

North Devon Biosphere Foundation Current projects

Devon Woods Status is Green

We aspire to plant 158 hectares of new woodland, which will relate to 45 kilometres of riverside enhancement, contributing to an improvement in overall river health.

Using nature-based solutions to improve water quality throughout Devon. Extending across the whole of Devon from the highlands of Dartmoor, down the river valleys and beyond, the project aims to improve water quality, flood management and biodiversity within the catchments of the rivers: Tamar, Torridge, Taw, Teign, Exe and Otter.

The project ran a free tree scheme for small projects not easily eligible for grant aid. Approximately 60,000 trees have been distributed.

CRITTER Status Amber

The land advisors on the CRITTER Project work with landowners and land managers to improve water quality, reduce flood risk, increase the health of local soils, create areas of new saltmarsh, all supported through a simple small grant scheme process. Focus areas Water Quality, Coastal Habitat/Saltmarsh Creation, Land Management. We are working with MoD and Gaia Trust on potential sites for intervention.

Farm related work is going well. There is a problem in recruiting for a coastal habitat advisor. The roles may be now linked to the marine project coordinator. The slow progress to deliver the new intertidal areas places the project at some risk and will require some negotiation with EA to continue the project and funding from them.

DRIP (Devon Resilience Innovation Project) Status Green

An exciting pilot project local to the Little Dart, Huntacott Water and Sturcombe River catchments consists of two complimentary strands designed to help unlock new natural flood management funding for landowners by installing watercourse soil moisture and chemistry sensors throughout the catchment alongside 1:1 advice towards natural flood management measures.

3C coastal coordination; Status: Amber. We have just received confirmation of the funding for this. £15K is on offer which will be partly used to fund the accreditation scheme below. It has already been agreed by the board that funds in the restricted funds will be used to make a one year contract for a marine projects coordinator to be appointed. This post will support the development of key projects such as aquaculture, coastal habitats, marine nature recovery and a revision of the estuary strategy. The post has been advertised and there are a number of interested applicants.

Marine Wildlife Aware Accreditation Scheme

The North Devon Marine Wildlife Aware Accreditation Scheme was developed as part of the EU funded 'BioCultural Heritage Tourism' project (BCHT) to recognise the amazing local coastal/marine businesses of North Devon operating along our coastline, to support and enhance their marine wildlife encounters. Face to face training will be given in mid March 2 boat owners and other stakeholders at two locations in Bideford and Ilfracombe

DEFRA Facilitation Fund Status Amber awaiting decision

Although we have just finished a 6 year project we hope to start a new farmers/landowners group in June 2023

Benefits to joining the group include additional points for Countryside Stewardship applications, provide help and advice with Countryside Stewardship applications. Organise free workshops and training in agriculture, forestry, grants etc, with the subject matter being identified by Facilitation Group members. Give general advice, support, and opportunities for joint working.

Pledge for Nature Status Green

Pledge for Nature is a campaign to galvanise community action for nature's recovery across the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere and beyond. Our aims are to make North Devon a better place for nature, with more community action to protect for the future. Working with community groups, school children, youth groups and individuals to do their bit to protect the natural world. We are developing a Climate action Fund application that will be a follow on to this project, with other partners in the Biosphere Reserve.

Biosphere Business Partner Eco-Accreditation Scheme Status Green

Our plan to create positive change for North Devon. The UNESCO World Biosphere designation is our unique selling point as a region. The Biosphere Business Partner Scheme provides the opportunity for businesses to share that they are proud to be part of this world class area, by being part of a sustainable business network that looks after the very assets that attract 80% of the visitors, as well as each other.

Visit.Invest.Protect Status Amber

Visit our area. Invest in nature. Protect our environment! The North Devon UNESCO Biosphere welcomes over 5m visitors every year, who come to enjoy our golden sands, rugged coastline and rich heritage. We're asking our visitors to help us give nature a helping hand in protecting what we all love by donating to help fund a variety of projects. Your donation could help the water vole reintroduction to Braunton Marsh or to restore the ancient woodlands across our biosphere! We have applied as a charity for gifted status, however, this appears to take some time with HMRC.

Sustainable Tourism Status Green

Our web app 'North Devon Explorer' aims to draw visitors away from the hotspots and find the hidden gems across our Biosphere. In conjunction with Torridge District Council, we're helping tourism providers showcase our area's abundance of natural assets and adventure activities, in turn, helping to increase their year-round offer. We also offer 1:1 support sessions for tourism businesses, to give advice and guidance on sustainability, increasing year-round offer and/or creating authentic Biosphere experiences. The current licence for the app expires in July 2023, the annual fee is 6000 pounds. At the moment the app does not have enough traffic to warrant this licence fee. We will be looking for other platforms on which we can develop the app such as Mendix which means we could provide the service in a much more cost-effective way.

We are using funds from Torridge District Council and North Devon District Council along with funds recovered from the Interreg project to sustain the position held by our tourism officer for a further two years

Applications in the Pipeline

DEFRA Facilitation Fund Status Amber awaiting decision

Although we have just finished a 6 year project we hope to start a new farmers/landowners group in June 2023

Benefits to joining the group include additional points for Countryside Stewardship applications, provide help and advice with Countryside Stewardship applications. Organise free workshops and training in agriculture, forestry, grants etc, with the subject matter being identified by Facilitation Group members. Give general advice, support, and opportunities for joint working.

Defra ELMS Test and Trials Status Amber awaiting decision by end of March

We have applied for a test and trials that follows from the first phase done with Natural England, This test will work in the same 4 landscape areas (Hartland, Upper and Lower Torridge, Tav Valley and Whistland Pound reservoir) with 25 farms to explore stacked and blended finance, combined offers from farmer groups, local fund governance and use of the NCM to deliver the above. We will have a decision by the end of March. The ask is to pay for the NCM operation and development and the land management advice as well as challenge papers about additionality rules.

Biosphere Foundation CIC Projects

Smart Biosphere

The Smart Biosphere is a programme from the Digital Biosphere concept. It is testing a range of sensors and the information it can tell us about the current state but also predict (and hopefully prevent) flooding and pollution events. The project is being expanded from the UMBER catchment to the Little Dart and having sentinel samplers on the estuaries. We are also testing the approach in rivers outside of the biosphere reserve (Axe and Somerset Levels) to test is more universal application.

Smart Biosphere is a key plank of the commercial activity of the CIC. it is receiving a lot of positive attention from the institute of chartered engineers, Department of Business, Innovation and Science, Ordnance Survey and the UN. These have been examples of best practise in applying digital technology in the environment and also side projects to develop further capacity and research for expanding and enhancing the services of the smart biosphere.

As a programme it has been developed through various phases attached to different funding programmes such 1 with LEP funds, 1a with some EA funds, 2 CRF and Estuary, 3 DRIP UMBER, 4 Part of DRIP in the Little Dart, and about to be developed more with 5 Environment Living Labs in testing some Somerset Catchments for Phosphate)

Axe catchment: Status Green.

This is a short term project looking with West Country rivers trust 2 apply monitoring and a sub catchment where farms will be engaged to use the various approved methodologies and test their efficacy. Funding is secured in the current financial year

to prepare the project with an aspiration for funding for the next two years from the Environment Agency.

Environment Living Labs Status: Green. The environment living labs project is a multi-partner project hosted by the satellite applications catapult. The project start date is September 2022 and will include eligible spend from that date going forwards to March 2025. There is a considerable matching fund requirement for this project that needs to be documented. We have negotiated that sensors bought after the start date and a reasonable depreciation of value of that along with the work in the little dark valley with the drip project, and funds aligned to the Axe project can be used as eligible match. The licence from Siemens tech will also be used as a match. The cash benefit to the CIC is £350,000. This will be spent on more sensors, development of the SMART Biosphere platform and the use of Mindsphere to work in different catchments and develop tradeable credits as a model. By working with satellite applications catapult we will be also developing other data sources that can support the monitoring of ecosystem service benefits arising from change.

Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) Status is RED

The Foundation is part of this work to test approaches for marketing various benefits arising from saltmarsh and intertidal habitat creation projects. There is also some allowance for developing monitoring systems for the benefits arising from the projects so that they can be monetised in support of project implementation. Due to a delay in a viable saltmarsh code being developed which was due last year, it has been hard to progress this work and a revisiting of the business case and business plan is needed. This project is an important part of the funding of the NCM over the coming 12 months.