



The
Wildlife
Trusts

Technical brief

Atlantic Rainforest Restoration Programme in partnership with Aviva

Summary

Atlantic rainforest (also known as Celtic rainforest or temperate rainforest) is often affectionately described as woodland where there is 'green on green on green', due to the hundreds of species of plants and lichens which cover every surface. The west coast of the British Isles, with its high rainfall and infrequency of winter snow, steady temperatures, and clean air, is one of the few places globally with the right conditions for it to form and thrive.

Once covering a fifth of our land, there are now only a few scattered fragments remaining- with the majority in Scotland (approximately 30,000 hectares). There are fragments still in parts of Devon, Cornwall, Wales, Lancashire, Cumbria, Yorkshire, Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man – an area collectively termed our 'oceanic zone'. Conserving and expanding our Atlantic rainforest is of vital importance not only for carbon sequestration, but also to protect ancient plant life, and to keep migrating populations of pied flycatchers, wood warblers, redstarts, and tree pipits coming back to our woodlands each year.

This programme aims to go beyond traditional habitat restoration and will work to establish entirely new woodlands across eligible sites totalling more than 2,000 hectares. Aviva's £40m donation will allow local Wildlife Trusts to purchase, or lease long-term, available land, and then to establish rainforest (with area-appropriate native trees) and manage that land in perpetuity. Local Wildlife Trusts will lead on their own sites and projects, with direct support from the programme team operating from the central charity, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, and input from their communities. New sites will be seen as a win for conservation and as important hubs for collaboration with local communities including educational opportunities. Local Wildlife Trusts will actively involve communities through planting days, volunteering opportunities, drop-in sessions, and guided walks.

The project is determined to ensure local people are included throughout the entire process and are able to develop a connection to their own patch of reemerging rainforest.

For Aviva, making one of the largest ever private sector donations for a habitat restoration programme supports delivery of their Net Zero carbon ambition. Aviva has an ambition to be Net Zero carbon by 2040; this nature-based solutions programme helps to achieve this. The project as a whole is expected to remove around 800,000 tonnes carbon dioxide-equivalent from the atmosphere – similar to the emissions created by one person taking 740,000 flights between London and New York. Carbon removals are expected to peak around c. 2060, when the planted rainforests will be reaching full height, equating to an approximate average of 24,000 tonnes CO₂e removal per year.

However, Aviva's interest and involvement goes beyond carbon, as this programme meets multiple environmental, social and good governance goals (ESG), including biodiversity gain, climate change adaptation, improved flood resilience and community benefits – all of which are priorities for Aviva. The programme demonstrates the power of using nature-based solutions to tackle societal issues, improving systemic resilience to drive a much greater suite of benefits.

This programme is based in the UK – one of Aviva's core markets. This means that the actions are tangible, with staff and customers able to physically visit the new sites or take part in their restoration through volunteering. It also contributes to improved catchment resilience – by reducing flood peaks and improving water quality – benefiting communities further downstream and reducing insurance claims. Whilst the impact of each site may be relatively modest, the programme provides great examples of what is possible, in-turn driving investment to scale up nature-based solutions.



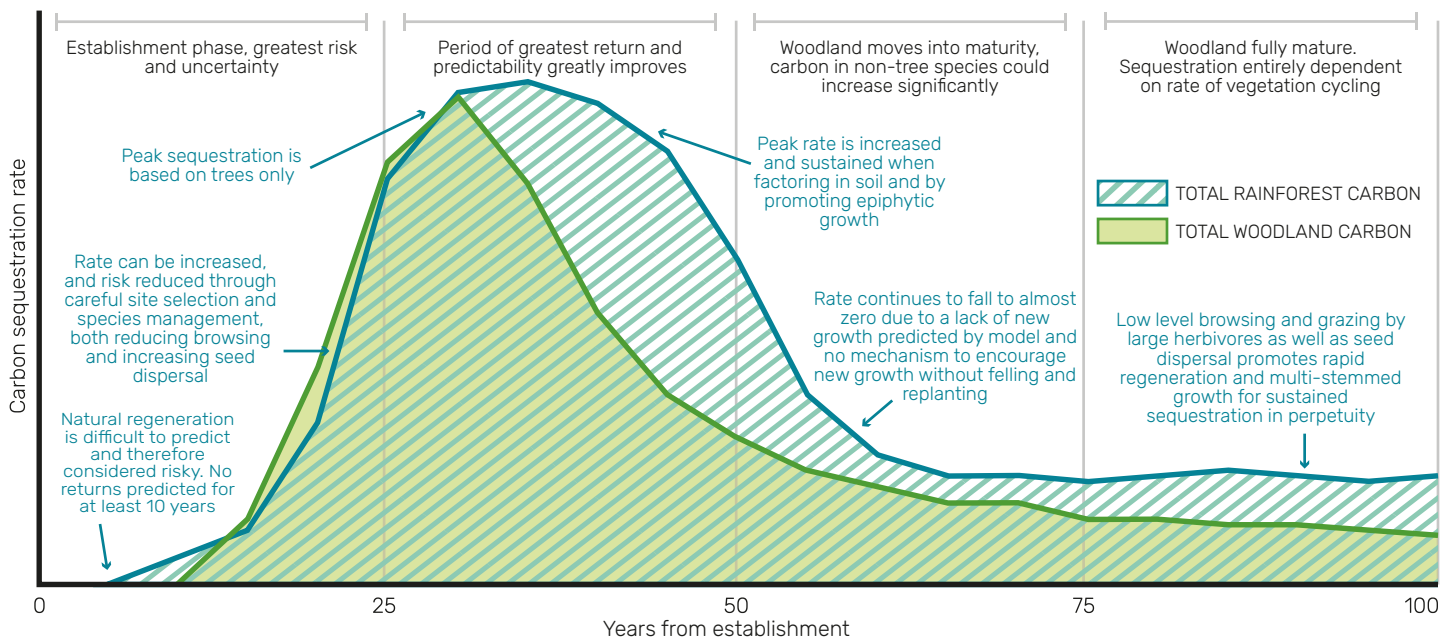
Pied flycatcher
fledgeling

Carbon and Research

This programme uses the Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) to validate the carbon credits generated. The WCC is a voluntary code which encourages consistency within woodland creation and carbon projects, while offering transparency to customers too. The process of validation and verification means any woodlands included in the scheme are certified to be sustainably managed according to national standards. This provides reliable, calculated estimates of the amount of carbon that will be sequestered as a direct result of planting new trees. This concept of additionality is vital. To gain carbon credits, it must be clear that all sequestered carbon is a result of new efforts, which would not have come about without the project. Projects involved must also have a long-term management plan and maintain verification for their whole duration. As part of our partnership, all carbon credits established by the planting of temperate rainforest are allocated to Aviva, helping to deliver their net zero ambitions. The credits are only passed to Aviva once they are realised as Woodland Carbon Units. Aviva then immediately retires the units preventing any possibility of secondary trading. By not using Pending Issuance Units (PIUs), this programme ensures the highest standards of transparency

and legitimacy. This is important as the restoration of temperate rainforest is a new idea and predictions of carbon returns may differ substantially from the actual units created. Nevertheless, modelling through the Woodland Carbon Code contains large risk buffers so we expect actual returns to exceed those predicted. This programme is aligned to the 'Nature Markets Principles' guidelines, produced in 2023 by environmental NGOs and investors, to assist with policy development and the creation of high-quality natural capital markets. A research programme over the first eight years of the scheme is being developed to further complement this work. This will create a unique opportunity to enhance our understanding of the establishment, management, and enhancement of Atlantic rainforest habitat across the British Isles as well as updating carbon models. We will share this information with organisations seeking to bring back our native rainforests and support green investment. We are keen to explore what works where and why. Research projects will include both environmental and social components as both are critical to long-term success. Broad themes will include climate and microclimate, landscape and ecology, hydrological processes, soils, and social dimensions. There will be opportunities for research institutions and practitioners to bid into this research programme.

Conceptual model of carbon sequestration rates for woodland vs temperate rainforest in lowland England

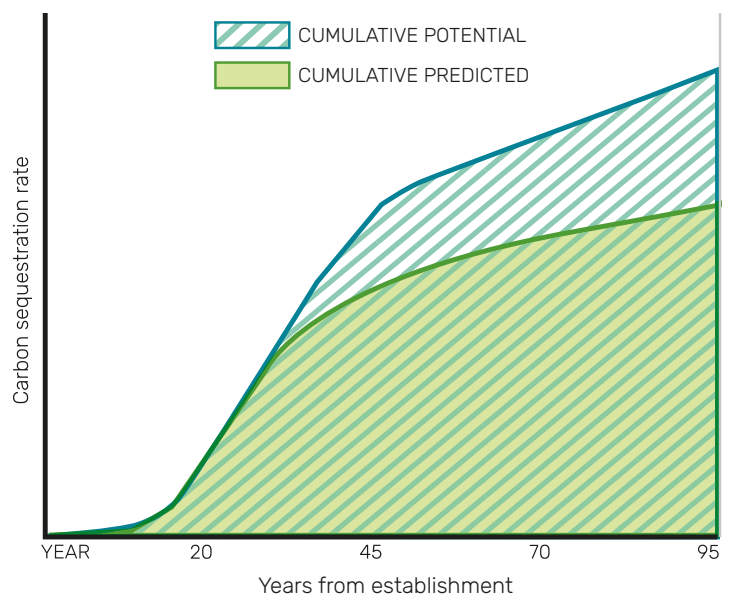


Further investment

We look to establish common cause and work in partnership with others to develop new, innovative ways to do what's right for nature and the climate. The Wildlife Trusts has a proven track record of managing large-scale partnership programmes, requiring complex data capture, evaluation, budgeting and reporting.

The Wildlife Trusts see this programme as the beginning of a paradigm shift in nature restoration at scale, driven by corporate partnerships. The power of this partnership is that it sits between philanthropy and investment, allowing for creative experimentation and learning to enable risks to be better understood and develop confidence in the market for high integrity carbon schemes which put nature at the heart of decision making.

To capitalise on the successes of this programme, The Wildlife Trusts are seeking further investment to enable high integrity nature-based solutions to be delivered at scale across the UK and its Crown Dependencies.



The Wildlife Trusts are on a mission to restore a **third of the UK's land and seas** for nature by 2030. We believe **everyone, everywhere, should have access to nature** and the joy and health benefits it brings.

No matter where you are in the UK, there is a Wildlife Trust inspiring people about nature and **standing up for wildlife and wild places**. Each Wildlife Trust is an independent charity formed by people getting together to make a positive difference for wildlife, climate and future generations. Together we care for 2,300 diverse and beautiful nature reserves and work with others to manage their land for nature, too.



The Wildlife Trusts

 info@wildlifetrusts.org

 wildlifetrusts.org

 [@WildlifeTrusts](https://twitter.com/WildlifeTrusts)

 [@wildlifetrusts](https://www.facebook.com/wildlifetrusts)

 [@thewildlifetrusts](https://www.instagram.com/thewildlifetrusts)