The context – Wild Isles

In Spring 2023 the BBC will launch **Wild Isles**, a landmark nature series about UK nature, in partnership with WWF, RSPB and Silverback Films. The series will be narrated and presented by Sir David Attenborough and will show the beauty, fragility, and global significance of UK nature. The series, and associated campaign, will deliver the message that while the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, there is still time for us to reverse the decline and protect and restore nature to our home.

The series presents an extraordinary opportunity to drive mass public engagement by inspiring people across the UK to take action to protect and restore UK nature, and our world: ramping up a decade of action for people and wildlife alike, we can help stop the decline.

Ahead of the TV series, WWF and RSPB will launch a nationwide participatory campaign to build a public mandate for change, working with people and communities across the UK to understand their current relationship with nature, and co-create a plan for restoring UK nature in a way which builds collective agency and people power. This plan – and associated engagement activity – will be called [The People’s Plan for Nature.](https://peoplesplanfornature.org/)

The People’s Plan for Nature will empower people to act together to restore UK nature by 2030. It will set out a range of actions needed by national and local governments, conservation NGOs, food businesses, citizens, and communities, to create the future people want for both them and nature; an irrefutable, independent case for political, business, and community-driven action.

The People’s Plan for Nature launched on the 30th of September. The first phase, the ‘National Conversation’ sees people from all walks of life sharing ideas for how we can protect and restore nature in the UK and make it something to be truly proud of. To date, there has been 15,000 submissions to the Plan.

Along with the survey, the People’s Plan for Nature is hosting the UK’s first ever People’s Assembly for Nature – taking place over four weekends between November 2022 and February 2023. The People’s Assembly for Nature is a citizens’ assembly which will bring together a broadly representative group of 100 people from across the country. The responses from the survey along with the outcomes from the People’s Assembly for Nature will together form the People’s Plan for Nature. This will include recommendations for governments (local and national) as well as food and farming businesses, non-governmental organisations, communities, and individuals.

The Wild Isles Community Fund provides an avenue for communities to take action for nature in their local environment.

What is the problem?

Across the UK there are thousands of people who have the desire and knowledge to take action for nature however they do not have the funding and resources. Groundwork report that the most significant issue community groups face is access to grant funding and identifying long-term income streams.

This is particularly prevalent in areas of higher deprivation where people already lack access to green space and experience higher risk to climate events. For a movement to be successful, particularly when focused on nature and climate (diversity is not well represented in the environmental sector) reaching people who would otherwise not be empowered to take action is vital to give the movement legitimacy and to influence others.

The fund helps communities drive forward the People’s Plan for Nature by breaking down the cost barrier for community-led action.

Wild Isles Community Fund Approach

A micro grant programme which gives out £500-£5000 to small community groups to allow them to restore and protect nature at a local level.

From local mosques to youth groups, choirs to community cafes, micro grants will give people the opportunity to restore or protect a small part of nature in their community and play a role in the Wild Isles movement across the country.

Community groups in low income and diverse areas will be targeted specifically to take part via a delivery partner, as well as opening the fund to all viewers of the Wild Isles BBC programme.

Alongside these grants community groups will be provided with guidance and support on the most effective ways to restore nature at a grass roots level and the wider network of community groups taking action.

From these groups WWF & RSPB would like to establish a network of 25 diverse community leaders who are new to environmentalism to advocate for a nature positive system.

This programme will have three main aims:

* Create the conditions for all communities to feel that they have the opportunity to have a say in establishing a nature-positive system.
* Develop a network of communities to drive forward a nature-positive UK
* Bring in new supporters to the existing nature-positive movement amongst the UK public who have been traditionally excluded

Proposed mechanism

Pre-granting

The Wild Isles documentary, with an estimated viewership of 10 million, will create an unprecedented opportunity to spotlight UK wildlife and galvanise action for nature. WWF and RSPB are partnering to deliver a mass integrated campaign and supporting mobilisation strategy, that aims to inspire 1 million people to act for nature. The community fund and its success stories will be promoted as part of this integrated campaign.

WWF & RSPB will produce easily digestible resources, which feature inspirational Wild Isles content and community case studies to help communities consider the type of nature positive action they may wish to take. An online/offline community will be created where groups can ask questions and share their knowledge with one another.

Implementation partners will draw on their networks to identify community groups of interest and promote the fund and its resources to them. Where necessary, they will work directly with groups or refer them to corporate funder’s support platform depending on the support needed.

Granting mechanism

All groups will sign up to the Wild Isles fund digitally on an online platform and submit a simple application. If it meets with the fund criteria below and is in an area of high deprivation (determined by cross-referencing the project location zip code and the UK’s Indices Multiple deprivation) the project will be admitted to the Wild Isles fund platform.

Within the platform all crowdfunded amounts will be matched 2:1 (for every £1 donated our corporate partner will donate £2) up to the project target. To ensure that communities with low income and social capital receive equitable funding and support projects that fit the criteria but are in areas of high resource will be redirected to our corporate partner’s general funding pot which has a separate source of funding and has a 1:1 matching scheme.

Throughout the process WWF, RSPB, and corporate partner will work together to communicate the fund, case studies, and offer support to make sure people from backgrounds who may be excluded are equally included in the fund. This support will be built in detail and can be flexed around any findings from the early stages of the fund.

Fund Criteria

We will ask that grantees demonstrate how their projects will aid one or more of the following:

* 1. Nature restoration – activity that boosts local biodiversity, by protecting or restoring habitats, creating space for nature, connecting green spaces and/or addressing activities that directly impact biodiversity.
  2. Nature connectedness and pro-environmental behaviours – activity that supports greater connection to nature and promotes pro-environmental behaviours at the community-level that will benefit nature.
  3. Community cohesion and connection – nature positive activity that encourages collaboration in the local community, connecting people of diverse backgrounds, generations, and abilities to nature and one another.

The following groups will be eligible for funding:

1. Constituted community groups, including faith groups
2. Community Interest Companies
3. Schools\* – so long as projects can demonstrate their value to the wider community.
4. Youth groups
5. Registered charities and social enterprises with incomes below £1 million

We will not accept applications from:

1. Individuals
2. Sole traders
3. Organisations based outside the UK
4. Private agencies or organisations who have been paid to apply for funding on behalf of another organisation
5. Companies that are aimed at generating profits for private distribution

**Implementation**

When participants enter the fund, they will have access to a suite of different non-financial support options to help them with capacity building, communications, and networking for their projects. These resources will be a combination of online and offline resources that will assist community groups with planning and implementing their match-funding campaigns and assist in creating resilience for projects to sustain themselves beyond the initial fund.

Match-funding related support will be provided by our corporate partner’s existing programming. WWF & RSPB will provide a programme of wrap around support for the grantees and applicants, creating a programme of support and networking opportunities. The purpose of this wrap around support is to empower and grow a movement of community leaders acting for nature. Some support will be directly provided by WWF and RSPB while other resources will be developed in partnership with specific types of organizations outlined below.

WWF & RSPB will support groups with educational resources on nature and how to implement nature projects in their communities. These resources will cover a range of topics including but not exclusive to the best times to work on different types of nature projects, media & spokesperson training, volunteering building, and Ask an Expert Q&As. We will also be working with our implementation partners to provide support for community groups and their projects. See below for details on each partner.

Audience Consultancy Partner: WWF and RSPB recognize that while we have audiences for the Community Fund there is significant gaps in terms of who we cater to. We are looking to work with implementation partners that work with these missing communities (specifically Lower socio-economic groups (LSEG/communities IMD 1-3) to understand how we can remove barriers to entry and provide support for them throughout their project. The Audience Consultancy Partner will work with our team to consult on the fund’s barriers to entry for communities they work with and draw on their networks to promote the fund and provide additional support throughout their projects.

Regional Hub Partners: Regional hubs will draw on their networks to identify community groups of interest and promote the fund and its resources to them. Additionally, they will assist in creating and maintaining convening networks for participating communities to meet online and in person to meet, learn, and collaborate with one another.

Monitoring and Evaluation Partner: The monitoring and evaluation partner will provide an anonymous system that will allow participants to give live feedback to assist in our adaptative management of the program. Additionally, we will work with this partner to develop a simplified version of our monitoring and evaluation system so communities can learn about their own project and be able to share their successes with others.

Working in collaboration with the implementation partner(s), WWF & RSPB will identify case studies that will be integrated into the wider Wild Isles communications campaign. These case studies will help to inspire further community-led action, while providing clear examples of the public desire for nature-positive action in the UK.

Monitoring and Evaluation

WWF will hire an external monitoring and evaluation partner to establish a simple, yet robust evaluation framework. Evaluation will focus on the community benefits and the success of involving and mobilising people as well as monitoring a few high-level environmental outcomes as we recognize it will be difficult to monitor for community groups.

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| Inputs | Activity | Outputs | Outcomes/Impact |
| Insight to inform target audiences, locations, and development of the programme of work    Corporate partner’s platform    Implementation partner networks and expertise    Community panel expertise      Staff resource    Capacity building resources    Digital platform/networking space          Communications & promotion | Nation-wide community fund        Regional community hubs set up across the UK    Co-designed resources available to grantees, to support their nature-positive activities          Peer-to-peer networking and support      Ongoing active management, monitoring, and review    Case studies shared across networks | At least 200 community nature action projects across the UK    Connected network of community leaders    **20,000** beneficiaries of the fund, stretch target **50,000**    At least 75% of grantees report feeling more empowered to take nature positive action      At least 75% of grantees report feeling more connected to other leaders    Uplift of community groups reporting feeling more resilient    25 community champions as spokespeople for the fund | Nature restored across the UK creating stronger ecosystems and mitigating climate change.    Network of leaders created within communities to champion future action.    Communities feel empowered and recognise their role in UK nature recovery    People made more resilient through the implementation of the nature restoration projects (direct and indirect beneficiaries)     Communities feel more connected to nature, and more likely to report nature-positive pro-environmental behaviours    Decision-makers recognise nature restoration as a public priority |

Project timeline

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| **Date** | **Milestones** |
| Oct-Nov 2022 | * Tendering of implementation partners |
| Nov-Dec 2022 | * Onboarding of implementation partner(s) and M&E partner. * M&E partner facilitates workshops with all partners to confirm success measures and SMART objectives. Full monitoring and evaluation framework in development. |
| Nov-Jan 2022 | * Co-design and consult on wrap-around support package, facilitated by Implementation Partner(s). |
| Nov 2022-Jan 2023 | * Implementation partners begin outreach and early support for communities of interest. * Pre-launch comms and outreach |
| Feb 2023 | * Prelaunch with Hero Partners |
| Mar 2023 | * Wild Isles Fund Launches (in line with Wild Isles final episode and People’s Plan for Nature launch) * Post launch comms |
| Mar 2023-Mar 2024 | * Community projects running throughout FY23, into FY24 * Capacity building and training delivery as part of co-designed wrap around support * Establish network of community leaders * Storytelling of successful community projects with always-on activity and planned bursts (as per communications strategy). |
| June 2023 | * Great Big Green Week celebrates first tranche of community champions – amplification moment for the fund. |
| Sept 2023 | * 6-month review of Wild Isles Fund led by M&E partner. Adaptive management to make any adjustments to the fund. Interim report which shows indicative success measures. |
| Early 2024 | * Full evaluation of Wild Isles Fund led by Monitoring and Evaluation partner. |