



The
Wildlife
Trusts

Aviva Temperate Rainforest Research Programme

Information for applicants

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August 2024

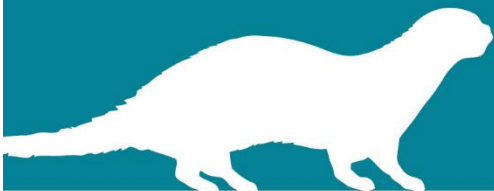


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Abbreviations used:

TRF	Temperate Rainforest
TRRP	Temperate Rainforest Research Programme
ECR	Early Career Researcher
EOI	Expression of Interest
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
PRP	Peer Review Panel

1.0 Introduction

The Wildlife Trusts Temperate Rainforest Programme is establishing new woodlands that will begin to restore and reconnect the temperate rainforest (TRF) of the British Isles. The aim is to create bigger areas of rainforest that are better managed and more connected – the start of a 100-year landscape restoration. The programme represents a large investment by Aviva¹ through a long-term partnership with The Wildlife Trusts. We want to restore nature at scale, thereby tackling both the climate and nature emergencies, whilst inspiring local communities, Aviva customers and policymakers. The funding will allow individual Wildlife Trusts² to buy land across the present-day bioclimatic envelope for temperate rainforest – with a focus on upland and other plots close to existing rainforest patches. New woodland will be created through planting, combined with natural regeneration where appropriate. This programme represents a unique opportunity for research across both the environmental and social sphere.

A research fund of £450,000 split between two research calls (2024 and 2027) has been established to support projects that fit with the research objectives of the programme. **This document provides information about the content and structure of the research programme for potential applicants and should be read in full before submission.**

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Aviva Temperate Rainforest Research programme (TRRP) is to further our understanding of the status, management and restoration of temperate rainforest in the changing climate of the UK. We seek to improve our understanding of what works when it comes to restoration of these unique habitats, how local communities can be engaged in this process and the benefits that result from restored, functioning rainforests.

1.2 Programme Objectives

- To provide evidence-informed guidance on how to restore a diverse TRF habitat. What works, how and why?
- To understand existing bioclimatic constraints to TRF restoration and to predict potential changes to their possible extent under a range of climate scenarios for the British Isles through to 2100.
- To increase understanding of ecology, hydrology and pedology of regenerating TRF.
- To increase understanding of greenhouse gas (GHG) exchange between the pedosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere of developing TRF habitats.
- To measure the resilience of restored TRF in response to a range of threats both climatic, biotic and social.
- To measure the economic, cultural and social co-benefits of the Aviva Programme
- To establish The Wildlife Trusts as a Centre of Excellence for the restoration of TRF in the British Isles.

¹ [Aviva plc](#) is one of the UK's leading insurance, pension and wealth management companies with customers across the UK, Ireland and Canada. In 2022 it committed £40 million to The Wildlife Trusts to fund the Temperate Rainforest Restoration Programme as part of its commitment to net zero.

² The Wildlife Trusts is federated organisation. The central charity - Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) plus the 46 independent charities. There are 14 separate Wildlife Trusts that sit within the temperate rainforest zone (see page 11 for the full listing).

2.0 Research Priorities

Three areas of activity have been prioritised for this research programme:

1. **Understanding the TRF baseline**
2. **Understanding the Process of TRF Restoration**
3. **Understanding the Impacts of TRF Restoration**

Each of these priorities has been further sub-divided into themes of interest (Figure 1) with a range of *indicative* research questions (Table 1). This listing is not meant to be prescriptive, and we encourage innovative approaches that sit clearly within the main research priorities of the programme.

Figure 1: Research Priorities and underlying themes of interest in the Aviva Temperate Rainforest Research Programme.

Understanding the Baseline	Understanding the Restoration Process	Understanding the Restoration Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: Where will TRF establish effectively both now and over the next century? • B: What does the public know about TRF? How do we engage effectively? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C: What are the critical factors determining “success”? • D: What methods of monitoring should we use? • E: How do we embed environmental resilience? • F: Do residents and visitor like the new forests? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G: What impact are our “new” TRF having on biodiversity and landscape functioning? • H: Are our restoring TRF contributing to net zero? • I: Does restored TRF offer wider socio-economic benefit? • J: How do restored sites contribute to health and wellbeing?

We encourage innovative use of technology where appropriate. This may be field-based such as drones / remote sensing / acoustic survey or laboratory based such as e-DNA. Deployment of such approaches, however, should be directed towards answering research questions, rather than stand-alone technological development projects.

Table 1: Indicative research questions for The Wildlife Trusts Aviva Temperate Rainforests Research Programme (Continued overleaf).

Priority	SUB-THEME	POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS
UNDERSTANDING THE BASELINE	A: Where will TRF establish effectively both now and over the next century?	1: Can we improve our mapping of the current and future TRF bioclimatic zone?
	B: What does the public know about TRF? How do we engage effectively?	2: Who is currently visiting existing TRF and why? What impact are they having? (+ve / -ve) 3: Are people ready for landscape scale changes to familiar landscapes? 4: What is the best way to engage different groups in the process of landscape change (public / landowners /practitioners/policymakers)?
UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF RESTORATION	C: What are the critical factors determining "success"?	5: Is tree planting or natural regeneration most effective at establishing rainforest? 6: What impact does landscape setting, topography, elevation, longitude / latitude have on development of new TRF? 7: How important are soil mycorrhiza in establishing trees? 8: How do we establish the unique epiphytic communities of TRF? 9: What impact do invasive species have on establishment? How is this spatially / temporally expressed? 10: How does grazing affect establishment and functioning? Do we get different types of TRF with and without? 11: How quickly do indicator species (birds / bryophytes / higher plants) establish in restoring TRF?
	D: What methods of monitoring should we use?	12: How can remote sensing and digital mapping enhance our monitoring of developing TRF sites? 13: How can new methods of monitoring be employed - specifically e-DNA and e-acoustics?
	E: How do we embed environmental / climate resilience?	14: How do we make our newly established sites resilient? (extreme weather, fire, disease, invasives)
	F: Do residents and visitors like / value the new forest?	15: What do people like and dislike about landscape change as rainforest develops?
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF RESTORATION	G: What impact are our "new" TRF having on biodiversity and landscape functioning?	16: What impact does establishing TRF have on reducing peak flows during extreme rain events? 17: Do new TRF improve water quality? 18: What impact does establishing TRF have on the soil: structure, invertebrates, mycorrhiza, C, OM? 19: What is the longer-term impact of new TRF in terms of: microclimate / hydrology / biodiversity?

Priority	SUB-THEME	POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS
	H: Have our restored TRF contributed to net-zero?	20: What does the GHG 'account' look like for a developing TRF - emissions vs sequestration?
	I: Do restored TRF offer wider socio-economic benefit?	21: How do the economics of rainforest creation compare to / differ existing modes of land use. Notably commercial forestry and sheep farming? 22: How can different sources of green finance be integrated effectively to deliver maximum rainforest-benefits? 23: What are the benefits / pitfalls of this model of nature-based climate solutions? Should it be a new economic "paradigm?"
	J: How do restored sites contribute to wellbeing?	24: What are the potential socio-economic benefits of a restored TRF site to local communities? 25: How best can TRF sites contribute to improved health and wellbeing in local communities?

3.0 Structure of the research call

There will be two research calls, the first starting in summer 2024, the second in summer 2027. Funding will initially be split equally between these two calls with £225,000 allocated to each. However, if we receive excellent projects in the first call, we may frontload the total funds and expand the 2024 funding allocation.

There are two strands to each of these funding calls with different criteria and funding attached:

1. **Main Research Grant**
 - a. Total funding available for the 2024 main research grant is £185,000
 - b. You can apply for a minimum of £40,000, we anticipate funding between 2 – 4 projects from the overall budget of £185,000.
 - c. Running for 36 months from April 2025
2. **Aviva Rainforest Scholarship** – Early Career Researchers only.
 - a. **Three** Aviva Scholarships of a fixed amount of £12,000 + up to £1,000 towards consumables, T&S and other research costs which must be fully justified in the application.
 - b. Running for 18 months from April 2025
 - c. Specific criteria apply to the Scholarships – please read section 6.0 carefully if interested in this opportunity.

For both strands applicants will be required to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). This will be used to short-list projects who will then be invited to submit a full application.

4.0 How to apply for funding

Firstly, it is important to check that you are **eligible for funding**. Different rules apply to the two strands (main grant versus Aviva Scholars) so check carefully.

Who can apply?

Main Research Call (projects up to £185,000 running for 36 months from April 2025)

- We welcome applications from individual researchers and / or project teams with demonstrable research experience relevant to the programme themes.
- The Primary Investigator (PI) must hold a substantive post at an organisation listed on the [UKRI list](#) of approved research organisations. The PI is responsible for delivering the project and is the scientific and administrative lead for the team.
- A project team can take any form but is likely to include a Co-PI who should also be a senior researcher with the ability to bring research leadership to the project.
- We value knowledge and skills which may sit in non-academic bodies and collaborators from such organisations may be listed as Co-PIs or as project partners. However, all project partners must be legally registered in the UK.
- Although not essential, we encourage collaboration with Wildlife Trusts active in the rainforest zone and staff involvement must be fully costed in any bid.
- The award will be given to the PI's institution, it will be the responsibility of that institution to sub-contract any collaborators and to manage fund dispersal from that point.

Aviva Rainforest Scholars (single award of £12,000 plus up to £1,000 consumables running for 18 months from April 2025)

- Funding is restricted to Early Career Researchers (ECRs) as defined by the UKRI.
- The award is not intended to support postgraduate study of any kind.
- Applicants must hold a postgraduate research degree (MPhil / PhD) before applying, MSc/ MRes awards do not qualify.
- Applicants must be based at a UK University / research institution listed on the [UKRI list](#) of approved organisations and hold secure tenure for the proposed lifetime of the project . These awards may particularly suit junior lecturers in universities or newly appointed researchers in UK research institutions.
- Applicants must be the lead PI on the project and fully responsible for the research idea, design and delivery. As these awards are modest in size and relatively short-term they are not designed to fund time for more than one person, though necessary assistance from technicians and research assistants may be costed in if appropriate.
- The applicant must be partnered by an experienced Co-PI based at the same institution. This person must hold a substantive post and have sufficient research experience to be able to mentor the ECR applying.
- Researchers based at existing environmental NGOs may also apply if they meet the basic ECR requirements as detailed. In this case, their Co-PI should be a research active senior member of staff at the same institution. Any applicants who may fall into this category please check with The Wildlife Trusts' [Aviva Research Programme Manager](#) before submission.
- Part-time applicants are welcome to apply, the length of the research contract can be varied to account for need but must not exceed 36 months.
- The scholarship award is intended to support new researchers at the beginning of their research careers. We encourage those ECRs with substantive research experience to apply through the main programme instead.

5.0 Funding conditions

Your application must directly address one or more of the research themes of the TRRP as detailed in Table 1. In the first call, we are seeking applications which respond to the following research priorities:

1. Understanding the Baseline
2. Understanding the Restoration Process

Research should address at least one of the sub-themes listed in Table 1. We ask applicants to clearly identify this in their application, noting the following:

- Your project must be a discrete project, not part of a wider scheme of work unless it is clearly established as separate work package from an already funded programme. Match funded projects are welcomed.
- Confirmed access to sites for fieldwork is key and this also applies to sites not managed by the Wildlife Trusts. **However, this step is not required at the EOI stage.** Any site queries at the EOI stage should be directed through the [Research Manager](#) to avoid overloading local Wildlife Trust teams with ad-hoc enquiries about access. Site access must be secured with the site owners by short-listed projects prior to final submission. The Research Manager can assist at that stage with any negotiations.
- The grant will be awarded with an annual payment upon agreement of a research grant contract between The Wildlife Trusts and the lead researcher's institution.
- Two written outputs are required: a final report within 2 months of project end and a second non-technical summary written for a public, non-specialist audience. Grant holders are encouraged to think creatively about non-standard means of communicating the output to a wide range of audiences. Quarterly project reporting against milestones and research activity will be required.
- The Wildlife Trusts and Aviva must be acknowledged in all publications, media interactions and presentations – further guidance on specific wording will be provided.
- For applicants wishing to work in the Celtic rainforests of Wales, please note that we strongly encourage the use of the Welsh language in promoting the work and in project communications. Further guidance will be provided to successful projects.
- Ethical approval must be sought from the lead PI's host institution.
- We encourage all applicants to review our commitment to [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) and **welcome applications from diverse research teams.**

Table 2: Funding guidance

We will consider funding	We will NOT fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical conservation work designed to test or trial management interventions. • Empirical modelling approaches if there is a clear link made to future management at restoration sites. • Socio-economic studies which directly address our research themes and questions. • Direct research costs including project research assistants, T&S to support fieldwork activities, small pieces of research equipment (<£2,000), consumables. • Research dissemination activities (conferences / webinars / policy briefings). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects which exceed 36 months • Indirect costs such as publication costs. • Equipment >£2,000 • Flights • Training, unless the development is directly related to the research such as safety training for fieldworkers or volunteers. Applicants are expected to be skilled in any research methods they propose.

6.0 Further information about the Aviva Rainforest Scholars Programme

As part of the TRRP we have a ring-fenced set of funding specifically to support Early Career Researchers (ECRs). The purpose of this part of the call is threefold:

- 1. To support the development of the ‘next generation’ of rainforest specialists**
- 2. To deliver short, targeted projects which can provide early management input to the developing Temperate Rainforest restoration sites.**
- 3. To broaden the range of researchers active in the field of Temperate Rainforest ecology**

Why do we need it?

Research funding is limited, and competition is high – particularly in the environmental field. Often well-established teams at large research active institutions have significant advantages in terms of research support to underpin their applications. This is no bad thing; many centres of excellence exist because they do attract high quality staff who are successful in attracting further research funding. However, it can be particularly difficult for young researchers to break into these established groups; even more so for those from socio-economically diverse backgrounds or minority groups. We believe excellence exists in many places and wish to cast the net wide for talent. Conservation science requires an applied mindset and needs diverse participants to succeed. This ringfenced part of the research programme is intended to offer a ‘stepping stone’ for new researchers. Smaller, shorter grants with appropriate mentoring and support offer that opportunity and enable ECRs to develop their research leadership skills. The hope is that these Aviva Scholars will then be at the forefront of Temperate Rainforest research in the future.

It is hoped that the award of an Aviva Rainforest Research Scholarship will be seen as a prestigious achievement and both The Wildlife Trusts and Aviva will seek opportunities to promote the award holders’ activities. Recipients will be expected to promote their

science to The Wildlife Trusts' membership, local Wildlife Trust rainforest site managers and Aviva shareholders and staff as required.

Applications should fill a clear evidence gap and there will be a preference for tightly targeted research work which can be delivered effectively within the timeframe outlined. Socio-economic studies are welcomed with appropriate social science methodologies employed. Purely theoretical studies are not encouraged in this stream.

£40,000 for 3 scholarships has been earmarked in the Phase 1 research call. A similar amount will be allocated in a second call amounting to approximately £80,000 over the entire programme. That equates to 18% of the total pot of £450,000. In addition to the support of an experienced researcher as a Co-PI in their own institute, the Aviva Scholars will be offered research mentorship by the Aviva Research Programme Manager (Dr Ruth Swetnam) who will also offer additional support to scholars with respect to site access.

7.0 Evaluation process

We recognise that bidding for research funds is time-consuming. We have a two-stage process which is designed to reduce the burden on potential contributors. Firstly, we ask for an Expression of Interest (EOI) which will be reviewed and shortlisted by staff drawn from the Climate & Evidence and Landscape Recovery teams in the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. Only projects submitted through The Wildlife Trusts' research system will be considered. The EOI should explain your research idea clearly and simply. Focus on telling us a compelling research story, identifying the evidence gap you are addressing and demonstrate why your project meets our needs.

Shortlisted projects will be notified and given further time to submit a full bid using the main grant application form. This will be automatically populated from the EOI with further questions asked for detail on your proposal. Applications will be scored using the following criteria:

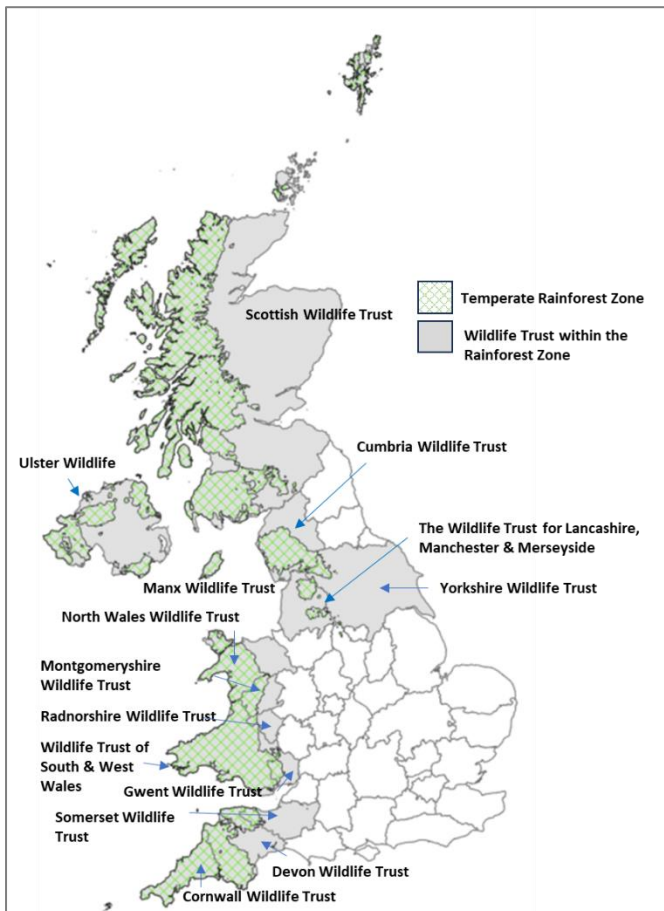
- *How well the research proposal addresses the key themes of the programme.*
- *The originality of the research and the quality of the research methodology proposed.*
- *Whether the research questions, objectives and methods are clearly articulated and well defined.*
- *Whether the proposed schedule of research is deliverable within the budget and timescales described.*
- *Whether the funding requested is reasonable and fully justified.*
- *Any risks are identified, and suitable mitigation has been planned.*
- *Expected outputs are well described, a clear publication plan is provided.*
- *The potential impacts of the research on the successful restoration of Temperate Rainforest are well defined.*

Final decisions on funding will be made by The Wildlife Trusts' Climate & Evidence team with input from independent and external peer reviewers. Successful teams will be notified and offered a contract with the Wildlife Trusts. Project dates will then be agreed but are expected to be April 2025-2028.

8.0 Using Wildlife Trust sites for your research

The Wildlife Trusts comprise 46 independent area-based organisations of which the following are located within the Temperate Rainforest biogeographic zone (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Temperate rainforest climate zone mapped against the individual Wildlife Trusts.



ENGLAND:

- Cornwall Wildlife Trust
- Cumbria Wildlife Trust
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside
- Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

WALES:

- Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
- North Wales Wildlife Trust
- Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
- The Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales

SCOTLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND, ISLE OF MAN:

- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Manx Wildlife Trust (Isle of Man)
- Ulster Wildlife (Northern Ireland)

You are encouraged to use existing Wildlife Trust rainforest sites (and others) for your research. The independent trusts shown in Figure 2 own and manage both established rainforest sites and those at the start of their restoration journey. The newly acquired Aviva funded sites are currently improved or semi-improved grassland and will be planted and managed by the Wildlife Trust in which they are located to establish new rainforest. At present these are:

1. **Bowden Pillars**, near Totnes, Devon (*Devon Wildlife Trust*)
2. **Bryn Ifan**, near Capel Uchaf, North Wales (*North Wales Wildlife Trust*)
3. **Creg y Cowin**, near East Baldwin, Isle of Man (*Manx Wildlife Trust*)
4. **Glion Darragh**, near Balanquine, Isle of Man (*Manx Wildlife Trust*)
5. **Trellwyn Fach**, near Fishguard, South-west Wales (*The Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales*)

With further sites likely to be announced during the bidding process under this call.

Again, we remind applicants **not to approach individual Wildlife Trusts at the EOI stage**, unless you have an existing research relationship with the staff. This is to ensure the Wildlife Trust teams do not get overwhelmed by ad-hoc enquiries. Approval for site access is required from the individual Wildlife Trust which owns the site but is only needed for those projects short-listed and invited to submit a full bid. Permission to work at these sites will then be negotiated with the individual Wildlife Trusts by the RSWT [Research Manager](#) in conjunction with the research teams.

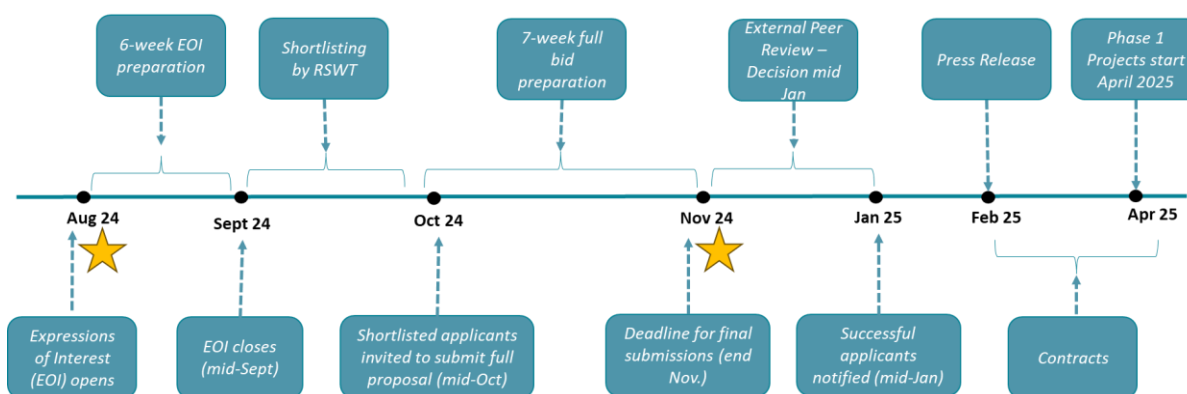
9.0 Timelines:

Table 3: Grant programme deadlines (first call 2024)

	Main Research Grant	Aviva Scholars
EOI Deadline	15/09/2024	06/10/2024
Shortlist announced, candidates notified	11/10/2024	31/10/2024
Final submission deadline	01/12/2024	08/12/2024
Result announced, candidates notified	17/01/2025	24/01/2025
Press announcement	TBC – early February	TBC – early February
Contracts let	28/03/2025	28/03/2025
Project start date	01/04/2025	01/04/2024

We will endeavour to keep this timetable fixed but some dates may shift depending on the volume of applications received and the time needed for review. All candidates will be kept informed if this is needed.

Figure 3: Overview of main grant programme - 2024



10.0 Summary of application

Table 4 summarises the information that is needed in the EOI and full submission (numbers in brackets refer to the maximum word count of that section). **Sections in Bold** are copied through from the EOI into the main grant submission document if short-listed.

The information requested for both streams (main research grant / Aviva Scholars) is the same at both EOI and full submission stage. Please note all applications must come through our online grant system where this information will need to be inputted.

Table 4: Information requested in the grant application, numbers in brackets refer to the maximum word count.

Information requested	
Expression of Interest (EOI)	Full grant submission
Title (20)	Title (20)
Short title (8)	Short title (8)
Keywords (5)	Keywords (5)
Abstract (200)	Abstract (200)
Project Team Details (PI / Co-PI / Project Partners)	Project Team Details (PI / Co-PI / Project Partners)
Job Title / Organisation Details / Contact details / ORCID or ResearchGate link	Job Title / Organisation Details / Contact details / ORCID or ResearchGate link
Theme & Sub-theme	Theme & Sub-theme
Overall aim (50)	Overall aim (50)
Research questions (150)	Research questions (150)
Methodology (200)	Methodology (500)
Key Milestones / dates	Key Milestones / dates
Total Funding requested	Wildlife Trusts resource requirements (access to sites etc.) (150)
Simple breakdown of funding by type (staff / T&S / Consumables/ Equipment / Communications & Engagement)	Risks & mitigation (250)
Detail of co-funders (if applicable)	Impact (250)
	Academic publication strategy (100)
	Wider communication strategy (250)
	Suitability of team – contribution of each member
	Organogram (optional)
	References
	Total funding requested
	Detailed funding breakdown by institution
	Justification of funding requested (500)
	Details of co-funders (if applicable)

11.0 Wildlife Trusts Temperate Rainforest Research Programme Contacts:

Dr Ruth Swetnam (TRP – Carbon & Research Manager)

Tara Cummins (TRP – Programme Co-ordinator)

Please use AvivaResearch@wildlifetrusts.org for all queries and contacts.