

Project Planning Grant – Summit to Sea

Project Summary Information	
Project Title (Max. 12 words)	Summit to Sea: Pause & Planning Phase
Project duration	12-24 months (dependent on Covid-19 impacts)
Project location (Country(ies), region)	Mid Wales, UK
Project budget (grant requested from the ELP in US\$)	\$198,622

Lead Organisation Information	
Organisation Legal Name	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Postal Address	Wales Headquarters Castlebridge 3 5-19 Cowbridge Road East Cardiff CF11 9AB
Website	https://www.rspb.org.uk/
Project Lead Contact – Provide the information below for the person responsible for correspondence with the ELP regarding this project.	
Name	Fiona Walker
Position in organisation	Senior Conservation Officer
E-mail	
Telephone	
Skype	
Organisation Chief Executive – Name and contact information for the chief executive or person authorised to sign	Katie-Jo Luxton, Director RSPB Cymru

contracts on behalf of your organisation.	
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Project partners

(N.B As explained in the main application this list is a starting point and we hope to expand this to include a range of other organisations)

Please list below your partners at this stage. Add more rows as required.

Partner Name	Contact person	Position
Coed Cadw (Woodland Trust)	Natalie Buttriss	Director of Woodland Trust Wales
Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust	Clive Faulkner	Chief Executive Officer
Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (Gwynedd Council)	Alison Palmer Hargrave	SAC Officer
Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)	Mick Green	Senior Policy Advisor
Marine Conservation Society (MCS)	Peter Richardson	Head of Ocean Recovery
WWF - UK	Anne Meikle	Director WWF Cymru

Plans for the planning phase

What you will do with your Project Planning Grant – A narrative description of what you will do to plan and prepare for restoration of the landscape, what you expect to achieve by the end of this planning phase (outcomes) and why each outcome is necessary (1.5 pages). Please also complete the summary table below.

INTRODUCTION

Please refer to *–the Summit to Sea Concept Note* (Appendix 1) for a project overview, including a review of the experience to date and a background to why this planning phase is essential.

The Summit to Sea project is seeking funding for a full development phase to take place over the next 12-24 months in response to the current status of the project. Within this planning phase the overarching aim will be

to work towards how the project can co-produce with local stakeholders, landowners and sea users a nature-rich zone from the top of Pumlumon - the highest point in mid-Wales – down through wooded valleys to the Dyfi Estuary and out into Cardigan Bay. This will build on linking existing habitats by enhancing and restoring these, whilst delivering a co-managed marine area to improve the management for marine habitat restoration and link this, through coastal and transitional habitats, to the land area.

We will expand the restoration of natural and naturalised processes across this area through peat bog, river, marine and woodland restoration. Natural patterns and distributions of species will be encouraged as the habitat changes and native species will expand their range. The project aims to deliver significant ecosystem services across the catchment. Flood risk to downstream communities will be reduced through interventions developed with local stakeholders and likely to include peat bog restoration and native woodland, riparian copses and scrub creation. Carbon sequestration and water quality will improve significantly, and recreational users (local and visitor alike) will benefit in terms of health and wellbeing.

VISION AND OUTCOMES

The revised outcomes for the project are as follows:

1. Local communities and wider public have had meaningful input into the vision and objectives, informing, shaping, and learning about the potential for nature-based activities which align with local culture and values.
2. Habitats are mapped and a strategy is developed to increase connectivity between wildlife rich ecosystems and ecologically positive interventions. Supporting new and existing links between terrestrial and marine towards continued ecological enhancement through engagement of relevant owners/stewards and resource users.
3. Nature-based enterprises are identified, along with opportunities to network and further develop nature based supply chains.
4. The local partnership to deliver the full project is identified / established including agreement on effective governance mechanisms for collaborative decision-making, collective visioning and benefit/revenue sharing.
5. Potential project interventions are locally driven and in support of national policy. Interventions engage public sector bodies where appropriate.
6. A cross sectoral monitoring and evaluation plan developed for the project, with experts from NGOs, government and academic institutions.
7. A funding proposal, if appropriate, for the full project is prepared, along with supporting documentation, and submitted to the ELP.

These outcomes sit below the currently revised vision of:

This is a vision for the project, which can be developed further into a vision for the area as part of the planning phase in conjunction with stakeholders and community representatives

**Ecologically biodiverse and connected ecosystems delivering benefits economically, ecologically and socially, through a connected terrestrial and marine landscape, appropriate to the local place and culture
*That will sustain robust ecosystem services, through a participatory approach which is underpinned by stronger, more nature friendly business, economy and supply chains***

The Summit to Sea partnership has been clear that the ecological aspects of the project remain a priority long term objective, but that a linked up mosaic of diverse habitats rich in biodiversity with a range of land use will depend on landowner cooperation. But we would explore developing habitat connectivity through agreed corridors, with specific focus on riparian links, existing service corridors (road / rail / etc) and collaborative management across adjoining existing landownerships with compatible habitat types (e.g. woodland can be in patches but underground mycorrhizal associations also benefit from direct connection). There is confidence that this will be achievable in the long term, and there are clusters of landowners already working to develop an ecological intervention approach. However, based on the learnings of the past 18 months the Summit to Sea project needs the time to deliver a truly co-designed project with stakeholders. This will help to secure community buy-in, establish a joint vision and expectations for the delivery phase and create co-ownership of solutions that are more likely to be sustained and enhanced beyond delivery phase.

To date, the Summit to Sea project has provided **valuable lessons** for the complexities of land and sea scape scale approaches when mixed with a rich historical and cultural background as follows. Much of the natural resource-based product from the area is exported and local supply chains have been lost in favour of large export supply chains with limited local benefit or control. Consequently, although landowners want to see more biodiversity on their land, it is not easy for them to see what economic benefits this can give locally. Recent research in Powys suggests nature friendly, nature based (and their supply chains) businesses don't always see commercial advantage in promoting their nature based credentials. Building a greater understanding of how nature friendly business works for the area and how it can maximise commercial benefit for the local economy will be vital to longer term nature friendly business and supply chain success.

PAUSE / REMOTE LOW LEVEL ENGAGEMENT PHASE

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the proposed planning phase will be split into two phases. This first **(Pause/Remote low-level engagement)** will be flexible in response to social distancing restrictions, reduced capacity of organisations with furloughed staff, and the immediate impact on the pandemic to communities within the area.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND BUY IN

The prime focus will be on maintaining key stakeholder engagement, crucial to the project not being seen as abandoning the area while also enabling ongoing conversations with stakeholder organisations and individuals with a clear vision for our new working practises, developing potential involvement in the project during the full planning phase. Although we have built stronger relationships with key organisations, it has been difficult to provide clear communications on how to become involved in the project whilst the transition phase has been occurring. Many key stakeholders have been unable to commit whilst the project was still under review/resetting. But with the clear separation from Rewilding Britain, a new host organisation with RSPB, and a clear timetable, the project will be able to have more detailed conversations with these individuals and organisations. This may be on a one to one scale (online through zoom or phone calls), or it may be through invitations to join one of the renewed working groups, which could include: ecological, enterprises/businesses, monitoring and evaluation, communications and engagement, or policy. There are also a number of additional organisations that we have yet to fully engage with that we will seek to begin focused conversations with.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

It is imperative to broaden the steering group during this time. The work in engaging with key stakeholders (both individuals, organisations and public sector/government) will lead to new partners engaged in the development of the project. Having a broad church of voices will strengthen the planning phase (and eventual delivery phase) of the project. By continuing conversations with local authorities, Welsh Government representatives and Natural Resources Wales the project will be able to align its development with evolving policy. The result being that Welsh Government land/sea management policy is woven through the project delivery, creating a more sustainable long-term vision for land/sea management in the area with a lasting legacy. Taking the time to encourage new partners to the project during this pause will make overcoming the negative impressions of the project more likely as it will have improved cross-sectoral representation, and therefore lead to better engagement during the planning phase.

During this initial phase the project will ensure that internal operational functions, such as governance, working groups and decision-making processes and procedures are fully functioning. Learning from the lessons of the last 18 months the project will be in a stronger position to deliver the full planning phase. The project will finalise the internal processes tested over the last six months, which have been partially developed into working management and recording systems (these include a clear process to identify and develop appropriate interventions with stakeholders; recording engagement; capturing stakeholder views and ideas; developing funded interventions against clear criteria; management and governance; etc)

INTERVENTIONS

The overall vision and direction has already been developed (as laid out in the *Concept Paper, Appendix 1*) as has a clear process of steps (see *Appendix 2: Process Approach*) which outlines a clear process to determine which interventions are developed and delivered to best achieve the vision.

The overall ecological objectives have been drafted (based on engagement and feedback to date) and work has begun to identify ecological, social and economic outcomes that can be delivered through a suite of synergistic interventions to achieve real benefit at scale. Examples of potential interventions are detailed in *Appendix 3: Delivering The Vision*.

The project needs to build on giving a clear sense of what it is aiming to achieve ecologically and how participation and engagement will be implemented. There is no lack of positive actions that have already been thought of or carried out within the area. The 'golden key' will be in joining up and enhancing activities at a land and sea scape scale, with the project providing the participatory framework to do so in a way that connects natural resources and the users of natural resources of both the land and sea.

The project will continue to change its process to one that empowers and supports the finding of local solutions in the way that a more positive approach (such as appreciative enquiry) as well as a more empowering approach (such as participatory learning and action) can enable. This will feed into the wider engagement strategy for the planning phase. A clear and inspiring communications plan will be developed which compliments the effective delivery of the engagement.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Based on the overall vision, objectives and outcomes (*Appendix 1*), the monitoring and evaluation system will be designed with support from experts in the advisory group and the ELP staff team.

This work will be further informed and developed by building on work already done with support from local ecologists, partners own monitoring, NRW information, and social research by Bangor University.

The aim will be to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system which captures both qualitative and quantitative information to inform change driven by the proposed interventions, in a way that captures the social, economic and ecological value of every intervention, rather than as a set of separate elements. This framework will be designed to allow for further addition as iterations identify and develop new interventions.

The appended table, (*Appendix 3: Delivering the Vision*) summarises examples of some of the identified interventions and how they contribute to achieving ecological connectivity and impact at scale.

PLANNING / FULL ENGAGEMENT PHASE

The second phase (**Planning/Full Engagement**) will begin once deemed suitable and safe by RSPB in consultation with Partners/Stakeholders and in line with Government advice. This will be based on the following principles:

8. Covid-19 Government restrictions are lifted sufficiently to complete a meaningful participatory co-creation process
9. there is sufficient capacity within the RSPB and stakeholders to engage with the planning process in a meaningful way.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND BUY IN

This phase will be a full planning phase and will include extensive engagement that will co-design the full project proposal for submission to ELP. This engagement will involve a range of activities working towards the overarching objective of increased and better involvement of stakeholders. Activities will include 1-1 meetings, focused workshops which will explore the range of focuses of the project, community drop-in sessions and talks with a range of community groups and organisations.

Due to the situation with Covid-19 there may be situations where we need to go back to the engagement alternatives detailed in Appendix 4 if we are unable to carry out face to face interactions. Therefore, in relation to engagement the pause and planning phases are not distinctly separate as they will need to adapt to external regulations relating to the pandemic.

We are also mindful of the areas of the community who may struggle with online interaction, either due to poor rural broadband connection or unfamiliarity with online meeting platforms. We would utilise the strong local paper network (Papurau Bro) to counter this, and offer a phone number for those interested in taking part to call. Planning for this critical path of decision making has begun and preparations for alternative engagement techniques are detailed in *Appendix 4: Engagement Alternatives*.

INTERVENTIONS

The project has already prepared an initial series of interventions recommended by the local community, partner organisations and others. These potential interventions are just that and will need to be planned as to how they fit strategically within the landscape and worked through with stakeholders and communities in terms of future delivery. The planning phase will work to ratify, add to and refine a series of interventions. These initial interventions range from ecological interventions to improve connectivity and enhance biodiversity, such as a riparian restoration programme, which will result in healthier connectivity from land to sea through the riparian zone; which will enhance natural processes and have associated economic benefits through reduced flooding. To recommendations to establish a multi-use route (walking and cycling) which connects the Cletwr woods and the Ynys Las nature reserve, which will also link economic opportunities such as the successful Cletwr community shop and cafe.

The emerging interventions have been developed into a draft summary. Final decisions on the most appropriate interventions will be identified by finalising an agreed set of criteria, which will ensure a strategic landscape scale benefit, these intervention ideas can be developed through a programme of co-design/production, resulting in a clear set of interventions, fully costed which will form a large part of the future ELP funding bid. By working to develop a project which delivers positive change for communities, ecology and economy the project will also be directly supporting the seven well-being goals which make up the Future Generations Act of the Welsh Government: a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a more equal Wales, a healthier Wales, a Wales

of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language, and a globally responsible Wales.

Meanwhile the existing project partners will come together to look at the area, and their land holdings within it, with a focus on how they can change their management plans to encourage more naturalised processes. Taking opportunities to learn from the experiences of these partners on other landscape scale projects such as the Treescapes, Celtic Rainforest, Living Levels or Living Landscapes to inform decisions. If other landowning partners join the partnership these will be incorporated to this vision, growing the potential for real change across the area.

A significant amount of land within the area is managed by NRW for Welsh Government on behalf of the people of Wales. In addition, they also influence other land in private and public ownership through grant funded interventions, SSSI agreements, management agreements and other methods. The recently published Area Statements draw together the overarching ecological issues for the area and help identify strategic ecological risks, needs and opportunity. Through continuing to strengthen and develop our relationship with NRW (as well as through long term relationships already held with them by individual project partners) the project would seek to benefit from a more joined up approach. This will include on going conversations with NRW as to how to involve their own key sites, such as Nant y Moch, Cwm Einion forestry, and the Cors Fochno bog within the project landscape. This will be in terms of both the management within their own plans in a way that better connects at landscape scale with other holdings, as well as their influence beyond that.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Integral to this planning phase is to begin planning the monitoring and evaluation element across all aspects of the work. A monitoring and evaluation plan will be submitted as part of the delivery bid documents for approval by ELP. This will ensure the project team, partners, stakeholders, have a central resource of information to make informed strategic decisions in the future and will establish an integrated action learning approach which provides best value of money for the project as well as provides useful information for future funding opportunities (private, public or third sector). The project will consult with a range of people who will be coordinated through a monitoring and evaluation specific working group.

BUDGET

Although budget planning for these phases has been calculated across a year in each phase, they have been designed such that if the principles mentioned above are met engagement can be increased swiftly. We have also planned our engagement work to be done virtually if required, with a worldwide increase in this technology and a wider range of people than ever before using video calling, we are confident that this method will have integrity to provide what is needed.

PROJECT LEGACY

During this project we would look to develop answers to the following:

How could the project inform national bodies (NRW, WG) and help test practical delivery and implications?

10. How could the project unlock further funding for greater impact?

11. How can the ELP funding help to drive and unlock positive supply chain and other economic changes which better support local people and nature, ensuring that a more nature-based and nature friendly economy underpins the legacy of local social and ecological benefit?

Conclusion

It is not possible to pre-define the landscape through these phases, however, the processes proposed will enable us to work with stakeholders to develop clear ecological interventions with social and economic benefit which work towards the vision. We have however identified a number of common themes on which to focus where ecological enhancement will occur and deliver both connectivity and scale. The resulting 'landscape' could be ecologically robust in a way which is fitting to the local cultural practices, resource user needs and economic benefits.

With local people proposing and/or developing the best solutions, these are more likely to be sustained and enhanced, beyond funding. This funding is therefore catalyzing a process which can be held up as an exemplar for finding ecologically robust solutions in populated and resource dependent areas.

Project management – Provide a description of how the work will be managed (roles and responsibilities of the project partners, how they will communicate etc.). (1 page)

Project Host & Staff Team

This phase of the project will be hosted by RSPB. RSPB will hold reporting, financial and HR responsibilities for the pause and planning phase. RSPB will provide line management for the Project Development Officer and a project management structure will be put in place in terms of a project plan, project executive (senior officer), project board (members of senior management from different aspects of the organisation), and project team (delivery group involving the different aspects of the project eg monitoring, engagement, policy). RSPB uses a well-established Project Management Framework, which is informed by PRINCE2.

RSPB are accountable for ensuring that the process of this project is adhered to, they are not responsible for making decisions on what the outcomes of this process are.

The project will employ one full time staff member (Project Development Officer) who will be hosted by RSPB. This role will be responsible for the design and overall coordination of all project work and engagement. This role will be undertaken by the current Community Engagement Coordinator. By retaining this team member the project will benefit greatly from continuity of project knowledge, positive relationships with key stakeholders and an understanding of the history of the project and forward future direction.

The project will also employ a handful of contractors to include additional support to strategy, engagement design, monitoring and evaluation planning and communications. Employing contractors to support these aspects will keep the project lean and give maximum flexibility to bring the best skills in for each aspect.

Project Partners

All current partners (listed above) have confirmed they are committed to the project and have agreed in principle to continue supporting the project through a Memorandum of Understanding. This list may be added to with other partners coming on board during the planning phase.

Role of project partners:

Roles may change over the period of these phases as new governance procedures are re-established. This phase of the project is a participatory co-creation process where views from the project partners (MoU group) and stakeholders will be sought. As RSPB Cymru is the legal entity in the project, the accountability, responsibility and decision making for the delivery of this planning process lies with RSPB.

The project partners will support the Project Development Officer in delivering the above Objectives and Outcomes, this will be done through the Project Development Officer being in regular contact with all key contacts of partner organisations.

Partners will also provide staff resources to contribute in specific working groups which will be developed throughout the 'Pause' phase. However, the membership of these working groups is expected to be broader than the current project partners.

Risks and assumptions – What factors would (a) prevent you from carrying out your planning activities; (b) prevent delivery of a future restoration project (0.5 pages)

Factors which may prevent planning activities:

- 1. Covid-19 - the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be substantial, however the above plan is designed to be flexible to the situation and makes full use of online/video conferencing technology**

Furlough

A number of staff from key organisations may be in furlough during the initial stage. However, partner organisations have agreed that certain staff are available, having not been furloughed. External organisations will be liaised with predominantly during the second phase of the project once furloughing will have finished.

Gatherings/Social Distancing

Most intensive engagement with the broader community will take place in the planning phase of this proposal, which will begin once restrictions are lifted. However, online workshops are being planned as alternatives alongside establishment and promotion of clear public lines of communications to the Project Development Officer. It is hoped that outdoor sessions may be an option as easier to remain a safe distance apart whilst also good for dynamics to be on site looking at real issues

2. Further opposition locally

Through the successful implementation of a full engagement and co-production process this risk is mitigated but is something the project will be continually aware of. The local group (made up of a number of individuals and organisation representatives) which has raised the most concerns about the original project has been consulted on the proposal for a planning phase in a genuinely participatory way and are open to this project progressing in this way so we do not believe there will be opposition to the planning phases if the project follows the principles of a participatory process. The re-building of trust has continued through the process of preparing this application as a number of key stakeholders have been consulted on the contents and have provided feedback which has been incorporated into this.

3. Welsh Government Land Management Consultation

The Welsh Government Land Management Consultation on the future of farming and land management under the current timetable runs until the end of 2020. Those affected most by this will be land managers in the area and policy staff from organisations involved in contributing to this process. It will inevitably create some uncertainty until the legislation is in place, and there may be a reluctance amongst some land users to be involved in the project as a result. However, the main engagement period for the project will take place once this has been finalised.

4. Loss of Staff

The project partnership will provide support to the Project Development Officer and RSPB as project hosts through this phase have well established HR support systems in place. There are also now enough people locally who have been involved in the project and know the key stakeholders to step in and provide back up if necessary.

Factors which would prevent delivery of future restoration project

That the listed objectives are not sufficiently completed

- Lack of interest amongst community in delivering
- Insufficient stakeholder involvement
- No support for a project of this type
- Criteria not well enough defined
- Stakeholder Reluctance in participating in monitoring & evaluation
- Failure for partner organisations and key stakeholders (landowners) to agree on a shared vision
- Further international pandemics in the project lifetime;
- The vision of partners and stakeholders isn't consistent with ELP funding criteria

The above risks and assumptions have been considered in the objectives and outcomes listed earlier in the proposal to mitigate these at all stages.

Project Summary

We're reviewing the overall **project objectives** to ensure they truly deliver the revised vision in the future delivery phase, guided by a revised logical framework to ensure a more integrated, cross-sectoral approach. The outcomes are likely to remain the same but the framing of the objectives is likely to change to ensure a more coherent structure for delivering the vision. The table below identifies key **outcomes** being worked towards during the development phase with a view towards informing the final objectives.

Objectives/Outcomes	Outputs	Activities to deliver the outcome	2020			2021			2022
			June to August	Sept to Nov	Dec to Feb	March to May	June to August	Sept to Nov	Dec to Feb
<p>1. Local communities and wider public have had meaningful input into the vision and objectives, informing, shaping, and learning about the potential for nature-based activities which align with local culture and values.</p>	Vision document signed up to by key stakeholders	1:1 Meetings with Key Stakeholders							
		Partner Group Meetings							
		Working Group Meetings							
	Number of website posts	Website Reviewed & Updated news articles featuring project changes							
		Monthly Updates via local press, e.g. Papurau Bro, Cambrian News etc							
	Stakeholders kept informed	Sharing project documentation throughout the process							
		Engagement Plan prepared, finalised and implemented							
	Communications Plan	Communications Plan prepared, finalised and implemented							
		Regular broader communications through website articles, newsletters, articles etc							
		Online talks on the project							

	provide greater connectivity, supply chain resilience and benefit to local people, economy and ecology.									
4. The local partnership to deliver the full project is identified / established including agreement on effective governance mechanisms for collaborative decision-making, collective visioning and benefit/revenue sharing.	List of partners List of wider range of organisations involved in project development Governance document setting out the structure Highlight reports Reports for ELP Claims to ELP Budget tracking spreadsheet	Mapping of relevant organisations/key stakeholders against existing research and engagement undertaken 1:1 Meetings to discuss and agree vision/proposal Invitations to join newly identified governance/planning structure groups Working groups established and meeting, feed back to partners group Redrafting of organisation structure for reviewing Group terms of reference/ agreement of governance drafted and reviewed Reporting to ELP every 6 months Budget tracking Preparation of claims Line management of project officer Partners group Meetings								
5. Potential project interventions are locally driven and in support of national policy. Interventions engage public sector bodies where appropriate.	Document detailing how the interventions are aligned with the Environment and Well-being of Future Generations Acts	Regular communications with NRW and WG Assessment of how interventions can be supported Assessment of the economics of interventions								
		Establish a working group for M&E								

6. A cross sectoral monitoring and evaluation plan developed for the project, with experts from NGOs, government and academic institutions.	Monitoring and evaluation Plan	Develop a cross sectoral M&E framework with this working group								
	Revised Logical Framework Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group	Draw on lessons from across other landscape scale projects								
7. A funding proposal, if appropriate, for the full project is prepared, along with supporting documentation, and submitted to the ELP.	Funding application Letters of support from Stakeholders	Project Development Officer to liaise across partnership and stakeholders to compile information for application								
		Project Development Officer to contact key stakeholders, including statutory bodies such as NRW and local authorities, for letters of support								
		Documents for a full delivery phase bid compiled and drafted								