



**ENDANGERED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME**

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The Endangered Landscapes Programme offers an exciting and inspirational vision for the future in which European landscapes are enriched with biodiversity, establishing resilient, more self-sustaining ecosystems that benefit both nature and people.

The programme is funded by Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, and is managed by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.



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**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

**SUMMIT TO SEA: RESTORING ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN MID-WALES**



The uplands, lowlands and coastline of the Cambrian Mountains have a rich cultural and natural heritage, developed through a long history of working closely with the land and sea. In recent years, however, the area has suffered ecologically through habitat fragmentation and seabed damage, and economically through subsidy reliance and a dwindling job sector. There is an opportunity, however, for this project to revive the area's previously diverse and abundant wildlife, while creating additional benefits for the local economy through traditional and new business enterprises. The first of its kind in Britain, this project will establish a continuous, nature-rich zone that stretches from the tops of mountains to the expanse of the sea, while providing a ground-breaking model for conservation and land-use in Wales and further afield.

### THE CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS

Situated across the central counties of Powys and Ceredigion, the project area stretches from the Pumlumon uplands (the highest part of Mid-Wales) to the marine-protected areas of Cardigan Bay. The Pumlumon massif forms the largest watershed in Wales and is the source of the rivers Severn, Wye and Rheidol. Overlapping with the Dyfi Biosphere Reserve and comprising the Dyfi National Nature Reserve, this area also contains several Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation.

The wider area encompassing this project provides a diverse range of habitat types including grazed upland grassland, deciduous woodland, lowland pasture, saltmarshes, dune systems, freshwater lakes and rivers, an estuary and marine reefs. The communities who live here are rightly proud of this extraordinary but little-celebrated part of Wales.



### PROJECT CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITY

Wales has lost a significant proportion of its natural habitat, including 44 per cent of upland heathland and 30 per cent of its wildlife-rich dune systems. Only 12 per cent of woodland in Wales is ancient or semi-natural, and much of that has become degraded and fragmented. This loss has led to a continuous decline in the number of breeding bird species and other key wildlife over the last 30 years. Fragile seabed communities are also being damaged by nomadic dredgers who, with little or no enforcement of regulations, occasionally fish illegally in Cardigan Bay.

The wider area, comprising 15,000 people in 11 communities and 250 farms, faces economic crisis and uncertainty post-Brexit. Low incomes, high dependency on subsidies and insufficient employment are all key factors in the struggle of local communities to keep young people in the area (the average age of farmers in Wales is now 61).

There is an opportunity, however, to develop a new, collaborative, landscape-scale approach to managing the land and sea in mid-Wales, one that provides a more diversified and sustainable alternative to the existing farm business model.

### WHAT THE PROJECT WILL DO

This project will restore a continuous, nature-rich area, encompassing 10,000 ha of land and 284 km<sup>2</sup> of sea, which runs from the Pumlumon massif, down through wooded valleys to the Dyfi Estuary, and finally flows out into Cardigan Bay. Flourishing ecosystems in this area will support a prospering, diversified, nature-based economy.

To achieve its aims, the project will:

- Develop an overarching vision and co-manage the area with local communities, public bodies, NGOs, businesses and relevant experts through a locally-led partnership
- Support local enterprises in creating an innovative range of products and services for low-impact tourism and recreation, such as a community-run bunkhouse and visitor hub
- Restore the wider area so that a range of economic enterprises that are founded on the value of nature can be sustained, such as continuous-cover forestry, harvesting of natural products, and value-added meat production and fishing
- Create ecological corridors through restoration work with existing landowners and strategically purchasing connective land where appropriate to
- Enhance ecological processes by removing artificial barriers to natural river flow and encouraging the grazing and free movement of wildlife. Absent species such as the beaver will be considered for reintroduction
- Restore and expand priority habitats such as montane scrub, blanket bog, grasslands, coastal saltmarsh and living reefs, allowing populations of native species including pine martens, horseshoe bats and lobsters to recover and colonise new areas



### PROJECT LEAD:

Rewilding Britain with the Woodland Trust

### PROJECT PARTNERS:

- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Marine Conservation Society
- Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
- Natural Resources Wales
- Wales Wild Land Foundation
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation
- Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation
- ecodyfi

“Summit to Sea is about demonstrating that there can be a different future for the land and sea, one that works for both people and nature.”

**Rebecca Wrigley**  
Director of Rewilding Britain