

# RIVERWOODS

## Part 1 – about you

### Lead organisation

Bioregioning Tayside & The CATERAN Ecomuseum

### Your name (optional)

Clare Cooper

### Other partners (optional)

The Tay Ghillies Association  
Blairgowrie, Rattray & District Angling Association  
Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust - Biodiversity Blair initiative

## Part 2 – about your project

### Project name

The River Ericht Catchment Regeneration Initiative

### Project description in a nutshell (this is the same as what you have entered into Consul)

[1000 characters max]

The River Ericht, one of the most important spawning grounds for Atlantic Salmon in Europe, is in crisis. Extreme weather caused by climate change, historic and current land management practices and invasive species, are damaging the quantity and quality of water in the river and the health of its vegetation, woodlands and wildlife. As a result Salmon numbers are in steep decline and in danger of disappearing altogether.

Our new River Ericht Catchment Regeneration Initiative has been set up in response to this crisis. With a founding group of local angling, environmental and community-led organisations, we want to take a catchment scale approach to reviving this important river system. We will seek to engage landowners, farmers, businesses, communities, educational institutions, and relevant statutory bodies in restoring biodiversity, sinking carbon and enabling the sustainable livelihoods that depend on the Salmon and the river to thrive now and in the future.

### 1. Technical feasibility

What is your overall approach going to be for getting the skills and expertise you need, and deploying these towards the restoration of river woodlands? [200 words max]

Technical feasibility would be explored firstly through a literature review on what palaeoenvironmental and current data there is for the catchment in relation to soils, vegetation, woodland, water quality, fish & invertebrate counts and other riparian dependent wildlife, land use - including the impact of the 19thc industrial textile industry in Blairgowrie and past and present extreme weather records. This should reveal important information which will allow us to understand what restoration activities could be prioritised and where. (Some of this data has begun to be assembled through the Ceteran Ecomuseum's Vital Signs project: [https://ceteranecomuseum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ceteran-ecomuseum\\_paleoecology-booklet.pdf](https://ceteranecomuseum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ceteran-ecomuseum_paleoecology-booklet.pdf) and the Smart Rivers Project: <https://wildfish.org/project/smart-rivers/>)

Anticipating data gaps, new survey work will then need to be done, particularly in relation to possible restoration sites (woodland/peatland) and their potential for the creation of carbon sinks and/or biodiversity uplifts.

The potential for developing new voluntourism experiences that could support the project financially and through human resource through e.g. citizen science activities would also be explored.

As importantly, we need to harness the knowledge, expertise and buy-in of the people who live and work across the Ericht catchment. This will require building our stakeholder network, communicating the benefits of similar projects elsewhere and determining everyone's interests.

## **2. Commercial potential**

Have you started thinking about the benefits your project will deliver and who the potential beneficiaries would be? We would be interested to hear about any early thinking you've done about the benefits (such as natural flood management) and which of these could have a monetary value to any of the beneficiaries. This is the starting point for building a business model. [200 words max]

In relation to the Ericht catchment, the **benefits to nature** of our initiative would be increased biodiversity, restoration of habitats that are key to the survival of the Atlantic Salmon and the engagement of many more local people from all kinds of backgrounds in the care and stewardship of a key piece of natural infrastructure on which their lives depend.

The **benefits to people** will be a healthier natural environment which provides food, secures livelihoods in fishing, food production and tourism, improves resilience to the impacts of extreme weather - which is significantly affecting the area already, and a thriving outdoors that both local people and visitors can enjoy.

In terms of **potential monetary value**, flooding is a big issue in the area and Blairgowrie is listed in the Tay Local Plan District Flood Management Strategy as vulnerable. The A93 has been closed on a number of occasions recently as a result of flooding causing huge impacts to businesses. There are also likely to be sites which could attract carbon and biodiversity credits and the Ceteran Ecomuseum's pioneering Regenerative Tourism plans will begin to develop new visitor experiences that could support the project through a variety of voluntourism offers.

### **3.Engagement with community**

What kind of engagement or plans to engage do you have with communities that will benefit or be affected by your project? [200 words max]

Each of the partner organisations listed above already works closely with the many civil society organisations and initiatives in the catchment.

For example, as a result of efforts by Blairgowrie & Rattray Development Trust, the town has been designated as Scotland's first Biodiversity Town. This is involving townfolk in activities aimed at increasing biodiversity. Bioregioning Tayside is running one of 4 NatureScot supported national pilots engaging communities in monitoring landscape change - part of this involves three participatory science projects on rivers including the Ericht. The Cateran Ecomuseum has been working with the Tay Ghillies Association and the Blairgowrie, Rattray & District Angling Association on their SmartRivers Project on the Ericht, Ardle and Shee Water, which involves training local volunteers to help sample and analyse invertebrates. It has also begun work on assembling palaeoenvironmental and more current records of the Ericht (see above) using participatory scientists. This catchment restoration project would look to consolidate all these existing community facing activities, recruit more local people as participatory scientists into the programme, bring new participatory science technologies into play in order to deepen engagement, e.g. <https://www.naturemetrics.co.uk> and <https://www.chronolog.io> and extend activities into local primary and secondary schools and youth groups.

### **4.Partnership potential**

What kind of organisations are you planning to team up with to get your project underway? [200 words max]

The core partnership will look to develop the stakeholder group to involve local representatives from the farming and country estate communities. These riparian landowners, of which there are many in the catchment, will be key to get on board, both for agreement to any preliminary surveying of what possibilities there are, to operationalising many of the solutions.

In addition the Cairngorms National Park, which stretches into the northern reaches of the catchment will have relevant expertise and resources that can be brought to bear. Forestry and Land Scotland own some of the woodland in the catchment and will need to be involved and local businesses that depend on the river, including local tourism businesses will also be essential to developing the leisure aspects of the initiative.

### **5.Level of public and environmental benefit**

To what extent is your project going to be about creating wider public or environmental benefit? [200 words max]

With its combination of stakeholders and its aim of involving participatory science, this initiative could act as model for other catchment restoration projects in the Tay River system, including how to develop revenue earning activities to support them - particularly if, as had been the case elsewhere, the catchment partnership becomes a key means to

overcome the limitations of pre-existing regulatory approaches in tackling persistent problems.

It will also provide a huge learning platform to show how, if we all get involved and we all work together, we **can** mitigate and adapt to the climate and biodiversity crises **in ‘our place’**. As the Regeneration Designer Pamela Mang has said “What makes a shift to true sustainability possible is the power of the connection between people and place. Place is a doorway into caring. Love of place unleashes the personal and political will needed to make profound change. It can also unite people across diverse ideological spectra because place is what we all share: it is the commons that allows people to call themselves a community.”

Additionally, restoring the Ericht catchment will enhance existing efforts to promote regenerative tourism, i.e. tourism that ‘leaves things better’ in Tayside see:

<https://www.bioregioningtayside.scot/news/bioregioning-tayside-learning-journey-2022-can-tourism-help-tayside-racetozero/>

#### **6. Right intervention in the right place**

What steps are you planning to take to make sure your intervention is ecologically suitable for the location?  
[200 words max]

The catchment falls within the River Tay Special Area of Conservation. It also falls within the River Tay Special Area of Conservation for Atlantic Salmon. This would require us to respect all obligations relating to those designations. Additionally, as part of our due diligence for the initiative, we would ensure that any other ecologically relevant guidance had been tracked out and taken into consideration when planning the programme of work. Given the aims and objectives of the project, we would expect and monitor all contractors to ensure their accountability too.

#### **7. Additionality to statutory responsibilities**

To what extent is this initiative going to deliver beyond what you would be expected to be delivering anyway?  
(For public agencies) [200 words max]

n/a

### **Part 3 - uploading this form to CONSUL**

1. Save your form in PDF
2. Label your form <project name - date>
3. Upload your labelled PDF to CONSUL platform
4. Check the platform regularly for questions people may have about your project proposal
5. Keep an eye out for updates from us along the way

#### **Need help?**

Contact [riverwoodspioneers@demsoc.org](mailto:riverwoodspioneers@demsoc.org)