season of research projects have collected data on bio acoustics and hydrology.

OCTOBER

Chelsea Flower Show

The award winning Chelsea temperate rainforest garden is relocated to it's permanent home at the Bristol zoo project and opened by Wildlife Trust ambassador Cel Spelman.

NOVEMBER

Lenamore Wood

The first programme site in Northern Ireland is announced.

SEPTEMBER

West Muchlarnick

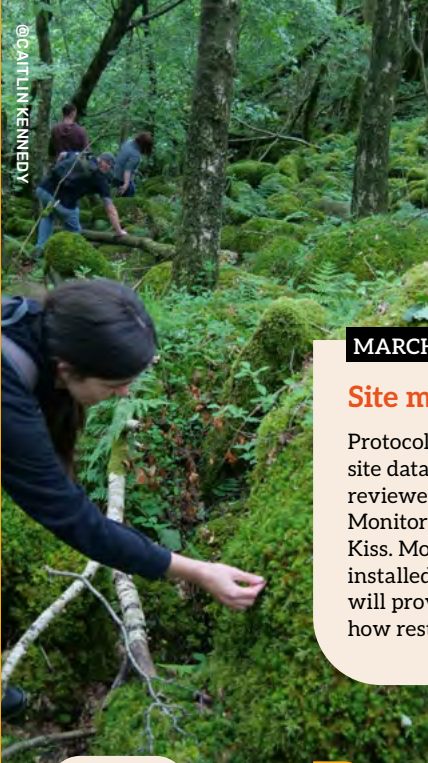
Cornwall Wildlife Trust's first programme site announced.

NOVEMBER

Park Gill

Minister for the Environment Katie White visits Park Gill.

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MARCH

Site monitoring

Protocols for gathering critical site data were comprehensively reviewed this year by new Monitoring Officer, Dr Annett Kiss. Monitoring equipment was installed across the UK, which will provide deeper insights into how restoration is going.

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APRIL

Celtic Rainforest Conference

The programme featured at the LIFE Celtic Rainforests Conference in Bangor. A host of wildlife organisations, academic researchers and environmental advocates gathered to celebrate Welsh rainforest restoration work, and to share lessons learned.

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JUNE

Restoring Britain Award

Dr Alison Smith, Temperate Rainforest Project Manager for Cornwall Wildlife Trust, won the 'Restoring Britain' award as part of the inaugural Pride in our Planet Awards.



2026

FEBRUARY

Planting sites

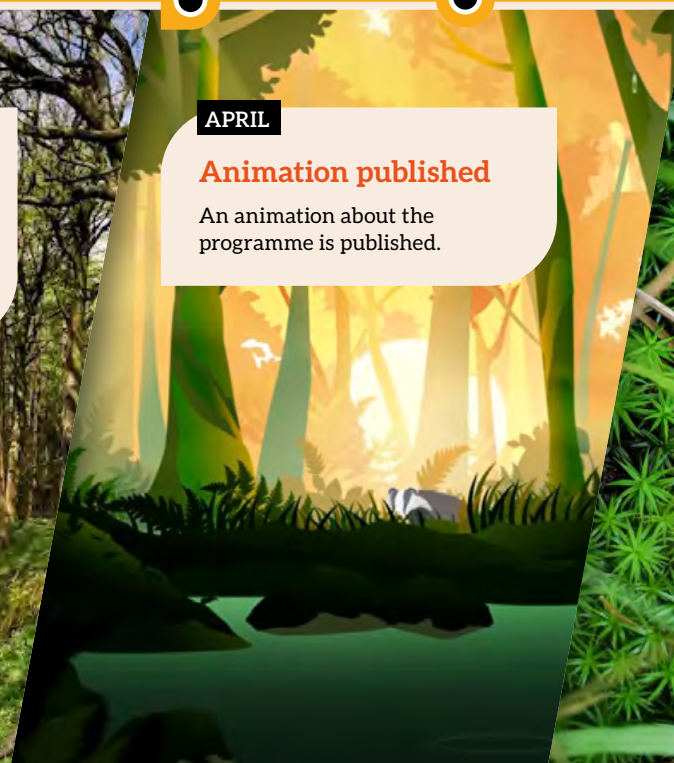
Several sites completed their planting this year: Lenamore Woods, Bowden Pillars, Trellwyn Fach & Creg y Cowin.



APRIL

Animation published

An animation about the programme is published.



MAY

First award

The programme took home its first award at the Better Society Awards alongside Aviva colleagues, for 'Partnership with an Environmental Charity'.



@CAITLIN KENNEDY

@AMY LEWIS

Site acquisitions

The total area of land for rainforest expansion in this programme increased to 704 hectares this year. This brings the total land coverage of new nature reserves to 2186 hectares.

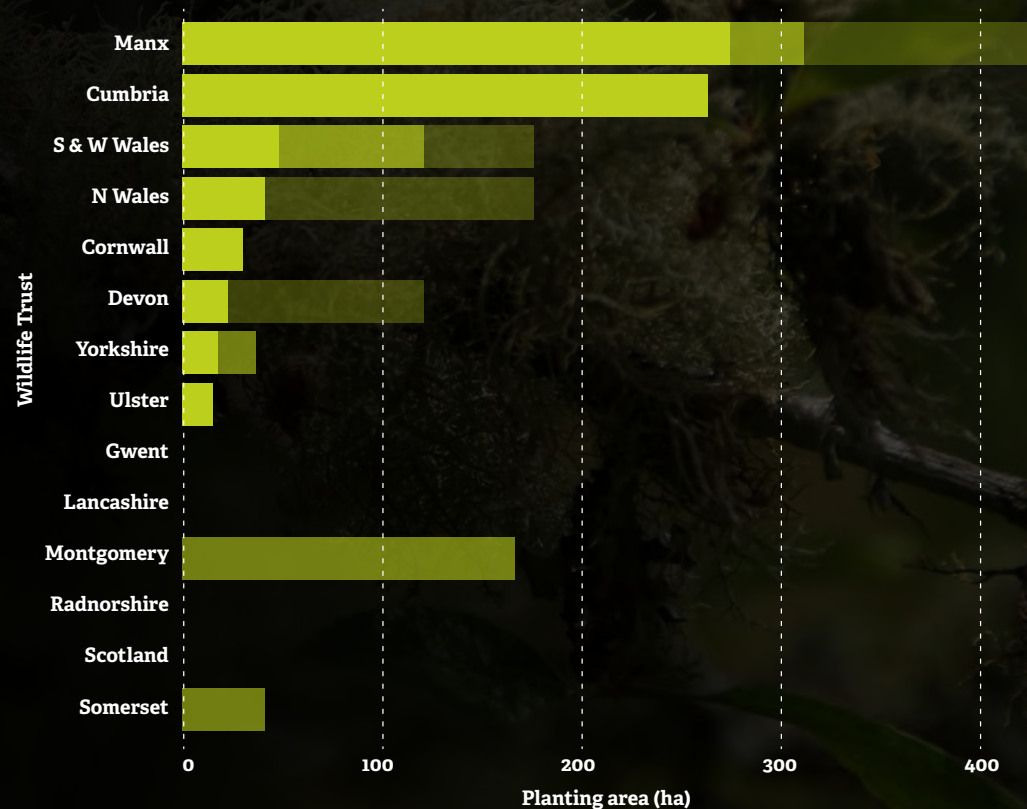
That means that in addition to areas suitable for rainforest planting, 1482 hectares of wetlands, meadows, peatlands and existing woodlands will be protected too.

Two new acquisitions were made this period;

- **West Muchlarnick in Cornwall:** This site, within the West Looe river catchment, has some brilliant temperate rainforest on its borders. Now, Cornwall Wildlife Trust will be expanding that rainforest into the fields on site augmented by new ponds which will help retain moisture and encourage mosses and lichens to move into the woodland as it grows.
- **Lenamore Wood in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland:** Native woodland cover in Northern Ireland is lower even than the rest of the UK and Ireland making it one of the least wooded places in Europe, less than 0.5% of the land area is covered by native woods, in England it is 7%, in Norway for instance it is above 25%. This new site therefore is extremely important to preserve the woodland species in the area which includes red squirrels, one of which has already been spotted on site!

Planting area by Trust

■ Live ■ Approved ■ Pipeline



Map Key

- 1 Lenamore Wood
- 2 West Muchlarnick
- Existing sites
- Temperate rainforest zone

9 further site acquisitions are in progress within the rainforest zone



SPOTLIGHT ON

Glen Auldyn

For the staff at Manx Wildlife Trust, the nature reserve at Glen Auldyn has been a long time in the making. Plans were afoot to manage the land for wildlife decades before the site was announced late last year. In fact, Head of Conservation & Land, David Bellamy, wrote his post-graduate dissertation on the site back in 2018.

The mission? To create a diverse and varied area of woodland communities, with 70% tree cover, comprising all the native Manx species, covering some 5% of the Isle of Man, for the benefit of wildlife and people, for the next 50 years.

The 458 acre site is now fully open to the public, creating a huge new area for the island's inhabitants and visitors to explore.

Glen Auldyn is so large that it contains the headwaters of an entire river catchment above the town of Ramsey. This provides a unique research opportunity to investigate how woodland creation will impact water storage and slow peak river flow downstream. Hydrological monitoring points are now being installed to study downstream flood reduction benefits.

Right by the main entrance, the site has a small patch of temperate rainforest, one of only a few places on the island where native woodland has persisted. With waterfalls cascading between ferns, and cool shade beneath the canopy, it gives a wonderful glimpse into the future of the whole site. Once the trees are established, it will be well worth coming back to see year on year.



Puss moth caterpillar
Glen Auldyn





With the addition of the Glen Auldyn estate, land secured for temperate rainforest restoration by Manx Wildlife Trust now covers approximately 1.5% of the entire Isle of Man!

SPOTLIGHT ON

Lenamore Wood

Lenamore Wood the most recent site and also the first to finish planting: a fantastic achievement for Ulster Wildlife Trust. The site was preferentially sold to Ulster Wildlife Trust due to the vendor wanting it to be protected for wildlife. It is surrounded by mature hedges and a sliver of ancient woodland on one side, all of which provide useful seed sources to support the woodland establishment. The site has received very positive media coverage across Northern Ireland and been visited by the Daera Minister Andrew Muir for the planting of the final trees.

"Nature-based solutions are fantastic because not only do they address flooding and water quality issues, they also provide a home for nature. So you're ticking so many boxes; restoring nature and helping to alleviate some of the problems that we face side by side. Plus they make the place look beautiful as well."

Rosemary Mullholand

Head of Nature Recovery, Ulster Wildlife Trust



SPOTLIGHT ON

West Muchlarnick

This site might arguably be the richest for existing temperate rainforest features. It sits alongside some excellent examples of temperate rainforest in the West Looe river catchment. The restoration potential of this site is therefore very good and should provide a brilliant example for the programme. However, this has meant that the plans need to be very carefully thought through to protect and enhance the existing features. This has included surveys for lichen species, planning of light and shade within the new woodland, and installing a large new pond storing more than 1,400 cubic metres of water which will increase humidity on the site. The first 5 hectares of the site has now been planted and the remaining area will be completed next winter.

"I think understanding the impacts of climate change on these woods is going to be really key. Specifically what things we can do to improve the resilience by rewetting areas or retaining humidity.

It's amazing seeing volunteers out planting today after spending so much time surveying, looking at maps and writing funding applications. It's so nice to see local people actually getting trees in the ground and the positive impact it has on them. Next year we'll be doing a lot more of that."

Alison Smith

Temperate Rainforest Project Manager, Cornwall Wildlife Trust



@LEWIS JEFFERIES



@LEWIS JEFFERIES



"The resilience of the trees absolutely amazes me - planting here they've got a good chance and, when it's finally all wooded, I hope people will come here and appreciate it."

**Lesley (registered dormouse monitor)
& Michael (bird surveyor)**

Volunteer tree planters at West Muchlarnick

Site impacts

Temperate rainforest restoration is a long-term project and will depend on future generations caring for these places. Each of our new reserves has its own character, so we work with people early on to make sure woodland creation reflects local knowledge, local priorities and local aspirations.

These sites are already starting to become places where people connect with nature and are part of its recovery. And because local Wildlife Trusts are part of the communities they serve, throughout the programme we've collaborated with our neighbours through local consultations, school planting days, site walks, community nurseries and wildlife surveys.

Impacts for nature

Bowden Pillars:

- Bullfinches and a firecrest were seen at the site this winter. And in early spring, a pair of kestrels and several ravens were spotted gathering nesting materials.
- A bat walk was held during the autumn - 20 people of all ages were shown how to use echolocation detectors and got to see and hear a number of different bat species. In total, five species were recorded: a really good number for the time of year and for a new site.

Isle of Man

- Glen Auldyn is now declared on the Manx Nature Recovery Network as part of the IOM's 30 by 30 commitment. Its purchase brought the Island's delivery from 19 to 20%.

Bryn Ifan

- A wider scope of surveys - including for bees, reptiles, lichens and mosses - are planned for the coming year, with volunteers keen to take on many of these themselves.
- The wildflower meadow seeded last Autumn is showing promise, with key species like yellow rattle starting to emerge: a good indicator that the space is going in the right direction.
- At Cors Y Wlad, three Carneddau ponies began grazing over winter to manage the wetland for marsh fritillary butterflies. Controlling the vegetation will benefit the butterfly's preferred flowering plant - devil's bit scabious.



Lenamore Wood

- Red squirrels have already been spotted on site - a camera has been installed to keep track of their activity. Fingers crossed!

Park Gill

- There have been regular sightings of a pair of male black grouse, ring ouzels possibly breeding, along with frequent sightings of hen harriers and short-eared owls, plus upland species such as curlews, dippers and grey wagtails.

West Muchlarnick

- The rare and declining temperate rainforest lichen, *lobarina scrobiculata* was found in Yearle's Wood, an adjacent Cornwall Wildlife Trust woodland. This is an exciting find and demonstrates the potential for this area as temperate rainforest habitat. The lichen was on a fallen ash, so will be transplanted to a nearby sycamore.

Economic impacts

Isle of Man

- Received a £25k Manx Lottery Trust grant to double the size of Milntown tree nursery.

Skiddaw

- A new project officer was hired to meet the demands of the project.
- Other large ground working contracts include fencing, peatland restoration (at Skiddaw) and track works.

Pembrokeshire

- A new Reserves Officer was hired to help manage the new rainforest sites including Trellwyn Fach.
- Large tree planting contracts given to Welsh forestry contractors, helping to support local jobs.

Devon and Yorkshire

- Local farmers to benefit from grazing opportunities at programme sites in Devon and Yorkshire.



Social impacts

Bowden Pillars

- This winter, twenty two planting days were held including a wider public event in February half term with 70-80 people out planting despite the heavy rain!

Lenamore Wood

- A drop-in session for local stakeholders was held with neighbouring landowners, a local Councillor, children's nursery leader, a Forest School practitioner and other interested individuals all showing up to learn about the project.



Skiddaw

- Roughly 80 volunteers regularly get involved with seed collection, many of whom also help on the community nurseries.
- Through a partnership with a local school, local kids will have the opportunity to get involved with the project by growing trees in a small onsite nursery.

West Muchlarnick

- A school tree planting day was held with 32 pupils from Polperro Primary Academy. After its success, plans are underway for this school to help with summer monitoring and further planting next winter.

Trellwyn Fach

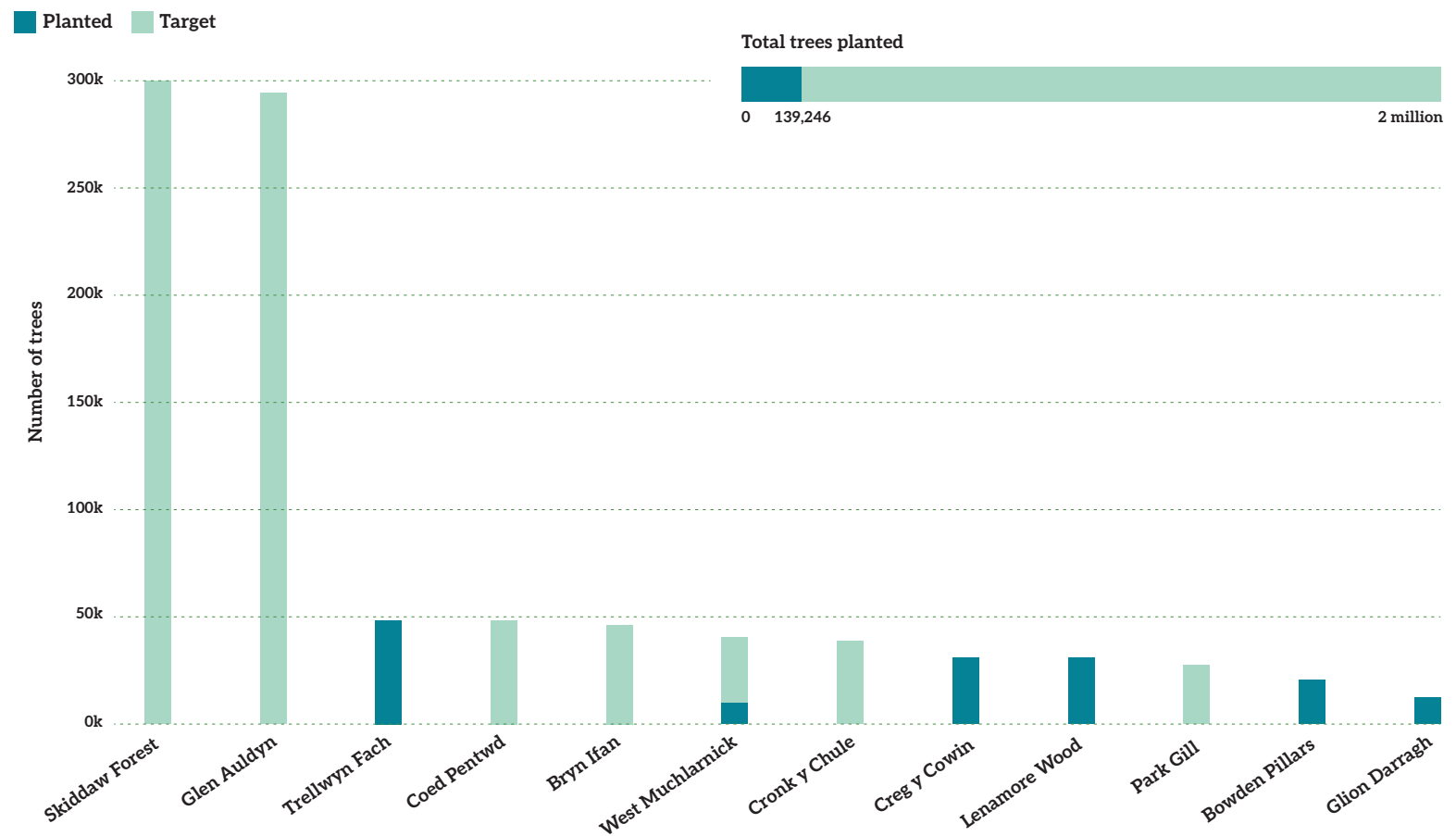
- Local school children got involved in a 'bracken bashing' event in late summer last year.

Tree planting

Planting work begins well before trees are actually put in the ground; Trusts have been thinking carefully about how and where to source their seeds for new rainforests.

Some are working with local organisations and ancient tree nurseries to ensure seeds are local as possible, while others are setting up their own entirely new nurseries. Many Trusts are organising seed collection days for volunteers to get involved in the process too.

Progress on tree planting



Media statistics

A rare ancient rainforest set to come back to life



ULSTER WILDLIFE
Rosemary Mulholland from Ulster Wildlife at the site of the restoration project in Omagh

30,000 trees planted to create temperate rainforest



GRAHAM MAKEPEACE-WARNE

The final tree at Crag y Cowin nature reserve was planted by a team of volunteers

Richard Baker



As rainforest gardens new home at Bristol Zoo. Image provided by Bristol Zoological Society

Bristol Zoo Project: new home for the British Rainforest Garden

4 min

2025 Wild Round-Up For Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

nature



Pond at Askham Bog Photo: ©Dave Powell

New Reserve In The Heart Of The Dales Will Return Rainforests To Yorkshire

nature



New images show the Lake District in its natural form

22ND MAY ENVIRONMENT



By Tom Cockburn
Reporter

01/04/25 – 01/04/26

Keyword: AVIVA

Keyword: RAINFOREST

134

Coverage numbers

609

Coverage numbers

3.1bn

Potential reach/ viewings

14.9bn

Potential reach/ viewings

£279k

Advertising equivalent value

£2m

Advertising equivalent value

Research framework

Temperate Rainforest Research Programme:

The Wildlife Trusts' Temperate Rainforest Research Programme is part of the Aviva-funded rainforest restoration programme. It was established to strengthen the evidence base for restoring Britain's temperate rainforests, supporting practical decisions about where restoration is most likely to succeed, how sites should be managed, and what wider ecological, climate and social benefits restored rainforest may deliver. Phase 1 began in April 2025 and runs to March 2028, with a second phase expected to overlap from 2027 and continue to 2030.

Purpose and priorities

The programme aims to improve understanding of the status, management and restoration potential of temperate rainforest in a changing climate. Its objectives include producing evidence-informed restoration guidance, understanding bioclimatic constraints, improving knowledge of soils, hydrology and biodiversity, measuring greenhouse gas exchange, assessing resilience to threats, and evaluating wider economic, cultural and social benefits. A long-term ambition is to establish The Wildlife Trusts as a centre of excellence for temperate rainforest restoration in the British Isles.

Three priority areas shape the research portfolio: understanding the baseline, understanding the restoration process, and understanding restoration impact. Together these ask where rainforests can establish now and in the future, which methods and monitoring approaches work best, how resilience can be embedded, and whether restored rainforest contributes to biodiversity recovery, net zero, socio-economic value, health and wellbeing.

Phase 1 projects and early progress

The first grant round funded six projects: three main projects and three shorter scholarship or pilot projects. These began in April 2025 (except a co-funded Bangor University PhD starting in October 2025). They involve different restoration methods: biodiversity monitoring, microclimate mapping, landscape connectivity, greenhouse gas exchange in lower plants, and the social justice impacts of land-use change.

- **Restoration methods:** Bangor University and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales are testing establishment methods for rainforest trees on challenging sites affected by bracken, poor soils and grazing. Experimental design, site surveys, protocols, seedling procurement, soil sampling and planting have been completed.
- **Acoustic biomonitoring:** Cardiff University, Wildersensing and UWE Bristol are developing non-invasive soundscape monitoring for biodiversity above and below ground. Summer and winter data have been collected across four sites, with early results supporting the approach.
- **Microclimate mapping:** Leeds University is analysing and monitoring rainforest microclimates to identify priority areas for restoration and assess climate resilience. Microclimate loggers have been installed across several regions, and early rainfall/runoff modelling suggests mature rainforest may reduce peak river flows more effectively than conventional broadleaf woodland.
- **Species connectivity:** Forest Research is modelling how indicator species, especially lichens, may disperse through current and future rainforest networks. Initial work focuses on south-west England and the Isle of Man, with habitat suitability mapping and modelling code in development.
- **Lower plants and greenhouse gases:** Bangor University is assessing whether lichens, bryophytes and other cryptogamic covers act as sinks for non-CO2 greenhouse gases. Summer and autumn field campaigns have been completed, a winter campaign added, and preliminary analysis is underway.
- **Just land-use transition:** A Bangor University PhD is exploring the social justice implications of rainforest restoration, particularly for Welsh agricultural communities. Early work includes a literature review, site visits, stakeholder connections and preparation for comparative fieldwork in Wales and the Isle of Man.

Key outputs from this year

The first year has built strong foundations for a nationally significant applied research programme. Practical fieldwork is underway, monitoring systems are being tested, datasets are being assembled, and cross-institutional collaboration is developing quickly. Several projects have already generated outputs earlier than expected, including papers written or submitted and an ArcGIS StoryMap sharing the acoustic monitoring work.

A particularly important early benefit is that the Aviva-funded programme is catalysing wider research activity. A UKRI large grant expression of interest, led by Leeds University and involving many of the programme partners, demonstrates that the funded projects are already helping to build a collaborative research community around temperate rainforest restoration.

Looking ahead

In the next stage, the programme will move from set-up and baseline collection towards repeat monitoring, deeper analysis and synthesis across projects. Priorities include completing seasonal data collection, refining restoration monitoring methods, testing ecological and social assumptions, and turning emerging evidence into practical guidance for Wildlife Trusts and partners. The early progress suggests the programme is well placed to inform rainforest restoration practice while strengthening the UK evidence base for climate-resilient habitat recovery.



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Great horsetail

Monitoring framework

Creating and restoring temperate rainforests over the next 100 years requires a robust and consistent approach to tracking change across our landscapes over the long term. This past year, we have been developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to underpin nature recovery activities happening across all our sites. This framework serves as the backbone for a variety of data collection and analytical methods for understanding and demonstrating changes resulting from our work, enabling us to:

1. Establish a clear baseline of environmental, biodiversity and socioeconomic conditions.
2. Track changes over time and adapt management accordingly.
3. Demonstrate impacts across biodiversity and socioeconomic targets.

Through a series of workshops and consultations with technical experts and delivery partners, we have identified a core set of surveys that will be implemented across all sites within the Temperate Rainforest Programme. Our approaches to providing a continuous evidence base are rooted in five key principles, where monitoring is:

- Standardised, enabling comparison across sites.
- Objective-led, aligned with restoration goals.
- Scalable, using emerging technologies and citizen science.
- Transparent, with data and learnings shared effectively.
- Collaborative, engaging local communities, practitioners and researchers.



@ANETT KISS

Collecting data for the various ecological surveys will make use of tools and protocols which provide reliability, cost-effectiveness and suitability for long-term deployment. The methods we will implement are backed by research and built on existing national recording schemes, while also integrating citizen science and emerging technologies, such as acoustic monitoring and remote sensing. This approach allows us to combine scientific rigour with practical scalability for robust, long-term monitoring.

Monitoring progress across sites

Various ecological surveys are already underway across our 12 sites, collecting critical baseline information of the landscapes in the start of their journey to becoming temperate rainforests.

Importantly, all our sites have been surveyed for a comprehensive summary of their current habitat types and conditions. We have also started using drone surveys, combining high resolution RGB imagery with LiDAR data to generate detailed orthomosaic maps and 3D models of the landscapes. These will allow us to track changes in structural complexity, vertical layering and canopy growth of our rainforests over time. Staff and volunteers have been conducting species surveys, including on birds and insects, which tell us about the current state and composition of biodiversity on our sites. Tracking trends in community composition and monitoring indicator species will help us understand how the current landscapes transition into functioning temperate rainforest ecosystems. As a critical element of that, specialists have begun surveying existing areas of woodland and other suitable habitats for source populations of mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi which we might expect to colonise our newly-planted rainforest areas over time.



Monitoring in practice

Passive Acoustic Monitoring

Temperate rainforests are characterised by rich biological communities, many of which are often difficult to survey directly. Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) uses small audio recorders to capture sound signatures produced by wildlife, enabling scalable, long-term, and non-invasive monitoring. The resulting soundscapes provide a powerful way to capture shifts in complex ecological communities and monitor the presence of indicator species associated with developing woodlands. We have begun deploying AudioMoths across all our sites to record sounds produced by birds and bats. These groups are key indicators of woodland condition as their activity patterns are closely linked to habitat structure, vegetation complexity and food availability. With AI-enabled analysis, we will use these recordings to derive detailed information about species richness, community composition and wider acoustic indices to test whether our sites are developing into complex, species-rich communities expected of functioning temperate rainforests.



 Early purple orchid

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The Wildlife Trusts are a federation of 46 Wildlife Trusts and a central charity (the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts). Each is an independent charity with a shared mission for nature's recovery.

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Thank you

The programme owes its thanks to a great number of individuals and organisations, but in particular, Aviva, without whom it would not exist.

We would also like to thank the other NGOs working on rainforest restoration across the UK including Plantlife, the RSPB, the National Trust and Woodland Trust, as well as several regional alliances.

Supported by



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