On 8 June 2022, The Convention on Wetlands and Danone announced the winner of the Pitch for the Grant 2022, a new EUR 10,000 grant from Danone to fund wetland conservation projects.

Created to support initiatives seeking to conserve, restore or sustainably use wetlands, the grant was awarded to BlueGreen for its project to restore the Govan Wetlands of Glasgow, UK.

A community interest company, BlueGreen aims to restore the Govan Wetlands to boost biodiversity, create new job opportunities and help Glasgow transition to a zero carbon city.

Working alongside the community, BlueGreen seeks to introduce the innovative practice of saline agriculture on a portion of this urban saltmarsh. They propose to grow salt tolerant crops such as halophytes, and other high value vegetables using only saline water, a practice increasingly in demand due to climate change. Halophytes have immense nutritional value and high carbon capture rates.

The Govan Wetlands in Glasgow is the latest BlueGreen project. The company has implemented similar landscape restoration projects for smallholder farmers in Malawi, Ghana, Vietnam and Bangladesh. Their vision is to continue restoring more wetland sites both nationally and internationally.

“We are thrilled to be receiving this grant as this is going to help scale up our work to restore more hectares in the Govan Wetlands and reverse the damage to this natural ecosystem previously used as a dock and shipyard,” said Chris Eccles, BlueGreen Director.

“The Govan wetlands project will benefit our communities by returning the benefits which wetlands have to offer, such as increased green space, natural habitats for birds and mammals, carbon capture, and nature-based solutions to urban pollution,” he added.

“The world is losing wetlands three times faster than forests mainly due to human activities such as pollution, unsustainable agricultural practices and rapid urban development,” said Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General Convention on Wetlands. “By deliberately investing financial capital to support individuals, organisations and enterprises
that are creating innovative solutions that are good for wetlands and people, we can begin to reverse these negative trends.”

“Our long-term partnership with Ramsar is echoing the “Act for Wetlands” theme of the last UN World Wetlands Day through this grant which aims to accelerate actions to restore wetlands. This project is particularly inspiring as it not only brings saline agriculture within the city of Glasgow through an urban wetland, but is also creating value to under-utilized, degraded land, and providing social and economic support to the local communities. This project also enhances the multiple benefits of Nature-Based Solutions thanks to carbon sequestration potential. We hope this grant will help the scalability and replicability of this project in many other cities in the world.” - Yann-Gaël Rio, SVP Sustainability & Agriculture, Danone.

Pitch for the Grant 2022 was created to help fund initiatives aiming to conserve, restore or sustainably use wetlands. The grant contest was launched on World Wetlands Day, 2 February 2022 by the Convention on Wetlands and Danone under their partnership agreement. This year’s World Wetlands Day was especially significant as it was observed for the first time as a United Nations International Day.

The winner was selected by a panel comprising Jay Aldous, Deputy Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, Dr. Priyane Amerasinghe, International Water Management Institute, Muriel Jaujou, Water Cycle and Sustainability Director, Danone and Claire Warmenbol, Communications and Partnerships Manager, International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The Convention on Wetlands and Danone also announced three top finalists in recognition of their project ideas to advance actions for wetlands:

• Fundacion Cosmos, for their project to develop a restoration plan for the Maipo Wetland in Chile

• Asters, Conservatoire d’Espaces Naturels de Haute-Savoie for their project, Ice and Life to create an inventory of newly created wetlands following the recent melting of the glacier in Haute Savoie, in France

• Kenya Wetlands Biodiversity Research team, for their restoration, management and conservation project of mangroves in the Tana Delta Estuary in Kenya.

Restoring the Govan Wetlands of Scotland: Winner of the Pitch for the Grant contest 2022

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