

RIVERWOODS

Part 1 - about you

Lead organisation

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere

Your name (optional)

John Wheeler - Chair of NithLife

Publicly available contact details (optional)

Other partners (optional)

We have representation across our group from:

Local community groups

Landowners

SEPA

The Stove

Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere

Nith District Salmon Fisheries Board and Nith Catchment Fishery Trust

Crichton Carbon Centre

University of Glasgow

ECoArt SCIO

KPT Development Trust

Nith Valley Lead Trust

Midsteeple Quarter

Dynamically Different Dumfries

Forest Schools

Part 2 - about your project

Project name NithLife

Nith catchment Riverwood feasibility study

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

1000 characters max]

We are, Nith Life, a newly established group who share a passion for the River Nith catchment.

Nith Life has individual, community, and organisational representatives across multiple areas of interest who have come together around a common aim – to address ecological challenges along the river Nith and build meaningful cultural and educational connections throughout the catchment. We hope to do this through a catchment-based approach to create more resilient habitats, restoring biodiversity and reducing flood risk whilst encouraging a culture of connection with the river for local communities. In essence we want to become better stewards and celebrate the Nith's as a resource for our local communities and as a significant part of our region's sustainability plans for the future.

We have a big picture ethos:

- Entire river catchment - from source to sea
- A cross sector and interdisciplinary approach to innovative solutions
- Inclusive working - all ages, demographics and backgrounds
- Collaborative – working in partnership to build a network for mutually beneficial outcomes

The focus for our project is to work with local communities and partners to identify woodland creation opportunities in the Nith catchment area – using a pool of data, knowledge and networks – in order to strategically plan and identify where best to work at scale.

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]

We will employ a contractor with the relevant experience and expertise, embedded in one of our partner organisations, to review reports, data and to corral our knowledge to establish where Riverwoods could best be to achieve the outcomes we are working towards. We also have a wide range of expertise within NithLife, including ecologists, aquaculturalists, and other conservation professionals who can support and advise. We will link the information gathered with Council plans and policies like Dumfries & Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan and seek help and advice from newly appointed Dumfries & Galloway Woodland Officer - based at Borders Forest Trust and Forestry and Land Scotland. Finally, we plan to consult landowners, residents and users of the river to access their local knowledge and experiences to help target and identify opportunities for work on the ground going forward.

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]

With the impacts of climate extremes - high flashy rainfall or drought, high river water temperatures and water scarcity in summer - becoming more of an issue catchment wide - the beneficiaries of planting trees will be the many inhabitants and small businesses of the Nith including local landowners, farmers, fisheries; tourism operators, local communities and individuals.

There are a variety of projects, small businesses and social enterprises operating along the Nith catchment already that our work could foster stronger connections with and bring additional value to programmes of activity in creative learning, public engagement events and land management approaches.

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]

We have had open well attended meetings since early 2022 and a growing "membership" of folks who want to engage, learn and contribute to NithLife. These come from organisations, businesses and individuals, with a wide range of interests and priorities. From the start one of our key aims has been to bring together the many and sometimes differing needs of these interest groups, finding ways to resolve any differences in approach to create a healthy and functioning river system that makes life better for everyone. This funding will help us gain finer perspective on what needs done and where and we can dovetail this work into wider initiatives such as the developing Regional Land Use Plan.

We are keen to link to others such as Dynamically Different Dumfries - a regeneration project for Dumfries town - to show that together we can deliver all parts of the jigsaw required to make the Nith resilient and adapted.

Some of the areas in our catchment are areas of high deprivation and local engagement activities would help bring a sense of pride to these communities and build a connection and sense of ecological agency for those that live there. We are looking for projects and activities that will help us start to re-connect local communities through practical and creative learning opportunities that also improve the ecology and local habits of the places we live.

4. Partnership potential

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

SEPA
Nith District Salmon Fishery Board and Nith Catchment Fishery Trust
Crichton Carbon Centre
Nature.Scot
Dumfries and Galloway Council
South of Scotland Enterprise
Galloway & South Ayrshire Biosphere
KPT Development Trust

Nith Valley Leaf Trust
Forest Schools
EcoArt SCIO
Southern Uplands Partnership
Destination Tweed
The Stove Network
Dumfries and Galloway College
University of Glasgow
Scottish Wildlife Trust?
Buglife
FLS
Scottish Water

We have engaged with Eden Rivers Trust, Eden Catchment Partnership and Tweed Forum as deliverers in other areas.

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]

Our shared ethos is that science and art, facts and stories intertwine on our river- to the benefit of all. This is a first strand in a multi-disciplinary approach we are building - we have a list of other actions we'd like to plan for and take forward and are actively discussing what form we should take.

- Creative Learning – employability
- Wider social benefit – volunteer programmes – rural isolation
- Raising awareness of climate issues and sustainable solutions
-

This feasibility study would provide the vital stepping stone to making those plans a reality. It would allow us to engage with local communities with a specific project rather than just theoretical plans, and in doing so to motivate people to appreciate and value this rich resource on their doorstep. We have been inspired by our neighbours Tweed Forum and work in the Cumbrian Eden catchments and will seek their input going forward too.

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]

We will use our network of contacts, including professional ecologists, the experience of our group to date, the new Scottish Riverwoods dataset, latest research from SEPA, and peatland expertise from the Crichton Centre etc to develop a strategic plan of planting opportunities - which we can then start to develop focus on.

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]

This funding creates a "shared" space and will give leverage to all other funding requests and project development.

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