

Report of: Conservation Team, Nature Recovery

Subject: Connecting the Coast Project

Purpose of the report

To provide Members with information, evaluation and feedback on the Authority's Connecting the Coast Project which was undertaken between July 2023 and March 2025.

Funded through Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Connecting the Coast Project was a land management scheme providing tailored support, advice and funding for biodiversity. Launched in July 2023, the project worked in partnership with local farmers and landowners creating a wealth of opportunities for nature recovery in the Park.

This coastal belt is under pressure from a combination of factors, including high visitor numbers, historical changes in agricultural practices over several decades coastal squeeze and climate change. Tourism and agriculture underpin the economy in Pembrokeshire and farmland constitutes the largest area, often right up to the fence which separates the fields from the coastal slopes.

Connecting the Coast recognised the need to work with these activities, particularly farming, to achieve effective nature recovery at scale. It was developed as a locally delivered, niche land management scheme in the National Park with the aim of reaching 'beyond the fence' and working with local landowners to extend opportunities for nature to thrive in the coastal hinterlands.

Members of the Conservation Team will provide a presentation on the project and report during the Operational Review Committee.

Background Documentation:

- Connecting the Coast Evaluation Report, November 2025

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Connecting the Coast Evaluation Report 2025



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Tirweddau
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Landscapes
Wales



Parc Cenedlaethol
Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park



Weasel's Snout (*Misopates orontium*), arable margin Dale Hill farm

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Background

Funded by the Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programme, Connecting the Coast was a land management scheme, designed to create new opportunities for nature recovery in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Launched in July 2023, the project worked in partnership with local farmers and landowners, providing tailored support, advice and funding to deliver for biodiversity.

The habitats and species of the Pembrokeshire coast are shaped by the unique environmental factors of sea, geology and climate that combine in this dramatic and beautiful landscape. The coastal slopes support maritime plants, from the iconic Thrift to rarities such as Green-veined Orchids (*Orchis morio*) and Pale Dog Violets (*Viola lactea*). In turn, these habitats are a hotspot for invertebrates including rare species such as the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly (*Boloria selene*), the threatened Shril Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) and the Short-necked Oil Beetle (*Meloe*

brevicollis). Reptiles such as Adders (*Vipera berus*) and a huge variety of birds, including the breathtaking Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), live and breed on this famous coastline.

The habitats and species that exist here are under pressure from a combination of factors, including high visitor numbers, historical changes in agricultural practices, coastal squeeze and climate change. Tourism and agriculture underpin the economy in Pembrokeshire and farmland constitutes the largest area, often right up to the fence which separates the fields from the coastal slopes.

Connecting the Coast recognised the need to work with these activities, particularly farming, to achieve nature recovery at scale. The ambition was to develop a locally delivered, niche land management scheme with the aim of reaching 'beyond the fence' and working with local landowners to extend opportunities for nature to thrive in the coastal hinterlands.

Aims:

- 1. Focus on coastal habitats and species** within half a mile of the mean high-water mark.
- 2. Habitat creation and restoration** – particularly grassland habitats adjacent to the coast.
- 3. Habitat management** – facilitating long term management of existing habitats, for example coastal slopes and semi improved grasslands.
- 4. Greening of farmland** – engaging with farmers to promote nature recovery within productive systems.

“It was time to stop and think about what we were doing as farmers, especially as the farm was in the boundaries of the National Park...”

Connecting the Coast participant



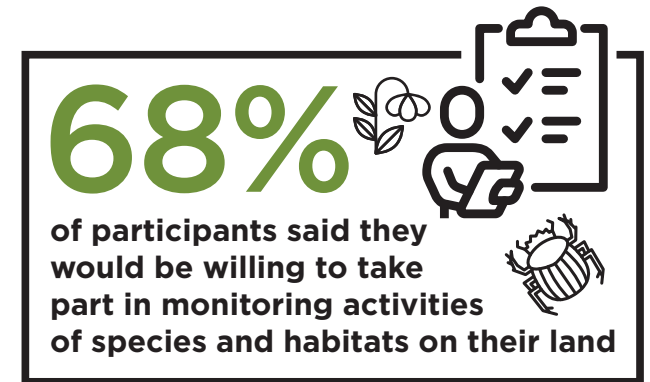
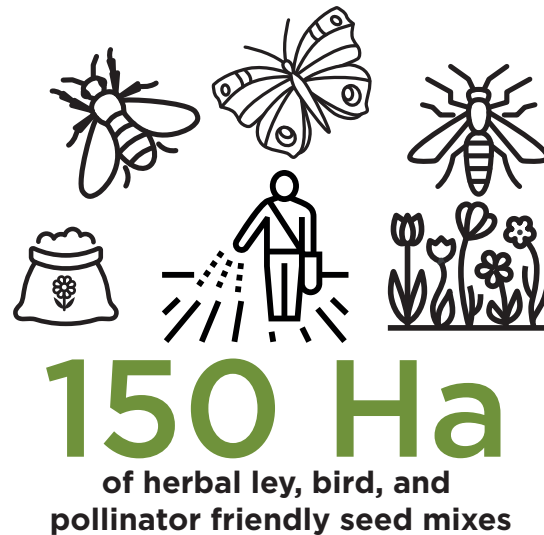
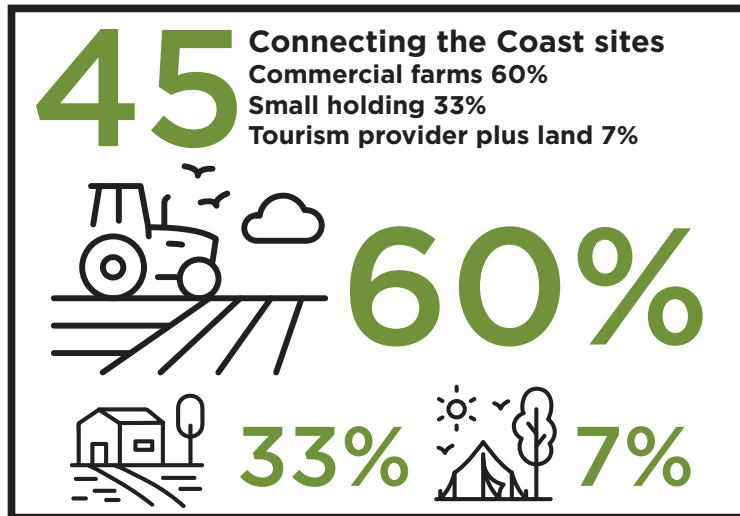
Hay making, Newgale

Timeline

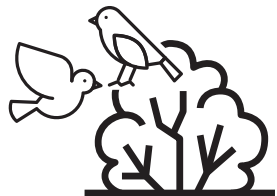


“ The process was very simple and flexible which made the decision to commit to the project very easy. Discussion and project design backed by site visits by project officers solved issues quickly and pragmatically. It was also an enjoyable process ” Scheme participant

Connecting the coast in numbers



75 Ha of coastal slope – supporting some of our most iconic coastal species.
45 Ha of hay meadows– providing habitat for pollinators, birds, and many other species.
60 Ha of species-rich permanent pasture – safeguarding carbon stocks and soil health.
20 Ha of other habitats including set-aside and semi natural habitat within farms.
3 Ha of unsprayed arable margins – protecting a threatened cultural habitat.



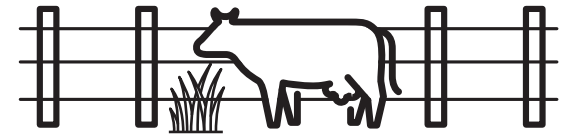
3km
of native hedging



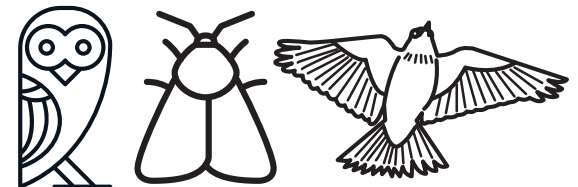
Restoration of Pembrokeshire
stone walls and restoration
of ponds and scrapes



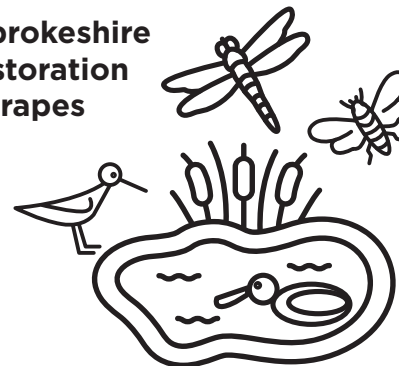
51 **20km** **11**
gates of fencing water troughs



to support conservation grazing



'Special' projects included the
provision of barn owl boxes, tray
feeders for farmland birds, skylark
information signs and purchase of
moth traps and other survey
equipment to facilitate landowner
engagement in monitoring during
the next phase



1. Nature recovery at a Landscape Scale

The project has created a new line of stepping stones for coastal and estuarine biodiversity.

Old hay meadows on the Cleddau estuary

Nature Recovery at a Landscape Scale

The project has created a new line of stepping stones for coastal and estuarine biodiversity, as illustrated in Map 1. 98% of sites are within, adjacent to or within 500m of a designated site. Additionally, except for Caldey Island, all sites lie within the Buglife Beelines Zone and 35% of sites are within identified Important Invertebrate Areas. This significantly enhances our work across the National Park and links more widely to work delivered by our colleagues in other conservation organisations, such as the National Trust.

Map 1: Location of Connecting the Coast sites in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

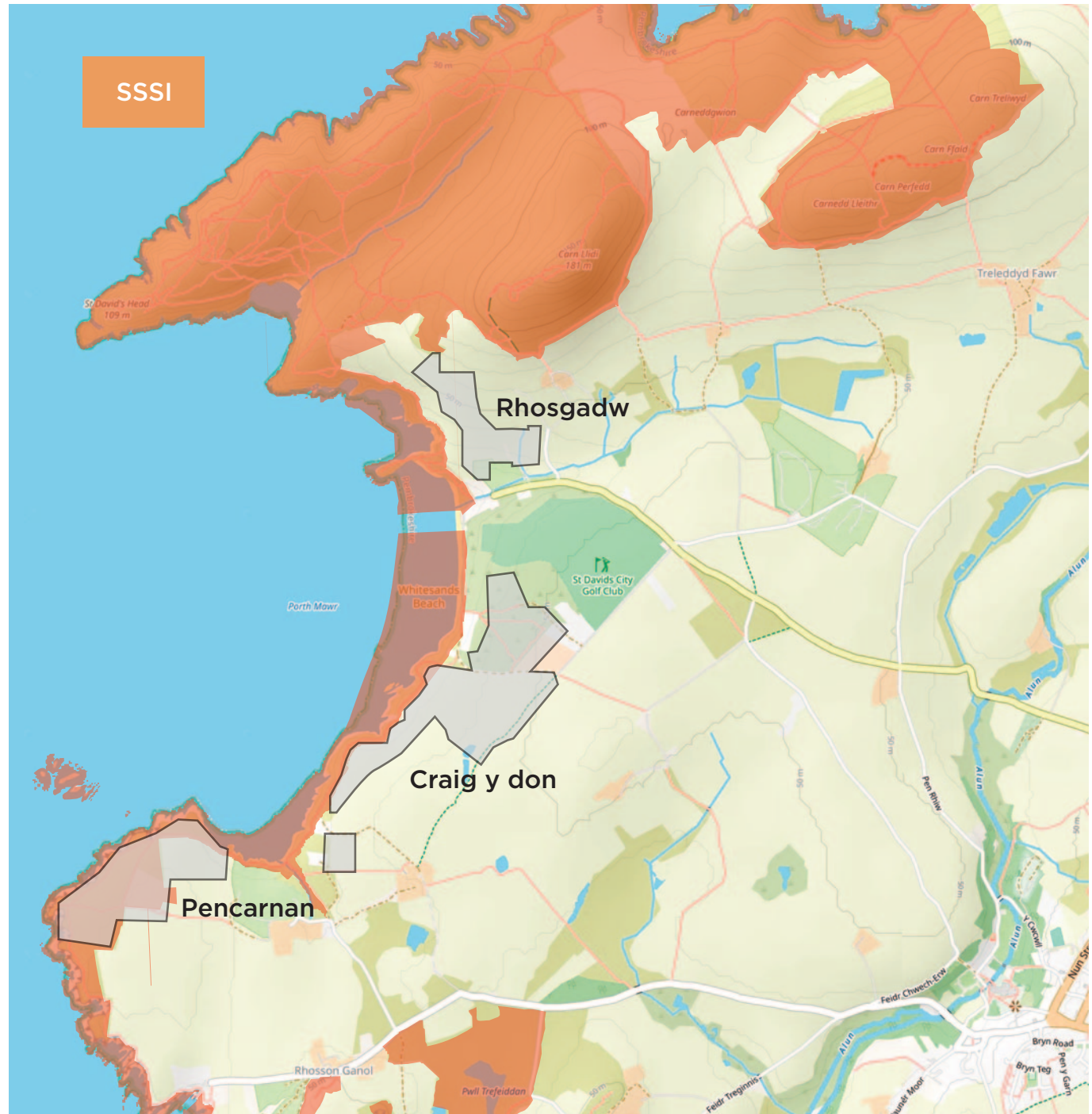


“Connecting the Coast was an excellent example of a landscape scale conservation in action. Working closely with farmers and landowners, the project helped to enhance biodiversity across Pembrokeshire’s distinctive coastal habitats aligning strongly with the National Trusts priorities of supporting nature recovery, sustainable land use and climate resilience. Above all the project demonstrated how conservation and farming could work hand in hand to restore and protect this iconic landscape.”

James Roden, National Trust Countryside Manager, Pembrokeshire.

Connectivity on the St David's Peninsula – Pencarnan, Craig y don and Rhosgadw

Improving nature connectivity in land adjacent to the Pembrokeshire Coast path was an underpinning ambition for Connecting the Coast. On the St Davids peninsula, conservation officers worked with 3 neighbouring landowners providing a focal point for collaboration, as illustrated in Map 2.



Map 2: Coastal fields near St Davids, currently under Conservation management agreements with Connecting the Coast.

Pencarnan Farm

Sian's father was born at Pencarnan Farm in 1915 and talking to Sian and her daughter, Jemeima, elicits a wonderful sense of place. Pencarnan is now a thriving holiday park, but many of the coastal fields remain and have been used for grazing for many years. The site encompasses a stretch of SSSI coastal heath which was traditionally managed by Sian's father but had suffered from a lack of management in more recent years due to difficulties with burning and lack of safety on the coastal strip for grazing animals.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Scrub clearance on overgrown coastal slopes
- Fencing repairs and water provision for conservation grazing
- Five-year management agreement for SSSI coastal heath and coastal pastures
- Interpretative signs for visitors



Sian, Jemeima and Ziggy



Local school children learning about meadows

These measures are facilitating restoration of the heathland and better provision for nature in the adjacent coastal pastures. In 2024, in collaboration with our Education team, local school children visited Pencarnan to learn about the meadows, the coast and help us with some meadow plant identification.

Sian describes what involvement in Connecting the Coast has meant to her and her family:

“I was born on a cliff-top farm in Pembrokeshire in 1964, surrounded by the wild beauty of coastal fields and the ever-changing sea. My mother, a keen amateur botanist, passed on her deep love for the wildflowers that carpeted our land. She knew every bloom by name and season, and her joy in their presence shaped my own. Thanks to support from the National Parks, some of our fields will now be managed for wildlife — protected spaces where nature can breathe. Fencing keeps the cliff side safe and enables us to use our horses to graze the land, and careful clearing of old scrub has made room for sunlight and new growth. With each returning flower, I think of my mother's delight, and feel it echoed in myself — and now in my daughter, who also grew up here, finding her own connection to this land. Three generations, rooted in the same soil, watching the wildflowers return.”



Hay meadow, Pencarnan

Craig y don

Perched above Whitesands Bay near St Davids, the fields at Craig y don have remained untouched by plough or seed for many years. John, who has lived here for over two decades, holds a deep appreciation for the coastal landscape and actively manages the land to support local biodiversity.

The fields shown in Map 2 were previously rented to a local farmer for sheep grazing. However, with grant support from Connecting the Coast, John is now managing them as traditional hay meadows. From the end of March, the fields are closed off to livestock until the hay is cut—usually in mid-July—followed by some light winter grazing.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreement on coastal hay meadows
- Fencing and gates to support grazing
- Scrub clearance on coastal slopes
- Targeted ragwort removal



Whitesands Bay



Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*)



Springtime pastures, Craig y don

Land management brings challenges. Some plants, like Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) and Creeping Thistles (*Cirsium arvense*), whilst excellent to support invertebrate biodiversity, must be carefully controlled to ensure the quality of hay and appropriate management.

These coastal fields were already relatively species-rich, but the summer break from grazing has quickly revealed a striking increase in floral diversity. Even in the first year, John has noticed a marked change in the fields, with a greater variety of wildflowers—and wildlife—appearing. Among the surprises was the arrival of the rare Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*). John has spoken highly of the advice and encouragement provided by the Connecting the Coast team, and we are looking forward to continue working alongside him as the meadows evolve in the years ahead.

Rhosgadw

Nick and Hannah run a busy beef, sheep, and arable enterprise across the northern part of the St. David's peninsula. They have been keen to implement changes on the farm to benefit wildlife but without the financial support from Connecting the Coast, it would have been difficult for them to do so.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreements on land adjacent to the coast including hay meadows, historic permanent pastures and wet coastal pasture.
- Fencing for traditional boundary protection, corridor creation and conservation grazing.
- Scrub clearance in existing habitats.

Through strategic grazing breaks, facilitated by management agreements, we observed good results in the first year, including coastal species such as Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) and Sheep's Bit (*Jasione montana*), amongst many other wildflowers, in pastures near Whitesands. Capital funding has allowed Nick to open up a neglected piece of land to grazing, complete with woodland area, scrub, marshy grassland, and a large pond.



Nick and Wilf

Nick told us,

“ I can now graze that area with conservation in mind and am very much looking forward to how we can develop it for nature. With the other parts of the farm that are being supported by Connecting the Coast, it could be the start of us going into future schemes to benefit wildlife on the farm. ”



Sheep's Bit (*Jasione montana*)



Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*)



Bog pimpernel (*Lysimachia tenella*)

2. Habitat creation

We have been able to support the creation of new habitats through individual, tailored advice, and capital funding. This has led to the creation of new meadows, hedgerows, and other habitats both on large, commercial farms and private small holdings.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)



Little Portclew

Jason and Bianca moved to Little Portclew farmhouse with its 12.5 acres of land, eleven years ago. The land had been farmed for many years and continued to be used for arable crops, such as barley, by the local farmer until very recently. Jason and Bianca wanted to change the way the land was used, primarily to benefit the local wildlife and eradicate the use of chemical fertilisers and sprays. Across their 4 fields they are creating a mosaic of habitats, including a newly planted woodland area and 3 new hay meadows which the local farmer cuts to provide for his livestock.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Fencing to protect hedgerows for nesting birds, particularly Yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*)
- Trees for hedgerow and woodland planting
- Wildflower meadow seed
- Educational visit support (e.g. benches)



School group visiting Little Portclew



Bianca and Jason

Jason told us,

*“To give Mother Nature the hand it desperately needs the National Park environment officers have been a huge help. Our journey creating 12.5 acres of wildflower hay meadows has been made possible under the guidance and crucially, the financial support of the National Park. Whilst wildflower meadows are not the easiest landscape to create, we have been rewarded with flowers for the bees in the summer, a significant hay meadow crop and winter grazing for the sheep. Since creating the wildflower meadows, we have seen a significant increase in bees, birds, rabbits, field mice and have been fortunate enough to have several pairs of the endangered yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) residing in the meadows and singing in the hedgerows. Not only has there been the environmental reward and the beautiful, picturesque reward, we have also opened to the local primary schools who hold environmental and art classes in the meadows.”*



New hedging and fencing

Goodwood Farm

Hywel and Jane have lived at Goodwood, on the Cleddau estuary, since 1986. In 2022 an opportunity arose to purchase 370 acres of land contiguous with their own. It consisted of 330 acres of pasture, which had been part of an intensive dairy operation for the last 10 years and 40 acres of ancient woodland. Hywel and Jane have worked hard to establish a productive pasture farm alongside an improving estuarine nature reserve.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Otter (*Lutra lutra*) Survey
- Creation of three new ponds



Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)



Pond in its second year

Hywel explains how Connecting the Coast was able to support their conservation plans at Goodwood....

*“ Last year we took part in the Connecting the Coast Scheme. With the help of Clare Flynn and Julie Garlick our projects involved the creation of 3 new ponds and assessing a small Victorian reservoir and woodland as an otter habitat. The ponds have now been constructed. As well as creating new exciting habitats, all 3 ponds have helped the drainage of all the neighbouring fields thereby immediately improving the land. The survey was extremely useful in identifying that otter activity was present and we have now received advice on how to modify the woodland to create a potential “otter paradise”! The ponds and otter survey help with our plans for a new wetland creation and our ambition is to attract breeding curlew (*Numenius arquata*) back to the river meadows. In 2024 We installed an osprey platform on an old Black Pine tree and have attracted a pair of ospreys for two seasons in a row – sadly to-date without successful mating. But it’s a good start. ”*

3. Management of existing habitats

Connecting the Coast was able to support landowners to continue with good practice or to establish good practice on areas of land, including coastal slopes and pastures, which had good potential for restoration to a more diverse and species-rich structure.

Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*)



Llanferran Farm

Llanferran is a mixed sheep and arable farm, near Strumble Head, which has been in Rob's family since 1914. The Connecting the Coast team were impressed to see the habitats and wildlife already thriving under Rob's careful management of the land. The heather-filled coastal slopes which are grazed seasonally with ponies, are home to a rich maritime flora which includes the rare Pale Dog Violet (*Viola lactea*) (also a Wales Section 7 species). Semi natural habitat extends from the slopes up into a valley where Rob has ponds, woodland, and tussocky grassland, forming a mosaic of habitats as part of the farm. We were delighted to be able to extend the fencing infrastructure which enables conservation grazing and will allow Rob to expand his current good grazing practices. Management agreements on two large coastal pastures adjacent to the slopes and valley provide a valuable buffer zone within the more productive parts of the farm and are being managed with reference to the local breeding Choughs (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*).

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreement on coastal slope and adjacent pastures
- Fencing & gates to enable conservation grazing



Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)



Rob



Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*), Llanferran farm

Rob explains,

“The key advantage of the scheme has been the flexibility – being able to talk to the project officer as weather and conditions change on the farm from month to month and year to year and make decisions which are good both for the farm and the wildlife. I’m looking forward to seeing the results of what we’ve been doing, such as more flowers and invertebrates. It’s speeded up what we intended to do in improving the natural habitats here and given us a boost to continue this into the future.”



Pale Dog Violet (*Viola lactea*)

Fronhaul

Rowena has lived at Fronhaul, a 17-acre smallholding near Cemaes Head since 1993. In that time, the local farmer has grazed his sheep, free range over most of the holding. Rowena and her partner Richard have been keen to manage the land more sensitively for wildlife and so applied to Connecting the Coast, hoping to be able to implement more controlled grazing and allow the fields to recover.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreement coastal pastures
- Fencing with associated gates and water troughs for grazing
- Hedge planting



Common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

Rowena and Richard have now separated their 5 small pastures to control the grazing times on each, in addition to taking a hay cut on two of them. They had no expectations of what they might see but the results have been spectacular with Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) and Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), carpeting the fields in the first year. Common blue butterflies (*Polyommatus icarus*) can be seen flitting amongst the flowers and skylarks (*Alauda arvensis*) heard as they rise from their nests in the fields. We are also monitoring how the local choughs (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) use the land for feeding to ensure the new management practices provide for them during the winter and also the summer breeding season.



Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) at Fronhaul



New water trough

Rowena explains...

“It’s been so nice to have the support and advice to make it the land more sustainable. It feels great to be part of the bigger project and part of a wider community looking after the coast and its wildlife. We’ve been able to preserve these ancient grass leys and without the fencing we never would have seen such a beautiful expanse of pignut and bulbous buttercup, amongst many other species coming up in the fields! ”



Rowena

4. Greening of farmland

A range of support has been given to farmers through management agreements, advice, and capital support. Management agreements have been critical in securing conservation grazing of pastures within the farm system or the implementation of hay meadow management on improved pastures to restore biodiversity. Working with farmers to secure longer term management and transition into other schemes will help to secure these habitats for the longer term. Capital payments for hedgerow restoration and creation were popular and have allowed the creation of linear habitat features along the coastal belt whilst the provision of species-rich herbal ley seed to replace single species leys has allowed the greening of pastures within more productive systems.

Common Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), set aside field, Dale airfield



Dale Hill Farm

Dale Hill is a mixed beef, sheep, and arable farm on the Dale peninsula, and has been farmed by Michael's family for many years. Michael had been in the Glastir agri-environment scheme previously but as this was ending, Connecting the Coast was able to fill a gap prior to the new Sustainable Farm Scheme being launched.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreement for unsprayed arable margins
- Five-year management agreement semi natural habitat (Dale airfield)
- Hedgerow planting and fencing to create connecting habitat



Field woundwort (*Stachys arvensis*),
arable margin Dale Hill farm

Once familiar farmland wildlife such as Poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*), Cornflowers (*Centaurea cyanus*), Harvest Mice (*Micromys minutus*) and Yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*) have declined sharply in recent decades, due largely to changes in arable farm practices. Surveys on Michael's unsprayed arable margins in the first year revealed a number of arable wildflowers such as Weasel's Snout (*Misopates orontium*) and Field Woundwort (*Stachys arvensis*), which are rarely seen in the landscape now. The margins were buzzing with insect and bird life as the season progressed, indicating the value of this option for supporting biodiversity in more intensive systems.

Management agreements on Dale Airfield have allowed us to work both with Micheal and CADW to manage key areas which are important for a range of plants, invertebrates and particularly birds. The integrity of these areas, both in terms of wildlife and its history, are now maintained sensitively in line with farm practices.



Michael

Micheal told us,

“It's a good scheme as we've been able to balance nature with what we are doing on the farm. The hedgerow and fences will be there long into the future and the arable margins have provided a buffer zone to the streams. I hope to continue some of the practices beyond the end of the scheme.”



Surveying the airfield with volunteers

Stackpole Home Farm

George's family farm a large-scale dairy business in Pembrokeshire, run on a New Zealand style grazing system. They are used to incorporating measures for biodiversity as some of their land is owned by the National Trust. However, Connecting the Coast funding has enabled them to extend these measures both within the most productive areas of the farm and through a management agreement on a particularly well known stretch of the Pembrokeshire coastline.

Connecting the Coast grant support:

- Five-year management agreement on coastal paddock
- Enhanced Herbal ley seeds for grazing

The coastal paddock forms one of the most walked sections of the Pembrokeshire Coast from Stackpole Quay to the famous Barafundle Bay. These 7 hectares of coastal grassland see thousands of visitors every year but are also regularly grazed by cattle. Despite these pressures, it supports a diverse coastal flora, particularly close to the cliff edge, including species such as Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*) and Green-veined Orchids (*Anacamptis morio*). Under the Management agreement, no fertilisers will be added to the grassland and the grazing will be adapted and monitored to encourage an increase in floral diversity. Currently the slope is grazed hard in the spring, providing the ideal conditions for

breeding choughs to feed but is then allowed to flower more extensively throughout the summer. There is already a noticeable change on the slopes with the dominant grasses reducing and the grassland becoming more open and favourable for wildflowers to flourish. George also explained to us that the herbal leys funded by the scheme have been very successful, allowing a significant reduction in the use of fertiliser, an improvement in soil health and provision of good grazing. Allowing the leys to flower provides nectar and pollen resources for a range of pollinators in an area which is close to populations of rare species such as the Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*).



Green-winged orchids (*Anacamptis morio*)



George with his cows



Cattle grazing herbal ley, Stackpole Home farm



Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*)

Project profile

Launch

Local Press releases, social high media presence and 'on the ground' local leaflet drop.



County Show Reception

Over 60 people attended a Connecting the Coast Reception at the Pembrokeshire County Show. Farmers, Landowners, National Park staff, Local dignitaries, MPS and Members of the Senedd gathered to celebrate the contribution to Nature Recovery in Pembrokeshire.



Film

Commissioned by Welsh Government, this film recognises the project as part of the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places funding initiative. Watch here

<https://youtu.be/bYLVEK1aM94>



Radio 4 Farming today

In May 2025, Connecting the Coast was highlighted as an example of working with landowners, particularly farmers,



to make changes for Nature Recovery within productive systems. The Connecting the Coast project officer and one of the participating farmers were interviewed on location at the farm.

Outreach through talks and presentations

The project Officer delivered several talks both locally, for example at the West Wales Biodiversity Centre's Annual forum and more widely, to the Wales National Pollinator Taskforce.



Art exhibition

Rob Johns of Llanferran farm was invited to be part of 'The Horizon' exhibition at Oriel Y Parc Rob tells the story of living and working on the coast, his connection to the land and to the sea. Watch here

<https://youtu.be/oCHytPJu7PU>



Outcomes

1. Funding, Ambition and Innovation

Flexible funding fosters innovation

The SLSP funding stream was key to the success of Connecting the Coast. The flexibility of the funding stream and in particular the support of the WG team for our ambitions, allowed trialling and innovation in a way that is simply not possible with other types of funding. This has been immensely valuable in driving innovation and step change in delivery.

Scaling up our ambitions

The additional funding provided a means of transformation for us as an Authority, in terms of increased budgets and a significantly scaled up ambition. It supercharged and built upon existing initiatives and saw our business administration processes adapt to handle larger projects in the future.

Private Sector Funding

With more limited options for tree planting and peatland restoration in our lowland farmed landscape than other National Parks, Pembrokeshire Coast has found attracting private finance for conservation land management more challenging. Due to scale and impact Connecting the Coast was one of the projects attracting private sector funding which will be used to help sustain the outcomes of the scheme. This demonstrates that schemes such as this may have the potential to attract further private sector funding supporting our existing initiatives.

2. Fostering Collaboration

Through the Connecting the Coast project the Authority acted as a central hub, successfully fostering collaborative action for nature recovery by linking 45 farmers and landowners from geographically disparate communities along 186 miles of the Pembrokeshire coastline. The scale and diversity of collaboration was impressive, uniting a range of farm business types, tourism providers and smaller landowners in a common aim to conserve the landscape and wildlife of our spectacular coastline.

“ This scheme is excellent - it is also nice to have the help and guidance from an actual person! ”

Connecting the Coast participant



Henbit dead-nettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*)



Coastal pastures under management agreement on Angle peninsula

3. Enabling delivery, filling gaps and adding value

Non farming landowners

CTC successfully engaged non-farming landowners who would not ordinarily have access to land management schemes, unlocking additional land for the delivery of nature recovery targets alongside traditional agri-environment schemes.

Targeting gaps in delivery

Our scheme engaged a number of arable farmers, some of whom had been involved in previous agri-environment activity but had not delivered arable conservation measures for a number of years. The scheme was able to support measures to re-engage farmers in arable conservation, to support rare arable flora and other declining wildlife. The Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership has assessed arable habitats and they are some of the most rapidly declining in the National Park.

Adding value and enabling delivery

The scheme was able to add value, for example linking landowners up with local schools through the Park's education team, enabling educational visits or facilitating teams of volunteers to assist with undertaking work such as tree planting and surveying. Removing barriers to implementation of management can also be key. For example, this could be by providing access to grazing animals for management purposes, especially for those landowners who do not own their own stock and who otherwise may not be able to participate.

“ I feel it's a valuable project and as a landowner I have a stewardship responsibility. ”
Connecting the Coast participant

4. The Scheme

Participants highlighted the combination of financial and advisor/officer support as the most useful elements of the scheme. Flexibility came a close third. This chimes with our own experience in delivering niche schemes, prior to Connecting the Coast, with financial support and advisory support forming the twin pillars of a scheme with flexibility and adaptability as a key way of working.

Additional comments referred to the scheme supporting existing farm business models where environmental stewardship was considered to be integral. Some landowners highlighted the potential for their less productive land to be managed to benefit nature recovery and for this to form part of their farm business.



Arable plant training for staff on one of our Connecting the Coast farms



Old hay meadow, Newgale farm

5. The Future

Securing outcomes long term

The conservation team is currently developing plans to develop ecological monitoring using standardised protocols to obtain a more comprehensive level of quantitative data, based on rapid assessment using positive and negative indicator species. Increased landowner and volunteer engagement in monitoring where appropriate will engender greater understanding of conservation management and safeguard the longer term sustainability of outcomes.

Greater security of outcomes will increase confidence that land within our schemes should count towards the delivery of our 30 x 30 target in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

As the Sustainable Farm Scheme, especially the collaborative element, develops, we will look to tailor our range of support to farmers and landowners to increase agri-environmental activity with the park. This may be through advice and practical support (e.g the Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network), as an agent of collaboration, or as

direct delivery agent as with Ffermio Bro.

There is also a clear on-going role for the Park Authority in supporting delivery to those landowners who are unable to access agri-environment and whose land may have a role to play in on-going agri-environment delivery.

Schemes such as Connecting the Coast offer an opportunity to draw attention to the great work being done by our landowners, often in tough economic conditions. We want to take advantage of the on-going opportunity to links these landowners together, foster peer to peer support and to build social capital around their collective achievements.

“ The knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff were second to none. It's been a complete joy watching the landscape benefit so much wildlife with scrub clearance, tree planting, fencing and grazing. ”

Connecting the Coast participant

