Report 23/26
Operational Review Committee

Report of: Conservation Team, Nature Recovery

Subject: Ffermio Bro Year 1 Review 2025-2026

1. Purpose of Report

To provide members an overview of the first year of Ffermio Bro (2025–2026), a Welsh Government-funded programme delivered by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority to support farmers and landowners with nature recovery and sustainable land management.

The report outlines the programme's purpose, delivery arrangements and governance, and reports 36 completed projects and full use of the £267,561 funding allocation, supporting improvements to hedgerows, woodlands, watercourses and traditional boundaries. It also identifies lessons around staffing, seasonal delivery and funding arrangements, and sets out priorities for 2026–2028, with greater emphasis on farmer collaboration, catchment-scale projects and environmental monitoring.

2. Background documentation

Ffermio Bro First Year Review 2025-2026

For further information, please contact:

Arwel Evans, Farm Conservation Liaison Officer, Arwele@Pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Ffermio Bro – First Year Review (2025–2026)

Operational Review Committee – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Contents

Section	Title
1	Executive Summary
2	Background and Strategic Context
3	Programme Delivery and Governance
4	First-Year Delivery and Achievements
5	Case Studies
6	Lessons Learned from Year 1
7	Looking Ahead (2026–2028)

1 Executive Summary

Ffermio Bro is a Welsh Government-funded programme supporting nature recovery and sustainable land management within Wales's designated landscapes. Delivered locally by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the programme works directly with farmers and landowners to develop and deliver practical environmental improvements that contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park.

The programme represents a significant development in agricultural environmental funding, with Welsh Government placing greater responsibility for project development and delivery with designated landscape bodies. Ffermio Bro combines elements of traditional centrally administered agricultural grant schemes with a locally led, advisory approach, drawing on the Authority's conservation expertise, established relationships with the farming community and knowledge of local environmental priorities.

The 2025–2026 financial year marked the programme's first year of delivery. During this period, the Authority received close to 50 initial enquiries, resulting in approximately 45 projects being developed. Of these, 36 projects were completed through Ffermio Bro, while other proposals were supported through alternative funding opportunities, including funding for baseline environmental surveys.

The programme successfully utilised its full annual funding allocation of £267,561, comprising £228,206 in capital funding and £39,355 in revenue funding for staff employment.

Key physical outputs included:

- 4,120 metres of hedgerow creation and restoration.
- 815 metres of watercourse interventions.
- 27 hectares of woodland interventions.
- 1,193 trees planted.
- 135 metres of traditional stone walling.
- 2.15 hectares of agroforestry, hedgerows, buffer strips and species-rich field margins.

Beyond these physical achievements, the first year focused on establishing effective delivery processes, developing relationships with farmers and landowners, identifying geographical and thematic priorities, and building the foundations for future collaborative projects.

The programme offers an opportunity to target environmental investment strategically, using the National Park Management Plan, established conservation priorities and local expertise to identify interventions capable of delivering benefits across habitats, ecosystems and ecological networks. An important principle is that Ffermio Bro should

add value to existing Welsh Government agricultural support, rather than duplicate or replace funding already available through other schemes.

Ffermio Bro also has an important role in helping to inform the development of the Collaborative Layer of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Its locally led delivery model provides an opportunity to develop and test approaches through which groups of farmers can work together to achieve environmental improvements at a landscape scale.

Looking ahead, the focus for 2026–2028 will increasingly shift towards developing local and catchment-based farmer collaborations, alongside thematic initiatives such as the restoration and enhancement of traditional field boundaries along the National Park's coastline. These approaches will build upon the relationships, delivery experience and conservation opportunities identified during the programme's first year.



2.1 Introduction to Ffermio Bro

Ffermio Bro (Farming in Designated Landscapes) is a Welsh Government-funded programme introduced in 2025 to support nature recovery and sustainable land management within Wales's National Parks and National Landscapes. The programme runs from April 2025 to March 2028 and represents a significant development in the delivery of agricultural environmental funding.

Unlike traditional agricultural grant schemes administered centrally through Rural Payments Wales (RPW) , Ffermio Bro places designated landscape authorities at the centre of local project development and delivery. Farmers and landowners work directly with local advisers to identify opportunities, develop proposals and deliver environmental improvements.

The programme primarily focuses on improving ecosystem resilience through habitat creation, restoration and management, with particular emphasis on strengthening ecological connectivity and supporting Wales's commitment to protecting and effectively managing 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (30by30).

The programme also provides opportunities to deliver wider benefits, including improved water quality, climate resilience, landscape conservation, historic environment protection and more sustainable agricultural management.

2.2 A Locally Led Approach to Environmental Funding

One of the most significant aspects of Ffermio Bro is its delivery model, which combines established Welsh Government grant administration and technical standards with a locally led, advisory approach.

Traditional agricultural grant schemes generally rely on farmers identifying suitable funding opportunities and applying through centrally administered computer systems. Ffermio Bro enables a more proactive approach, with local advisers working alongside farmers to develop projects that address both farm management requirements and wider environmental priorities.

This provides an opportunity for the Authority to use its local knowledge, technical expertise and established relationships with landowners to direct investment towards areas where environmental benefits can be maximised.

Importantly, projects can be informed by the National Park Management Plan, conservation priorities, habitat networks and catchment-level environmental pressures. This allows investment to be considered strategically rather than solely through individual, unrelated grant applications.

A fundamental principle is that Ffermio Bro should complement, rather than duplicate or replace, existing Welsh Government agricultural funding. Advisers have an important role in signposting farmers towards existing grant schemes and support where these provide the most appropriate funding route.

Ffermio Bro funding can therefore be prioritised for interventions that offer additional environmental value, particularly where collaborative delivery enables wider benefits for local habitats, ecological connectivity or ecosystem resilience that might not otherwise be achieved through individual grant applications.

Local delivery capacity

During the programme's first year, Arwel Evans, Farm Conservation Liaison Officer, initially held responsibility for programme planning, development, delivery and monitoring.

Additional delivery capacity was established through the appointment of Gareth Waters as Ffermio Bro Adviser, who became full-time in post in September 2025. This strengthened the Authority's ability to engage with farmers, develop capital projects, provide technical advice and administer the programme.

This locally based advisory capacity is fundamental to the delivery model. It allows officers to identify conservation opportunities directly, develop proposals in partnership with farmers and coordinate interventions around established landscape priorities.

Financial accountability and governance

The delivery model also carries additional financial and administrative responsibilities for the Authority.

Unlike grant arrangements where funding is paid directly to individual applicants, the Authority is responsible for administering local grant awards and demonstrating eligible expenditure before reclaiming funding from Welsh Government.

This places considerable importance on ensuring that completed works comply with the programme's technical specifications, that expenditure is eligible and properly evidenced, and that appropriate verification is undertaken before claims are submitted.

While this introduces additional financial and delivery risk locally, it also provides opportunities for robust scrutiny at both local and national levels. Local verification, financial controls and subsequent Welsh Government claim assessment provide complementary checks on expenditure, helping to reduce the risk of ineligible claims, duplicated funding and works failing to meet the required standards.

An important component of the programme's governance is the **Local Assessment Panel (LAP)**. Comprising representatives with agricultural, environmental and local expertise, the Panel provides independent scrutiny of relevant funding proposals and contributes to the strategic direction of the programme.

The Panel plays an integral role in ensuring that projects are appropriately considered, that investment is directed towards meaningful conservation outcomes and that local delivery remains transparent and accountable.

The programme therefore provides an opportunity to demonstrate that locally developed and delivered grants can achieve both strong environmental outcomes and robust financial governance.

2.3 Relationship with the Sustainable Farming Scheme

Ffermio Bro has an important relationship with the Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS), which began implementation in January 2026.

The SFS comprises three layers:

- **Universal Layer:** Provides annual financial support to participating farmers undertaking applicable Universal Actions, establishing a foundation for sustainable agricultural management.
- **Optional Layer:** Offers additional support for more targeted interventions that improve environmental management and farm business resilience.

- **Collaborative Layer:** Supports coordinated activities involving multiple farmers, land managers and organisations to achieve environmental outcomes at landscape, catchment or wider scales.

Ffermio Bro, alongside the Integrated Natural Resources Scheme (INRS), provides an opportunity to develop and test collaborative approaches that can help inform the wider evolution of the SFS Collaborative Layer.

This is particularly important because many environmental challenges, including habitat fragmentation, water quality and the management of shared ecosystems, cannot be effectively addressed through isolated actions on individual farms.

The experience gained through Ffermio Bro will therefore be valuable in understanding how farmer groups can be established, supported and coordinated to deliver shared environmental objectives.

The programme also provides an opportunity to help farmers understand and access other components of the SFS, ensuring that Ffermio Bro funding is used where it offers additional benefits rather than duplicating activities supported through the Universal or Optional Layers.

2.4 Delivering Ffermio Bro in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park presents particular opportunities and challenges for landscape-scale environmental delivery.

Unlike more geographically compact designated landscapes, the National Park is predominantly coastal and geographically dispersed. Its linear and fragmented boundaries can make the development of conventional neighbouring-farm collaborations more challenging.

Through engagement and co-creation with farmers, the scheme has therefore adopted an approach that recognises both geographical and thematic opportunities for collaboration.

During 2025–2026, the emphasis was on establishing the programme, identifying priority geographical areas and environmental themes, engaging with farmers and developing an initial portfolio of projects.

This groundwork has provided the foundation for a more coordinated approach during 2026–2028, focused on several geographical and thematic priorities.

Cleddau catchment and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Developing collaborative approaches to improve water quality, reduce sediment and nutrient runoff, and enhance riparian habitats and ecological connectivity across the catchment.

Preseli Commons and associated habitats

Supporting the resilience of priority habitats and species through appropriate grazing management, habitat restoration and collaborative approaches involving graziers, farmers and common land interests.

Gwaun and Nyfer catchments

Developing catchment-based collaboration to improve water quality, protect watercourses, enhance woodland and riparian habitats, and strengthen ecological connectivity.

Stackpole catchment

Identifying opportunities for coordinated land management that supports water quality, habitat restoration and improved connectivity across the catchment and its associated ecological networks.

Coastal hedgerow and traditional boundary network

Developing a thematic collaboration across the National Park's coastline, focusing on the restoration, creation and management of traditional field boundaries. This approach recognises the ecological and landscape importance of coastal hedgerows and their role in providing connected habitats and wildlife corridors across an otherwise fragmented geographical area.

These priorities demonstrate how Ffermio Bro can use local expertise, established conservation objectives and the National Park Management Plan to direct investment towards areas where coordinated interventions have the potential to deliver wider environmental benefits.

They also recognise that meaningful collaboration does not always require adjoining landholdings. Farms can contribute towards a common environmental objective through coordinated actions across different parts of the landscape.

The programme's development reflects increasing Welsh Government expectations for collaborative delivery. While no formal collaboration expenditure target applied during 2025–2026, the guideline minimum for National Parks is 80% of capital expenditure allocated to collaborative projects in 2026–2027, increasing to 90% in 2027–2028.

Developing effective farmer clusters and longer-term collaborative relationships will therefore be central to the next phase of Ffermio Bro delivery within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

3 Programme Delivery and Governance

From initial enquiry to completed projects and claims to Welsh Government

1 Enquiry / Expression of Interest

Farmer or landowner expresses interest in environmental improvements through Ffermio Bro.

2 Officer discussion and site visit

PCNPA officers discuss needs, opportunities and farm context.
Site visit used to identify practical options and develop proposals.

3 Project development

Maps, environmental priorities, technical specifications and eligible items developed in partnership with the farmer.

4 Eligibility and strategic fit check

- Checked against Ffermio Bro aims, National Park priorities and scheme rules.
- Avoid duplication with other Welsh Government schemes.
- Consider wider environmental benefits and opportunities for collaboration.

If another grant scheme is more suitable, the applicant is signposted to the appropriate funding.

5 Costing and funding approach

- Standard Welsh Government item rates used where available.
- Items outside standard rates may receive variable funding where they offer high nature value or clear environmental benefit (funded at 100%).

6 Approval route

Projects developed into funding proposals.

Over £10,000:
Local Assessment Panel consideration and approval.

Under £10,000:
Delegated officer approval with Panel oversight.

Local Assessment Panel membership

- 3 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority representatives
- Natural Resources Wales representative
- Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership representative
- Farmers' Union of Wales representative
- National Farmers' Union representative

The Panel provides independent scrutiny of applications, ensures alignment with environmental priorities, and helps shape the strategic direction of the programme.

7 Grant offer issued

Successful applicants receive a grant agreement setting out the approved works, funding value and conditions.

8 Works delivered

Farmer or contractor completes the agreed works within the funding period, with ongoing support from PCNPA officers.

9 Verification and evidence

- PCNPA checks that works are completed to the required standard.
- Evidence gathered (photos, invoices, maps).
- On-site inspections undertaken (risk-based approach).

10 Payment and claim

PCNPA pays against eligible completed works using standard or approved variable rates, then reclaims expenditure from Welsh Government once verified.

11 Monitoring and reporting

- Outputs recorded for Welsh Government reporting.
- Project locations and interventions mapped.
- Information used to evaluate delivery and inform future years, including collaborative approaches and environmental outcomes.

4 First-Year Delivery and Achievements



4.1 Programme Delivery

The first year of Ffermio Bro demonstrated the Authority's ability to establish and deliver a new agricultural environmental grant programme while working directly with farmers and landowners across Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

During 2025–2026, the programme attracted close to 50 enquiries, with approximately 45 projects developed for consideration. These proposals covered a wide range of environmental interventions, reflecting the diversity of agricultural landscapes, habitats and conservation priorities within the National Park.

A total of 36 projects were completed during the first year, with the programme successfully utilising its full annual funding allocation of £267,561, comprising £228,206 in capital funding and £39,355 in revenue funding supporting staff employment.

Although projects varied considerably in scale and complexity, the programme enabled practical improvements across a range of habitats, including hedgerows, woodlands, watercourses, grasslands and traditional field boundaries.

4.2 Measurable Environmental Outputs

The following outputs were reported through the final 2025–2026 Welsh Government monitoring return.

Intervention	Output
Projects completed	**36**
Hedgerow creation and restoration	**4,120 m**
Watercourse interventions	**815 m**
Woodland interventions	**27 ha**
Trees planted	**1,193**
Traditional stone walling	**135 m**
Agroforestry, hedgerows, buffer strips and species-rich field margins	**2.15 ha**
Annual funding utilisation	**100%**

These figures demonstrate the range of practical conservation work supported by Ffermio Bro during its first year.

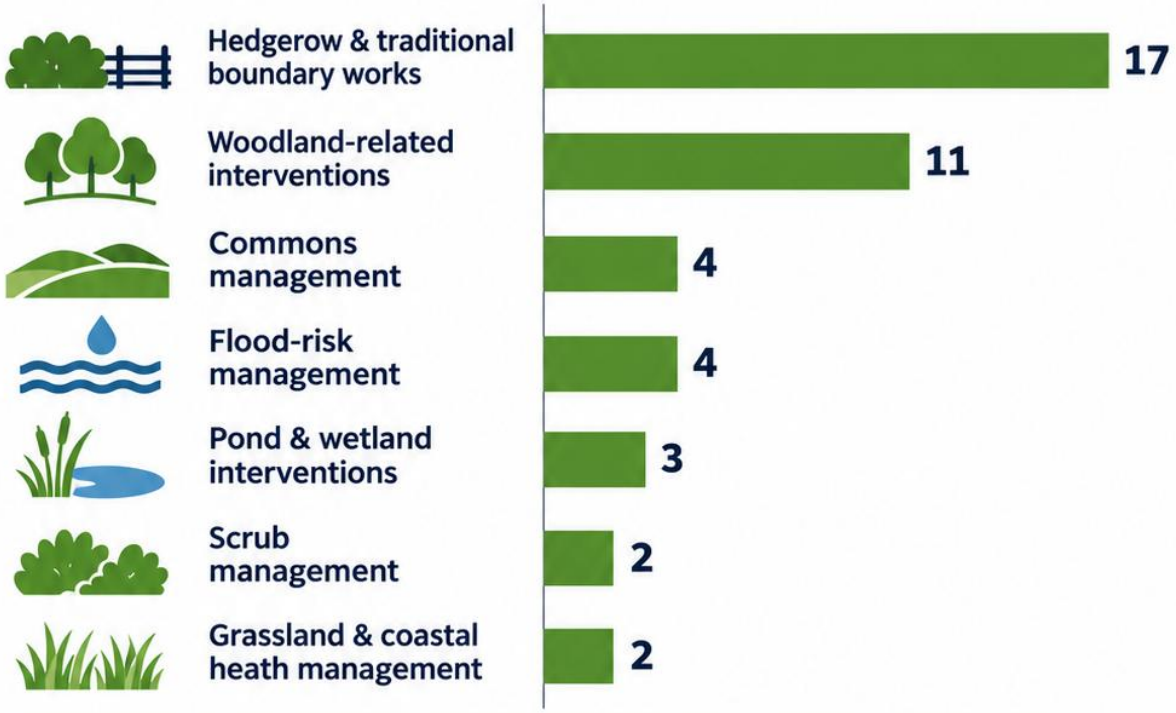
36
projects completed

c. 2,940 ha
project coverage
Area adjusted to avoid double-counting overlapping common land

Average recorded grant award:
c. £6,354

Principal intervention themes

Number of completed projects featuring each theme



Reading the figures

- Projects often included more than one intervention theme.
- Project coverage refers to the wider area encompassed by recorded projects, not the area directly restored.

4.3 Geographical Distribution of Projects

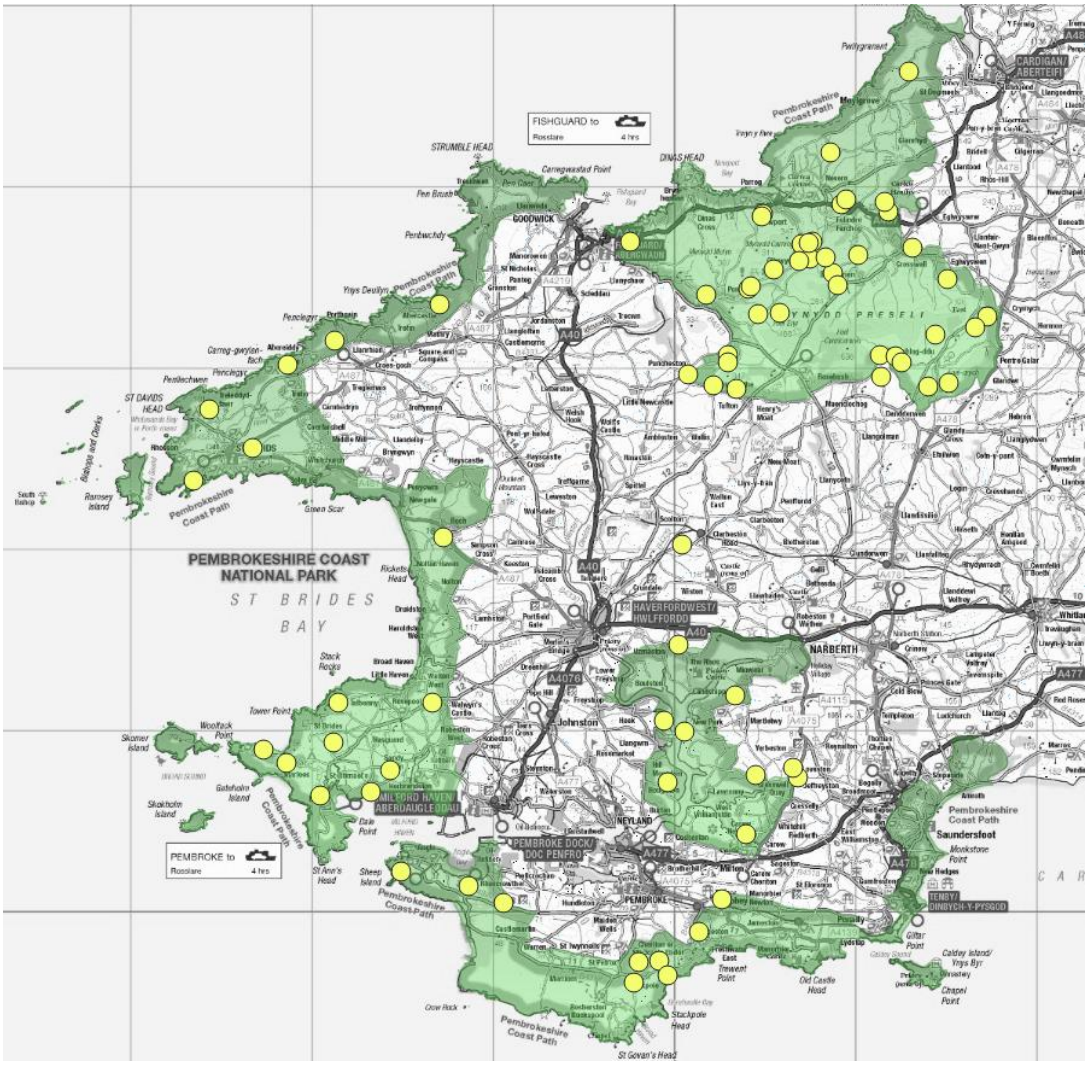


Figure 1. Geographical distribution of Ffermio Bro projects across Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, showing the first-year projects alongside those developed for the second year of the programme.

The map illustrates the geographical spread of investment across the National Park and the developing concentration of projects within priority catchments, habitat networks and areas identified for collaborative environmental management.

Case study: Carnachen, Mathry

Coastal fencing, wetland protection and habitat restoration

Ffermio Bro Year 1 | 2025–2026

1 Background

Carnachen is a coastal farm near Mathry on the west coast of Pembrokeshire. New fencing is needed to support livestock management and the long-term sustainability of the business.

2 Challenge

Walkers can struggle to identify the correct public footpaths. Wetland areas also need stock-proof fencing to prevent poaching and soil damage, while protecting habitats and helping water quality.

3 What was delivered – Year 1

01 660 metres of post, wire and netting fencing

02 3 gates

03 75 metres of gapping-up hedging

04 4 days of pond restoration work and £250 of materials

4 Benefits and outcomes

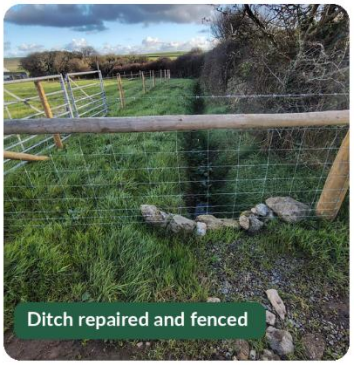
- Improved farm security and livestock management
- Safer access for walkers along the coast
- Protected wetland habitats, ditches and water quality
- Enhanced hedgerows and habitat connectivity

Project location





Fencing on the coastal holding



Ditch repaired and fenced



Hedges after fencing



Pond before restoration



Pond restoration underway

> *"Gives an opportunity to get the farm back to the position where it's working sustainably for the farms future as well as supporting the farms environment"*
>
> Carnachen farmer

Ffermio Bro • Carnachen • Year 1 (2025–26)
Original farm photographs and supplied project location map.
Draft – case study permission for public use to be confirmed.

Case study: Sprinkle Hill

Herbal leys, hedgerows and watercourse protection

Ffermio Bro Year 1

1 Background

Sprinkle Hill is a farm within the Cleddau area, with land adjoining a protected riparian corridor. The farm contains valuable boundary habitats and offers good opportunities to enhance biodiversity, improve water quality and support livestock health through more diverse grasslands.

2 Challenge

The farmer wanted to increase biodiversity in his grasslands, support pollinators and reduce anthelmintic use in lambs. Existing hedgerows also needed protection and enhancement to improve habitat connectivity, and livestock access to a natural watercourse needed to be controlled to protect water quality and reduce disease risk.

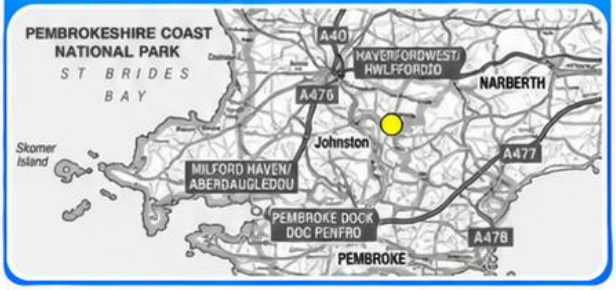
3 What was delivered – Year 1

- Established herbal leys to boost biodiversity, support pollinators and help reduce anthelmintic use.
- Boundary fencing along a SSSI riparian corridor to exclude stock from the watercourse.
- Hedgerow planting and maintenance to strengthen and extend habitat links across the farm.

4 Outcomes

- More diverse, wildlife-rich grasslands supporting pollinators.
- Improved water quality through livestock exclusion and better riparian management.
- Enhanced hedgerow habitats and greater connectivity across the farm.
- More effective rotational grazing and reduced anthelmintic use in lambs.

Project location





Improved drainage to reduce run-off to the watercourse



Restored pool with new fencing and stock exclusion



Watercourse with reduced sediment run-off



Protected watercourse to maintain water quality



New tree planting to strengthen habitat links

> *"The herbal leys, improved hedges and fencing have helped our grazing, wildlife and water quality, and should reduce wormer use in our lambs."*
>
> **Sprinkle Hill**

Case study: Stackpole

Landscape-scale water stewardship

Ffermio Bro Year 1

1 Background

Stackpole sits where farmland meets dunes and lakes within an important National Nature Reserve in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. It is a much-loved landscape for residents and visitors, rich in wildlife and closely connected to sensitive freshwater habitats.

2 Challenge

The area was experiencing nutrient pressures and sediment loss into watercourses. Field drainage and stock access were contributing to sediment moving off fields, affecting water quality in downstream streams, lakes and coastal habitats.

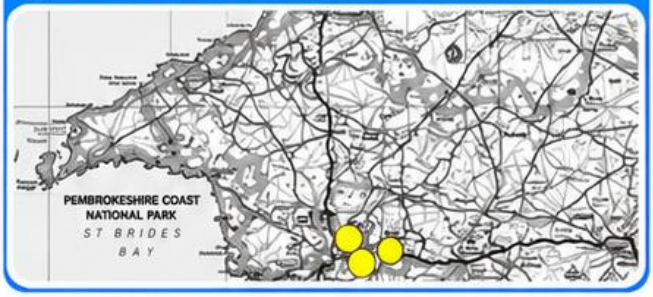
3 What was delivered – Year 1

- New fencing to better manage stock and protect watercourses
- Three new gates to improve access and enable better grazing management
- Leaky dams and sediment barriers using locally sourced timber to slow flows and trap sediment
- Restoration of a pond to slow runoff and provide wildlife habitat

4 Outcomes

- Reduced sediment movement into watercourses
- Supported improved water quality in the wider Stackpole catchment
- Created a more resilient and wildlife-rich landscape
- Strengthened collaboration between farms and partner organisations

Project location





Restored pond to slow flows and trap sediment



Leaky dams to slow flows across the catchment



Sediment barrier using locally sourced timber



Restored pre-existing structure to trap sediment



Pond restoration (de-silted existing pond and improved margins)

> *"Collaboration at scale sits at the heart of the programme."*
>
> **Stackpole partnership project**

Case study: Dôlwernen, Gwaun Valley

Integrated water, woodland and soil management

Ffermio Bro Year 1

1 Background

Dôlwernen is a smallholding in the Gwaun Valley, within a landscape linked to the North Pembrokeshire Woodlands SAC. New entrants Molly and Brynmor wanted land management that complemented the surrounding designated landscape and their traditional orchard.

2 Challenge

As the project developed, an emerging spring and altered drainage were causing silt movement and repeated seasonal flooding by overwhelming a downstream culvert. The project evolved from initial water and boundary improvements into a wider natural flood management response.

3 What was delivered

- Restored a shallow pool and revitalised existing ditches
- Opened drainage and used strategically placed boulders to slow flows
- Improved watercourse management and reduced pressure on freshwater
- Planted a mixed multi-species shelterbelt of about 80 trees to provide orchard shelter and strengthen habitat links

4 Outcomes

- Reduced sediment movement
- Slowed water flows during heavy rainfall
- Lowered risk of culvert blockage and road flooding
- Improved habitat connectivity and orchard shelter
- Supported longer-term water quality and soil health

Project location





Restored pool with strategically placed boulders to slow flows



Reinstated watercourse with new tree planting



Emerging spring feeding the watercourse



Improved drainage with boulder features

> *"We are really proud of the work we completed this year with Ffermio Bro. It has brought many stacked benefits, including shelter for our orchard, a wildlife corridor between the two wooded sides of the Gwaun Valley, reduced erosion in the field and stopped seasonal flooding of the council road."*
>
> **Molly and Brynmor**

6 Lessons Learned from Year 1



The first year of Ffermio Bro provided valuable experience in establishing and delivering a new model of agricultural environmental funding. While the programme successfully delivered its first-year objectives and utilised its full funding allocation, several challenges were identified relating to programme development, staffing capacity, seasonal delivery and financial administration.

These experiences have informed practical changes to the delivery arrangements for 2026–2027 and provide important lessons for the remaining programme period.

6.1 Establishing a New Delivery Model

The introduction of Ffermio Bro presented several challenges associated with establishing a new programme, including developing appropriate administrative procedures, governance arrangements and delivery mechanisms.

The Authority benefited from having two officers involved in the national steering group responsible for supporting the design and implementation of Ffermio Bro. This group brought together representatives from across Wales's designated landscapes, ranging from senior management to operational officers, providing a broad range of experience and practical perspectives in developing the programme.

This early involvement helped the Authority prepare for implementation and contributed to the development of a delivery model that recognised both national policy requirements and the practicalities of local delivery.

One of the principal considerations during programme development was the allocation of funding in the first year. A deliberate decision was taken nationally to provide a smaller initial allocation, reducing the pressure to commit substantial expenditure while allowing designated landscapes to establish delivery processes, engage farmers and develop suitable projects.

This phased approach provided an opportunity to concentrate on project quality, establishing relationships and developing effective administrative systems before moving towards larger and more complex collaborative interventions in subsequent years.

Key learning: Early involvement in programme design and a phased approach to funding helped establish the delivery model while allowing time to develop appropriate local procedures and project pipelines.

6.2 Staffing and Delivery Capacity

A central strength of Ffermio Bro is its locally based advisory approach. The availability of officers to meet farmers, discuss proposals and develop practical projects is fundamental to the programme's effectiveness.

The opportunity for direct engagement, often through informal discussions around the farm kitchen table, enables officers to understand the operational needs and aspirations of individual farming businesses while identifying opportunities to deliver wider environmental benefits.

This relationship-based approach helps bridge the gap between national environmental policy and the practical realities of farming, ensuring that interventions are both achievable for land managers and aligned with the Authority's conservation priorities.

However, delivering this level of engagement is resource-intensive and requires sufficient staffing capacity.

The first year began with a single Farm Conservation Liaison Officer responsible for programme planning, project development, delivery and monitoring. A national job description was subsequently developed to support recruitment across designated landscapes.

The Authority successfully recruited Gareth Waters as Ffermio Bro Adviser, who became full-time in post at the end of September 2025. This additional capacity helped distribute the growing workload associated with farmer engagement, capital project development, administration and monitoring.

The first year demonstrated that staff availability is a critical factor in the success of the programme. The local advisory model provides considerable added value, but its effectiveness depends upon having sufficient officer time to develop projects, maintain farmer relationships and manage the associated administrative requirements.

Key learning: Adequate locally based staffing is essential to maintaining the quality of farmer engagement and ensuring that project development, delivery and monitoring can be undertaken effectively.

6.3 Programme Timescales and Financial Management

The first year highlighted the challenges of delivering agricultural environmental projects within an annual funding cycle, particularly where interventions are dependent upon seasonal conditions.

Experience from previous grant programmes indicated that the process from opening Expressions of Interest, through project development and approval, to issuing grant agreements could take approximately four and a half months.

Consequently, many farmers did not receive their grant agreements until late summer or early autumn, leaving a relatively short period in which to complete the approved works.

This effectively concentrated much of the programme's first-year delivery into the autumn and winter months, with particular emphasis on activities such as fencing, hedgerow restoration and tree planting.

Other interventions, including riparian and water-quality improvements, were more difficult to progress under wet ground conditions and required careful consideration of suitable delivery windows.

The particularly wet winter created additional challenges, with a number of fencing and groundworks projects delayed until February in anticipation of improved conditions.

These delays placed considerable pressure on officers and applicants to ensure that works were completed, inspected, evidenced and paid within the required timeframe.

For the first year, the contract completion deadline was 15 March 2026. This was intended to provide sufficient time for officers to process and submit the associated grant claims through Rural Payments Wales before the end of the financial year.

Financial management was therefore a critical consideration throughout delivery. Unspent annual funding cannot be carried forward into subsequent financial years and must be returned to Welsh Government. Maximising the use of the available allocation for eligible environmental improvements within the National Park remains an important programme objective.

Despite these challenges, the Authority successfully utilised its full first-year funding allocation.

Improvements introduced for Year 2

The experience gained during 2025–2026 has informed a more structured approach to project scheduling and monitoring for 2026–2027.

Rather than working towards a single final completion deadline, the Authority has introduced staged delivery milestones aligned with the type and seasonality of the works:

- **October:** Completion of suitable early-season works.
- **End of December:** Completion of autumn works and associated interventions.
- **28 February:** Target completion of all remaining works, wherever practical.

This staged approach provides greater flexibility for farmers while reducing the risk of a significant proportion of projects reaching completion simultaneously towards the end of the financial year.

An additional improvement has been the introduction of more frequent contact between officers and participating farmers throughout the delivery period. Regular progress checks help identify potential delays, resolve practical difficulties and provide greater confidence in the programme's financial forecasts.

These measures are intended to improve delivery certainty, spread the administrative workload more evenly throughout the year and provide a contingency period before final financial claims are submitted.

Key learning: Seasonal delivery requires realistic project timescales, staged completion milestones and regular communication with applicants. Early identification of delays is essential to protecting the programme's ability to utilise its full annual funding allocation.

6.4 Farmer Engagement and Project Development

The first year demonstrated considerable interest from the farming community in locally delivered environmental funding. Ffermio Bro was promoted through social media, farming union newsletters, word of mouth and direct engagement with farming businesses that had previously worked with the Authority's Nature Recovery Team.

This engagement built upon relationships established through earlier initiatives, including the Connecting the Coasts scheme, which had provided experience in delivering environmental capital and revenue interventions across the National Park.

The programme attracted close to 50 initial enquiries, with approximately 45 projects developed for consideration. Interest continued beyond the closure of the formal Expression of Interest window, demonstrating ongoing demand for locally accessible environmental support.

Co-creation and project development

A central feature of the delivery approach was the opportunity to develop proposals collaboratively with farmers. Initial site visits provided an opportunity to discuss farmers' ideas, identify practical land management requirements and explore how proposed interventions could deliver additional environmental benefits.

The programme's scoring criteria encouraged the development of projects contributing towards multiple Sustainable Land Management objectives. This provided an incentive for farmers and advisers to move beyond isolated interventions towards more comprehensive projects combining practical agricultural improvements with wider conservation benefits.

For example, an initial proposal for hedgerow restoration or fencing could be developed to incorporate additional opportunities for habitat connectivity, improved grazing management, watercourse protection or biodiversity enhancement.

This process of co-creation helped ensure that projects were practical for participating farm businesses while contributing towards the Authority's wider conservation objectives.

Funding flexibility and accessibility

One of the challenges identified during the first year was the application of Welsh Government's standard capital payment rates.

Historically, the Authority had developed its own payment rates for environmental projects, reflecting the practical costs of delivering infrastructure improvements alongside the wider public benefits associated with nature conservation.

The adoption of Welsh Government standard rates presented difficulties for some applicants. Depending on the intervention and prevailing costs, these rates were experienced as covering approximately 40–60% of actual expenditure, leaving farmers to meet a potentially substantial proportion of the costs themselves.

This created a barrier to participation, particularly where interventions were being undertaken primarily for biodiversity or wider environmental benefit rather than direct agricultural productivity.

However, the programme retained flexibility to consider bespoke interventions outside the standard payment rate framework. Where justified, funding could be provided at up to 100% of eligible costs, taking account of the relative environmental benefits and the advantages to the individual farming business.

This flexibility was an important feature of the locally led approach, allowing investment to be better aligned with the conservation value of proposed works.

The experience highlighted the importance of maintaining appropriate funding mechanisms that recognise both the costs incurred by farmers and the wider public environmental benefits being delivered.

Key learning: Effective farmer engagement depends on accessible local advice, collaborative project development and funding arrangements that reflect the practical costs of environmental improvements. The ability to develop multifaceted projects and apply flexibility where justified is fundamental to ensuring that Ffermio Bro delivers additional conservation value rather than simply operating as another capital grant scheme.

The first year of Ffermio Bro established the foundations for a more strategic and collaborative approach to environmental improvements across Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

Building upon the relationships established with farmers and landowners, the remaining two years will focus increasingly on developing coordinated projects that address shared conservation priorities at a landscape and catchment scale.

7 Looking Ahead (2026–2028)

7.1 Collaborative Delivery and Environmental Monitoring

The programme is moving towards a greater emphasis on collaborative delivery, with Welsh Government setting expectations for 80% of capital expenditure to support collaborative projects in 2026–2027, increasing to 90% in 2027–2028.

Within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, this will involve the continued development of geographical and thematic clusters, including the Cleddau, Gwaun and Nyfer catchments, Preseli Commons, Stackpole and the coastal hedgerow network.

These collaborations will provide opportunities to coordinate environmental interventions across multiple holdings, improving habitat connectivity and addressing shared pressures such as water quality, habitat fragmentation and grazing management.

Alongside this, the Authority is exploring opportunities to strengthen ecological monitoring, including baseline habitat assessments and bioacoustic surveys for birds, bats and other wildlife.

Establishing baseline information will provide a foundation for assessing environmental change over time, helping demonstrate the contribution of Ffermio Bro interventions to biodiversity recovery and ecosystem resilience.

7.2 Continuing to Refine Programme Delivery

Experience gained during the first year is already informing improvements to project development, financial management and delivery timescales.

The introduction of staged completion deadlines, increased officer capacity and more regular monitoring of project progress will help improve delivery certainty and reduce financial and administrative pressures.

The remaining programme period also provides an opportunity to refine the locally led funding model, ensuring that it continues to complement existing Welsh Government agricultural support while delivering targeted environmental improvements.

Ffermio Bro represents an important opportunity for the Authority to demonstrate how local conservation expertise, farmer engagement and strategic environmental investment can be brought together to support nature recovery across the National Park.

The experience gained during the programme's three-year period will also contribute to wider understanding of how locally coordinated agricultural environmental funding can support the future development of collaborative approaches under the Sustainable Farming Scheme.