

The first day of the Conference heralded a new approach to financing needs for a restored environment in the UK and beyond. We were delighted that over 500 delegates joined us yesterday, representing locations throughout the UK and 28 countries around the world.

Here are just a few of the highlights from Day 1:

Eying the prize

In his opening address, Andrew Griffith MP, the UK Net Zero Business Champion, championed the role of natural capital. He highlighted that biodiversity is a crucial part of achieving net zero, and reiterated the importance of uniting the needs for a healthy natural environment with sources of finance. Mr Griffith expressed his gratitude for the work already taking place locally and nationally across the UK in nature-based finance. He expressed a willingness to work with all sectors in support the natural capital investment arena.

Rhian-Mari Thomas OBE, Chief Executive of the Green Finance Institute, provided delegates with a bold vision for nature-based finance. She spoke of it as integral to green finance and highlighted the urgent need for nature-based investment to become mainstream. Rhian-Mari pointed to the endeavours within Government and the financial services sector in the UK to be a global leader in green finance, including the establishment of the Green Finance Institute. Among the barriers to developing the natural capital investment market, she pointed to complexity, the lack of connectivity between projects, inconsistent impact measurement techniques, and lack of scalable projects and metrics. She spoke of biodiversity and climate change as two sides of the same coin. Rhian-Mari referenced a proposed new National Infrastructure Bank for the UK and highlighted the need for nature to be a beneficiary of this major new finance facility.

A pioneering new Impact Fund announced

Jamie Mansfield, Co-Founder and Managing Director of Finance Earth, and Toby Roxburgh, Head of Sustainable Economic Policy at WWF UK, unveiled a pioneering Blue Impact Fund for the UK. This aims to support enterprising marine-based businesses to yield positive environmental impact, green jobs and commercial returns. Alongside this, an Ocean Recovery Trust is being established and will be financed through surplus revenues from the fund and other sources. The trust will help to grow smaller blue enterprises with potential to accelerate in future and to invest directly in improved marine protection and restoration activities. Delegates heard about the collaborative process for developing the Blue Impact Fund. The first phase of fundraising for £25 million is now open, with a second stage for £75 million planned in mid-2021. Family offices, foundations and endowment funds are expected to be among the investors to whom the fund will appeal.

Find out more at: <https://finance.earth/fund/blue-impact-fund/>

Becoming Investment Ready: Investable Success Stories

What does investment success look like for nature-based projects and what happens along the way? Four nature-based projects shared their insights from their journey from early-stage development to creating models that attract and secure investment. While

natural capital finance is an emergent arena, this session proved that there is a lot to be learned from the pioneers. Trees for Life, Quantified Ventures, RSPB, and SLM Silva Fund all shared helpful insights. This webinar was hosted by the Green Finance Institute on behalf of the Environment Agency and Defra.

Charting the future for blended finance

Katherine Stodulka, Director of the Blended Finance Task Force at SYSTEMIQ, provided a helpful global perspective on blended finance and business models to scale protection & restoration of the natural environment. She referred to a wide array of initiatives that are listed at www.blendedfinance.earth/case-studies

A bright future for seaweed enterprises

Adrien Vincent, Head of Oceans at SYSTEMIQ and Director of the Seaweed for Europe, led an exciting pitch session to facilitate investing in UK enterprise to harness the value of seaweed. He outlined findings from a compelling report by Seaweed for Europe, 'Hidden champion of the ocean' (October 2020), covering the vast potential of the application of seaweed, the environmental and climate benefits of farming it, and the strong economic case for over 115,000 new jobs it offers to Europe where it is mostly an untapped opportunity. Paul Dobbins of WWF in the US also spoke about their growing investments in this area. Innovation is already mushrooming and four small UK companies presented their pitches for investment to grow:

- Biome Algae - offshore seaweed farmer with state of the art farm model and plans to start processing with focus on bio-plastics, textiles and medicines.
- Sustainable Seaweed - creating a large offshore farm off the North Norfolk coast with a focus on 'feeding us today whilst cleaning the oceans for tomorrow'.
- Oceanium - buys seaweed from farmers and breaks it down into its constituent parts to create trademarked food, medicine and biopackaging products.
- Notpla – specialist biodegradable seaweed packaging company, 'We make packaging disappear', already working with food, drink, soap and fashion brands.

Make the most of the rest of the Conference. Please see [our programme](#).

Share the event with colleagues using this link:

<https://ecosystemsknowledge.events.idloom.com/natural-capital-finance-and-investment-conference>

We have room for more! Tell others about what you are learning use [#naturalcapitalfinance2020](#) and tag [@NatInvest](#)

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