

Report of the Lead Ecologist and Conservation

SUBJECT: Connecting the Coast Grant Approval

Purpose of the report

To Introduce the members to the Connecting the Coast Pilot and scrutinise Grant applications in excess of £20,000 received for the pilot phase.

1. Introduction

The National Park Authority has recently been awarded funding from Welsh Government under their Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Scheme to deliver a pilot Coastal Land Management Scheme.

The Connecting the Coast Scheme Pilot aims to work with farmers and landowners within the National Park by incentivising land managers to enhance biodiversity adjacent to the Pembrokeshire Coast Path and within half a mile of mean high water.

In mid-June 2023 we advertised an open 6 week window inviting landowners to express an interest in the scheme. Advisors visited all those who expressed an interest and assisted with drawing up proposals that matched the following scheme aims.

1. Habitat creation – More space for nature through the creation of new habitats, including species-rich grasslands, coastal grassland and scrub and woodland.

2. Management of existing habitats – Good condition of existing habitats and species on land through appropriate management.

3. Greening of farmland – Sustainable production through greening measures on the most productive areas of the farm supporting production, wildlife and carbon.

The Connecting the Coast scheme offers support in the form of

- **Capital grants** – e.g fencing, herbal leys to be delivered by March 2025
- **Management Agreements** - 5 year management agreements which provide an annual payment for managing habitats according to set prescriptions.

The scheme booklet and payment schedule attached in Appendix 1 and 2 gives further detail on the range and purposes of the support on offer.

2. Grant Scoring and Prioritisation Process

All proposals containing management agreements and all capital proposals over £10,000 went through a scoring process which produced a ranking. Larger proposals and proposals which were geographically spread were split for scoring purposes to enable us to discern the best value for money as well as ensure parity when comparing smaller and larger proposals. As we expected the capital to be under-subscribed, we approved all capital projects under 10k which met the aims of the scheme.

Table 1 -The criteria scored were as follows:

Criteria	Score (1-10, low-high)	Weighting	Rationale
Focus on Location	10 - adjacent to coastal strip, 8 - One field back, 6 - 2 or 3 fields back, 3 - within half a mile, 1-outside half a mile but continuous with land within project zone, 0 - outside NP	10	Proximity to the special habitats on coastal strip and proximity to the National Trail.
Focus on Greening Agriculture	10 - non-organic intensive dairy, 8 - other commercial farms, 5 - small holding or tourism business with animals, 3 – Non-commercial small holding, unused land parcels, 1- domestic garden	7	Engaging new audiences with our conservation grants, demonstrating conservation management with productive farming with a particular focus on dairy.
Focus on Managing Existing Habitat	10 - diverse coastal habitat (option 2), 8 - diverse permanent grassland or hay meadow (options 3 & 5), 6 - other habitat (Option 7), 5 - arable/ enhanced herbal ley 4 - trees & shrubs in landscape 3 - basic herbal ley	10	First principles – ensure good condition of existing habitat.
Focus on Habitat Creation	10 - diverse coastal habitat (option 1), 8 - diverse permanent grassland or hay meadow (options 4 & 6) 7 - arable margins, 6 - other habitat (Option 7), 5 - arable / enhanced herbal ley, 4 - trees & shrubs in landscape, Basic herbal ley	10	Increase the area of semi-natural habitat within the coastal margins.
Proximity to	10 - in SAC or SPA or in a SSSI, 7 - adjacent to SSSI, 4 - forming buffer to other habitat	5	Adding value and buffering and

designated sites	1 - isolated from designated site		connecting the Special Sites Network
Value for money	10 - VR 15 to 20, 5 - VR 8 to 10, 1- VR less than 5	5	For area-based habitats we calculated a value for money ratio
Longevity	10 - Assessed to be a good risk long term, 5 - assessed to be a medium risk long term, 1 - assessed to be highest risk of loss after 5 years.	5	Subjective consideration of risk

This created a composite score which allowed us to rank proposals/sub proposals in order of priority. The rankings were then used to inform the process of grant allocation.

All proposals were scored by at least 2 officers and the approach and final scores were presented and agreed at a meeting which included 5 officers from the Conservation team and the Head of Nature Recovery.

3. Proposals for approval

Section 76 of the Financial Standards (2016) states that where there is a payment of 'Total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £20,000', approval must be obtained from the National Park Authority (NPA). The authority to approve these grants under the Connecting the Coast Pilot Scheme was delegated to the SDF Committee at the NPA meeting of 20th September 2023.

All rankings are out of 74 with 1 being the highest priority. Larger proposals were broken down into sub proposals for rankings but were considered at the proposal level for the purposes of grant allocation.

Officers recommend the approval of the following 7 proposals in principle up to the maximum value presented.

Table 2 - Summary of proposals

Our Ref	Farm type	Proposal Overview	Maximum grant
CTC/01/PC	Coastal Dairy farming operation with diversification	This proposal will facilitate the management of almost 10ha of coastal slope bisected by the National Trail and the creation of 7 ha of new hay meadow habitat on land directly adjacent to this coastal habitat. The scheme is also supporting the trialling of a simple herbal ley in a field adjacent to the coastal belt which will protect carbon in soils as well as reducing the need for nutrient inputs close to coastal habitat. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.	£31,618.53
CTC/02/DH	Coastal mixed arable and livestock farm	The proposal contains a significant provision for wildlife dependant on arable habitat which is in significant decline in Pembrokeshire and Wales as whole as well as support for managing a significant area of existing mixed Heathland and Purple moor-grass dominated habitats within the coastal belt. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.	£30,801
CTC/03/LF	Mixed livestock and arable	The farmer has been managing this important area of coastal SSSI and adjacent semi-natural habitat for many years. The proposal will enable the continuation of this positive management through renewal of fencing and ongoing support and monitoring for the farmer. It also includes the addition of two invertebrate rich pastures (important for the local breeding	£25,527.50

		chough population) also adjacent to the SSSI and a new area of coastal slope, supporting the new position of the coast path.	
CTC/04/SST	Coastal livestock	This proposal combines and supports the management of an extensive area of existing coastal slope and species rich pastures adjacent to the National Trail. In addition to the biodiversity predicted outcomes, this proposal brings significant access and experience benefits to users of the Coast Path.	£23,332.50
CTC/05/SPK	Estuarine livestock farm	This proposal secures the management of a precious ancient species-rich pasture, a very rare habitat within the County and a hay meadow adjacent to the estuary. The sowing of an enhanced herbal ley will extend the pollinator habitat further with similar leys in adjacent locations observed to be successful in providing productivity for agriculture as well as supporting pollinators such as bees. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.	£25,730
CTC/06/SHF	Coastal Dairy Farm	The coastal options are located at prominent coastal honeypot site and will support the retreat of intensive agriculture from the tops of the coastal slopes. The proposal contains a novel measure to use precision agriculture techniques to programme out sensitive features from fertiliser application. The proposal contains a significant provision for wildlife dependant on arable habitat which is in significant decline in Pembrokeshire and Wales.	£25,150
CTC/07/BIF	Coastal mixed arable and livestock farm	The farmer has been sympathetically managing an extensive area of coastal slope and adjacent hay meadows which form a valuable swathe of semi natural habitat across this much visited stretch of coastline. The management agreement will	£23,640

		secure this habitat management and provide the farmer with ongoing support and monitoring through the project. The herbal leys will provide improved diversity in the more intensive areas of the farm, creating a buffer zone for insects and other wildlife.	
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Table 3 – Detailed Connecting the Coast Proposals

Our Ref	Farm type	Proposal Overview				
1. CTC/01/PC	Coastal Dairy farming operation with diversification	This proposal will facilitate the management of almost 10ha of coastal slope bisected by the National Trail and the creation of 7 ha of new hay meadow habitat on land directly adjacent to this coastal habitat. The scheme is also supporting the trialling of a simple herbal ley in a field adjacent to the coastal belt which will protect carbon in soils as well as reducing the need for nutrient inputs close to coastal habitat. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.				
Grant details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
1	PC Coastal Scrub	Coastal Slope Management	Capital	Per item	NA	£600
1	PC Coastal Scrub	Coastal Slope Management (Option 2)	Management Agreement	9.977ha @ £125/ha/annum	£1247.125	£6235.63
27	PC Hay meadow	Creation of Hay meadow (Option 4)	Management Agreement	7.051ha @ £400/ha/annum	£2820.4	£14102
27	PC Hay meadow	Fencing to support hay meadow creation	Capital	300m @ £6 per m	NA	£1860
27	PC Hay meadow	Planting up gaps in hedgerow to support hay meadow creation	Capital	80m @ £4.50 per m	NA	£360
NA	F2 Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Fencing	Capital	660m @ £6 per m	NA	£3960

NA	F2 Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Gapping up	Capital	120m @ £4.50 per m	NA	£540
NA	Simple herbal ley (Field C)	Simple herbal ley	Capital	8.46ha @ £240/ha	NA	£2030.4
NA	F3 Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Fencing	Capital	234m @ £6/m	NA	£1404
NA	F3 Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Gapping up	Capital	117m @4.50/m	NA	£526.5
					Total	£31,618.53
Our ref						
Farm Type						
Proposal overview						
CTC/02/DH	Coastal mixed arable and livestock farm	The proposal contains a significant provision for wildlife dependant on arable habitat which is in significant decline in Pembrokeshire and Wales as whole as well as support for managing a significant area of existing mixed Heathland and Purple moor-grass dominated habitats within the coastal belt. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
11	DH MA Arable margins	Unharvested arable margins (Option 8)	Management Agreement	1ha @ £1500 per annum	£1500	£7500
29	DH MA Maintain habitat	Manage Existing habitat (Option 7)	Management Agreement	6.66ha @ £150 /ha/annum	£999	£4995

29	DH MA Maintain habitat	Fencing to support above	Capital	1530m @ £6 per m	NA	£9180
29	DH MA Maintain habitat	Gate	Capital	£150 per item	NA	£150
NA	Field C Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Fencing	Capital	574m @ £6/m	NA	£3444
NA	Field C Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Gapping up	Capital	287m @ 287	NA	£1291.50
NA	Field D Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Fencing	Capital	514m @ £6/m	NA	£3084
NA	Field D Gapping up and fencing hedgerow	Gapping up	Capital	257 @ £4.50 per metre	NA	£1156.50
					Total	£30,801

Our Ref	Farm type	Proposal Overview				
CTC/03/LF	Mixed livestock and arable	The farmer has been managing this important area of coastal SSSI and adjacent semi-natural habitat for many years. The proposal will enable the continuation of this positive management through renewal of fencing and ongoing support and monitoring for the farmer. It also includes the addition of two invertebrate rich pastures (important for the local breeding chough population) also adjacent to the SSSI and a new area of coastal slope, supporting the new position of the coast path.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
2	LLF Coastal Slope	Coastal Slope Management (Option 2)	Management Agreement	13.47ha @ £150/ha/annum	£2020.5	£10102.5
2	LLF Coastal Slope	Fencing (F1, F2, F3)	Capital	838 m @ £6/m	NA	£5028
2	LLF Coastal Slope	Gates	Capital	4 @ £150 each	NA	£600
9	LLF New Coastal Slope	Coastal Buffer Strip (Option 1)	Management Agreement	0.35ha @ £400/ha/annum	£140	£700
9	LLF New Coastal Slope	Fencing	Capital	F4 287 @ £6 per metre	NA	£1722
30	LLF Area A and B	Manage other habitats (Option 7)	Management Agreement	8.5ha@ £150/ha/annum	£1275	£6375
NA	LLF Pond	Pond Restoration	Capital	£1000	NA	£1000
					Total	£25,527.5

Our Ref	Farm Type	Proposal Overview				
CTC/04/SST	Coastal livestock	This proposal combines and supports the management of an extensive area of existing coastal slope and species rich pastures adjacent to the National Trail. In addition to the predicted biodiversity outcomes, this proposal brings significant access and experience benefits to users of the Coast Path.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
7	SST Area C Coastal Slope/pasture management	Manage existing Coastal Slope (Option 2)	Management Agreement	10.56 ha (2.43+5.14+2.03+0.96) @ £150/ha/annum	£1584	£7920
7	SST Area C Coastal Slope/pasture management	Manage existing flower rich grassland	Management Agreement	6.63 ha (2.25+0.86+0.94+2.58) @ £150/ha/annum	£994.50	£4972.50
7	SST Area C Coastal Slope/Pasture Management	Fencing	Capital	1690m @ £6/m	NA	£10,140
7	SST Area C Coastal Slope/Pasture Management	Gates	Capital	£150 per item x 2	NA	£300
					Total	£23,332.50

Our Ref	Farm Type	Proposal Overview				
CTC/05/SPK	Estuarine livestock farm	This proposal secures the management of a precious ancient species-rich pasture, a very rare habitat within the County and a hay meadow adjacent to the estuary. The sowing of an enhanced herbal ley will extend the pollinator habitat further with similar leys in adjacent locations observed to be successful in providing productivity for agriculture as well as supporting pollinators such as bees. Associated hedgerow restoration will support habitat, landscape and water management aims.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
37	SPK Field E Haymeadow	Manage existing haymeadow (Option 4)	Management Agreement	5.3ha @£150/ha/annum	£795	£3975
37	SPK Field E Haymeadow	Fencing	Capital	566m @ £6/m	NA	£3396
66	SPK Field B pasture	Manage existing Flower-rich grazed grassland (Option 4)	Management Agreement	4.3 ha @£150/ha/annum	£645	£3225
66	SPK	Manage existing Flower-rich grazed grassland	Fencing	787m@ £6/m	NA	£4722
66	SPK	Manage existing flower-rich grazed grassland	Gate	2 x£150	NA	£300
74	Coppicing and fencing hedgerow	Coppicing	Capital	466m @ £5/m	NA	£2330
74	Coppicing and fencing hedgerow	Fencing	Capital	932m @ £6/m	NA	£5592

74	Coppicing and fencing hedgerow	Gate	Capital	£150 per item	NA	£150
74	Enhanced herbal ley	Enhanced herbal ley	Capital	5.1ha @ £400/ha	NA	£2040
					Total	£25,730
Our Ref						
Farm Type						
Proposal Overview						
06/CTC/SHF	Coastal Dairy Farm	The coastal options are located at prominent coastal honeypot site and will support the retreat of intensive agriculture from the tops of the coastal slopes. The proposal contains a novel measure to use precision agriculture techniques to programme out sensitive features from fertiliser application. The proposal contains a significant provision for wildlife dependant on arable habitat which is in significant decline in Pembrokeshire and Wales.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
18	C1 Coastal Paddock	Create Flower-rich Grazed grassland – Option 6	Management Agreement	7ha @ £400/ha/annum	£2800	£14000
20	C2 Un-fertilised outcrops	Leave calcareous outcrops within improved field unfertilised – Special Project	Management Agreement	1ha @ £250/ha/annum	£250	£1250
NA	Enhanced herbal ley	Enhanced herbal ley	Capital	21ha@ £400/ha/annum	NA	£8400

NA	Bird seed mix	Bird seed mix – Special Project	Capital	6ha @ £250/ha	NA	£1500
					Total	£25,150
Our Ref						
Farm Type						
Proposal Overview						
CTC/07/BIF	Mixed livestock and arable	The farmer has been sympathetically managing an extensive area of coastal slope and adjacent hay meadows which form a valuable swathe of semi natural habitat across this much visited stretch of coastline. The management agreement will secure this habitat management and provide the farmer with ongoing support and monitoring through the project. The herbal leys will provide improved diversity in the more intensive areas of the farm, creating a buffer zone for insects and other wildlife.				
Grant Details						
Ranking	Proposal code	Description	Type	Rate	Annual total (Management Agreement only)	Total
3	BI MA Coastal slope	Coastal Slope (Option 2) Species rich pasture (option 3) Hay meadow (option 4)	Management Agreement	28 ha @ £150/ha/annum	£4200	£21000
3	Fencing	Fence between species rich grassland & arable fields	Capital	200 m @ £6/m	NA	£1200
NA	Herbal ley	Simple herbal ley	Capital	6Ha @ 240/Ha	NA	£1440
					Total	£23,640

RECOMMENDATION:

Officers recommend the approval of the proposals in principle up to the maximum value presented.

(For further information contact Sarah Mellor on extension 4829)