

20 March 2026

Our ref: Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE

Your ref: LIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570



LIFE Project Number
LIFE17 NAT/UK/000570 - DuneLIFE

Report
Covering the project activities from 17/09/2018 to 30/09/2025

Reporting Date
31/03/2026

Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE

Data Project

Project location:	England - Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes & Gibraltar Point SAC; Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes SAC; Penhale Dunes SAC; Braunton Burrows SAC; Sefton Coast SAC; Morecambe Bay SAC; Drigg Coast SAC; and Solway Firth SAC.
Project start date:	17/09/2018
Project end date:	30/09/2025
Total budget:	€ 8,522,712
EU contribution:	€ 5,113,627
(%) of eligible costs:	60%

Data Beneficiary

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Package completeness and correctness check	
Obligatory elements	✓ or N/A
Technical report	
The correct latest template for the type of project (e.g. traditional) has been followed and all sections have been filled in, in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
Index of deliverables with short description annexed, in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
<u>Mid-term report</u> : Deliverables due in the reporting period (from project start) annexed <u>Final report</u> : Deliverables not already submitted with the MTR annexed including the Layman's report and after-LIFE plan Deliverables in language(s) other than English include a summary in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
Financial report	
The reporting period in the financial report (consolidated financial statement and financial statement of each Individual Beneficiary) is the same as in the technical report with the exception of any terminated beneficiary for which the end period should be the date of the termination.	✓
Consolidated Financial Statement with all 5 forms duly filled in and signed and dated <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel file)</i>	✓
Financial Statement(s) of the Coordinating Beneficiary, of each Associated Beneficiary and of each affiliate (if involved), with all forms duly filled in (signed and dated). The Financial Statement(s) of Beneficiaries with affiliate(s) include the total cost of each affiliate in 1 line per cost category. <i>In electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel files) + in the case of the Final report the overall summary forms of each beneficiary electronically Q-signed or if paper submission, signed and dated originals*</i>	✓
Amounts, names and other data (e.g. bank account) are correct and consistent with the Grant Agreement / across the different forms (e.g. figures from the individual statements are the same as those reported in the consolidated statement)	✓
Mid-term report (for all projects except IPs): the threshold for the second pre-financing payment has been reached	✓
Beneficiary's certificate for Durable Goods included (if required, i.e. beneficiaries claiming 100% cost for durable goods) <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets)</i>	✓
Certificate on financial statements (if required, i.e. for beneficiaries with EU contribution ≥750,000 € in the budget) <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed original and in electronic version (pdf)</i>	✓
Other checks	
Additional information / clarifications and supporting documents requested in previous letters from the Agency (unless already submitted or not yet due) <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
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**signature by a legal or statutory representative of the beneficiary / affiliate concerned*

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2 List of key-words and abbreviations

C actions	Conservation actions
Cornwall WT	Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Covid-19	Coronavirus pandemic
Cumbria WT	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
DAS	Discretionary Advice Service
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
Furlough	A temporary leave of employees
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IPENS	Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites
KPIs	Key Project Indicators
Lincs WT	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NT	National Trust
NE	Natural England
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
PAF	Prioritised Action Framework
PGB	Programme Governance Board

PSG	Project Steering Group
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SIPs	Site Improvement Plans
SLG	Site Leads Group
SNAPs	Site Nitrogen Action Plans
SoLIFE	Sands of LIFE (LIFE17NAT/UK/000023)
SRM	Senior Reserve Manager
SRO	Senior Responsible Officer
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UKCEHUK	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WT	Wildlife Trust

3 Executive Summary

DuneLIFE¹ is a partnership project restoring sand dunes across England for the benefit of wildlife, people and communities. It has delivered nature conservation work at scale across England and has undertaken engagement work that has both supported the restoration of these unique habitats, and made a wider contribution to local communities.

Sand dunes were listed as the habitat most at risk in Europe (Article 17 Habitats Directive Report, 2013) with the lowest proportion of assessments marked as 'Favourable'. Declines in the extent and quality of sand dunes, often due to over-stabilisation, reached a critical point in the UK by the time of the 2013 report, which stated that all seven sand dune habitats and a freshwater feature were in an overall bad conservation status². The DuneLIFE project aimed to deliver [Site Improvement Plan \(SIP\)](#) and Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) actions relating to 3,412ha of dunes and 22ha of H3110 across eight SACs and build on the approaches outlined in the relevant [IPENS \(LIFE11 NAT/UK/000384\) theme plans](#).

DuneLIFE proposed to improve the condition of eight SACs by tackling the root causes of decline, such as over-stabilisation, encroachment of invasive species and nutrient enrichment; and implement best practice techniques in ways which are sustainable and promote their replication and transfer.

The eight SACs across six English counties were: Saltfleetby to Theddlethorpe and Gibraltar point (Lincolnshire); Studland Dunes (Dorset); Penhale Dunes (Cornwall); Braunton Burrows (Devon); Sefton Coast (Lancashire); Solway Firth, Drigg Coast, and Morecambe Bay (Cumbria)

Six core partners, Natural England (co-ordinating beneficiary), Plantlife, National Trust, The Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust, worked in collaboration with local delivery partners. The overall project initial cost of € 8,522,712 included the principal funding contribution from the EU LIFE Programme (€5,113,627) as the major funder, along with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, partner and in-kind contributions. There were also many other associated partners ([see Annex 1](#)).

The projects key objectives were:

1. Increase and enhance the restoration of sand dune and associated wetland habitats.
2. Improve the resilience of relevant Annex I & II habitats and species to climate change, impacts of water availability and future nutrient enrichment.
3. Demonstrate best practices including the positive integration of habitats and species restoration with visitor/recreational management to existing and future site managers, volunteers and policy makers at key sites in Europe.
4. Inspire and promote better understanding and awareness of the value and function of natural dynamic dune systems across a wide range of audiences in the UK and mainland Europe (15000+).

Key achievements, deviations and issues:

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a huge unforeseen challenge during the first two 2 years of the project and had implications across all the objectives in terms of resources, project planning, delivery and public engagement. Despite this, and with a prolongation to help take account for delays, DuneLIFE delivered on all its intended objectives and targets, and provided additional outcomes.

The project achieved extensive rejuvenation by restoring 270 Ha of sand dune and associated dune-wetland habitats, with benefits for associated species. The key techniques involved scrub removal, 'turf' (surface vegetation) stripping and top-soil removal (where it had become enriched with nutrients) to create new areas of bare sand and reset ecological succession. Bare sand is an important feature of dune ecosystems for pioneer species and specialist invertebrates and reptiles, and in all the sites was under-represented before the work began. These techniques were used across all sites but extensively at Braunton borrows SAC, and at

¹ DuneLIFE is also referred to as 'Dynamic Dunescapes' -the name given to the wider joint project with Natural Resources Wales, that was co-funded with the National Heritage Lottery Foundation. This report uses both terms to refer to the project, although the DuneLIFE funding was focussed on English SAC sites. The English Dynamic Dunescapes "DuneLIFE" is the sister project of the Welsh EU-funded "Sands of Life/Twyni Byw" project that ran from September 2018, until June 2024.

² The project was aimed at benefiting the seven Annex 1 sand dune habitats including EU priority habitats (H2130* & H2150*) and H2190 for which the UK has a special responsibility, an integral H3110 freshwater lake and associated Annex II species across the eight SACs.

this site and others the clearance of Unexploded Ordnance, left over from World-War II training, caused delays to work. However, partnerships were formed with the Ministry of Defence to clear these at no cost, and at other sites MoD also contributed to earth moving as a training exercise for their troops.

Maintenance of bare sand was also encouraged through frontal dune 'notch' creation - digging out notches) notches in the frontal dunes to encourage wind-blown sand to migrate landward (sometimes very large and deep- e.g. at Penhale SAC). DuneLIFE was the first time this technique has been used in England, and a great deal of experience has been gained and shared through trialling the technique in different locations. A key lesson has been ensuring that notches were 'deep' enough from the beginning, and that vegetation was sufficiently to maintain function.

A very extensive fore-dune restoration at Formby, Sefton Coast SAC was completed where 80,000 tonnes of rubble were removed from the beach, and the dune land-forms successfully restored. A significant obstacle to the success of this project was the time taken to secure approval from the local planning authority (which required a 'prolongation') for the project. Planning permission issues were experienced at other sites and allowing adequate time to accommodate these is a key learning from the project.

Over 66 Ha of invasive alien species (IAS) were removed by the project. Different approaches were trailed across the sites, according to the species being tackled. Site managers gained experience of which techniques worked best at their particular site, although often repeated treatments with herbicide were needed. Ensuring adequate grazing will be an important component of the sustainable maintenance of cleared areas in future. In Lincolnshire use of a specialised 'Softrak' cutting machine, unique at the time for English dune sites, procured through the project has radically increased the ability to control large areas of scrub and invasive alien species.

A novel aspect of the project was the effort to restore the condition of a dune-slack lake, at Littlesea, Dorset. 100's of kilos of Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) were removed along with other techniques to restore the lakes ecology. Whilst the lake has not yet recovered (not unusual for shallow lake that has been damaged by input of excess nutrients). Carp removal, monitoring and research work continues toward that aim.

Increasing grazing across the sites to manage scrub and invasive species was another successful outcome of the project with 444 ha of land under new grazing regime and over 12.6km of new fencing installed. In particular The [successful trialling of 'NoFence' technology on cattle for the first time in the world](#) at Studland SAC as part of the DuneLIFE project, led to widespread uptake thought the project and beyond.

New work was undertaken to provide the evidence base for 'Site Nitrogen Action Plans' for two of the SACs to address the impacts of air quality and atmospheric nitrogen deposition; and to inform methods to mitigate this significant pressure on all sand dune locations in England. This work will now be taken forward under UK legislation mechanism of 'Protected Site Strategies'.

There was very extensive engagement throughout the project, across many types of communities: Public using the sites for recreation, practitioners, volunteers, citizen scientists, school groups, young people, dementia sufferers and their carers, dog walkers and many others. Over 85,000 people were recorded as engaging with the project, despite the hurdles created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Aside raising awareness of the importance of sand dunes and associated species with communities with the project, engagement also enabled very significant restoration work to take place by gaining support for, and greatly reducing objections to large scale intervention and re-introduction of grazing to sites. More widely in terms of broadcast, print and social media, it is estimated that the project reached over 35 *Million* people.

Close links were made along with sharing of knowledge between England's DuneLIFE project and other EU dune projects, including the Welsh 'Sands of LIFE' project); Denmark's REWETDUNE and LIFE WETHAB's; Belgium's LIFE Dunias; the Interreg ENDURE (Ensuring Dune Resilience Against Climate Change) project; and the Danish 'LIFE Duneamics'. Connections are maintained through partners and the [UK & Ireland Sand Dune and Shingle Network](#) which has links with several of these projects.

The project now moves into its 'AfterLIFE' phase, and already has a steering group established and a plan to maintain these achievements and take forward the work on these and other sand dune sites into the future.

4 Introduction

Declines in the extent and quality of sand dunes, often due to over-stabilisation, reached a critical point in the UK by the time of the 2013 Article 17 UK report, which stated that all seven sand dune habitats and the H3110 freshwater feature were in an overall bad conservation status.³

The project was aimed to benefit seven Annex 1 sand dune habitats including 2,222ha of EU priority habitats (H2130* & H2150*) and 361ha of H2190 for which the UK has a special responsibility; H2210, H2120, H2170; and also an integral H3110 freshwater lake. Delivery also includes associated Annex II species across eight key representational SACs totalling 116,362ha.

Thus at the period of LIFE project application, the project was designed to address this and other key pressures on these SAC habitats, and deliver Site Improvement Plan and (Prioritised Action Framework) PAF actions relating to 3,412ha of dunes and 22ha of H3110 across the SACs - and build on the approaches outlined in the relevant IPENS (LIFE11 NAT/UK/000384) [‘Theme plans’](#).

DuneLIFE improved the condition of the SACs by tackling the root causes of decline such as over-stabilisation, encroachment of invasive species and nutrient enrichment, by implementing best practice techniques in ways which are sustainable and to promote their replication and transfer.

At the start of the project the key objectives of DuneLIFE were to:

1. Increase and enhance the restoration of sand dune and associated wetland habitats H2110 / 2120 / 2130* / 2150* / 2160 / 2170 / 2190 / 3110 and four Annex II species (S1395 / S1441 / S1654 / S1166) at England’s most important and ‘at risk’ Natura 2000 sites. Work included the restoration of natural dynamic sand dune and freshwater systems and improve 4417ha of the SACs toward meeting ‘Favourable’ condition and contributing to ‘Favourable Conservation Status’.
2. Improve the resilience of relevant Annex I & II habitats and species to climate change, impacts of water availability and future nutrient enrichment. Achieved partly through Objective 1, together with improving the area of sustainable grazing, piloting nitrogen action plans to address atmospheric pollution, and introducing better long-term management practices across the total resource within the SACs.
3. Demonstrate best practice - including the positive integration of habitats and species restoration with visitor/recreational management to existing and future site managers, volunteers and policy makers at key sites in Europe. The project aimed to increase the transfer of knowledge and skills, to promote replication of best practice to other sand dune sites.
4. Inspire and promote better understanding and awareness of the value and function of natural dynamic dune systems across a wide range of audiences in the UK and mainland Europe; with the aim of maximising longevity, sustainability and replicability of the project solutions.

In addition, the project sought to:

- Use best practice techniques and learning from restoration projects across Europe, by working with other projects, and especially with ‘Sands of Life’ (SoLIFE) in Wales, to augment understanding and develop a robust design framework to be implemented in other declining dune systems.
- Develop a training programme to build skills and understanding amongst land managers to secure positive SAC management and a wider legacy for the project.

The Project Partners:

³ The 2019 Article 17 reports for England showed that the short-term trend of habitat area in good condition within the network for these habitat types were either Stable or Decreasing. The 2026 Article 9A reporting under the UK’s habitats regulations, does not indicate a recovering picture as yet, with the trend for five of the seven key coastal dune habitat types being deteriorating – However, this is as a result of atmospheric nitrogen deposition now being considered as an overriding factor, and thus has strongly influenced these ‘deteriorating’ assessments. . . However, at individual site level (rather than England wide) there will be local variation in condition with some habitats showing trends toward recovery, *especially* because of DuneLIFE interventions.

The project was a collaboration between six partners - Natural England (NE) the Co-ordinating Beneficiary; working closely with Plantlife, The National Trust (NT), Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Cumbria Wildlife Trust (the Associated Beneficiaries) to deliver the project actions.

The SACs involved:

	English County	SAC Name	SAC code
1	Lincolnshire	Saltfleetby to Theddlethorpe and Gibraltar point	UK0030270
2	Dorset	Studland Dunes	UK0030038
3	Cornwall	Penhale Dunes	UK0012559
4	Devon	Braunton Burrows	UK0012570
5	Lancashire	Sefton Coast	UK0013076
6	Cumbria	Solway Firth	UK0013025
7	Cumbria	Drigg Coast	UK0013031
8	Cumbria	Morecambe Bay	UK0013027

Code	SAC Annex I Habitat types represented across these SACs
H2110	Embryonic shifting dunes
H2120	Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes')
H2130	Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')
H2150	Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>)
H2160	Dunes with <i>Hippophaë rhamnoides</i> (sea-buckthorn dunes)
H2170	Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) (creeping willow dunes)
H2190	Humid dune slacks
H3110	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)

In summary, the project sought to address the key pressures on these sites and target these conservation issues:

- Negative impacts of dune stabilisation and atmospheric nutrient pollution leading to increased vegetation growth and so a lack of bare sand; and re-introduce dynamism into the sites to encourage sand movement through them.
- Tackle Invasive Alien Species outcompeting or damaging native flora and associated fauna
- Re-introduce or encourage grazing across sites to help deal with the above issues.
- Improve knowledge and awareness of sand dunes, the wildlife they support and the importance of dynamism in dune systems.

5 Administrative part

Project Management Process

Natural England led the project management, with regular project team meetings held across the beneficiaries to discuss and monitor progress. Regular meetings were held between the Project Manager and the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) to discuss resourcing, delivery and risks, which were maintained on NE's Risk Register and updated regularly.

A steering Group met every 4-6 weeks and comprised staff from all Beneficiaries, to oversee the operational delivery of the project. The Governance Board comprised senior managers from all beneficiaries and met at least every 6 months to provide senior strategic oversight of the project.

Working Method

Six regional locations around England were led by one of the partners, with each reporting quarterly to the central team on activity and spend. Local delivery partnerships were established as required at each site, for example, in Devon, Plantlife worked closely with NT and the landowner.

Main Problems Encountered

The main issue that the project encountered was the Covid-19 pandemic. The national lockdowns, especially in spring 2020, caused disruption to site and engagement activity, and also significantly reduced staff capacity, decreased availability of contractors, and increased costs (e.g. Significant delays were seen at NT Formby where all project staff were 'furloughed' for 2020). The year delay to preliminary activity near the start of the project led to the seeking of an initial 12-month prolongation to the project. Delays were also seen at other NT and NE led sites – e.g. the brief working window for completing notch work was missed, causing a year's delay to deliver this work. This was compounded by another delay of a year as a result of delays in getting planning permission for work at NT Formby, thus requiring a further prolongation request. Delays to milestones were also caused by a variety of issues, including the requirement for consents, permissions and baseline monitoring to be in place prior to the works, as well as needing to deal with unexploded ordnance (UXO), especially at Braunton Burrows.

The partnership and their added value

Each DuneLIFE partner was responsible for management of the dune sites or played a part in developing the restorative techniques needed to reverse decline. This programme of work was the first nationwide coordinated effort to work together in an integrated way to restore sand dune habitats and added value is clear to see. NE is the statutory public body for nature conservation in England. The Associated Beneficiaries are registered nature conservation charities.

Communication with the AGENCY and Monitoring team

The project has received several formal letters from EASME then CINEA:

Date:	Regarding:
05/04/2019	Mission visit with the monitor on the Sefton Coast
25/02/2020	Mission visit with the monitor at Studland, Dorset
08/03/2021	Monitor's (Virtual) annual visit
30/06/2022	Monitoring visit in March 2022 to Lincolnshire
18/11/2022	submission of Mid term review
27/04/2023	5 th Mission visit & project conference
04/03/2026	Virtual project visit Sept 2025 Cornwall; & Sefton+Cumbria field visit Nov 2025

There were mission visits and good regular communications with the monitor (Neil Wilkie) to discuss progress and resolve any issues raised, as outlined above.

Amendments to the Grant Agreement

Any early budget changes were detailed in the mid-term report and associated annexes, and at completion of the project a budget transfer between categories totalling 295000 euros was made, as shown in the Consolidated Financial statement as part of the Finance report section.

6 Technical Part

6.1 Technical progress, per Action - and including

6.2 - deviations, problems and corrective actions (described in the context of each action).

A1 Project establishment & recruitment. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: October 2018
Foreseen end date: April 2020

Actual start date: October 2018
Actual end date: August 2020

The project governance groups were set up from the start of the project and met regularly. All beneficiaries were represented and there was strong collaboration between the organisations. The project partnership agreement was signed in April 2019. (See [Annexe 3 - Partnership Agreement](#))

There was a phased approach to project staff recruitment, led by Natural England (NE) and the hosting Associated Beneficiary where appropriate. Core members of the team were in place within 6 months – Project Manager and Project Officer – working closely with the permanent staff across the partnership. This phased approach allowed for the further development of plans, baseline surveys and other preparatory actions prior to the full project team being in place. The majority of the project team were in place by April 2020, as planned. One outstanding role, that of Reserve Warden in Lincolnshire, was filled in August 2020. This role had not been filled through the first round of recruitment. The role was therefore changed to be 1FTE, with 0.5FTE working on the project and 0.5FTE working on other tasks within the NNR. This was thought to be more attractive to potential candidates who would likely have to move to the area.

An additional Monitoring Officer full time role was identified as required in 2020, and was recruited by NE through external open recruitment and filled in April 2021, Previously having been carried out part time by a permanent staff member This change was discussed and agreed with our monitor.

Other A1 activities included the purchase of cattle in Studland by National Trust (NT). When the project was developed, NT envisaged buying new cattle. NT policy has shifted in recent years, and had to use cattle bred from the existing NT herd. The costs of the cattle are therefore not eligible to reclaim from the grant.

A2 Consents and permissions. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: January 2022

Actual start date: January 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

All sites assessed their requirements for consents and permissions that needed to be in place before work began. All site projects worked closely with NE's Wildlife Licence Services (NEWLS) team to determine whether protected species licences were required. Early on in the project, a significant piece of work was completed to get landowner permissions in place for the project activity. The majority of the land in the project is owned by one of the beneficiaries, however some of the land is in private ownership and the leading beneficiary for the area secured the necessary third-party landowner agreements, also ensuring access and works are maintained after the project ends.

Some activities, such as the creation of larger dune 'notches', planning permission was part of the requirement, although this varied around the country depending on the individual local authorities view. In some cases (e.g. Formby, Sefton Coast SAC, dune restoration and associated car park restoration works) getting the permission was protracted but, in all cases, where it was required and sought, it was given to enable works to go ahead.

A3 Developing and piloting stakeholder engagement. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: October 2018
Foreseen end date: September 2019

Actual start date: October 2018
Actual end date: January 2021

Plantlife led a consultation in 2018 to understand the project's audiences and to develop key messages. These were further developed through work with a contractor to develop interpretation themes that would be used in the project's messaging. Plantlife also reviewed the project's plans for citizen science, developing plans for a mobile application to assist the sites with the collection of monitoring data.

The partnership also developed extensive plans and supporting materials for the engagement of visitors and local communities at each of the sites. This was targeted through engagement events led by the project's team of People Engagement Officers. A 'Training package for land managers' (The 'Sand Dune Manger's Handbook 1st edition') was completed in January 2021. [See Annex 2.](#)



Examples of educational materials and different approaches to engage visitors and local communities.

A4 On-site trial of re-purposing of inert material for restoration. Status: Curtailed.

Foreseen start date: October 2020
Foreseen end date: September 2022

Actual start date: October 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: June 2021

The work proposed was for a trial in the dunes at Formby, Sefton Coast SAC, to test using inert material removed from the car park, to recreate 'grey' dunes. However, as the project progressed there were concerns about this proposal due to the very large amount of rubble in the dunes, and so other options were taken forward. Thus trial pits were not considered necessary, and an evaluation report of the results was not appropriate.

C1 Sand Dune Rejuvenation. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: March 2023

Actual start date: October 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

C1 activity started in October 2019 at Sefton Coast SAC with vegetation clearance in the areas where the frontal dune notches were to be located. There were some delays to the commencement of C1 activity due to a variety of issues, including the requirement for consents, permissions and baseline monitoring to be in place prior to the works. The delay to the start of C1 actions was discussed with our monitor at the 2019 mission visit. Some works due to start in 2020 were delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions that prevented access to sites. However, despite the delays, in the period following, delivery at all project sites accelerated, resulting in significant delivery beyond many of the projected targets in the bid.

Action	Site	Target area (ha)	Progress to Sept 25 (ha)	% complete
C1.1: Sand Dune rejuvenation	Lincolnshire	17	83.6	492
	Studland	3	4.58	153
	Cornwall	8.12	9.25	114
	North Devon	34	55	162
	Sefton	20.5	25.73	126
	Cumbria	46.25	54	117
	TOTAL	129	232	180
C1.2: Associated wetland rejuvenation	Lincolnshire	2	2	100
	Studland	2	3.1	155
	Cornwall	1	2.2	220
	North Devon	22	23.2	105
	Sefton	0.486	0.53	109
	Cumbria	5.05	7.35	146
	TOTAL	33	38	118

C1.1: Table 1: Sand Dune rejuvenation and C1.2: Associated wetland rejuvenation summary

6.2.1.1 UK0030270 - Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire)

In Lincolnshire, the major sand dune rejuvenation works at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR were led by Natural England. 1ha of turf stripping from freshwater marsh exposed the bare sand beneath, to create new dune slack habitat to support pioneer plants and animals.



Turf stripping 1ha of the freshwater marsh at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR

After only a year, the turf stripping project at Saltfleetby was showing outstanding success for natterjack toads breeding, where previously the few bodies of water were unsuitable for egg laying. The turf stripped area has also seen an increase in migrant waders foraging at the edge of water pools.

From 2020 through to 2021 Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust also recreated lost dune topography. A field adjacent to the NNR was once an integral part of the wider sand dune complex, but is believed had been levelled for agricultural benefit. Using the turves and bank soil from the Washland Creation Project (see above) a new dune ridge was created. A very large trench was dug in the field, and the flood bank material deposited in the bottom and back-covered from the sand store bank. The new dune ridge provides open, bare sand, a scarce habitat on site due to the stable character of east-coast dune systems (see images below).



2020 before dune creation. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



2021 during construction. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



Dune creation in 2021. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



Early establishment June 2022. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



July 2023 showing a fine crop of Vipers Bugloss. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust



Early 2024 showing growth of ruderals. Photo Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Restoration of 'lost' dune landscape from a levelled agricultural field.

Much of the Dunescapes work was also facilitated by purchase through the project of a 'Softtrak' machine – a specialised tractor topper, operating with a very low ground pressure. It has been used extensively across the Lincolnshire sites:

At Donna Nook it was used to clear a dune slack, cut sea buckthorn and *Rosa rugosa* regrowth. At Gibraltar Point a habitat mosaic was created over the 500ha NNR wetland edge, and it was also utilised for dune slack and scrub clearance. New areas were cut taking a large-scale restoration approach to management, taking days rather than weeks to achieve as would have been the case with volunteers using hand tools.

At Saltfleetby NNR, the machine was used to clear vegetation on the newly created dunes at Sea View Farm, and remove reed, sedge and rush at wetland margins to allow areas for waders and wildfowl to feed. Tall dune vegetation around scrapes was also cleared for foraging natterjacks, and sea buckthorn regrowth was managed on the outer dunes. At East Dunes slack, restoration work carried out by the Softtrak reduced invasive wood-small reed and allowed internationally important dune slack species to flourish.

The Softrak was also used to transport equipment for a shorebird protection scheme in spring 2023, a five-mile round trip over wet ground, safeguarding Lincolnshire's last remaining little tern and ringed plover colony; and also utilised to cut and clear bramble as site preparation prior to the new fencing, demonstrating further the utility and efficiency of this diverse management tool.



Softrak machine cutting wetland vegetation and removing scruba and invasive species.

6.2.1.2 UK0030038 - Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC (Dorset)

This site is managed by the National Trust. Dune rejuvenation work at Studland began successfully in January 2020, with vegetation clearance taking place to allow access to check for unexploded ordnance (UXO) prior to scrape creation. By 2022 a total of 2.04ha of bare sand creation, alongside a further 1.59ha of heather and gorse removal had been achieved.



Dry scrape creation April 2021



Wet scrape creation November 2021

23 wet scrapes (1.3ha) were created out to improve the condition of dune slack, and then subsequently works to restore reed beds and clear willow carr took place in autumn/winter 2022/23, opening up areas of wetland to create about 25% open marsh and 75% wet woodland. 1.5ha of sallow carr was cleared, creating 12 separate open fen glades within the wet woodland that dominates the dune slacks: 1ha in Pipleay Swamp (upstream of Little Sea) and 0.5ha at Saltings strip (downstream of Little Sea). There was a combination of

two different techniques involved: 1) cut the willow at ground level, and 2) pull out whole trees including root ball. The latter technique was used to create areas of open water bog pool, whereas the former enables existing fen vegetation to remain.



Pipley Swamp, Studland SAC - willow clearance and complete root removal

Three large pools were created by removing silt from a reedbed at Shell Bay, Studland, creating more permanent pools to benefit wildlife including amphibians, dragonflies and water voles and preventing the whole area from succeeding to scrub and woodland.

In early 2024, the final area of bare ground creation was undertaken. 0.95ha of gorse was cut and removed, and herbicide treated at ground level. As a result, there is an exposed bare sandy area providing early successional dune habitat. There were some logistical difficulties due to access and exceptionally wet weather, but no negative feedback was received from the public.

In 2025, further areas of gorse scrub were cleared, along with all unexploded ordnance, to create open ground, enable future scrape creation, and make safe for future fire tender access.

6.2.1.3 UK0012559 - Penhale Dunes (Cornwall)

Cornwall Wildlife Trust are led the works at this site. The works included dune slack clearance and scrub cutting and removal, and the more extensive dune rejuvenation works, including a creating very large notches in the frontal dunes.

Bracken control, scrub cutting and removal was undertaken across the site, throughout the project period using the tractor purchased through the project.



DuneLIFE funded tractor at work clearing scrub at Penhale, displaying Project and LIFE logos

During 2021, the Cornwall team worked with soldiers from the Port and Maritime regiment to clear blackthorn scrub and to create bare sand, creating a partnership where military could practice and enhance their plant handling skills, and the project benefitted from conservation works.



Military personnel assisting with increasing the amount of mobile sand at Penhale.

There is a long cultural tradition of stabilising dunes in Cornwall, so to remobilise them (especially though dune notch creation) requires a considerable change of local public opinion to ensure communities understood the project. Consultation with local project partners highlighted the extent of public engagement required in order to carry out the work without provoking a negative reaction. This investment through the engagement officer led to the work being able to go ahead without a negative reaction from the community.

In winter 2022/23, the Dunescapes tractor completed around 2ha of scrub removal. Perranporth boy scouts removed 60m² of willow from a dune slack and the MOD created a further 0.33ha of bare sand. Early in 2023, the final 10% of scrub clearance was completed, ready for scraping to take place in late summer/ autumn 2023. Volunteers removed a further 0.5 ha of scrub through the use of 'tree poppers' on blackthorn scrub.

Dune notching at Penhale was completed during summer 2023 with four large coastal notches and an additional one slightly inland. The contractors then moved on to the scraping of dune slacks and completed twenty areas. In addition, MOD diggers created more areas of bare sand, removing blackthorn scrub at the same time.



Dune notch creation (2023), and the completed notches after 2 years (in 2025) at Penhale Dunes.

6.2.1.4 UK0012570 - Branton Burrows (Devon)

Plantlife led the works at Branton Burrows, which is owned by a third party, but during the 2nd World War was used extensively for live fire training by the Military, and is still regularly used for other training to this day. There were delays to starting the work whilst unexpected ordnance (UXO) issues were resolved. However by September 2021, restoration work began, alongside the Ministry of Defence (MOD) who were clearing UXO across the site. It would not have been possible to carry out extensive works at this site without the assistance of the MOD.



Braunton Burrows: All areas of work first been had to be cleared of UXO by the MOD



Scrapes being created at Braunton Burrows

In summer 2022, works started on a second phase of scrapes, and in winter 2022/23, a further 13ha of scrapes were completed making a total of 23ha of scrapes across Braunton Burrows.

In winter 2023/24, further removal of scrub, scraping bramble from bare sand patches and removal of vegetation from the notches was completed. During this winter, the team lowered the level of Pebble Slack and Twayblade Slack to enable water levels to 'drown' the bramble regrowth. Also, scrub was removed from Partridge Slack, the last known site of the fen orchid at Braunton Burrows, to try to recreate conditions to encourage any seed present to germinate. In early 2024, the MOD's UXO team were back on site to clear two more slacks. Over 1,500 items of ordnance were found and cleared from the site.



Extensive scrape



Extensive scrapes (aerial image)

Since the submission of the original LIFE bid, the planning authority informed the project that planning permission was required for six foredune notches and three inland notches the foredune rejuvenation work,

Planning permission was granted and the work completed by January 2023 to specification. Geomorphologist Ken Pye inspected the completed works and also suggested possible future enhancements to the design and

of the notches, to further increase their function. The beach profile changed very quickly, and a new raised dune appeared in front of the foredune as sand was accreted. The new dune was two metres high and more than ten metres wide running for hundreds of metres in front of the foredune and the newly dug notches. Therefore, two notches were reworked to keep them open. Vegetation is starting to re-establish in the notches, and it is anticipated that management will be needed to optimise and maintain their function.



Restored dune slack (2025)



Frontal dune notch (2025)

6.2.1.5 UK0013076 - Sefton Coast (Lancashire) comprises sites with different ownerships and management.

Dune Heath Restoration: The Triangle is privately owned, with the project works being led by Natural England. The Sefton Coast holds 14ha of heather-dominated habitat within 150ha of a dune heath habitat mosaic. This area, known as 'The Triangle', holds approx. 2.5 ha of heather-dominated habitat, which is an important component of the ecosystem. The Triangle has suffered from a lack of management for decades until funding became available through DuneLIFE. The project activities focused restoration on actions such as scrub and tree removal, and localised sand patching/turf stripping and transplanting heather strips, with continuing work by a local volunteering group. A total of 4.3ha has been restored through Dynamic Dunescape, 2ha on The Triangle and 2.3ha on Freshfield Dune Heath which lies next to The Triangle.



February 2020 conifer clearance and removal of birch saplings



Cutting back overgrown gorse Pockets of heather revealed A series of oaks retained

Triangle scrub clearance Phase 1 (Feb 2020)

Cabin Hill NNR: Cabin Hill NNR is owned and managed by Natural England. Mowing was carried out between 2020-22, and 1ha of willow scrub was removed from the site to restore areas of H2130, H2170 & H2190 across 25ha.

Ainsdale NNR: Ainsdale NNR is owned and managed by Natural England. Mowing took place in May 2020 and January 2021 across 0.4ha to deter sand lizards from hibernating in the dunes. The main dune rejuvenation actions were scheduled for May 2020 but had to be delayed for a full year due to Covid-19 restrictions on contractors' access to the site which meant that the season was missed. Due to the presence of sand lizards at the site there is only a small window each year – a few weeks in May – when this activity can take place. Actions were again delayed in May 2021 due to conflicting advice on planning permission from the local authority. However, they were successfully completed in May 2022.



Creation of the frontal dune notches at Ainsdale NNR (2022)



Notch when 1st Created (2022)



Showing active sand transport (2025)

Evidence of natural windblown sand transport from the beach through the notches was already apparent when initially surveyed, after the work, indicating that the notches were already acting as successful conduits for sand movement between the beach and the hind-dune area behind the high frontal dune ridge.

Turf stripping and rejuvenation of Dune-slacks was also completed by Ainsdale NNR staff in 2022 and 2023, as well as additional willow scrub removal.

Formby: Works at Formby were led by the National Trust (NT). Despite significant delays to the works at Formby caused by Covid-19 restrictions, works were able to progress. In 2022, a notch was made in the frontal dunes in the tobacco waste areas (waste from Liverpool's tobacco factories had been dumped decades ago) - and dune slacks were rejuvenated with creation of pools.

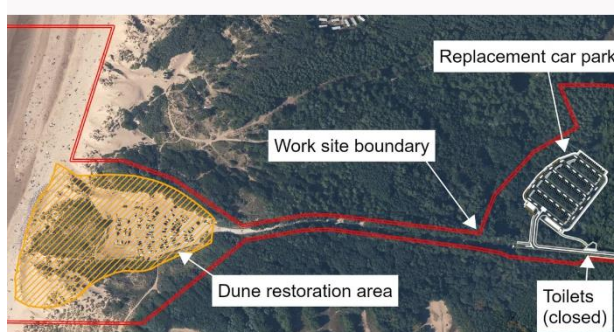


Creation of a notch in the tobacco waste area of Formby (Feb 2022)

One of the most significant projects at Sefton was the restoration of a former car park area at 'Victoria Road', near the front of the dune system. Rubble from a disused army barracks that had been dumped on the beach sixty years ago, and then formed the site of a car park, was spilling out of the Dunes onto the beach, disconnecting habitats, limiting access and preventing the coastline from adapting as it should.

The project removed 80,000 tonnes of rubble from the beach to restore habitats, and recycled it to create a more sustainable replacement car park further inland. Rejuvenated natural processes now reconnect large areas of rare dune habitat,

There were many very significant challenges that were overcome before the project could start. In the early stages, it became clear that the original proposals needed modification due to site complexities and the nature and volume of the buried rubble, which could not be used to recreate the grey dunes as originally hoped. A different approach was required which was to create a new more sustainable car park inland. This proved more expensive than the original scheme, planning permission from the local authority included requirements for extensive ecological surveying, geomorphological investigations, coastal flood risk, full Environmental Impact and Habitat Regulations Assessments, and a public consultation. The conservation designations, and visitor access issues also added to the complexity.



Aerial image showing the car park relocation



Beach with rubble at Formby dunes before work started (2021)



Removal of Rubble from the dunes (2025)



Restored frontal dune system (2025)

Sequence of images showing progression of the car park removal project at Formby.

The planning permission was initially refused by the local council but was then successfully appealed against by the National Trust, leading to further delays. Thus, a further project prolongation request was made. Planning Permission was finally granted in July 2024, and then the National Trust and its contractors then got to work and delivered the part of the project DuneLIFE funded by September 2025. The Trusts' project manager stated that what drove the project to its successful conclusion was the commitment National Trust had made to the Dynamic Dunescapes partnership, and by accepting LIFE funding provided significant additional leverage to ensure the organisation continued to support the project, and commit the resources necessary to fully fund and deliver it. By the conclusion of the dune restoration and car park relocation project, conclusion National Trust committed approximately €3, 940,000 of their own funding in addition to the funding from EU LIFE.

6.2.1.6 UK0013027 - Morecambe Bay (Cumbria)

The National Trust (NT), Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT) and Natural England (NE) worked together across the three Cumbrian SACs, with NE taking a co-ordinating role.

Sandscale Haws NNR (managed and led by NT) C1 actions started in October 2019 through to 2024, with significant areas of turf stripping and restoration/creation of four new slacks, including pool restoration works, and over 20ha of scrub clearance and removal.



Sandscale Haws, Morecambe Bay SAC

Haverigg (managed by CWT) is around 80ha total, and much of the work focussed on clearance of Gorse (*Ulex* spp), although areas were retained for birds to nest and shelter. The team encountered issues with burning cut/pulled gorse due to the wet weather preventing the gorse from burning. Chipping was undertaken as a viable alternative and used as biomass fuel. Areas were herbicide treated to prevent re-growth. Some pool restoration was carried out by volunteers as permission to use excavators was not given by the landowners.

South Walney NNR (managed by CWT) A small frontal dune notch was created to encourage the deposition of sand blown from the beach. 3ha of turf stripping (to remove the nutrient rich layer resulting from a very large historic gull colony on the site) took place across a total area of 77ha, sometimes to 0.5m depth. A new pond was also created within a dune slack.



Shallow frontal dune notch (looking seaward)



Turf and soil stripping

The site also has very large areas of bracken, and due to changes in Wildlife Trust policy, CWT switched from using herbicide treatment to control it, to cutting three times per year, and then because of contractor issues, switched to using a 'bracken bruiser' that could be towed by their existing quad bike. These methods were used to successfully control the bracken across 15 hectares. Arisings from turf stripping and bracken removal, were used on site to create banks to screen sensitive bird areas from disturbance (and avoid waste management costs and issues.)

North Walney NNR (managed by NE) Willow scrub was cut and burned on a raised platform in the first dune slack in December 2020. 2ha of turf stripping was carried out with an archaeologist and a UXO engineer present in Jan 2022.



Turf stripping at North Walney

Work included areas of turf stripping, willow clearance from dune slacks, pond restoration, and volunteer led beach cleans to remove litter. Topography and difficult access issues at this site, meant that dune notches were not included in restoration works. (**Note** dipwells to monitor water levels were installed in 2024 -see monitoring report etc).

6.2.1.7 UK0013025 - Solway Firth Natural England led the works at Grune Point, working with the third-party landowners to clear Gorse and treat re-growth. Pools were restored and created (including use of a pond liner) and an earth bund was created to protect the pools.

6.2.1.8 UK0013031 - Drigg Coast (Drigg & Eskmels) Natural England led the works at Drigg, working with the third-party landowners to clear gorse. At Eskmeals CWT led work to create four ponds.



Pond being installed at Eskmeals, Cumbria



Pond when filled

Overall, despite Covid 19 implications, the majority of works were completed by 2024 across all sites, except for Formby Sefton SAC which were extended as described and required a prolongation.

C2 Removal of Invasive Alien Species. Status: Complete

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: March 2023

Actual start date: July 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

C2 actions started in July 2019 with the commencement of carp exclusion works at Little Sea in Studland. Similar to C1 activity, there were general delays to the commencement of C2 activity due to the requirement for consents, permissions and baseline monitoring to be in place prior to the works. The delay to the start of C2 actions across the majority of sites was discussed with our monitor at our 2019 mission visit. Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 prevented access to sites, which caused further delays. The project worked hard to catch up on these delays and there was significant progress through to the end of the project.

C2.1: Removal of IAS (flora) summary

Site	Target area (ha)	Progress by end of project (ha)	% complete
Lincolnshire	15	22.21	148
Cornwall	1.48	2.55	172
North Devon	6.25	6.55	105
Sefton	9.144	10.679	117
Cumbria	19.15	19.15	100
TOTAL	51	61	120

Table 2: summary of area of IAS controlled at from the start to end of project works.

6.2.1.9 UK0030270 - Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point

Clematis is native, rather than non-native, but it grows invasively at Saltfleetby and causes the loss of Annex I dune habitats. It was removed by cutting and burning on site (along with dead sea buckthorn which the *clematis spp* had smothered) which was a slight change from initial plans where only using a chemical spray was anticipated. Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides. L*) is an Annex 1 Habitat and designated feature in Lincolnshire, whereas it is an invasive species at the other SACs. During the works, work was also done to restore dune slacks and create scrapes to benefit amphibians. The approach to control of clematis regrowth has had variable success, evolving through the project but experience has been gained around which chemicals and application technique to use, including harrowing ground after control to minimise re-growth.



2022 clematis clearance at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR

Before



After



2021 clematis clearance Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR

6.2.1.10 UK0030038 - Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC

Works at Studland were led by the National Trust. The major project on Common Carp removal from 'Little Sea' aiming to restore water quality and the rare aquatic plant population that had been present prior to the illegal introduction of the fish.

A wide range of techniques were implemented, trialled and developed during the course of the project to reduce the Carp population. Approaches included installing exclosures (July 2019 when carp removal started); 'trammel' and 'inscale' netting and electrofishing. The contractors had to work around unexploded ordnance; three devices were found including an unexploded projectile.

A line of hazel deflectors was also installed to lessen wind and wave action, with aim of reducing churning up of sediments and preventing carp from accessing and grazing on rare aquatic plants. Tern rafts have also been recommissioned, relocated and anchored on Little Sea for use by cormorants and otters to predate and reduce number of carp (Note The monitor approved a change in description of a milestone from: 'Spawn netting used in Little Sea, Studland' to 'Carp removal underway in Little Sea using works to reduce future spawning success in reedbeds' ('spawn netting' having been confused with 'spawn matting').

Despite 100's kilos of Carp being removed, monitoring of Little Sea showed that turbidity remained high, so in addition to continued fish removals, work began to continuously monitor and understand the ecological processes that are affecting the lake to ensure post-project management is appropriate. An expert working group was formed and concluded that continuing with carp removal should remain a priority beyond the end of the project, and NT agreed to fund continued carp removal and long-term continuation of water quality monitoring. This work is detailed the Ecosystem Service and Dorset Monitoring reports.



Willow barrier



'in scale' net before installation



Electrofishing to remove invasive Carp

Studland Dunes - Dorset – techniques to remove invasive Carp and restore water clarity

6.2.1.11 UK0012559 - Penhale Dunes

The control of invasive species has included sea buckthorn removal by a contractor with an excavator and grab. Japanese Rose (*Rosa rugosa*), Cotoneaster (*cotoneum spp.*) and Montbretia (*Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*) were controlled by herbicide spraying, to protect rare diminutive species such as petal wort and scrambled egg lichen habitat.

There was some sea buckthorn regrowth from the root material left behind, which has been removed by volunteers using 'tree poppers', which pulls roots out and means no follow up herbicide treatment is needed. All removed sea buckthorn, cotoneaster and montbretia has now been removed from the site or received an initial and follow up herbicide treatment.



Sea buckthorn management



Site manager and volunteers use tree poppers to remove sea buckthorn

6.2.1.12 UK0012570 - Branton Burrows

From September 2020, work to tackle invasive sea buckthorn was carried out through spraying and mechanical removal, with arisings buried and burnt. In addition, Japanese rose was also targeted. Delays were caused by needing to survey for risk of UXOs earlier in the programme but by 2022 all areas were cleared of UXO. Several follow up herbicide treatments were required to control regrowth and also target new areas. Wet weather was also an issue, preventing spraying in Summer of 2023, so spraying resumed in Summer 2024.



Herbicide control of sea buckthorn and *Rosa rugosa* at Braunton Burrows

6.2.1.13 UK0013076 - Sefton Coast

At Ainsdale Dunes NNR Sea buckthorn clearance was led by Natural England with the help of local volunteers. A *Rosa rugosa* stakeholder steering group was developed by the team at Natural England to help facilitate local partners to eradicate this invasive species from across the entire area which stretches for 12 miles. The key removal method was to 'dig out and bury' which has the added benefit creating large areas of bare sand helping re-mobilise the sand, and so benefiting protected species such as sand lizard and natterjack toad. The contract was completed over three years from 2020-2023. The work was initially delayed because of the requirement to obtain planning permission, so some herbicide treatment was also used.

The 2014 *Rosa rugosa* survey identified 5.7ha across the Sefton Coast – however it had grown since the report but it had not been re-mapped to the same extent. There were also areas of Japanese Knotweed alongside or mixed in with the *Rosa rugosa* which have also been targeted by the Dunescapes project. Best estimates from our team indicate the *Rosa rugosa* (including the Japanese Knotweed) had increased to around 7.25ha on the Sefton Coast. A combination of herbicide treatment and dig/bury treated/buried approximately 7.2 ha, significantly more than originally envisaged in the proposal. Further follow-up works (i.e. *Rosa rugosa* spot treatment) will be carried out as needed by local landowners leading on this element of the AfterLIFE work.

At National Trust Formby, Sea buckthorn and poplar tree species were removed from the Ravenmeols and Lifeboat Road area, alongside the rejuvenation of wet slack habitat.

6.2.1.14 UK0013027 - Morecambe Bay

Haverigg: *Rosa rugosa* was spot sprayed every autumn by NNR staff. The target for the site lowered from 0.4ha to 0.1ha due to a revised estimate of area of habitat on site requiring treatment. By 2022, several years of spraying with herbicide successfully killed several areas of *Rosa rugosa* and a volunteer group has been set up to monitor any regrowth and remove it.

North Walney: *Rosa rugosa* was cut and burned on a raised platform, with cut stumps were then treated with Glyphosate to prevent regrowth. Regrowth was spot sprayed in Autumn 2021. The target was revised from 1ha to 0.75ha as only 0.75ha of the species remained at the site. Follow-up treatment of re-growth was carried in 2022, and 2023.



North Walney, Cumbria – before and after *Rosa rugosa* IAS clearance

Roanhead Three areas of *Rosa rugosa* (0.2ha) were dug out during dune turf stripping by Natural England. Regrowth from the previous winter's removal was spot sprayed with selective herbicide by contractor in 2002. Follow-up treatment of re-growth was carried in summer 2023.

Sandscale Haws: NT NNR staff removed and treated 0.1ha of *Rosa rugosa* and it has been almost eradicated on the site. Regrowth was spot-sprayed and any further regrowth will be removed by volunteers.

UK0013031 - Drigg Coast at Eskmeals Sea buckthorn was removed, although the original 15ha target was more than was present in 2020, and so was revised to 10ha. At Drigg, sea buckthorn was cut and herbicide treated.

C3 Introduction of new and sustainable grazing. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: September 2023

Actual start date: July 2020
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

There were general delays to the commencement of C3 activity due to the requirement for consents, permissions and baseline monitoring to be in place prior to the works, and due to Covid-19, which were agreed with the monitor, CINEA and partners ([annex 6](#) and [annex 7](#)). The project worked hard to catch up on these delays, from trialling then adopting the new GPS 'Nofence' technology, through to significant new areas fenced for grazing.

Action	Site	Target area (ha)	Progress (ha)	% complete
C3: New grazing regimes	Lincolnshire	31.5	8.93	28
AREA	Studland	66	75	114
	Cornwall	100	230	230
	Cumbria	100	130	130
	TOTAL	298	444	149
Action	Site	Target (m)	Progress (m)	
C3: New grazing regimes	Lincolnshire	1,600	7,470	467
LENGTH	Studland	1,024	3,014	294
	Cornwall	1,600	1,600	100
	N. Devon	575	575	100
	TOTAL	4,799	12,659	264

Table 3: C3: New Grazing regime summary- Area & length of fencing

6.2.1.15 UK0030038 - Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC

Studland was the first place in the world to use the GPS virtual 'Nofence' technology with cattle. Animals were trained and the system was tested, allowing cattle grazing for the first time on the site in 80 years. A perimeter boundary of the dune area was fenced using traditional post and wire fencing, with virtual grazing areas established within this. Cattle were taken from the existing NT Red Devon herd to avoid herd mixing and minimise biosecurity risk, and because of their known suitability. Studland dunes are very heavily used by the public during the summer and in order to prepare the public for the arrival of cows on the dunes, there was a focus on engagement with an 'Arty Cow' event.



Installing perimeter fence



'Red Devon' with Nofence collar



'Arty cow' public engagement

Once the local team were comfortable with interactions with the public, cattle were allowed to graze additional areas for longer, and new areas were also grazed. The greater forage availability (larger area and wetter summer) means the cattle were kept out longer, including on the western shore of Little Sea from 2024 ([see case study note](#)).

6.2.1.16 UK0030270 - Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point

At Saltfleetby the 'Nofence' invisible fencing system was initially trialled for 6 months from May 2021, and was very successful, and allowed the local team to review their fixed fencing requirements. Old fencing and scrub were removed and new fences erected which enabled important conservation grazing within the sand dunes. Further fencing was installed from 2023, including kissing and vehicle access gates and a cattle corral. A footpath section was also raised due to wet ground and creation of new pond scrapes. The Wildlife Trust also installed new dune slack fencing for pony and sheep grazing at Gibraltar Point.



Extended fencing at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR



Nofence trial on cattle

6.2.1.17 UK0012559 - Penhale Dunes

Cornwall Wildlife Trust team explored the possibility of Nofence as an alternative solution to grazing infrastructure. However, traditional electric fencing was favoured as collars are not suitable for young stock or animals with calves. In winter 2022/23, grazing equipment was received and installed, with the help of a team of volunteers. GPS collars (without the electric shock facility) are used on Exmoor ponies to help track their location on this large site. In addition, 'NoFence' has very recently been trialled with three goats on the site, and due to their success in controlling scrubby growth the trust anticipates expanding the goat herd.



GPS collars used to track lead ponies



Goat with 'NoFence' collar

6.2.1.18 UK0012570 - Braunton Burrows

New grazing infrastructure work had to be rescheduled to 2022 to allow for frontal dune notch works to take place. Fencing was subsequently completed at Braunton in early 2023, with 575 metres of installed inland of the notches. Fencing between two zones was not wanted by the landowner, so was removed from the plan.

6.2.1.19 UK0013076 – Sefton Coast

Fencing was installed at 'The Triangle' in August 2023 to allow a greater area of the heath to be grazed. With Hebridean sheep and longhorn cattle, to help maintain the scrub clearance work carried out under C1.

6.2.1.20 UK0013027 - Morecambe Bay & UK0013031 - Drigg Coast

North Walney: 'Nofence' collars allowed grazing of North Walney with cattle for the first time. In summer 2021, grazing commenced across 100ha of North Walney using cows trained to use the Nofence system and it has been utilised ever since.

South Walney and Drigg: The presence of rabbits is highly beneficial to conservation management of sand dune habitats. Their grazing and digging helps to maintain short-sward herb-rich grasslands, creates patches of bare sand for specialist dune plants and important dune animal species and contributes to the mobility of the dune system.

The rabbit population enhancement study and population surveys at South Walney (Morecambe Bay) and Drigg was completed, and a report and case study written. As a result, the planned translocations were cancelled, since subsequent projects have shown difficulties with introducing rabbits into small existing populations, and instead habitat enhancements were carried out to boost the local rabbit population. A fox control contract at Drigg was also carried out in winter 2023 to try to help boost the rabbit population through the reduction of predation.

C4 Volunteer/visitor infrastructure. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: December 2022

Actual start date: July 2020
Actual (or anticipated) end date: April 2023

6.2.1.21 UK0030270 - Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point The milestone for volunteer accommodation installation at Saltfleetby had wrongly been classed as C3 in the bid documents but is volunteer infrastructure rather than a new grazing regime. The procurement process was plagued by issues, resulting from the impact of both Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. This was detailed in the mid-term report (annex 1) . The volunteer accommodation was completed in summer 2023 and the first volunteers moved straight in at Gibraltar Point. (see image on next page). This and the Saltfleetby unit are now complete and have been in regular use, enabling volunteers and trainees to work on the reserves, when accommodation costs locally would prohibit this.

6.2.1.22 UK0030038 - Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes SAC Work in the original bid to deal with a sedimentation issue on a creek and an old footbridge was cancelled after consultation with local staff and stakeholders. It was decided that the original bridge was still functional and so would be not replaced it as part of the project. This was covered by the 2023 project report.

6.2.1.23 UK0012559 - Penhale Dunes In July 2020, 358m of fencing was installed at Penhale by Cornwall Wildlife Trust to encourage visitors to access SAC areas where footfall will have positive impacts. The fencing will protect the rare scrambled egg lichen from visitor footfall.

6.2.1.24 UK0012570 - Braunton Burrows proposals to install a board walk, were initially delayed due to the risk of unexploded ordnance (UXO) on site. However, as the boardwalk was originally installed to keep people off the dunes, it was subsequently decided a better approach was to promote dynamic sand movement, the old and broken boardwalk was completely removed to restore a natural sand path to the beach.

6.2.1.25 UK0013076 - Sefton Coast C4 works on the Sefton Coast were linked to the car park relocation project at Formby which, following delays detailed in above, have now been completed.



Penhale - fencing to protect rare lichen habitat



Accommodation pod in Lincolnshire

C5 Updating Standard Data Form Review Status: Completed.

Foreseen start date: January 2019
Foreseen end date: December 2023

Actual start date: September 2025.
Actual (or anticipated) end date: February 2026

The original grant agreement expressed an action based around proposing changes to the Standard Data Forms SDF (for sites) where necessary to ensure they reflect the extent of Annex I habitats more accurately.

Following discussion with Natural England's coastal specialists, it was established that the process to do this is outside the scope of the DuneLIFE project, and Natural England's remit: This is a UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) administered process, and no set timetable exists for this to take place. However, data produced throughout the project, in particular the extent of Annex 1 habitats measured through the remote sensing monitoring work to assess habitat change, will be used in future to contribute to any future review of the SDF's whenever that is instigated by JNCC.

The deliverable for this Action "Case study Dune Dynamism – guidance for assessing FCS & condition" was produced, and has been uploaded via Butler, and will be made available for Natural England staff and others to help inform condition assessment of sand dune protected sites.

D1 Monitoring Plan and enhanced baseline monitoring. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: October 2018

Actual start date: October 2018

A biodiversity monitoring plan was developed to set the framework and indicators by which the project's biodiversity assets were assessed. All site leads followed it to ensure consistency and facilitate analysis of change across the project over time. It was reviewed annually in line with local site plans. **See Annexe - 5 Monitoring Plan (D2).** Baseline surveying started by April 2019, although some surveys were delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions, baseline surveys were all completed where possible prior to works taking place.

A wide range of surveys took place, for example : Studland: Ecological assessment of Little Sea; Lincolnshire: bryophyte survey, entomological survey, badger and water vole surveys; Penhale: reptile survey, surveying Gentian and dune slacks; Cumbria: rabbit population survey; Sefton: Petalwort survey.

The original location for the dipwells to assess hydrological change at Formby, Sefton SAC was not feasible due to ground conditions. Having been installed to fit with the car park relocation works, they have since been repeatedly vandalised and pulled out so it is not economic or practical to keep replacing them. However, dipwells were successfully installed midway and at the project end, as part of baseline and long-term change monitoring at both North Walney and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe dunes.

D2 Ongoing and final post-restoration monitoring. Status: Ongoing

Foreseen start date: October 2019

Actual start date: October 2019

Foreseen end date: August 2023

Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

The DunelIFE Biodiversity Monitoring Plans were reviewed through the course of the project. Citizen science activities contributed to project monitoring. A mobile application (App) was developed to facilitate the consistent collection of data across sites, to feed into site monitoring, alongside external assistance surveys and site staff surveys. The App was not used as much as was anticipated, with groups often having a very localised focus and there were some technical issues for users. However, alongside the App the Citizen Science Manual was developed, along with a series of training modules and videos to help train volunteers in data collection. These materials remain available through the website.

Monitoring of project activities was facilitated by a full time Monitoring Officer who joined the team in April 2021, and the monitoring reports for each project area are available as a deliverable.



Vegetation monitoring



Dipwell installation

D3 Assessment of contribution to ecosystem functions. Status: Complete.

Foreseen start date: April 2019

Actual start date: September 2019

Foreseen end date: August 2023

Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

Data was collected from the project team through the project, and included information on at provisioning services, such as reared animals and their outputs; regulating services, such as improved habitat condition and removal of invasive alien species and cultural services, such as leisure, education and scientific knowledge exchange. Throughout the course of the project some of the data identified in the project bid documents proved impractical or irrelevant to collect, and so was excluded from the final analysis. Findings are summarised in section 6.4 and explained fully in the ecosystem function report.

D4 Assessment of Socio-economic impact of the project. Status: Complete.

Foreseen start date: April 2019
Foreseen end date: August 2023

Actual start date: September 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

Data was collected by the project team throughout the project, and included information on economic impacts, such as employment, project expenditure and training; and social impacts, such as volunteering opportunities and recreation. Throughout the course of the project some of the data identified in the project bid documents proved impractical or irrelevant to collect, and so was excluded from the final analysis. Findings are summarised in section 6.4 and explained fully in the socio-economic report.

Note that both D3 and D4 reports had funds allocated to them for an external contractor to produce. However, due to the complexity of sourcing data from across the project, and the timing of report production, coinciding with a change in project manager, it was decided it was more efficient for the project manager to produce these.

D5 Monitoring impacts on local communities, other user groups and professional engagement. Status: Complete.

Foreseen start date: April 2019
Foreseen end date: August 2023

Actual start date: April 2019
Actual (or anticipated) end date: April (report July 2024)

Surveys were developed by Plantlife for event feedback, training, volunteers, schools' partnerships and new generation conservationists. The engagement team collected feedback and statistics on engagement with the different user groups, and professional engagement. An external consultancy then analysed all this data to produce the deliverable D5 "Impact of engagement summary Report " as submitted.

D6 Monitoring and measuring LIFE performance indicators. Status: Complete.

Foreseen start date: October 2018
Foreseen end date: September 2023

Actual start date: October 2018
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

LIFE (Key) Project Indicators (LPIs) were recorded through the project and have been submitted to the database. The KPI database comments detail specific information around the individual targets, and rationale for any deviations from the original snapshot.

- **Note that our LIFE monitor Neil Wilkie has reviewed the LPIs against the supporting reports and was satisfied that there were no discrepancies.**
- **They have also been verified by our LIFE Monitor LPI expert user, Lynne Barret.**

Note that the key significant variation in LPIs from project outset to project completion, was for 7.3: area of "Natural and Semi Natural Habitats". The 'start' totals for each SAC dune habitat type in the final snapshot are consistently lower than the start values in the original data snapshot. This is because the original data were derived from the existing (and unquantified) Standard Data Forms (SDF) used in the original SAC selection process. Through the project we were able to provide significantly more accurate data derived from remotely sensed data, which provides a different picture of habitat coverage, before and after, at each site. However, only 4 of the 8 SACs have remotely sensed data that was available before and after DuneLIFE interventions (Braunton, Penhale, Sefton and Studland). Thus, only these 4 SACs have been included in the final snapshot. The original snapshot had data from the SDFs of all 8 SACs and therefore a reduction in total area per habitat type is likely. This data will also be used to update SDF forms when that process happens in the UK (ref Action C5).

It is important to acknowledge that any survey is a 'snapshot' in time and ephemeral habitats such as embryo, mobile and wet slack features can change rapidly and within year. Thus, a true picture of habitat change can only really be ascertained over a timeframe beyond the project duration. However, taken as a whole across all habitat types there is in fact an overall increase in dune habitat, but there is much variability between sites as dune systems are inherently dynamic, these habitats fluctuate year on year.

E1 Dissemination Planning and Delivery. Status: Complete

Foreseen start date: October 2018
Foreseen end date: September 2023

Actual start date: October 2018
Actual (or anticipated) end date: September 2025

The project delivered extensive dissemination planning and delivery despite the difficulties encountered due to Covid-19 policy restrictions. An ambitious communications plan was drawn up with input from all partners. This was reviewed and developed further each year by the Communications Officers along with the communications leads for each partner. See **Annexe 7 - Communications Plan (E1)**.

The project was promoted by partners through articles on their websites and intranets, and widely on social media, and through press releases. This led to local radio interviews, and coverage in national papers. It was also featured online by BBC News, BBC Wildlife Magazine, ITV news and the Independent. 27 further press releases announced project activity. The project featured in The Guardian, Independent, Times, BBC News and Sunday Times as well as numerous local publications. More on these stories can be found on <https://dynamicdunescape.co.uk/dunescape-in-the-news/>.



National Broadcast television programmes featuring the DuneLIFE project

The project had regular print and broadcast media coverage (both national and local) and was featured in The Guardian [Online] which has a monthly readership of 18 million globally and popular TV programmes, such as BBC's Countryfile and BBC's The Lakes by Simon Reeves. The project has had feature articles in partner magazines and a monthly newsletter was sent out with news on the project, events and volunteering opportunities. (PDFs available on the Dynamic Dunescape website)

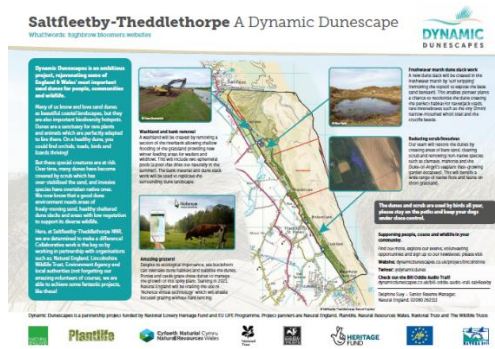
June 2021 saw the inaugural [World Sand Dune Day](#) with a wide range of activities delivered not just by project partners but supported by organisations and groups beyond the project boundaries. The day was formally launched in Cornwall and attended by Tony Juniper (Chair of Natural England) and Carolyn Cadman (CEO of Cornwall Wildlife Trust). They were featured on ITV news promoting the event. For the 2022 event, Social media reach beyond the project saw the hashtag #WorldSandDuneDay used in Arizona, Florida, Abu Dhabi, the Netherlands, Scotland and Ireland. [World Sand Dune Day](#) continues through to 2025.

6.2.1.26 Web and social media presence

The project has a website which was developed during the project, along with national and local social media channels (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube), providing regular posts on general project activity and social media campaigns. To ensure legacy, [a compilation video](#) was put together on YouTube.

We conservatively estimate that the project communications have reached over 35 million people.

Site notice boards – A1 panels Semi-permanent A1 notice boards were produced for all sites by 2021.



Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe panel



A1 panel in situ at South Walney.

Local Communities: Events and activities programme for local communities was run by a team of six People Engagement Officers across each of the main areas, each hosted within one of the partner organisations and co-ordinated by the Engagement Manager. Due to Covid-19, virtual engagement became the primary offer for engagement – e.g. the Dune Art Challenge - a series of online arts-based activities that enabled people to learn about some of the specialised dune species and habitats, and available as legacy resource for future audiences. Remote, virtual and online engagement enabled a blended programme of events, including online presentations to local audiences. ‘Dune Den’ events were run in a Covid-19 secure way. For example, using self-led trails and activity sheets.



Most projects ran community arts events to help people understand and enjoy sand dune landscapes as well as explain the conservation management by the project partners e.g. collaborative decoration by community groups, of a Totem pole depicting dune species, at Ainsdale NNR, on the Sefton Coast SAC; ‘Sound waves’ in Cornwall; and a showing of Dunescapes film and ‘Star Wars’ in the largest dune ‘blow out’ in England, at Branton Burrows. These all engaged audiences and communities that might not normally consider the sand dune systems as part of their daily lives. Engagement led to reductions in negative comments when undertaking Dunescapes works, compared to partners experience with other projects with less engagement.



Outdoor cinema screening of Dunescapes film & ‘Star Wars’ at Branton Burrows SAC



Dunescapes ‘Totem’ pole at Ainsdale, Sefton Coast

6.2.1.27 Education

Despite restrictions on direct education engagement as result of Covid-19, Dunescapes local Engagement Officers, produced a range of materials and resources to enable learning about sand dune sites, wildlife and culture. In partnership with the John Muir Trust, a bespoke John Muir on the Dunes Award was launched. The booklet is available for groups, families and individuals to download and participate in a range of sand dune themed activities encouraging the principles of 'Discover, Explore, Conserve, Share'.



John Muir Award Activity resource and pupils at Seascape Primary receiving their awards

National education resources have been produced. Primary resources are in an activity booklet linked to the national curriculum, and Secondary resources were also provided if requested. A live presentation, recorded as 'evergreen' content, was delivered to Geography Education Online (a sister website for the Geographical Association). [The recording is available on their website](#). The education resources are also hosted on the Times Educational Supplement web portal and are available for download directly from these platforms.

6.2.1.28 Student research opportunities

Student research opportunities were compiled from across the sites and collated in a central document (see **Annexe 12 - Student research opportunities (E1)**) and advertised on the project website. Opportunities for young people were developed to offer opportunities to learn about new techniques, experience 'real world' conservation and to support routes into conservation careers. Beneficiaries and participants contributed blog posts and vlogs [via the project website and YouTube channels](#).

6.2.1.29 Apprenticeships

Two apprentices were recruited by Cornwall Wildlife Trust. One was inspired to study for a conservation management degree; and an apprentice recruited by Natural England to the Lincolnshire NNR team has now become a permanent member of staff.



One of the DuneLIFE apprentices meeting King Charles III on a site visit to Lincolnshire.



Volunteers preparing ground prior to creation of dune notches at Ainsdale, Sefton Coast SAC.

6.2.1.30 Volunteering

The project aims to ensure more people and a wider range of people are involved with sand dunes and through their involvement learn about, enjoy and value sand dunes. In addition to practical works, volunteers have

been involved in supporting social media and communications projects; developing education materials; organising and leading events and activities; setting up and running litter-picking groups; surveying and monitoring; and ground-truthing citizen science quadrats and transects. The project looked beyond traditional volunteering (practical work in groups) to explore options for people to get involved from home, remotely or undertaking a wider range of activities (especially during Covid-19 restrictions). In total, up to Nov 2024, 947 new volunteering opportunities were offered, and involved 7467 volunteers.

The project also targeted specific groups through its engagement programme, including:

Older people living with dementia and their carers and developed a programme to enable better access to local dune systems, and working with people to better understand the barriers they face and to co-design solutions.

Youth involvement was considered during the development of the project, as it was highlighted that young people, especially 13-18 year-olds, were particularly absent and not engaged with sand dune systems. Efforts have therefore been made to reach out to under-represented and under-served young people and support organisations.

6.2.1.31 Dog Walkers

Many sand dune settings experience the challenges associated with regular dog walkers; disturbance to wildlife (e.g. ground nesting birds, seal pups, over-wintering birds) and stock; increased soil fertility due to dog fouling; and user conflict. It has been recognised that most regular dog walkers do not intend to 'damage' the sites, indeed, they love where they live but may be unaware of the impact that their activity has. The project launched a 'Paws for Thought' campaign to help dog owners understand what the potential impacts are, why there are sometimes restrictions to access, where the alternatives are, and what they can do to help.

Full details and analysis on engagement, volunteering etc is provided through the deliverable reports D3, D4 and D5.

Site Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs)

Evidence to support Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) was collated for Branton Burrows and the Sefton Coast. These documents draw together the available and relevant information for each of the sites. Data was collected at the sites for two years, analysed through contract with the Centre of Hydrology and Ecology. Funding has been secured to continue monitoring for a further year at Sefton Coast SAC beyond the end of the project as part of AfterLIFE work. Through working with Natural England's Long Term Monitoring Network (LTMN) the monitoring put in place at Branton Burrows can also be continued by the LTMN team beyond the end of the project.

The detailed findings of this work are reported as a case study as a deliverable for E1. Note that data from 2025 requires final ratification (calibration), as this was still being processed at the time of report writing. This is made clear in the text for the draft report. The report will be updated and sent through in June/July 2026 once the ratification process is finished for the 2025 data.

This work will now be taken forward, potentially under UK legislation mechanism of 'Protected Site Strategies', with 'SNAPs' as part of that site-wide approach.

Professional Engagement:

The [Sand Dune Manager's Handbook](#) was produced by the project to introduce the concept of dune dynamics. It describes the new and emerging practical conservation management interventions being deployed across the project sites. The lead authors are from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) and the UK's Sand Dune and Shingle Network (contractors) with input from national coastal specialists at Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, and in consultation with a project site leads. Two editions of the Handbook were produced in 2021 and then 2024, and it is available as an [online resource](#).

Events for a technical audience and networking activities

Within the project monthly Site Lead Group regular 'teams' calls, and site manager field visits, enabled site managers to share, learn and ask questions of each other across the different partner organisations

A forum for knowledge and experience exchange was established using the IT/app platform 'Slack'. This was well adopted initially but was not used as much as anticipated.

It had been intended that the project would hold regular project workshops to bring together site managers and the Dunescapes team. Whilst a workshop was held in October 2019 Covid-19 curtailed these, so to maintain project learning and sharing, two virtual workshops were delivered in October 2020 and March 2021. Two 'regional' events (Studland and Sefton) also enabled colleagues to see examples of practical conservation interventions and associated engagement programmes.

DuneLIFE organised a 'Final' project conference in 2023 (before the project was prolonged) to share the work and findings from the previous 5 years. Over 90 people attended, including site managers, academics and representatives and speakers from other EU LIFE dune projects and the sessions remain available online for future reference [Dynamic Dunescapes Project Conference - Dynamic Dunescapes](#)

Links with other EU LIFE and European projects:

There were close links between England's DuneLIFE and the 'Sands of LIFE' project in Wales (SoLIFE LIFE17NAT/UK/000023). The DuneLIFE team attended and presented at four SO LIFE workshops, and team members attended each project's final conference. DuneLIFE and SoLIFE have close links with reciprocal positions on each other's Steering Groups, and a Sands of LIFE representative is a member of DuneLIFE's 'AfterLIFE' steering group to retain these links into the future.

A team member attended Denmark's LIFE project REWETDUNE and LIFE WETHAB's final seminar in May 2019. The LIFE Dunias workshop was also attended in May 2022. Learning was shared from both these events across DuneLIFE partners.

DuneLIFE worked closely with the ENDURE (Ensuring Dune Resilience Against Climate Change) project, with a representative on the advisory board and discussions to ensure consistent messaging across the two projects. Members of the DuneLIFE team inputted to their reporting and presented at their final conference.

The project contributed presentations to the Mediterranean and European Coastal Agencies network, and a presentation was delivered to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management 2021 Conference.

In May 2022, the Cumbria team presented an online presentation and hosted a guided walk to attendees of the Europarc Conference, an event for those working in Europe's Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites, with conversations around Nofence grazing, invasive species removal and citizen science schemes. In particular, a link was made with NatureScot with practical advice given, and the Sand Dune Managers Handbook shared. A site visit by the LIFE Dunas project, from the Madeira archipelago to the Sefton sites was arranged for October 2022.

National Trust were invited by EU LIFE project board to represent the Dynamic Dunescapes project in Netherlands – the aim to talk about the project's benefits and hurdles, with the aim of kickstarting a new project in Denmark.

The project also attended EU LIFE workshop in Belgium to create a collaborative piece of work on highlighting and prioritising invasive dune species across Europe. This made a connection with other dune experts working across Europe – leading to an invitation to Holland to meet with the EU project board.

The DuneLIFE project manager attended the 2025 'UK & Ireland Sand Dune and Shingle Network' annual conference to present and share learning from the project. This conference was attended by several European dune restoration projects, and further links were made with the team submitting the project agreement for the Danish 'LIFE Duneamics' project, to share specific insights around approaches to delivering an extensive Dune project.

F1 Overall Project Management. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: April 2019

Actual start date: August 2018

Foreseen end date: September 2023

Actual (or anticipated): March 2026

Throughout the project, the beneficiaries reported quarterly into the core team hosted by the Coordinating Beneficiary, Natural England. A Project Steering Group met monthly during the main period of project delivery. A Governance Board met every six months, and did so until the final meeting in February 2026, when the Groups role changed to become the project 'AfterLIFE' steering group (with additional partner representation).

F2 Project Monitoring and Reporting. Status: Completed

Foreseen start date: October 2018

Actual start date: October 2018

Foreseen end date: September 2023

Actual (or anticipated) end date: March 2026.

The Project Manager(s) worked with all staff across the partnership to gather the required information for project reporting throughout. Due to a change in project manager, and the loss of the co-ordinating Monitoring officer through a NE redundancy scheme during the final year of the project, an extension from 31st December 2025 to 31st March 2026 for final report submission was requested and approved by CINEA. ([see Annex 6](#)).

6.3 Evaluation of Project Implementation

Overall Analysis of the **results of the project achieved against the objectives and expected results**

An enormous amount of work and activity was undertaken by the project partners over the seven year period of the project. Highlights and quantified areas of delivery across the different sites is described in the preceding sections. The table below is therefore a summary of key findings – to appreciate and understand this fully the main report text and the supporting deliverables should be consulted.

Objective 1“Increase and enhance the restoration of sand dune and associated wetland habitats” & Objective 2” Improve the resilience of relevant Annex I & II habitats and species to climate change, impacts of water availability and future nutrient enrichment.”	
Key Action	C1.1: Sand Dune rejuvenation and associated wetland rejuvenation
	Evaluation of achievements (including lessons learned & cost effectiveness)
Significant areas of sand dunes were rejuvenated at all sites. The key techniques used were (i) scraping off nutrient enriched upper sand and soil layers, and vegetation to expose bare ‘mineral’ sand (ii) Restoring dune-slacks-and wet features (iii) creation of dune ‘notches’ to encourage mobilisation of sand through the sites (iv) removal of invasive scrub	i. Scraping off bare layers was generally successful at most sites in ‘resetting’ ecological succession and creating opportunities for uncommon plants and associated fauna to re-establish. However, the depth of scraping proved critical. Many site managers were initially cautious about removing excess material, not least because of the volume of arising that then need to be ‘lost’ elsewhere to sacrificial areas of the sites. Subsequently, many sites were seeing rapid return of vegetation growth, which may require more frequent re-intervention than planned. So the key lesson learnt is that it may have been prudent to have removed more material initially, although the balance between the amount of material initially moved and the frequency of follow up maintenance is very site, and sometimes within site specific -depending on factors such as climate and weather variability, localised nitrogen deposition, presence of ruderal species , grazing pressure – i.e. the learning is often specific at individual site level, rather than translatable across all locations. Whilst the techniques were considered cost effective (especially where partners such as MoD could be engaged to do the work for free) in future removing more material initially to maintain open sand areas for longer may be considered. ii. Restoring dune-slacks followed similar techniques for ‘dry’ scrapes in terms of physical removal of substrate with machines, although the variability in water tables and weather across the site and between years led to differing responses to the interventions: In some cases higher water tables suppressed ruderal weed growth, in others areas remained relatively dry due to unusual spring drought conditions. Notable for Lincolnshire was the purchase and use of the ‘Softrak’ low pressure tractor cutter, which radically improved the ability and speed of cutting and manging wetland areas (and IAS)- so although a relatively expensive capital outlay, its value for money was exceptional in the eyes of the partners. Restoration and creation of smaller features like ponds, particularly for species such as Natterjack toad, also formed part of several project approaches and was generally considered a lower cost but very effective way of improving the habitat and resilience of those species. iii. Creation of dune notches was trialled at four SACs; Morecambe Bay, Braunton Burrows, Sefton Coast and Penhale. This technique, with variation in size and design according to the individual sites, appears to be

	working successfully. There has been observed sand mobilisation at all sites; and topographical monitoring (by Ken Pye associates) and remote sensed analysis continues to further our understanding of the evolution and effectiveness of the notches. Partners considered the technique to be cost effective, although the inconsistency in the requirements for planning permission (and so costs) across England, and the very different geography and topography of sites, led to different costs and sometimes delays for each project and partner. As with scrapes, several site managers expressed that some of the notches were vegetating up quite quickly (potentially impeding full sand transport) and would need some maintenance to keep them fully open. iv. Scrub removal was significant across the project, e.g. at Branton Burrows alone over 50 ha was cleared. The biggest issues came with how to deal with cuttings - and a variety of techniques including burning, burying and crushing using digger buckets were trialled. The biggest issue in terms of cost effectiveness and longevity was minimising regrowth either through herbicide treatment or grazing. Animals such as ponies and goats should prove effective if numbers and therefore grazing pressure is adequate.
Immediacy of impact and outcomes:	For these techniques the initial interventions are immediately visible. However, the response in the dunes ecosystems in terms of recovering the desired suite of flora and fauna expressed by a full range of habitats may take time - especially for slow growing plants, or species with poor or slow dispersal to move back into the restored ecological niches.
Supporting information:	Available through the text above (i.e. the main report); the D2: Monitoring report and D3 ecosystem services report; LPIs).
Key Action	C2 Removal of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)
	Evaluation of achievements (including lessons learned and cost effectiveness)
	Action to address IAS was taken across all project sites. Approaches included a range of techniques including herbicides, cutting and burying – replicating the techniques and issues described above for scrub management. A particular issue encountered was around estimating the coverage of, and managing IAS which is difficult when they are often intermingled as a mosaic with native and desirable species. Often close work with hand application of herbicides and cutting/removal with hand tools is therefore the only realistic and often time-consuming approach. Volunteers played a big part in achieving the outcomes at many sites. As mentioned above the ‘Softtrak’ machine in Lincolnshire proved especially helpful for managing some invasive species. At Studland Dunes, Dorset, the specific project to remove invasive Carp from a low-nutrient dune slack lake, was a novel but important part of the project. 100’s of kilos of Carp have been removed and different capture techniques tested, along with extensive analysis of water quality. Whilst fish numbers have been dramatically reduced the lake has not recovered its previous condition, but this response is not unusual in shallow lakes that have ‘flipped’ to a turbid state. There is an ongoing ‘maintenance’ cost to keep removing carp in the face of climate warming and thus reproduction. The learning from this project has highlighted the complexity of the ecosystem and is leading to further research with universities (e.g. on fish populations the implications of climate change and IAS in other shallow lake systems) and an expert working group to continue to work toward a long-term solution.

Immediacy of impact and outcomes:	For these techniques the results of initial interventions are immediately visible. However, the effectiveness of maintaining or further reducing IAS populations will only be seen over time.
Supporting information:	Available through the text above (the main report); the D2: Monitoring report and D3 ecosystem services report; LPIs and Deliverable D2 – ‘Evaluation of Carp removal at Studland’ report).
Key Action	C3: New grazing regimes
	Evaluation of achievements (including lessons learned & cost effectiveness)
	Significant areas of sites were either grazed for the first time, or grazing was returned to them for the first time in many years, and there was significant additional delivery (see table) in both area grazed and length of fencing installed above the original objectives. A particular success was the world first of trialling ‘Nofence’ technology on cattle in Dorset, expanding this out to many other sites in the project; and then the technique becoming used for Conservation grazing beyond the project.
Immediacy of impact and outcomes:	The impact of grazing can be relatively quick during a grazing season in terms of sward height or reduced scrub, but the ecological response in plant and animal communities that results from the grazing, will often take much longer.
Supporting information:	Available through the text above (the main report); the D3 ecosystem services report; C3 ‘Evaluation report of rabbit grazing at Morecambe & Drigg’ ; & LPIs.
Key Action	C4: Volunteer/ visitor infrastructure
	Evaluation of achievements (including lessons learned & cost effectiveness)
	The main deliverable under this action was provision of four accommodation units for volunteers at the Lincolnshire sites. There were significant problems with procurement of these items, in part due to the very specific description of the supplier in procurement processes and increased cost through Covid-19; this led to having to find an alternative supplier for the units and so delays in installation. However, once installed the units has been very successful and considered to be very cost effective.
Immediacy of impact and outcomes:	The units were occupied as soon as they were ready and have housed a number of reserve workers, that otherwise couldn’t have afforded to live and work in that location.
Supporting information:	Available through the text above (the main report); & LPIs.
Objective 3 “Demonstrate best practices including the positive integration of habitats and species restoration with visitor/recreational management to existing and future site managers, volunteers and policy makers at key sites in Europe” and Objective 4 “Inspire and promote better understanding and awareness of the value and function of natural dynamic dune systems across a wide range of audiences in the UK and mainland Europe (15000+)”	
Key Actions	D5 Monitoring impacts on local communities, other user groups and professional engagement; and E1 Dissemination Planning & Delivery
	Evaluation of achievements (including lessons learned & cost effectiveness)
	As described in section 6.1 and Deliverable D5, there was a very diverse range of dissemination activities across the project at local and National Level and to very diverse audiences, that related to restoration of habitats and species and dune dynamism. Key highlights that demonstrate the effectiveness of this include:

	• The very large numbers of people the project reached through its media and social network outreach - estimated at over 35 million. • The high engagement with communities at a local project level in terms of volunteers, citizen scientists, school children and students. (e.g. over 660 teachers and 6180 school pupils involved) • The engagement with practitioners and site managers locally, nationally, and internationally through conferences, expert meetings and publications. (e.g. over 700 participants at 56 learning events) • Over 168,000 page downloads from the projects external website; and production of 2 editions of the comprehensive 'Sand Dune Managers Handbook'. Cost effectiveness of these measures is difficult to quantify but based on numbers alone the costs of providing this information is very small in comparison to the very large audiences the project reached.
Immediacy of impact and outcomes:	The long-term impact of this extensive outreach could have very immediate effects e.g. people changing their behaviour in the use of sand dune sites, or citizen science recording, through to long term raising awareness of the value of dune habitats through media work and early years engagement.
Supporting information:	Available through the text above (the main report); the D4 socio-economic report; D5 – Impact of Engagement summary report ; & LPis.

Replication

Through the extensive engagement, outreach and knowledge sharing particularly across site managers, academics and other professionals, the opportunities for replication of approaches developed through Dunescape sites were multiple and will continue into the future. The project did not formally 'track' replication but anecdotally has been made aware of this taking place.

For example, at National Trust Woolacombe, Devon, 'Nofence' grazing technology was trailed to help control scrub regrowth after the success in Dorset and in many other locations. And after the end of the project, the local team have spoken to site managers at other project sites to gain knowledge, and in Winter 2025/26 have undertaken frontal dune notching for the first time.

On the Lincolnshire Coast, scrub control techniques developed on the Dunescape SAC sites, are now being expanded along the whole of the Lincolnshire coast National Nature Reserve, by partners including the Ministry of Defence, and Cleethorpes and East Lindsey District Council.

Policy implications and impacts

The delivery of the project, and objectives 1 and 2 were centred around responding to the 2013 Article 17 reporting that determined Sand Dune Habitats were in the worst condition of any habitat. The outcomes of the project contribute to addressing the requirements of the Habitats Directive for member states to take action to restore habitats and Species of European importance to meet Favourable Conservation Status across their range.

In terms of UK domestic policy and legislation, restoration work undertaken by the project has contributed to the requirements under domestic legislation for Nationally designated sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to meet their conservation objectives and achieve 'Favourable condition'.

Targets for SSSIs are expressed through the UK's 2021 'Environment Act' and the policy vehicle that underpins that, the 2025 'Environment Improvement Plan (EiP)', both of which have challenging targets for SSSI condition and for species recovery. Dynamic Dunescape work directly contributes to meeting these targets across the component SSSIs and for the species that are supported by them.

Natural England worked with Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the development of the amended sand dune options under the new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs), as well as the new 'making space at the coast' option (CCT2) – which includes the roll-back of sand dunes. For both options there is greater emphasis on dune dynamism. The project's Sand Dune Managers Handbook is referenced as a key advice document. Approximately a third (c. 3,200ha) of English sand dunes are in an agri-environment scheme, and subject to available funding it is hoped uptake of these management options will increase.

Coastal habitats were identified as one of the high-risk areas in UK governments Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2022. The Dynamic Dunescapes project is mentioned in The Third National (Climate) Adaptation Programme as an example of a landscape scale restoration initiative. Learning from the Dynamic Dunescapes project will help creation of SSSI climate change Adaptive Delivery Plans to help build respond to dynamic change, which are also referenced within the latest EiP.

Experience from the project's trial with 'Nofence' virtual grazing technology fed into Defra's Animal Welfare Committee's report: 'Opinion on the welfare implications of using virtual fencing systems to contain, move and monitor livestock'. The use of virtual grazing systems is now commonly in use to allow sites to be grazed where traditional fencing is either not appropriate or cost effective. Many sites require grazing to maintain Favourable Condition and the technology has become a major beneficial management tool.

Natural England's Defining Favourable Conservation Status project is defining minimum threshold area at which habitats or species can thrive throughout their natural range in England. Definitions can be used to inform and improve work to recover nature, for example to inform policy, strategic or legal work. [The Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Coastal Sand Dunes \(RP2942\)](#), was authored by a DuneLIFE team member Sue Rees.

The main barrier experienced through 'policy' was at a local level in England, specifically the time scales taken to get planning permission for some of the larger restoration activities (e.g. dune notching). This is outside of the projects control, but learning has been gained and shared by the partner organisations, for any future works of this nature.

6.4 Analysis of Benefits

Environmental benefit

Numerous conservation benefits were delivered for Natura SAC habitats and species. **In terms of project progress against initial habitat and IAS Action targets** the project overdelivered as highlighted in the table below (see section Action C1 above for full breakdown)

Action	Target area (ha)	Progress to end project (ha)	% complete
C1.1: Sand Dune rejuvenation	129	232	180
C1.2: Associated wetland rejuvenation	33	38	118
C2.1: Removal of IAS (flora)	60	66	111
C3: New grazing regimes	298	444	149
Action	Target (m)	Progress to end project (m)	
C3: New grazing regimes	4,799	12,659	264
C4: Volunteer/visitor infrastructure	358	358	100

Table 4: 'Headline' figures for environmental benefits delivered by DuneLIFE across the project sites.

- In terms of a 'headline' statistics an overall area of 270 ha of Sand dune and associated wetland habitat (as reported in LPI 1.5) was improved, with significant areas of Invasive Alien Species removed, reduced or treated.
- Extensive areas of the sites are now grazed such that the conservation work through Dunescapes *and* wider parts of the sites will be maintained more sustainably by grazing animals.
- Infrastructure refers to specific project at Penhale Dunes SAC, to provide fencing to manage access and protect are lichen habitat. Infrastructure also included provision of volunteer accommodation in Lincolnshire, detailed in section C4, and below under 'best practice'.

Note however that the main significant variation in LPIs from project outset to project completion, was for LPI 7.3: area of "Natural and Semi Natural Habitats". The 'start' totals for each *individual SAC dune habitat type* in the final snapshot are lower than the start values in the original data snapshot, except for fixed dunes which show a marked increase. This is because the original data were derived from the existing Standard Data Forms (SDF) used in the original SAC selection process, which do not show the sources of their data. Through the project we were able to provide significantly more accurate data derived from remotely sensed data for four of the key SAC project sites, which provides a different picture of habitat coverage, before and after, at each site. NOTE this is limited remote sensed data – the table above captures the actual work that was done through the project on the ground and so is representative of the habitat improvements made through the project.

It is also important to recognise that any survey is a 'snapshot' in time and ephemeral habitats such as embryo, mobile and wet slack features can change rapidly and within year. Thus, a true picture of habitat change can only really be ascertained over a timeframe beyond the project duration. However, taken as a whole across all habitat types there is an overall increase in dune habitat, but there is much variability between sites as dune systems are inherently dynamic, these habitats can fluctuate year on year.

For Species delivery - For the Annex II or rare dune species monitored at key sites through the project, in the majority of cases the trend in those species at the end of the project was either *increasing* or stable, an encouraging change from the situation in 2018 before the project activity began -see Table 5, below.

Note, however the time between when interventions were carried out is not long enough for most species to respond to the changes in their supporting habitat, especially those that are slow dispersers or colonizers. E.g. fauna where breeding maturity may be delayed (e.g. in Natterjack toads breed only after 3 years), or for plant species that are slow to move into newly restored areas (e.g. Bryophytes).

Natterjack Toad (monitored closely at Sefton Coast SAC) did show as no change in trend – but survey reports acknowledge that the low count of spawn strings in 2024 may be due to survey conditions at the time ; and importantly there are positive signs that the new habitat created or restored is either already or will become suitable for Natterjacks to expand their range (and hopefully numbers) at several sites: There is evidence of them moving into the wetland areas created in Lincolnshire (Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe SAC); and into restored slacks and pools at Sandscale Haws, Cumbria, Morecambe bay SAC. For full breakdown see data in the ecosystem services Report Deliverable D3).

SAC	Braunton Burrows	Braunton Burrows	Penhale	Penhale	Penhale	Sefton Coast	Sefton Coast	Sefton Coast	Studland dunes	Studland dunes	Studland dunes
Species of interest	<u>Petalwort</u> (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>)	Dune Gentian * (<i>Gentianella angustella</i> subsp. <i>occidentalis</i>)	<u>Petalwort</u> (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>)	Shore dock (<i>Rumex rupestris</i>)	Early gentian (<i>Gentianella anglica</i>)	Sand Lizard (<i>Lacerta agilis</i>)	<u>Natterjack Toad</u> (<i>Epidalea salamita</i>)	Northern Dune Tiger Beetle (<i>Cicindela hybrida</i>)	Sand lizard (<i>Lacerta agilis</i>)	<u>Lycoadiella inundata</u> (moss)	<u>Common tiger Beetle</u> (<i>Cicindela sylvatica</i>)
Species status (2018)	Unknown	unknown	Unfavourable - inadequate	Unfavourable - inadequate	Other (Unfavourable - inadequate)	Unfavourable/ inadequate	Unfavourable/ inadequate	Other (Unfavourable/ inadequate)	unknown	other	other
Species status at end of project	Unknown	Unknown	favourable	Unfavourable - inadequate	Other (Unfavourable - inadequate)	favourable	Unknown	Other (Favourable)	unknown	other	other
Species trend (2018)	decreasing	decreasing	unknown	decreasing	fluctuating	unknown	decreasing	Unknown	decreasing	decreasing	decreasing
Species trend at end of project	increasing	unknown	stable	increasing	increasing	increasing	decreasing	increasing	stable	stable	increasing

Table 5: Excerpt from D3: Ecosystem Service report showing overall trends in notable species at sites where they were monitored.

A key outcome in terms of UK policy was the influence of the project on development of England's revised [‘Agri-environment scheme options to embrace dune dynamism](#) and [coastal change](#)- which may also be relevant to development of European member states agri-environment options.

[The AfterLIFE Plan](#) – attached toward the end of this document, details the actions that will be undertaken to continue and develop the actions initiated by the project, and assure long term management of the sites.

Economic

DuneLIFE objectives were centred around nature conservation and community engagement and so whilst the opportunities for economic ‘gain’ were not a focus for this project, economic impacts were still considered, and were greatest in terms of employment creation, and the ‘in kind’ contribution created by volunteers : Across the projects, 16 new staff posts and three apprenticeships were created to deliver the work. A total of 18.2 FTE, including three apprenticeships, were created, equivalent of approx. 69 years of ‘qualified staff’ employment. Across the project the ‘non-qualified’ volunteer resource equated to over 7675 days, or approximately 30 FTE, and is likely many more.

Analysis was carried out around the value from the project of investment in local economies. A conservative estimate was that this equated to over €400,000, based on claims to the project of > €5000 but would be likely much greater from smaller expenditure that could not be isolated. Although at project inception there was in intention to quantify expenditure by participants and volunteers, the sheer scale of the project in terms of activities and sites made this impractical. In addition, evidence from NE’s volunteer engagements team, suggest that this local expenditure would be relatively low and so it was considered disingenuous to extrapolate figures to predict potential economic gain. (see D4 Socio Economic full Report).

Social

A wide range of social benefits were derived through the project as a result of the wide range of engagement activities. This included significant numbers of opportunities for volunteers (947 opportunities) including practical work and citizen science, bringing people together. The educational outreach work with schools was also extensive, with over 6180 pupils and 662 teaching staff involved. In addition, there were activities aimed at providing social benefit for harder to reach groups such as young adults (167 events with 4,217 participants) and for older people living with dementia (62 events, 832 participants).

Participant surveys show that engagement in a Dynamic Dunescape activity helped people connect more with nature and the benefits this could bring, including improvements to health and wellbeing. The data showed:

- 79% of people who attended the events feel inspired to visit the sand dunes more

- 68% identified they felt more relaxed having spent time in the sand dunes
- 54% were more likely to spend time outdoors because of this event

Volunteers in particular recorded significant health benefits; surveys identified how:

- 89% said it had a positive impact on health and wellbeing
- 84% have met new people or made new friends

Social media was also used extensively, especially during the first two to three years of the project during the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain social connection – and continued to be used as an engagement tool throughout. Over 4230 followers of the Dunescapes were recorded, and over 38,500 viewings of the 145 YouTube videos the project hosted. This is fully reported in Deliverable D3 and D5.

Best Practice lessons:

The best practice measures and that stand out from the plethora of work that DuneLIFE delivered include:

- (1) Fore dune notch creation – Has been successful in the locations it was trialled, acknowledging the lesson learnt around ensuring that notches were ‘deep’ enough from the beginning, and vegetation cleared fully from their profile to maintain function (as described under section 6.1, C1 Action).
- (2) The very extensive fore-dune restoration at Formby, Sefton Coast SAC where 80,000 tonnes of rubble were removed from the beach, and the landforms were successfully restored. Protected species (Sand Lizard) were successfully managed and mitigated for). The lessons learnt included from initial curtailed trials considering inert material re-use for dune material (deliverable A4); and allowing adequate time for the local planning process.
- (3) Installation of dipwells to monitor hydrological change at two SACs, to provide long-term understanding of water tables – but also lessons learnt re the equipment required and special requirements of installation in dune situations (Action D1).
- (4) Provision of volunteer accommodation and the value it provided to enable apprentices, trainees and reserve workers to help manage and restore dune sites. Key Lessons learnt were around specification and procurement of infrastructure such as this.
- (5) The extensive engagement throughout the project, that aside the function of raising awareness, enabled very significant restoration work to take place by gaining support for and greatly reducing any community objection to large schemes such as dune notching (e.g. Penhale Dunes) and introduction of cattle to a site that had not been grazed in living memory (Studland Dunes).

Innovation and demonstration value:

Again, there are many examples of innovation and demonstration that have gained added value from the funding. Highlights include:

- (1) Re the fore dune notching described above, DuneLIFE was the first time this technique has been used in England, and a great deal of experience has been gained through trialling the technique in different geographic locations.
- (2) The [successful trialling of ‘NoFence’ technology on cattle for the first time in the world](#) at Studland SAC as part of the DuneLIFE project, led to widespread uptake through the project and beyond.
- (3) The work around the impacts of air quality and atmospheric Nitrogen deposition, to develop the evidence base for Site Nitrogen Action Plans to help address this significant pressure on all sand dune locations in England (and beyond).
- (4) The use of the ‘SoftTrak’ machine in a sand dune context (very unusual in England) in Lincolnshire that has radically reduced the amount of time it would have taken staff or volunteers to clear areas of invasive species, or manage scrub growth.
- (5) The strong partnership working between five different eNGOs and Natural England as the governmental body was a clear demonstration of the added value that multiple partners with different geographies, experience and approaches can bring to form a cohesive project.

(Policy implications are described in the previous section)

7 LIFE Project Indicators

and rationale are included in the LPI tool, and supported by the different deliverable reports notably the D2 Monitoring report, D3 Ecosystem services report; D4, Socio Economic Report; and D5 Impact of engagement report.

END.

8 Finance Report

8.1 Summary of costs incurred

The table below summarizes the costs incurred on the Project up until 30th September 2025. The more detailed itemization of costs by budget category is provided in the financial statements of each beneficiary.

Table 1: Breakdown of Project costs incurred during Dynamic Dunescapes by budget category (from consolidated statement)

PROJECT COSTS INCURRED			
Cost category	Budget according to the grant agreement in €*	Costs incurred within the reporting period in €	%**
Personnel	2,488,331	2,738,935.07	110.1%
Travel and subsistence	214,351	73,733.06	34.4%
External assistance	4,234,587	4,259,897.02	100.6%
Durables goods: total <u>non-depreciated</u> cost			
- Infrastructure sub-tot.	417,993	956,603.85	228.9%
- Equipment sub-tot.	360,480	340,916.57	94.6%
- Prototype sub-tot.	0	N/A	N/A
Consumables	84,460	70,012.32	82.9%
Other costs	164,952	101,412.56	61.5%
Overheads	557,558	597,904.20	107.2%
TOTAL	8,522,712	9,139,414.66	107.2%

These financial statements, along with the consolidated statement and all the signed forms of the beneficiaries have been sent separately and are listed below, and attached in a 'Zipped' file with the **Annex references as shown below referencing the ZIP filenames.**

- Signed Certificates for Nature Projects for NE, PlantLife (PL), Cumbria Wildlife Trust (Cumbria WT), Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (Lincolnshire WT), Cornwall Wildlife Trust (Cornwall WT) and National Trust (NT) (**Annex 1**)
- Consolidated financial statement Excel file (**Annex 2**)
- Ink signed Consolidated financial statement PDF of signed forms (**Annex 3**)
- Ink Signed individual financial statement front sheets of all the beneficiaries PDF (**Annex 4**)
- NE financial statement (**Annex 5**)
- PL financial statement (**Annex 6**)
- Cumbria WT financial statement (**Annex 7**)
- Lincolnshire WT financial statement (**Annex 8**)

- Cornwall WT financial statement (**Annex 9**)
- National Trust financial statement (**Annex 10**).

All the files are password protected as they contain sensitive information. The password will be communicated to CINEA separately.

- **Personnel** – Project delivery was delayed due to Covid-19 which meant the project was extended by two years. The impact of this has meant staff costs are greater than anticipated in the grant agreement. The project has had to deal with a large number, and high turnover of project staff over the duration of the project. The lead and some other beneficiaries did not claim for all the staff that worked on the project.
- **Travel and Subsistence** – This budget was affected by Covid-19 reflecting a lack of travel during the pandemic. Underspend from this budget has been reallocated to meet project commitments under other headings such as external assistance.
- **External Assistance** – formed the largest proportion of the expenditure on the project, as many of the sites required significant contracted costs.
- **Infrastructure** – had the greatest variance from the original budget due to large scale construction a National Trust Formby (Sefton Coast SAC) as well as the apprentice and warden accommodation units installed at the Lincolnshire sites (Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and Gibraltar Point SAC)

8.2 Project Spend by Action

Table 2: A breakdown of Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE expenditure per action (excluding Personnel and Travel).

	Action	Total Eligible costs with non-recoverable VAT (€)	Grant Agreement (less Personnel and Travel) (€)	Variance (€)	% Variance
A	Preparatory Action, Elaboration of Management Plans and / or Action Plan				
A1	Project establishment and recruitment	34,874.30	14,220.00	-20,654.30	-145%
A2	Consents and permissions	200,515.76	97,650.00	- 102,865.76	-105%
A3	Developing and piloting stakeholder engagement	7,975.84	18,240.00	10,264.16	56%
A4	On-site trial of re-purposing of inert material for restoration	261,197.35	63,900.00	- 197,297.35	-309% ¹
C	Conservation Actions				
C1	Sand dune rejuvenation	1,985,690.01	2,370,427.00	384,736.99	16%
C2	Removal of Invasive Alien Species	1,362,987.33	1,260,178.00	- 102,809.33	-8%
C3	Introduction of new grazing regimes	225,829.01	366,891.00	141,061.99	38%
C4	Volunteer/visitor infrastructure	832,247.38	148,200.00	- 684,047.38	-462% ²

	Action	Total Eligible costs with non-recoverable VAT (€)	Grant Agreement (less Personnel and Travel) (€)	Variance (€)	% Variance
D	Monitoring the impact of the Project actions				
D1	Monitoring Plan and enhanced baseline monitoring	245,416.07	319,158.00	73,741.93	23%
D2	Ongoing and final post restoration monitoring	188,991.15	158,878.00	-30,113.15	-19%
D3	Assessment of contribution to ecosystem functions	0.00	6,768.00	6,768.00	100%
D4	Assessment of socio-economic impact of the project	0.00	6,768.00	6,768.00	100%
D5	Monitoring impacts on local communities, other user groups and professional engagement	0.00	8,112.00	8,112.00	100%
D6	Monitoring and measuring Life performance indicators	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%
E	Public awareness and dissemination of results (Obligatory)				
E1	Dissemination planning and delivery	378,838.40	387,718.00	8,879.60	
F	Project management				
F1	Overall Project Management	4,279.73	11,364.00	7,084.27	62%
F2	Project monitoring and reporting	0.00	24,000.00	24,000.00	100%
	totals	5,728,842.32	5,262,472.00	-466,370.32	-9%

Table 02 Notes: (Full details on Notes 1 and 2 are available in the main technical project report.)

1. This refers to the large-scale dune restoration at Formby NT, Sefton Coast SAC. It was decided that the material was not appropriate for re-building the Dunes. Therefore, trialling or piloting the approach was not undertaken and specific evaluation not possible. Thus, budget was allocated to C1 sand dune rejuvenation action at the site (as detailed in the main report).

2. The change in infrastructure was due to increase in cost for the accommodation 'pods' for Lincolnshire, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes SAC.

8.3 Project Spend Variances

Project budget changes, against the original grant agreement, were reported at mid-term review to the LIFE monitor. The report submitted is attached at Annex 1 of the main technical report.

8.4 Additional / Non-additional Staff for Public bodies.

NE are a public body and are subject to the 2% rules regarding additional and non-additional staff and complied with the 2% rule as evidenced by the consolidated Financial Statement.

There were considerable numbers of Natural England staff working on the project. The distinction between additional and non-additional roles for Natural England (the only public body) is reflected in Natural England's Financial statement.

8.5 Transfer of Budgets

There was some movement between budget categories, but none was greater than 20% of the total grant. Overall, €295,000 of budget was moved between Travel, Equipment, Consumables, and 'Other Costs' categories, across to 'Infrastructure'. Details are summarized in Table 3 below, and shown in context of the DuneLIFE Consolidated financial statement.

Table 3: Record of budget movements between categories

CATEGORY	DIRECT eligible costs with non-recoverable VAT (in €)							Total ELIGIBLE costs with non-recoverable VAT
	PERSONNEL	TRAVEL	EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE	INFRASTRUCTURE	EQUIPMENT	CONSUMABLES	OTHER direct costs	
TOTAL Contractual Budget	2488331	214351	4234587	417993	360480	84460	164952	8522712
TOTAL Final Budget	2488331	69351	4234587	712993	305480	59460	94952	8522712
Movement btw categories	0	-145000	0	+ 295000	-55000	-25000	-70000	0

8.6 Added Value

Dynamic Dunescapes has significantly benefitted from contributions to the project (in time, evidence etc.) which are not being funded by the project. This included:

- The use of numerous volunteers to undertake project activities at various sites at no cost to LIFE Dynamic Dunescapes. For example, clearance of vegetation by volunteers prior to frontal dune notch creation at Ainsdale, Sefton Coast SAC or 'looking' (visual checking) of stock at Penhale SAC, Cornwall, were undertaken by volunteers.
- There was a great deal of volunteer citizen science activity across the project sites, surveying habitats and species.
- Not all the partners claimed for all their permanent staff time spent on the project – for example National Trust and Natural England. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust didn't claim for any staff time of permanent staff.
- National Trust also decided not to claim for Travel and Subsistence costs from LIFE funding.
- Considerable areas of unexploded ordnance checking and clearance prior to site works was also done for free by the Ministry of Defence at both Braunton Burrows (Devon) and Penhale dunes (Cornwall).

8.7 Accounting Systems

8.8 Natural England (NE)

Resource Accounting

NE, in accordance with industry best practice, operates its accounts on a Resource Accounting basis. This means the Project accounts for all goods and services when the Project receives them, rather than when the Project pays for them (i.e. accruals-based account). Coding and the Chart of Accounts Budget reporting, purchasing, recording expenditure, monitoring and reports were all reliant on the use of the Chart of Accounts (our 'coding' list). This helped us identify which team incurred the expenditure, the type of expenditure, and which Project incurred it. The Project had a unique identifier Cost Centre:

Cost Centre 10140571

Approving Costs

Financial Scheme of Delegation - NE, as a statutory body, has a Scheme of Delegation (SOD) which authorised its staff to carry out certain functions. Functions were delegated at the most operationally efficient and effective level. The SOD includes a Financial Scheme of Delegation (FSOD). This covered all financial functions or functions with monetary implications e.g., grants and scheme payments. It also included all the spending control which Cabinet Office instructed should apply to all departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Procurement - Procurement of goods/services was based on a tiered system based on costs. Below £2,500 (inc. any VAT) the goods/services were self-procured and can be verbal. Between £2,500 and £5,000 a written quote was required. Above £5,000 but below £10,000 three written quotes were sought. Until October 2018, for procurement above £10,000 a tender process was required, and this was let in a fair and open system undertaken through an outsourced central procurement arm of DEFRA, Defra Group Commercial (DgC).

From October 2018 procurement above £25,000 was dealt with by DgC.

From April 2023 all procurement was self-service below £49,999 through a self-approval requisition on MyBuy with any goods/services above £10,000 being published on contracts finder.

Anything above £50,000 was dealt with by DgC who create an Invitation to Tender which is advertised on an e-tendering and Contracts Finder website or in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) – these were open adverts where any supplier could bid.

If there was a requirement to conduct a Single Tender Authorisation (STA), i.e. only one supplier could meet the requirement (as regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations), permission needed to be sought from DgC.

All STA requests must be reviewed by the relevant Procurement/Commercial Team. STA requests valued between £5,000 - £9,999 (exc. VAT) should have been sent to NE Procurement for review.

STA requests valued at £10,000 or more (exc. VAT) should be submitted to DgC via the MyBuy Portal (attaching the STA form) and reviewed by the relevant DgC grade G7.

I-expense Approval - I-expense was used for reclaiming NE business expenses that an individual may have incurred and was also used for verifying and approving Government Procurement Card (GPC) transactions. NE has a duty to ensure that public money is managed to high ethical standards. All staff were therefore required to fully justify all expenditure and provide receipts for all expenses, except those claims for an allowance or mileage where there is not one.

Line managers ensured claims were:

- Incurred for business purposes only and were supported by scanned receipts that were electronically attached.
- In accordance with NE's travel and subsistence policy and represented value for money.

Purchase Order (POr) Payment Approval - Most payments were processed through 'three-way matching'. This is where the details of the POr, the value shown as being 'receipted' and the details of the invoice all matched, the Finance Officer receipts the POr after receiving authorisation from the requester or Project Manager. Invoices were checked by the requester or Project Manager and secondly by the Finance Officer before being emailed to the service provider to attach to the POr.

Time recording system

NE uses an online time recording system called 'Orion'. It enables staff to record the time they spend each day on different areas of our work - each area of our business (including Dynamic Dunescapes) has its own time recording code.

For staff who worked 100% of their time on Dynamic Dunescapes, or who worked less than 24 days in any calendar year on Dynamic Dunescapes, the Project used reports from Orion to populate the number of hours

they worked in a month and how many hours in total they worked in a calendar year. For all other staff working on Dynamic Dunescapes they completed monthly LIFE timesheets which identified the hours worked each day on the LIFE Project and in total. These were then signed and dated by the member of staff and their line or functional manager at the end of each month.

Timesheets were originally in hard copy but post March 2020 (Covid-19) they were produced electronically and /or scanned.

Invoices

All suppliers were asked to include (DuneLIFE) LIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570 on their invoices where possible. If it was not possible then each invoice was manually stamped/annotated with the Project code.

8.9 National Trust

Accounting system

Resource Accounting

The National Trust uses a unified Unit 4 ERP system to consolidate data across the organisation, providing efficiency in purchasing and reporting.

NT's project coding system was used for the Dynamic Dunescapes budget, with individual codes holding allocations centrally and then with our different geographical teams. This enabled NT to identify which work was carried out at each location and allowed tracking the expenditure.

- Central L&N Directorate: 10326679 Natural Environment Dynamic Dunes
- North Devon Portfolio: 10035670 North Devon Dynamic Dunes
- Purbeck: 10035671 Studland Dynamic Dunes
- Formby: 10028557 Formby Dune Restoration
- Formby: 10028437 Victoria Road Conservation Project

Approving costs

Scheme of Delegation

The Board of Trustees, the Board of National Trust (Enterprises) and the Board of National Trust (Renewable Energies) have delegated several decisions relating to the day-to-day running of the National Trust to the Director-General, including the authority to determine the onward delegation of authority to other staff. The process through which the Director-General delegates approval and decision levels is the Scheme of Delegation, which is published as a Rulebook Instruction. The delegated approval levels are presented in an associated spreadsheet.

The Instruction applies to all employees and volunteers. All financial decisions and approvals for delivery of Dynamic Dunescapes were made following this instruction.

Procurement

The National Trust has a 'Buying Goods and Services Instruction which applies to all staff and volunteers. All National Trust (NT) procurement activity demonstrated that value (including price, quality, efficiency, sustainability and risk) was considered. To ensure that the approach taken was proportionate to the cost and risk of the purchase, we followed our Instruction as follows:

Below £10k, low complexity

- Used the Trust's standard terms of contract
- Used an approved ordering and payment method

Above £10k to £50k, low complexity

- Obtained three or more competitive quotes using the Trust's standard Request for Quotation.
- Used the Trust's standard terms of contract.
- Use an approved ordering and payment method.

Above £50k to £1m, low complexity

- Obtained three or more competitive proposals using the Trust's standard Request for Proposal.
- Used the Trust's standard terms of contract.
- Use an approved ordering and payment method.

The only expenditure valued above £1m was the Formby Victoria Rd Conservation Project works. These works were published on the Government's Contracts Finder portal. Following an Expression of Interest process, contractors were invited to submit firm price tenders based on tender documentation prepared by a separately appointed Contract Management and QS company. A full evaluation exercise was carried out prior to selection – all was evidenced in a Tender Report.

Purchase Orders & Receipt of Goods

Purchase Orders are NTs primary method of buying goods and services. All purchases were raised through NT's regional or central purchasing team. These were then approved by the Budget Holder on our Unit 4 system before any commitment was made to suppliers and before any receipt of goods/services.

Purchase Orders with a value of less than £1,000 were automatically receipted on the Business World Unit 4 system. POs over £1,000 were receipted when goods and services ordered were delivered or completed.

Where some purchases were for longer-term services, we partially receipted and had multiple invoices relating to one purchase order.

When the value of the invoice exceeded 0.10% or £50 (whichever was greater), a task was sent for Budget Holder approval before payment was made.

Purchasing Cards (P Cards)

P Cards have sometimes been used when it was not possible to use a Purchase Order (e.g. 'face-to-face with supplier, online or over telephone). The single transaction limit was £1,000 and the monthly total spend limit was £5,000 (splitting purchases was forbidden).

All P Card transactions were coded, had a VAT receipt / invoice attached and were reconciled monthly.

Time recording system

All staff, whether project funded or permanent staff working on Dynamic Dunescapes, completed monthly LIFE timesheets which identified the hours worked each day on the LIFE Project and in total. These were then signed and dated by the member of staff and their line manager, client or consultancy manager at the end of each month.

Timesheets were originally in hard copy but post March 2020 (Covid-19) they were produced electronically and /or scanned.

Invoices

All suppliers were asked to include Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570 on their invoices where possible. If it was not possible then each invoice was manually stamped/annotated with the Project code.

All invoices were sent directly to our Finance Services Centre either by email or post. Once the correct three stage matching process was in place (PO, receipt, invoice), invoices were processed and paid.

8.10 Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Accounting system

Cumbria Wildlife Trust manages its finances using the Xledger accounts system.

At the start of the project, specific codes were set up within the Chart of Accounts for this project to record project expenditure on an accrual's basis. This included codes for both capital and revenue items. All goods

and services were accounted for when the items were received and invoiced, not when those invoices were paid.

The codes used for the project were:

C.01.01.05 – EDU – Dynamic Dunescapes (Engagement)
C.04.17.03 - RES – Eskmeals – Dynamic Dunescapes
C.04.19.02 – RES – Foulney - Dynamic Dunescapes
C.04.42.02 – RES – South Walney - Dynamic Dunescapes

Approving costs

The Cumbria Wildlife Trust Board of Trustees have approved a policy of Delegation of Authority. This defines the relevant staff that can sign grant applications, grant contracts, grant claims and approve purchase order and payment of invoices. Cumbria Wildlife Trust has guidance documents on procurement of goods and services. In summary All purchases on behalf of Cumbria should consider the following:

- The environmental practices of the supplier or contractor
- The quality of the item or service
- Whether the item serves its purpose or the contractor can carry out work to desired requirements
- The cost provides value for money

Externally funded projects will abide by the procurement requirements set out in the grant guidelines. Where no specific guidance is given the following applies:

- 1) Three competitive quotes for all goods, work and services worth £10,000 or more (excluding VAT)
- 2) Goods, works and services worth more than £50,000 (excluding VAT), must go through a competitive tendering procedure and all records are retained for evidence. Undertake a report on the tenders received, together with rationale about the decision on which tender is accepted. Record all reasons if not selecting the lowest appropriate tender. These may be overall value for money the quote presents and the skills, experience and financial viability of the contractor/supplier/consultant.

Time recording system

The project funded member of staff working on Dynamic Dunescapes, completed monthly LIFE timesheets which identified the hours worked each day on the LIFE Project and in total. These were then signed and dated by the member of staff and their line manager or client at the end of each month.

Salary costs of staff employed solely for the purpose of the project were coded to the appropriate project code within the Xledger accounting system. The payroll reports were produced for the claim were authorised quarterly by the Trust's Head of Finance, confirming that the amounts stated had been paid to staff.

Invoices

Cumbria Wildlife Trust operates a Purchase Order approval system for all expenditure. Purchase Orders are approved in accordance with the Delegation of Authority.

All suppliers were asked to include Dynamic Dunescapes DuneLIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570 on their invoices where possible. If it was not possible then each invoice was manually stamped/annotated with the Project code.

All invoices were sent directly to our Finance Department either by email or post. Once the invoice was matched the purchase order and a goods received notice was received, invoices were processed and paid.

8.11 Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Accounting system

Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT) initially managed its finances using the Sage 50 Accounts system. At the start of the project, a project (205) was created specifically for Dynamic Dunescapes. This, together with income

and expenditure codes in the chart of accounts were used to record project expenditure on an accrual's basis. This included codes for both capital and revenue items. All goods and services were accounted for when the items were received and invoiced, not when those invoices were paid.

In April 2022, we moved to a new accounting system called Xledger. This resulted in a new project code for revenue costs (2006) and the creation of a capital code once needed (2127).

Purchase orders

For all invoiced costs, a purchase order is raised, and approved, before goods are ordered. For payments against a PO to be made, the invoice is matched against the PO. If the invoice does not match the PO, it requires further approval from the project manager.

All suppliers were asked to include the project reference LIFE17NAT/UK/000570 – DuneLIFE on their invoices. If this was not possible or the request was not made, the reference was either stamped on the invoices, or it was manually written before the invoices were submitted to Natural England as part of the quarterly claim process.

Expenses

Any costs incurred via expenses require a receipt, and if no receipt, an explanation of why there is no receipt.

All expenses require the employee manager's approval before payment. All expenses must be in line with the Cornwall Wildlife Trust policy.

Procurement policy

CWT follows a structured procurement process based on value thresholds (excluding VAT) as follows:

- Up to £ 25,000: Only one quote is required based on a clear specification with no advertising required. Evidence of best value is expected with Cornish suppliers used wherever possible.
- Between £ 25,000 - £100,000: at least 3 written quotes with a clear justification as to how the decision was taken.
- Over £100,000: Formal tender process required with at least three competitive tenders.

Salary payments

Salary costs of staff employed solely for the purpose of the project were coded to the appropriate project code within Sage. The payroll reports from the Sage payroll were checked and authorised monthly by the Trust's Director of Resources and Support. No staff costs were charged for any members of staff who were not exclusively working for the project.

Time recording system

CWT initially used a bespoke timesheet system. It enabled staff to record the time they spend each day on each project, with each project having a code matching the Sage code, and different areas of our work.

From April 2022, Xledger was used for this functionality. This does not represent a change in functionality from an entry point of view but does require employee managers to approve submitted timesheets as appropriate.

8.12 Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Accounting system

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust manages its finances using the Sage 50 Accounts system. At the start of the project, specific codes were set up within the Chart of Accounts for this project to record project expenditure on an accrual's basis. This included codes for both capital and revenue items. All goods and services were accounted for when the items were received and invoiced, not when those invoices were paid.

The codes used for the project were:

Capital 0325

Revenue 3167 and 316701

Approving costs

Procurement of goods and services followed the appropriate guidance based on the value of the transaction.

- For expenditure up to £10,000 (including VAT) - purchases were self-procured and approved by the relevant project staff member.

- For expenditure of £10,001 up to £49,999 – three quotes were obtained
- For expenditure of £50,000 up to 135,000 euros – a framework agreement was used. For the purchase of Softrak and associated equipment, the ESPO framework 274_18 was used.
- For expenditure over 135,000 euros, an open tendering process was used, using the government ‘find a trader’ service. This is the central digital platform for use in public procurement and allows any supplier to bid for the work. Three tenders were obtained for the accommodation pods, and a choice was made based on both cost and quality.

Time recording system

Salary costs of staff employed solely for the purpose of the project were coded to the appropriate project code within Sage. The payroll reports from the Sage payroll produced for the claim were authorised quarterly by the Trust’s Head of Finance, confirming that the amounts stated had been paid to staff. No staff costs were charged for any members of staff who were not exclusively working for the project.

Invoices

All suppliers were asked to include the project reference LIFE17NAT/UK/000570 – DuneLIFE on their invoices. If this was not possible or the request was not actioned, the reference was either stamped on the invoices, or it was manually written before the invoices were submitted to Natural England as part of the quarterly claim process.

8.13 Plantlife

Accounting system

Plantlife uses Sage50 to consolidate data across the organisation, to keep accounting records and produce financial reports. All goods and services were accounted for when the items were received and invoiced, not when those invoices were paid.

Our project coding system was used for the Dynamic Dunescapes budget, with individual codes used to identify project spend and allocations throughout the life of the project.

Dunescapes department code 67/68

Approving costs

Plantlife follows its procurement policy when approving costs. Authority to procure goods or services is delegated to staff in line with the level of their role within the staff banding structure. Purchases are allowed to the maximum value as listed below for the items within the staff member’s area of budgetary responsibility. Values comprise either a one-off purchase or an annual contract commitment.

All procurement above a staff member’s authority limit requires additional authorisation before any commitment to purchase is made.

Time recording system

All staff, whether project funded or permanent staff working on Dynamic Dunescapes, completed monthly LIFE timesheets which identified the hours worked each day on the LIFE Project and in total. These were then signed and dated by the member of staff and their line manager or client at the end of each month.

Timesheets were originally in hard copy and collected electronically (signed and scanned) for record retention.

Invoices

All suppliers were asked to include Dynamic Dunescapes on their invoices where possible. If it was not possible then each invoice was manually stamped/annotated with the Project code.

All invoices were sent to our Finance team either by email or post along with a signed Payment requisition and authorisation form confirming the spend, correct level of approval and coding. Once received and checked, invoices were processed and paid.

Staff Band	Maximum Value (including VAT)	Quote requirement
A – Trainee/Intern	£500	Informal quote before purchase.
B – Administrator	£500	Informal quote before purchase.
C – Senior Administrator/Officer	£1,000	One written quote
D – Senior or Specialist Officer/Coordinator	£2,000	One written quote
E – Function/Project Manager /Specialist Advisor	£5,000	Two competitive written quotes
F – Senior Manager/Senior Specialist	£10,000	Two competitive written quotes
G – Head of Function/Lead Specialist	£20,000	Three competitive written quotes
H – Director	£50,000	Formal written spec & three competitive written quotes
I – CEO	£100,000	Formal written spec & three competitive written quotes

8.14 Partnership Agreement

The Partnership Agreement between NE and partners was signed on 5th April 2019 by all the Project partners. The Partnership Agreement ([Annex 3](#)) outlines the requirement partners were required to provide re maintaining financial information etc. It is valid until September 2033, more than 5 years beyond the length of the (prolonged) project which completed in September 2025.

Two prolongation requests were made during the project and approved by CINEA. These are attached at [Annex 6](#).

The beneficiaries were responsible for maintaining their own statement of expenditure, claims forms, and supporting documentation for the LIFE Project. NE as coordinating beneficiary completed the consolidated statement of behalf of associated beneficiaries.

8.15 Certificate on the Financial statement

NE's appointed auditors of the Project's final financial statement Were: **Wilson Partners Limited**
TOR
Saint-Cloud Way, Maidenhead,
Berks,
SL6 8BN

The audit focused on the expenditure of NE and National Trust. The other three partners fell under the threshold required for this independent audit.

Audit and certificates of nature can be found in the Annexes below:

[Annex 4](#) The Auditor's report and Terms of Reference

Estimation of person-days used per action

The project stopped recording time against individual actions following advice from CINEA that this was optional and no longer a mandatory requirement.

Financial issues raised during the three project visits

Financial issues were raised during the three monitor visits and the MTR. These issues, actions and resolutions can be found at [Annex 5](#)

Index of Deliverables:

Name of due deliverable	Action	Initial Foreseen date (month/yr)	Revised due date (month/yr)	Completion date (month/yr)
Signed partnership agreement	A1	Mar-19	Mar-19	Apr-19
Initial Communication Plan	E1	Mar-19	Mar-19	Feb-19
1 st press release announcement of project & funding	E1	Apr-19	Apr-19	Aug-18
Project Information Note	E1	Apr-19	Apr-19	Jul-18
Monitoring Plan	D1	Sep-19	Sep-19	Mar-19
Performance indicators submitted with Progress report	D6	Feb-20	Feb-20	Sep-20
Information note on student research opportunities compiled	E1	Mar-20	Mar-20	Dec-20
Monitoring Plan and timetable revised annually (Yr 2-3)	D2	Oct-20	Oct-20	Oct-20
Sefton- Unit 22-Visualizations of dune interventions created	A4	Oct-20	Oct-20	Dec-20
Communication Plan and timetable revised annually (Yr 2-3)	E1	Oct-20	Oct-20	Jan-21
Resource pack for educators	E1	Jun-20	Jun-20	Jul-20
Land management resource packs available	E1	Sep-20	Sep-20	Jun-21
Performance indicators submitted with Mid-term report	D6	Oct-21	Oct-21	Jul-21
Monitoring Plan & timetable revised annually (Yr 3-4)	D2	Oct-21	Oct-21	Oct-21
Communication Plan and timetable revised annually (Yr 3-4)	E1	Oct-21	Oct-21	Oct-21
Evaluation report of Trial of re-purposing inert waste	A4	Sep-22	Sep-22	No longer needed
Monitoring Plan and timetable revised annually (Yr 4-5)	D2	Oct-22	Oct-22	Oct-22
Communication Plan and timetable revised annually (Yr 4-5)	E1	Oct-22	Oct-22	Jan-23
Evaluation report of carp removal at Studland	D2	Dec-22	Dec-22	Oct-22
End of LIFE Conference proceedings produced	E1	Sep-23	Sep-23	Mar-23
Evaluation report of rabbit grazing at Morecambe & Drigg	C3	Jan-23	Sep-23	Sep-23
Impact of engagement summary report	D5	Aug-23	Aug-24	Aug-24
Site leaflets/information notes	E1	Sep-23	Aug-24	Aug-24
Best practice notes on demonstration aspects of project	E1	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Final ecological monitoring report produced	D2	Aug-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Ecosystem Service report produced	D3	Aug-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Socio-economic report produced	D4	Aug-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Layman's Report	E1	Aug-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
SNAP case study completed	E1	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Case study Dune Dynamism–guidance for assessing FCS & condition	C5	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Initial Audit completed	F2	Sep-23	Nov-25	Submitted Mar-26
Final submission of EU performance indicator information	D6	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
Technical reports produced as part of the Final Report	E1	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26
AfterLIFE Plan completed as part of Final report	F2	Sep-23	Mar-26	Submitted Mar-26

9 Annexes:

9.1 Annex 1: External Delivery Partners:

External Delivery Partners included:

Area	Delivery Partner	Area	Delivery Partner
Cornwall	Bourne Leisure	Dorset	BCP
Cornwall	Cornwall Council	Dorset	Planet Purbeck
Cornwall	Martin Rule	Lincs	East Lindsey District Council
Cornwall	Penhale SAC Management Group	Lincs	Lincolnshire County Council
Cornwall	Perranzabuloe Parish Council	Lincs	Ministry of Defence (RAF)
Cornwall, Cumbria, Lincs, Devon	Ministry of Defence (Defence Infrastructure Organisation)	Lincs	North East Lincolnshire Council
Cumbria	Allerdale Borough Council	National	Dementia Adventure
Cumbria	Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	National	John Muir Trust
Cumbria	BAE	National	UKCEH
Cumbria	Millom Town Council	Sefton Coast	John Houston
Cumbria	Morecambe Bay Partnership Solway Firth Partnership Duddon Estuary Partnership	Sefton Coast	Ken Pye
Cumbria	RSPB	Sefton Coast	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Cumbria	Solway Coast AONB	Sefton Coast	North Merseyside Amphibian and Reptile Group
Cumbria	Wyre Borough Council	Sefton Coast	Phil Smith
Devon	Andy Byfield	Sefton Coast	Sefton Council
Devon	Braunton Countryside Centre		
Devon	Christie Devon Estates		
Devon	North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve		

9.2 Annex 2: Sand dune managers handbook



[Sand Dune Manager's Handbook](#)

9.3 FINANCE ANNEXES:

Annex 3: Partner Memorandum of Agreement



Dvnamic Dune

Annex 4: The Auditor's report and Terms of Reference



Dynamic Dunes Dynamic Dunes Dynamic Dunes Data
Audit report signed.p terms of reference sig sharing signed.pdf

Annex 5: Financial issues raised in the CINEA letters LIFE 17 NAT/UK/000570) - Project visits and the Mid Term Report.

March 2021 Mission visit follow up:



LIFE17NATUKC

CINEA Letter June 2022 Mission visit follow up:



CINEA letter_March
2022 (1).pdf

CINEA Letter Nov 2022 after Mid Term Review:



CINEA letter

The Response to the last CINEA letter (of 27/4/23):



I IFF17

Was covered off in the Project Progress Report of 30/11/23 (below-see pages 9 & 10.)



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Annex 6 : Project prolongation request and approvals letters CINEA.



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LIFE17 NAT

Extension to Reporting timetable agreed with CINEA



Agreed Extension
to Reporting -from (

Annex 7 : Confirmation from Partners of their agreement to the prolongation



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END

Glen Cooper 20 March 2026.