



New citizen science app will help restore UK sand dunes

The Dynamic Dunescapes app makes it easier for volunteers to record data, and for site managers to build long-term environmental data sets across nationwide project

For Dynamic Dunescapes, a large sand dune restoration project in England and Wales, a digital environmental monitoring assistant can now be downloaded to a smart phone. The new Dynamic Dunescapes app, developed by UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, provides six activities for volunteers to monitor changes in the project's many different dune systems - including their shape and size, vegetation cover and water table depth - over months and years.

Environmental monitoring is an essential part of any conservation project. It is necessary to know the health and distribution of the species you're trying to support, and to know whether conservation actions are helping. The task of generating reliable long-term data sets, then, occupies one of the top spots on the to-do list. But when that monitoring takes place year-round at over 30 sites in England and Wales, from Cornwall to Cumbria, gathering this data certainly doesn't come without its challenges. Even more so, in an era where group activities, including conservation volunteering, are limited.

The app tackles many of these challenges: standardising the monitoring methods used; guaranteeing that transects are set up at exactly the right location in large landscapes, time after time, with GPS coordinates; improving the reliability of data collected with offline species ID guides; ensuring all data is collected and collated centrally, to form a nationwide data set for analysis.

The app is free to download and is designed to be used in collaboration between sand dune site managers, and their volunteers and citizen scientists out in the field. It also connects the many regional sites in the project and delivery partners working on Dynamic Dunescapes. The project is now calling for local teams and local volunteers to support in rolling the app out in the field. You can sign up to get involved by [registering as a project volunteer](#).

Coastal sand dunes are listed as the most threatened habitat in Europe in terms of biodiversity loss. In recent decades, these habitats which are healthiest when dynamic and contain areas of free-moving sand, have often become threatened by overstabilisation, invasive species and nutrient enrichment. A key part of Dynamic Dunescapes is identifying the locations in which interventions are required and subsequently monitoring the impact of these interventions.

Download and explore the app here: <https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/dunescapes-citizen-science-app/>.

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Natural England, Plantlife, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust are working in partnership to deliver this ambitious and innovative project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the EU LIFE Programme.

For more information about Dynamic Dunescapes find the project on social media @dynamicdunes, and keep up to date with events and volunteering opportunities by visiting dynamicdunescapes.co.uk (<https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/>) and signing up to our [email newsletter](https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/newsletter/) (<https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/newsletter/>).

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