



D4-Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE Socio-Economic Report

**Evaluating the socio-economic impact of the DuneLIFE
Dynamic Dunescapes project**



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This sub-report is provided to meet the deliverable ‘D4’ for the EU LIFE Dynamic Dunescapes Project : “Evaluation of Dynamic Dunescapes - Socio-economic impact of the project”.

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1. Introduction and context

‘Dynamic Dunescapes’ (LIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570) is a partnership project working to restore sand dunes across England and Wales for the benefit of wildlife, people and communities. The project is led by Natural England, working closely with Plantlife, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales and three Wildlife Trusts (Cornwall, Lincolnshire and Cumbria).

The project is financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Commission.

Due to the project's focus on habitat and species restoration, the project was not designed or expected to have significant economic impacts. However, the project has had positive impacts on the local economy and employment, as well as positive social impacts for local communities and visitors. Where data is available, the socio-economic impact has been analysed and assessed.

2. Evaluation approach

Description and methods employed (what, how, where, when and why):

An evaluation of the socio-economic impact of the project has been undertaken in collaboration with relevant actions under D3 and D5, together with the collection of additional data, separate analysis and reporting. D4 Socio-economic impacts of project actions utilised project staff and specialists to provide an assessment of the wider benefits of the project. This D4 assessment of socio-economic impacts focuses on the main anticipated impacts on **economic** indicators, such as volunteering and employment. Deliverable D5 covers the majority of the social indicators through its detailed reporting on impacts on local communities, other user groups and professional engagement.

3. Headline indicators

The evaluation will assess impacts on the following indicators.

Economic impacts:

1. Employment at the sites (direct impact).
2. Expenditure by the project in the local economy (direct impact).
3. Expenditure by participants in project events and by visitors to the site in the local economy (e.g. expenditure on food and drink) (direct impact).
4. Expenditure by volunteers (as part of their volunteering activity) in the local economy (e.g. expenditure on food and drink) (direct impact).
5. Resource provided to the project by volunteers (number of person hours of input).
6. Training provided by the project to (a) volunteers and (b) others, contributing to the capacity of the workforce.

Social impacts on scientific and practitioner communities:

7. Provision of new information on dune restoration, dissemination of that information and provision of education and training.
8. Contributions to networks in scientific and practitioner communities

4. Summary table of outcomes against socio economic indicator

Ref	Intended Outcome D4 Indicator at start of Grant Agreement.	Intended source of Data (at outset)	Summary / Headline Commentary on outcomes:
D4(i)	Employment at the site (direct impact).	Data collected by the project Team	Headline: Across the project, 16 new staff posts and three apprenticeships were created for project delivery. A total of 18.2 FTE. Equivalent of 62 years of employment. See 'Supporting information' for breakdown.
D4(ii)	Expenditure by the project in the local economy (direct impact)	Data collected by the project Team	Headline: across the project the 'local' investment attributable to the project will be a <i>minimum</i> of 403,000 Euros and potentially significantly more.
D4(iii)	Expenditure by participants in project events and by visitors to the site in the local economy (e.g. expenditure on food and drink) (direct impact).	The data collected through surveys of event participants and site visitors (conducted under action D5).	Reliable data could not be derived for this indicator.
D4(iv)	Expenditure by volunteers (as part of their volunteering activity) in the local economy* (e.g. expenditure on food and drink) (direct impact).	Data collected through surveys of volunteers (conducted under action D5).	Numbers of volunteers were collected but it was not practical or reliable to extrapolate this to local economy expenditure.
D4(v)	Resource provided to the project by volunteers (number of person hours of input).	Data collected by the project Team	Headline: Days of volunteer activity = 7,675; in-kind contribution across all volunteer activity = £385,055 (see 'supporting information' for breakdown)
D4(vi)	Training provided by the project to (a) volunteers and (b) others,	Data collected by the project Team	Headline: 154 training events took place reaching over 4150 participants.

	contributing to the capacity of the workforce.		
Social impacts on scientific and practitioner communities:			
Ref	Intended Outcome D4 Indicator at start of Grant Agreement.	Intended source of Data (at start of Grant Agreement)	Summary / Headline Commentary on outcomes:
D4(vii)	Provision of new information on dune restoration, dissemination of that information and provision of education and training	Data collected by the project.	Key mechanism/outputs: • The Update to the Sand dune Managers Handbook (2024) • End of Project Conference: Dynamic Dunescapes Project Conference - Dynamic Dunescapes • NRW Sands of Life Conference (Dunescapes Staff attended and contributed) • Engagement with Sand Dune and Shingle Network: (Virtual and Conference) • Provision of Guidance and training for the Citizen Science Community – provided as a manual for Citizen Science monitoring of sand dunes, and a series of training modules https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/citizenscience/ and also delivered through citizen science initiatives throughout the project.
D4(viii)	Contributions to networks in scientific and practitioner communities	Data collected by the project.	Key mechanism/outputs: • The Update to the Sand dune Managers Handbook (2024) • End of Project Conference: Dynamic Dunescapes Project Conference - Dynamic Dunescapes • NRW Sands of Life Conference (Dunescapes Staff attended and contributed) • Engagement with Sand Dune and Shingle Network: (Virtual and Conference)

5. Supporting information and background data for the outcome indicator headlines:

i. Employment generated by or through the project

Across the project, 16 new staff posts and three apprenticeships were created for project delivery. A total of 18.2 FTE. Equivalent of 68 years of employment. (Source Draft 'Summary of Costs' Report 2025 (unpublished))

Role	Host Organisation	Location	Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)	Duration of employment (yrs)
Project Manager	Natural England	National	1	5 + 2 years
Finance Officer	Natural England	National	1	5 + 2 years
Communications Officer	Natural England	National	1	4.5
Project Support Officer	Natural England	National	1	4.5
Engagement Manager	Plantlife	National	1	3
Project Officer	Natural England	Cumbria	1	3.75
Reserve Manager	Natural England	Lincolnshire	0.5	3
Project Officer	National Trust	Dorset	1	3
Project Officer	Plantlife	Devon	0.7	4
Engagement Officer	Plantlife	Wales	1	3.5
Engagement Officer	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	Lincolnshire	1	3
Engagement Officer	National Trust	Dorset	1	3.5
Engagement Officer	Cornwall Wildlife Trust	Cornwall	1	3.5
Engagement Officer	National Trust	Devon	1	3
Engagement Officer	Natural England	Sefton Coast	1	3.5
Engagement Officer	Cumbria Wildlife Trust	Cumbria	1	3.5

Apprentice	Natural England	Lincolnshire	1	2.5
Apprentice	Cornwall Wildlife Trust	Cornwall	1	1
Apprentice	Cornwall Wildlife Trust	Cornwall	1	2
TOTAL			18.2	69.25

Table 1. Employment opportunities created by the project

ii. Expenditure by the project in the local economy (direct impact).

For the purposes of this analysis, the local economy is defined as the geographic area within a 10-mile /16km radius of the project site, following the examples used in similar UK LIFE environment projects, such as the Cumbrian Bog LIFE Restoration, and the ‘Marshes Mosses’ BogLIFE project (Natural England, 2022¹).

To value the expenditure in local economies, we took data from project partners financial claims (e.g. for contractors or suppliers) made throughout the project, and analysed these against a central postcode for each project site. There were *thousands* of individual claims, so we set a threshold of 5000 Euros to make the assessment manageable. **Taking this approach, we identified circa 403,000 euros investment that could be attributed to suppliers with the ‘local’ economies.** This is likely to be a minimum, as there will be many smaller local suppliers (albeit lower value of < 5000 euros) that it was not possible to capture through this analysis.

It’s notable that some suppliers whilst outside the 16km radius of sites, were located within the same county as a project. For example, the key contractor for the Formby project (Sefton coast SAC) main base was in same county 50km from the site. The costs totalled over 1.1m euros for this supplier – and it’s possible that at least that some of that economic input would be invested more locally around the site (e.g. through staff living near, or travelling to site, buying fuel, food etc). Another significant cost from the Lincolnshire Coast SAC projects, was the supply of volunteer accommodation (c 574000 euros). The supplying firm was based c 50km from the sites - but in the same county.

The breakdown by regional SAC sites is shown in the table below. Proportion of local spend may be biased by the number of sites in each location (e.g. Cumbria)

¹ Natural England (2022) Socio-economic analysis of the Marshes Mosses BogLIFE project. Unpublished.

Dunescape site	Local investment in euros< 16km radius	Proportion
Braunton Burrows (Devon)	53322	13%
Cumbria Dunescape sites	120110	30%
Sefton Coast (Lancashire)	67313	17%
Lincolnshire	48706	12%
Penhale Dunes (Cornwall)	93107	23%
Studlands Dunes (Dorset)	20694	5%
Grand Total	403251	100%

* Centroid postcode distance to supplier, calculated for each of the ‘composite’ sites;

In conclusion, it would seem reasonable to assume that across the project the ‘local’ investment attributable to the project will be a *minimum* of 403,000 Euros and potentially significantly more.

iii. Expenditure by participants in project events and by visitors to the site in the local economy (direct impact).

Insufficient data was obtained surveying Dunescape event participants on this indicator that could be analysed to provide meaningful analysis or conclusions.

E.g. for sites such as National Trust Studland where there are very many visitors to visit the property, a very small proportion would have attended specifically because of Dunescape activities. I.e. it would be disingenuous to attribute additional expenditure to the project.

For site events where it was more likely that participants were there because of specific Dunescape events, there were generally very limited opportunities to spend money, as the majority of Dunescape sites were not close to tourist hotspots or conurbations.

iv. Expenditure by volunteers (as part of their volunteering activity) in the local economy

Numbers of volunteers and volunteer days were collected (see ‘v’ below.) It could be assumed though not quantified, that this significant number of volunteers would have spent money in the local economy of each project area – e.g. be that through buying

refreshments, using local services such as public transport or fuel to access sites. However, advice from Natural England colleagues leading on Volunteer engagement is that this would be limited – From their experience volunteers usually supply own food etc - and there's no certainty that this is spent in the local economy (e.g. expenditure is as likely to be in a nationally based supermarket or fuel chain, rather than a local shop). Thus it would be inaccurate and disingenuous to extrapolate the gross volunteer figures in this way.

v. Resource provided to the project by volunteers

Through the project, 947 new volunteering opportunities were provided by the project team. Events were largely coordinated by the team of Engagement Officers across the different sites. Activities included site management activity, such as invasive species or scrub removal, monitoring activity, such as species recording, or helping to run public engagement events or social media channels.

Project volunteers provided an in-kind contribution to the project of £385,055 (c. 450,514 Euros@ avg. exchange rate 1.17) through 7,675 volunteer days.

	In-kind £	In kind (Euros)	Vol days
Cumbria	£70,688.00	82705	1209.00
Cornwall	£67,044.50	78442	2317.25
Devon	£108,325.00	126740	1637.50
Dorset	£94,972.00	111117	1748.00
Lincolnshire	£15,200.00	17784	200.00
Sefton	£28,825.00	33725	563.50
Total	£385,055	450514	7675

vi. Training provided by the project to (a) volunteers and (b) others, contributing to the capacity of the workforce

Dynamic Dunescapes created opportunities for volunteers, staff, site managers, teachers and students to gain practical skills and experience as a result of their engagement in the project. In total 154 training events took place reaching over 4150 participants². Examples as a result of Dynamic Dunescapes:

- 22 Citizen Science events have taken place reaching 458 participants
- 48 training events have taken place for schools reaching 607 teachers

² From 'Key Project Stats Aug 2024' file data collected for project

- 47 skill development events for young people reaching 1,011 participants
- 56 site manager training events reaching 716 participants

Specific surveys on the value of those attending training were undertaken and feedback (197 responses) was as follows:

- 98% have developed new knowledge about sand dunes
- 99% had a greater understanding of sand dune topic
- 71% felt they had developed new skills

There was also a survey focus on specific training aimed at **younger conservation practitioners**. Feedback from this group (19 respondents) indicated:

- 100% agreed they had learned about sand dune habitats and wildlife
- 63% felt they had developed new survey skills for monitoring habitats and wildlife
- 95% had increased their knowledge of individual plant and animal species
- 84% learned about sand dune management
- 63% had learned about the conflicts between different users of sand dunes

In addition, three Apprenticeships were created by the project (as shown in table 1)

From a **volunteers** perspective, surveys (55 participants) indicated:

- 85% developed new skills and knowledge
- 93% learned about sand dunes
- 84% have a greater understanding of their local environment.

All survey data in section vi. from ¹ Sheperd & Moyes, Dynamic Dunes, 'Final Evaluation Report. 2024'

Social impacts on scientific and practitioner communities:

vii. Provision of new information on dune restoration & dissemination of that information and provision of education and training

and

viii. Contributions to networks in scientific and practitioner communities

There were significant delivery of communication tools and a number of events used to engage with the Scientific and practitioner Communities, in terms of the deliverables of both (vii) **Provision of new information on dune restoration, dissemination of that information and provision of education and training** and (viii) **Contributions to networks in scientific and practitioner communities**:

- This included the external Dynamic Dunescapes website which was a primary means of sharing information, project activity, advice, technical guidance and case studies to these audiences (by the end of 2025 there had been over 168,000 page views). It's clearly not possible to ascertain how many are from those that would identify as a being from a scientific/practitioner audience - but it is likely a significant proportion would have been. There were over 4000 materials downloaded from the website, many of which would comprise scientific and practitioner resources, case studies and reports. (e.g. There were over 300 downloads of the 1st edition of the sand dune managers handbook, and 100 downloads of the citizen science handbook by midway through the project).
- The key document produced to support the project and share information with this audience was the '[Sand Dune Managers Handbook](#)' with an initial edition issued in 2021, and then an updated 2nd edition in 2024.
- In addition the [main project conference held in 2023](#), at Braunton Burrows, Devon, UK brought together a practitioner and expert audience of over 90 attendees, including site managers, academics and representatives from other EU LIFE dune projects, to share learning from the project.
- Dynamic Dunescapes staff also contributed the 'sister' Welsh EU LIFE sand dune project '[Sands of Life](#)', to help facilitate knowledge sharing between the two projects.
- Dynamic Dunescapes project staff and colleagues have also taken an active role in the [UK Sand dune and Shingle network](#), attending steering group meetings and presenting the work of Dynamic Dunescapes to an audience of practitioners, academics and also European colleagues working on sand dune EU LIFE projects (e.g. most recently at the [meeting in September 2025](#)).
- A number of scientific reports focussed around the deliverable D4(vii) have been commissioned as part of the works, particularly around Dune notching, and other topographic works and surveys. Many of these are published by [Kenneth Pye Associates Ltd](#) - for example there are reports relating to the key Dunescapes sites and associated works at Penhale (Cornwall) Ainsdale and Formby (Sefton coast) and Sandscale Haws (Cumbria).
- Considerable output for the Citizen Science Community was provided, through guidance and training. This included development of an App, and a series of training modules <https://dynamicdunescapes.co.uk/citizenscience/>. Including

- Introduction to Sand Dune Habitat Types
- Introduction Conservation Management Interventions
- Recording Disturbance Module
- Surveying Vegetation Module
- Surveying Indicator Species
- Sand Dune Profile Module
- Fixed Point Photography Module
- Water Depth Module
- Zonation Module

Various citizen science initiatives and events also took place throughout the project at the project sites.

- Opportunities for students carrying out Research and Conservation were also created by the project. 39 student placement opportunities were created, and 40 student researchers were supported [Students & Researchers - Dynamic Dunes](#)

END. Glen Cooper, March 2026.