



**Cannock
Chase
National
Landscape**

Cannock Chase National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Guidance Notes

Please read the following carefully as it includes important information about who can apply and how to apply for a National Landscape grant.

You are encouraged to speak to us first when considering applying to the fund. Please contact National Landscape Land Management Officer, Richard Harris on (01785) 278035, or email richard.harris1@staffordshire.gov.uk

The Scheme

The Sustainable Development Fund is a grant scheme that supports projects that help to conserve, enhance, and raise awareness of Cannock Chase National Landscape. These projects focus on integrating the environment, local communities, and the economy so that the unique landscape of the National Landscape is conserved, and its natural beauty enhanced, making it more enjoyable for all.

The fund enables local communities and other organisations, businesses, and individuals to make a difference to the National Landscape by promoting and achieving sustainable development.

For the financial year 2024-25 we will be operating two levels of award:

- i) £500 or under
- ii) over £500. There is no set limit on the amount that applicants can apply for. The panel usually award up to £5,000 per project although in exceptional circumstances higher awards may be made.

What we fund

The purpose of the fund is to support the conservation and enhancement of Cannock Chase National Landscape. We can support a range of activities including practical work, feasibility studies or research projects, education and awareness raising and training relating to the National Landscape and its conservation. Priority areas for projects are:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, landscape, wildlife, or heritage of the Cannock Chase National Landscape.
- Educational and awareness-raising activities relating to the National Landscape and its conservation.

In all cases projects must show a clear public benefit.

Examples of projects include installation of bird and bat boxes, creating wildlife gardens, production of information boards, leaflets, books, wildlife surveys such as the 2022 Cannock Chase Quinquennial Breeding Bird Survey, research projects such as understanding historic landscape change over the past 150 years using historic photographs, film raising awareness of the National Landscape and the protection it needs, providing access to art and eco-therapy to clients with a mental health diagnosis.

To be eligible for funding your project should be carried out within the Landscape, or directly benefit it. Projects may be located outside of the National Landscape where benefit is seen to be achieved to the National Landscape. Projects will usually only be funded up to 1km from the National Landscape boundary.

We cannot provide grant aid retrospectively. You may do preparation work towards your project, but any costs incurred prior to the grant award being made cannot be claimed or used as match funding.

Please note funding is not available to meet statutory responsibilities.

Applications will be assessed against the essential and desirable criteria listed below. It is expected that successful projects will meet as many as possible of the essential criteria, and as many as possible, but not necessarily every desirable criterion.

(i) Essential criteria

Your application should support one or more of the priorities set out in the Cannock Chase National Landscape Management Plan (<https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/publications/aonb-management-plan/>)

Landscape Character and Planning

- Maintain quality and distinctiveness
- Enhance the landscape setting

Wildlife and Nature

- Improve conditions for nature in the Chase
- Enlarge and connect habitats

Historic Environment and Culture

- Conserve the Chase's historic environment
- Connect communities with the Chase's history and culture

Experience and Enjoyment

- Treading lightly in the Chase
- A greener experience

Communities and Business

- Natural health benefits for the community
- Businesses Supporting the Special Qualities

All projects should promote equality and diversity in their approach. We are committed to greater inclusion, diversity, access, and participation in the National Landscape and seek to attract applications from and/or benefit the widest range of society possible, including underserved groups.

Your application should also demonstrate that it supports sustainable development objectives. That means that it should contribute in some way to:

- Economic sustainability (supporting the local economy in some way)
- Social sustainability (supporting local communities)
- Environmental sustainability (helps protect the landscape, natural resources, and minimise our impacts on the environment)

(ii) Desirable criteria

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Demonstrate innovation or best practice
- Develop skills and “capacity building” in the community
- Bring organisations and people together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas
- Encourage urban involvement/links to the National Landscape

Who can apply?

Public, private, or voluntary sector organisations, community groups, or individuals from within or outside the National Landscape can apply to the Fund.

You do not have to live or work within the National Landscape, but you must be able to demonstrate that your project will have a direct positive impact upon the National Landscape, have a wider public benefit and satisfy as many as possible of the essential criteria of the grant. Your project must comply with any relevant regulatory requirements (See the Terms & Conditions). Community groups will need to have a basic constitution and a bank account to receive grant payments.

Priority is given to first-time applicants.

How and when to apply

The SDF is a competitive grant fund with grants awarded on a competitive basis for a share of the available funds. We operate two rounds of applications, a first round submitted by a set closing date, followed by a second round later in the year if not all money is allocated. Grants can only be made for activity within a particular financial year i.e. 1 April to 31 March.

Applications are now being invited for projects that must be completed by the end of March 2025. The closing date for applications is **midnight 11th June 2024**.

A Word version of the SDF Application Pack is available on request by completing the form at: <https://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/get-in-touch/> or by emailing: richard.harris1@staffordshire.gov.uk

Applications will be acknowledged as soon as possible on receipt. Applicants may be contacted for additional information where necessary. Once the application has been validated, a decision on the application should be made within 15 working days. Applicants will be contacted, in writing with a formal grant offer and Terms and Conditions which you will be required to sign and return before work commences.

How much can I apply for?

For grants of £500 or under we can fund up to 100% of the project costs to support small projects and grass roots community organisations.

For awards over £500 the Fund can support up to 75% of the total project cost (the total project cost is our contribution plus your contribution) if you are a voluntary group or charity; and up to 50% of the total project cost for public bodies including Local Authorities, Education Authorities and Hospital Trusts, as well as businesses.

There is no set limit on the amount that applicants can apply for. The panel usually award up to £5,000 per project although in exceptional circumstances higher awards may be made.

For government organisations i.e. bodies funded directly through the Treasury (not local authorities), the level of SDF grant plus match-funding from government organisations should not exceed 50% of the total cost of the project.

Applicant's Contribution

Applicants will normally be expected to provide the remaining 25% or 50% of the total project costs. This is referred to as "match funding." Match funding can be both your own time i.e. in-kind funding and/or money.

Please use the following standard volunteer rates to calculate the cash value of your in-kind contributions: Professional volunteer (for example, accountancy or teaching) £50 per hour; Skilled volunteer (for example, leading a guided walk) £20 per hour; Volunteer (for example, clearing a site or acting as a steward at an event) £10 per hour. Travel expense claims by car for staff and volunteers directly related to the project should be based at a rate of 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter.

Limitations on Cash-Matched Funding

SDF funds count as exchequer funding i.e. they come from central government. Treasury rules dictate that total exchequer funding in a project must not exceed 50% for projects led by public bodies and 75% for those led by community groups. This may limit the sources which can be used for match funding, especially where the SDF grant is being requested up to the maximum rate.

Other sources of exchequer funding include: National Landscape core funds, British Waterways, Natural England, Defra, Historic England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission. These sources can be used to match with the SDF provided the total exchequer funding limit is not exceeded. In this case, other sources of cash or in-kind funding will also be needed.

Public funds which do not count as exchequer funding and are available to be used as match funding include: Local Authorities, Heritage Fund, Education Authorities, and Hospital Trusts.

Funds from the private sector (businesses) and the voluntary sector (including charitable trusts, etc.) can also be used as match funding.

VAT

If your organisation is VAT registered and you are able to reclaim VAT yourselves, the grant offer will be made excluding VAT. If you only claim a proportion of your VAT, please include in the budget only that proportion which you pay i.e. that part you are not able to reclaim from HMRC.

In the case of a non-VAT registered organisation/body/individual the VAT can be included in the cost of the project and grant can be claimed against the gross cost of the project (i.e., including the VAT element).

Project budget

You must provide accurate financial details of your project. Please enter a detailed breakdown of expenditure and project funding (in kind and actual cash) on your application form. Where estimates have been made, please indicate on the application form. If you need help on completing the form please contact the National Landscape Land Management Officer, Richard Harris on (01785) 278035, or email richard.harris1@staffordshire.gov.uk

Contract Processes, Services and Facilities

Where contracted work, services and facilities of above £500 is required, the applicant must provide three quotations from independent contractors where it is reasonable to do so. If the applicant wishes to use their own labour/machinery, then they may submit a 'lower quotation' in addition to the three independent quotes (See the Terms & Conditions).

Statutory Permissions/Consents or Licences

You need to ensure all Statutory permissions, consents or licences are in place before your project commences. Please factor in the time it will take to secure the appropriate permissions, consents or licences when developing your project. In some cases, we may be unable to offer funding until permissions are in place.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are assessed by the SDF Grants Panel made up of representatives from a range of community, business, and environmental management interests. Projects are
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judged on how well they meet the essential and desirable criteria and support sustainable development objectives.

Projects will also be assessed in terms of their benefits and value for money. Those projects able to demonstrate the potential to deliver a wide range of the Fund's objectives and value for money are more likely to attract support. The Panel may advise that an offer is made for less than the full amount requested.

Whilst the Panel is authorised to deal with all applications, the scheme is overseen by the National Landscape Joint Committee. Any application may be 'called in' for consideration by the Joint Committee, for example, where there is concern over financial mismanagement of the project. The Joint Committee's decision will be final. The work of the SDF Grant Panel will be regularly reported to the Joint Committee and a summary of the applications, the decisions made, and the outcomes of successful projects will also be reported to Defra to demonstrate the results of the Fund.

For applications of £500 or under these are assessed by a 'fast-track' procedure to enable small projects to happen quickly and encourage small community groups, schools, parishes etc to get involved in making a difference locally.

If you are successful

Applicants will be contacted in writing with a formal grant offer and Terms and Conditions which you will be required to sign and return before work commences.

The National Landscape Team will monitor the progress of projects and may carry out site inspections prior to the approval of grant, before making any payments and at project completion.

Grants will normally be paid in arrears/on completion and will be dependent on the submission of:

- Completed Grant Claim Form
- Supporting evidence of expenditure
- Any accompanying outputs, such as reports

Upon conclusion of your project, you will be asked to provide a short summary to publicise on the Cannock Chase National Landscape website.

There is a national monitoring programme to oversee the working of the fund. Therefore, all projects supported by it must be ready to provide relevant information as requested; and allow access to the national monitoring team if asked to do so.