Harnessing coastal rewilding: £1 million in funding launches new wave of climate action

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Rewilding Britain has surpassed £1 million in total grants awarded, marking a significant milestone for Britain's rapidly growing rewilding movement.

This funding, delivered through the Rewilding Innovation Fund – which supports vital projects breathing life back into our landscapes, marine environments and communities – acts as a catalyst for large-scale projects that prove rewilding is essential for helping meet crucial nature and climate change targets.

The latest grant recipients reflect a growing focus on restoring natural habitats as a frontline defence against climate change.

With a strong emphasis on coastal recovery and shoreline resilience, funding has been directed to innovative projects in coastal Wales and the Orkney Isles, where communities are working with nature to support marine diversity and tackle rising environmental threats.

The Menai-Connecting Coasts project, led by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Bangor University, aims to create a plan for seascape-scale habitat recovery and partnership working across the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay area of Wales.

Central to this work is exploring opportunities for the recovery of native oyster reefs, which when restored can provide ecosystem service benefits, such as improved water quality and clarity – providing a habitat to support marine biodiversity and knock-on benefits for local communities and industry.

As part of this initiative, the project will undertake a feasibility study to assess the potential for native oyster recovery in North Wales, aiming to help identify suitable recovery sites and contributing to broader, ecosystem-scale marine recovery efforts in the region.

Celine Gamble, Senior Restoration Manager at ZSL, said: “We’re delighted to receive funding from the Rewilding Britain Innovation Fund. By assessing the potential for native oyster restoration across the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay – and feeding this into our broader seascape-scale restoration plans – we’re laying the groundwork for long-term, collaborative action towards healthier, more resilient seas.”

The Growing Sanday Land & Sea project, led by the Sanday Development Trust, is a community-driven project in the Orkney Isles which aims to address the urgent threat of coastal erosion on the island of Sanday.

With much of Sanday lying just a few meters above sea level, and dune losses of up to 37 metres already recorded in some locations, the project is shifting away from reactive interventions towards restoring natural systems.

By revitalising kelp forests, saltmarshes and dune systems, the initiative aims to build a self-sustaining coastal defence for the island’s 500 inhabitants and protect them from storms and coastal erosion.

Kieron Brogan-Wadley, Community Development and Operations Manager at Growing Sanday Land & Sea, said: “Through the Growing Sanday Land & Sea project, we are working to turn a challenge from nature into an opportunity. By restoring our dunes, saltmarshes, kelp forests and wider coastal habitats, we hope to make Sanday a living example of what an island community can achieve.

“With Rewilding Britain’s support, our ambition is to establish Sanday as a centre of excellence in nature-based coastal resilience, sharing what we learn for the benefit of other island and coastal communities.”

Other projects supported in this funding round include efforts to enhance biodiversity and reduce flooding in Dorset’s River Char by working at landscape scale with multiple stakeholders, and engaging the community with habitat restoration at the Dalnacardoch Estate in the Cairngorms National Park, which aims to revive degraded peatlands, woodlands and freshwater systems.

Rebecca Wrigley, Rewilding Britain’s CEO, said: “The growing demand for funding shows the rapid rise of rewilding across Britain. Communities are moving beyond reactive, short-term interventions and

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instead working with nature to address rising environmental challenges. These are exactly the kinds of initiatives that the Rewilding Innovation Fund aims to support."

Rewilding Britain is Britain's leading rewilding charity, working to create a wilder Britain for nature, climate and people. Rewilding Britain influences policy, removes barriers, and inspires positive, practical action to help rewilding – the large-scale restoration of nature and its remarkable web of life – flourish across at least 30% of Britain's land and seas by 2030.

Rewilding offers hope for tackling the nature and climate emergencies, while creating a cascade of benefits for people and local communities.

The Rewilding Innovation Fund is a bi-annual fund launched by Rewilding Britain in 2021 to foster the scale and ambition of rewilding projects, enabling large-scale restoration of ecosystems. Up to £15,000 is awarded to multiple rewilding projects in spring and autumn of each year.

See www.rewildingbritain.org.uk.

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