Nature Networks Fund (round two)

See all updates

This fund aims to strengthen the resilience of Wales' network of protected land and marine sites, supporting nature's recovery while actively encouraging community engagement.

This guidance was last updated on 8 January 2026. See all updates.

Important

Nature Networks Fund (round two) is no longer accepting applications.

Explore our available funding.

Overview

This is round two of the Nature Networks Fund.

As a key element to the delivery of the Nature Networks Programme, the aim of the Nature Networks Fund is to improve the condition and resilience of **Wales' network of protected land and marine sites**.

Improving the condition of these protected and connected sites will enable them to function better as **nature networks**. Nature networks are vital, resilient areas where habitats and species can thrive and expand. Restoring connectivity in these networks will:

- prevent further declines in species and habitat condition
- support nature recovery
- enhance capacity to adapt to the climate crisis

This fund will also support the active involvement of communities in and around protected sites. Strengthening engagement with nature has direct health and wellbeing benefits for people, as well as improving the resilience of the sites themselves.

The protection of sites is reliant on strong organisations and good governance. Therefore, **round two** of the Nature Networks Fund will **additionally support capacity building**, including: financial resilience, community engagement, training and apprenticeship programmes and inclusion work.

What is the protected sites network?

The protected sites network covers Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and other Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). To check whether land or sea is included within this definition please visit the Natural Resources Wales website and the DataMapWales website.

Application deadlines

Grants between £30,000 and £250,000: **12noon on 19 October 2022**

Grants between £250,000 and £1million:

- mandatory Expression of Interest (EOI) deadline: **12noon on 21 September 2022**
- application deadline: **12noon on 7 December 2022**

Once you have read the guidance below, visit our application portal

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Aims of the fund

Through round two of the Nature Networks Fund, we want to support:

- Action on protected or connected sites that specifically benefits the management of protected habitats and species on Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It should also demonstrate the sustainable management of natural resources across Wales. This can include action outside of protected sites that will benefit the network as a whole.
- Improvements on protected sites or their connected sites that local communities are able to actively participate in, and benefit from. An aim would be to support active involvement with a diverse range of people and communities (particularly under-served groups) to increase the network of people engaged with nature, and with building the resilience of their local ecosystems.
- activity that allows organisations to build their capacity, develop their resilience and reach under-served communities

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Who can apply?

The scheme is open to all individuals and organisations working with natural heritage in Wales. This is provided that you have the right permissions, licences and consents in place to undertake activity on the protected site network or surrounding areas. The site/land you are improving must be in Wales but you/your organisation can be based anywhere in the UK.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for project work to take place in Wales but not on protected sites. For example, in projects where the focus is on training and apprenticeships, trainees may be working on different sites, but the skills they develop may be beneficial to the whole sector later on in their careers. In these cases, it is your responsibility to

demonstrate the value your project will bring to the protected site network in the long-term within your application form.

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What we expect from projects

Activities must deliver direct benefits to the protected site network now or in the future. This can include:

- improvements directly on a site or on surrounding areas that will improve the condition of features and connectivity of sites
- improvements to accessibility of a site, or supporting organisations to reach under-served communities
- Supporting organisations or individuals who are (or will be in the future) responsible for sites. This could include planning, staffing, training, apprenticeships, green financing, good governance, etc.

As applicants, you must demonstrate that you are aware of, and working towards obtaining, the relevant permissions and licenses to carry out your project.

You will be expected to demonstrate that your planned project delivers against the management objectives or conservation objectives for the relevant site.

We will be looking to fund a combination of capital and revenue activity across a portfolio of projects. To understand more, please refer to the section within this guidance called ‘Preparing your application’.

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Key dates

Programme opens **18 August 2022**.

Grants between £30,000 and £250,000

- application deadline: **12noon on 19 October 2022**
- applicants informed of decisions in **January 2023**
- projects must be complete by **31 March 2025**

Grants between £250,000 and £1million

- mandatory EOI deadline: **12noon on 21 September 2022**
- applicants successful at EOI stage will be invited to submit full applications by **5 October 2022**
- application deadline: **12noon on 7 December 2022**
- applicants informed of decisions in **March 2023**
- projects must be complete by **31 March 2026**

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Preparing your application

What costs can you apply for?

It is important that you identify which of your project costs are capital and which are revenue. Applications can include any of the following:

Capital costs

- the purchase of items associated with land management activities, such as trees, hedge plants, fencing and capital works items required to deliver the outcomes
- general costs incurred in installing the capital works, which include contractor costs for labour and use of equipment
- the purchase of machinery and equipment up to the market value of the asset
- the purchase, design and installation of interpretation panels (and translation costs)
- acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights and trademarks
- consultant and architect fees, other technical design costs, site surveys and professional fees such as fees related to environmental and economic sustainability
- Planning application fees and costs. Fees incurred for statutory permissions, licences and consents are eligible, provided they are essential for the delivery of the capital project. These can be incurred before the start of the project but must be incurred after 18 August 2022, and must be evidenced in the same way as other expenditure.
- Contingency funding for additional capital costs. We recommend this be approximately 10% of your capital costs.
- inflation funding to allow for cost increases in future years of project delivery

Revenue costs

- staff time
- full cost recovery or core organisational costs towards project delivery
- activity costs (events, refreshments, etc)
- room hire
- evaluation
- planning, for example business planning, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Reviews, green financing opportunities
- training, apprenticeships costs
- translation costs
- Contingency funding for additional revenue costs. We recommend this be approximately 10% of your revenue costs.

You may not include future costs for ongoing maintenance or running costs beyond the duration of the project.

Welsh language

You must consider the Welsh language in all aspects of your work and tell us how you will promote and support the Welsh language and reflect the bilingual nature of Wales.

You will need to show how you will offer bilingual provision in your project budget and plan. You should include the budget for translation under the 'Other' costs category in the project costs section of the application form.

If you would like more information on how to do this, please read more in our guidance for delivering a Welsh bilingual project. You can also get in touch with our Welsh language support team at: cymorthcymraeg@heritagefund.org.uk

Supporting documents

The following supporting documents must be uploaded with your application form. File sizes should be smaller than 20MB. **Note** that some of the supporting documents required for this programme are different to those stated in the online application form.

For this programme, we require the following documents:

- Governing document (mandatory if your organisation has one).
- Audited or verified accounts (mandatory if you are an organisation).
- Project plan (mandatory for all projects) and risk register (mandatory for applications over £250,000) – you can download a template from our project plan page.
- Partnership agreement (mandatory, if you are working in a partnership).
- Job descriptions (mandatory, if you are creating new jobs or apprenticeships as part of your project).
- Briefs for commissioned work (if applicable).
- At least one map showing the locations of capital works (mandatory for applications over £250,000), please upload this under ‘Images’).
- Images to illustrate your application (optional).
- Calculation of full cost recovery (if applicable).
- evidence of support, such as letters, emails or videos of support (optional).
- Cash flow (mandatory for large applications). This should be detailed for the first year and an outline for consecutive years.
- Project management structure (mandatory for applications over £250,000). This should outline your project management structure so we know who will make decisions and how you will control change during your project.
- Detailed cost breakdown (mandatory for applications over £250,000). A spreadsheet detailing the cost breakdown in the Project costs section of the application. Please separate costs into Capital and Revenue.
- Main risks document for after the project is completed (mandatory for applications over £250,000). This should outline the main risks facing the project after it has been completed and how they will be managed.

Supporting documents are **not needed for Expressions of Interest.**

Third party ownership requirements

Your project’s land (which may include different plots of land over a wide area) may be owned by a third party or multiple third parties (including private owners). If this is the case, legal agreements should be put in place between you

and each land owner.

There is no prescribed form of agreement, but we have specific requirements which should be included in any third party land owner agreements. At a minimum, the land owner agreements should include the following:

- details of the parties
- confirmation as to how the land is held (freehold or leasehold)
- a description of the property (including plans)
- covenants on the part of the land owner to maintain the land and provide public access in accordance with the terms of the grant (as applicable)
- a provision that any onward disposal should be subject to the third party agreement
- that the agreement will last from the start of the work on the third party land until 10 years following project completion

You will need to provide us with copies of the landowner agreements to make sure you are compliant with these requirements. The land owner agreements will need to be completed and in place before grant money is released for work on each plot of land owned by a third party. In some circumstances we might require the owner to sign up to our terms and conditions.

You may include the costs of adapting and setting up any third party agreements, including the cost of taking legal advice, as part of the costs in your application.

Licences, permissions and consents

Applicants must demonstrate in their application that they are aware of, and working towards obtaining, the relevant permissions and licenses to carry out their project.

Match funding

There are no requirements for cash or non-cash contributions for the Nature Networks Fund (round two). However, any cash, non-cash or volunteer contributions you provide can add to the impact and value for money of your project, which will be considered in assessment.

As this programme includes National Lottery funding, you may not use this grant as match funding for a project from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, or vice versa. You may use other sources of match funding including other funding programmes from Welsh Government or Natural Resources Wales, and should include these on your application form.

Evaluation

We recommend that you consider evaluation from the beginning of your project. The more carefully projects budget for their evaluation, the higher the quality of the final report. We have recommended minimum spends on evaluation. You can find further information on this in our evaluation guidance.

At the end of your project we will expect you to submit an evaluation report. This needs to be submitted before we pay the last 10% of your grant. This should include details of how ecosystem resilience and/or habitat connectivity has benefitted (or will benefit in the future) from the investment. You should share relevant monitoring data and methodology.

Expand All accordions

Pre-application advice webinar and workshops

We held a pre-application webinar on Tuesday 23 August 2022 and a smaller drop-in workshop on Wednesday 14 September. We have published a series of FAQs in answer to the questions raised at these workshops.

We will provide a further workshop for grant applications of over £250,000 that have successfully passed the Expression of Interest stage. This will be held on **24 October** and we will send details out directly to those projects.

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How to apply

Grants from £30,000 to £250,000

For grants between £30,000 and £250,000, you can apply as soon as you're ready. The application deadline is 12noon **on 19 October 2022.**

Make sure you read our application help notes carefully and check that you are eligible to apply. These help notes should provide all the information you need to make an application.

Please note: The Heritage Fund uses the same application forms across a variety of our programmes. Some questions need to be answered differently for this programme, so you must carefully read the application help notes to understand what information is required where. Please **do not** use the help icons embedded in the online form.

We have designed the application process to be as straightforward as possible and we are requesting only the information we need.

When you're ready, apply for grants between £30,000 and £250,000

Grants from £250,000 to £1million

Our application process is competitive and we cannot fund every good quality application that we receive.

Expression of Interest

We recognise the work that goes into preparing an application, and to give you the best chance possible, we ask all applicants for a grant between **£250,000 and £1million** to complete a short **Expression of Interest (EOI) form**. Please refer to our EOI help notes for more information on how to complete your form.

You must submit your EOI by the deadline of **12noon on 21 September 2022**.

We will use the information you provide to decide whether or not to invite you to submit a full application. An invitation to apply does not guarantee grant from us in the future, but does indicate that we see potential in your initial proposals.

We aim to respond to your EOI within 10 working days.

If your EOI is successful, we will provide additional guidance on how to complete your full application. You must submit your full application by the deadline of **12noon on 7 December 2022**.

When you're ready, submit an EOI form for grants between £250,000 and £1m

Full application form

Our application forms for grants over £250,000 will be released to you on a different portal. Successful applicants will receive a link to this portal via email. Please follow that link rather than signing into our usual portal.

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Application help notes and templates

- application help notes for grants between £30,000 and £250,000
- Expression of Interest (EOI) help notes for grants between £250,000 and £1million
- receiving a grant guidance

For grants between £30,000 and £250,000 you need to submit a project plan with your application. Please refer to our project plan page to review and download our template.

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After you apply

Once you send us your online application, we will check everything is in place and be in touch to let you know if we need any further details.

Unless we need to check anything with you, it is unlikely that you will hear from us again until we notify you of the decision.

Assessing your application

We will assess eligible applications on the following criteria:

- contribution to nature recovery of protected sites in Wales
- engagement of a wider range of people in nature
- the number of jobs/apprenticeships/traineeships offered, especially for young people

- deliver value for money
- demonstrate long-term sustainability
- a geographic spread of projects across Wales
- a combination of capital and revenue projects across the portfolio

Balancing criteria

If we receive more good-quality applications than we can fund, we will prioritise projects which will:

- work in our Areas of Focus or areas that most strongly support the delivery of Resilient Ecological Networks within the Nature Networks Programme
- represent a geographical spread across Wales and across all Nature Networks (round one) and round two projects
- provide active public engagement with nature

If you are awarded

We will notify applicants for **£30,000 to £250,000 of our decisions in January 2023**, and for **£250,000 to £1m in March 2023**. We will provide additional guidance on our monitoring requirements and legal conditions at that point.

All grants under £100,000 will be paid in three instalments. You will receive 50% of your grant once you have received permission to start your project. You will receive the next 40% at the midpoint of your project, when the first 50% has been spent. We withhold the final 10% of your grant until the project is completed.

Grants of £100,000 and over will be paid in arrears, in regular instalments, on receipt of evidence of expenditure.

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Additional information

Subsidy control

It is an applicant's responsibility to confirm that their application has been considered and checked in relation to subsidy control rules.

At the point of publication of this guidance, public funding for organisations is no longer governed by the European Commission's state aid rules. This is as set out in Article 107–109 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union and associated regulations and guidelines.

Instead, all grant decisions made after 11pm on the 31 December 2020 are subject to the new UK subsidy control regime. The principles of which are set out in Chapter Three (Subsidies) of Title XI (Level Playing Field) of Part Two (Trade, Transport, Fisheries and Other Arrangements) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

There is expected to be further guidance, a consultation and possibly new legislation in this area to build upon those principles. You will be expected to comply with the principles of the subsidy control regime and to satisfy any future

requirements. Agreements that have been entered into will be reviewed and varied accordingly. We reserve the right to impose further requirements and additional conditions in relation to this matter.

As an applicant, it is your responsibility to check whether state aid or subsidy control clearance is required. You should seek independent legal advice if you are unsure whether a project will require clearance.

Working on private land

Many designated habitats and species occur on land that is owned by private individuals or for-profit organisations. Projects can deliver works or activities on private land so long as any public benefit clearly outweighs any potential private gain, and provided subsidy control rules are not breached.

For example, we could fund the restoration of hedgerows or create farm ponds, provided that they do not add financial value to the land or convey any significant indirect financial benefit that could breach subsidy control rules.

When working on private land we understand there may be limits to public access. We do, however, encourage public access whenever practical. We also accept that physical access may not always be appropriate or desirable for habitat conservation reasons. If improved access is possible, you may also wish to apply for funding for new infrastructure, for example paths or hides, that can help to accommodate increased public access.

Works can take place on land owned by a government department or arm's length body, provided they do not financially benefit from any investment. If an environmental charity or partnership were to undertake work on such land, then it can only be for works that would not be covered by any statutory responsibility.

Property ownership

Land and buildings for capital works

You must either own the freehold or have a lease which meets the following requirements:

- **not for profit organisation:** your lease must have 10 years left to run after the project completion date
- **private owner:** your lease must have at least 10 years left to run after the project completion date
- we **do not** accept leases with break clauses (these give one or more parties to the lease the right to end the lease in certain circumstances)
- we **do not** accept leases with forfeiture on insolvency clauses (these give the landlord the right to end the lease if the tenant becomes insolvent)
- **you must** be able to sell on, mortgage, or sub-let the whole or part of your lease but if we award you a grant, you must first have our permission to do any of these

Land or buildings in third party ownership

If a third party owns the land (which may include a project partner) we will either require the owner to sign up to your grant contract directly with us, or require you to enter into a legally binding agreement with the owner.

Acquisitions of land or buildings

If your project involves buying land or buildings, you must buy them freehold or with a lease with at least 99 years left to run.

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Further help and resources

- for technical support or assistance with accessibility, please contact our customer service team by email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk
- good practice guidance: advice on a range of topics to help you achieve a high quality project, including our guidance on conducting evaluation
- nature and landscapes guidance: help to design and deliver projects
- these area statements from Natural Resources Wales outline the key challenges and initiatives taking place within each Welsh area
- To discuss your application with a member of staff, please email natur@heritagefund.org.uk. Alternatively, Natural Resources Wales can provide advice on the management objectives, please email: sitesactions@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.
- for more information about how your data will be processed under this grant programme, please see our privacy policy

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Making a complaint

We understand that you may be disappointed with a decision. There is no right to appeal or re-apply for the Nature Networks Fund (round two).

We can only review our decision if you can make a formal complaint about how we have dealt with your application. We have a two stage complaint process for this fund. We will only be able to consider and investigate the complaint if you can demonstrate that:

- we did not follow the published procedures for assessing your application
- we have misunderstood a significant part of your application
- we did not take notice of relevant information

A formal complaint must be made in writing by emailing enquire@heritagefund.org.uk within 10 working days of receiving your application decision. We aim to acknowledge your complaint within three working days.

Your complaint will initially be reviewed by an area/country director from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who is independent of recommendation and decision panels for this fund. We aim to communicate a decision within 15 working days from when you submitted your complaint.

For assistance, contact our Customer Services Team on 020 7591 6044 or email enquire@heritagefund.org.uk.

Changes to this guidance

We will regularly review this guidance and respond to user feedback. We reserve the right to make changes as required. We will communicate any changes as quickly as possible via this webpage.

The Nature Networks Fund (round two) is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.



Page updates

- **2 September 2022:** FAQs from our pre-application webinar were published and you can now book to attend smaller drop-in sessions. More information in section 'Pre-application advice webinar and workshops'.
- **14 September 2022:** the Expression of Interest (EOI) deadline was pushed back from 20 September to 21 September 2022 due to the bank holiday.
- **3 October 2022:** Following our applicant drop-in workshop held on 14 September, additional questions were added to the FAQs page. Details were also updated to confirm the date of the next workshop.
- **19 October 2022:**
    - The list of supporting documents in the 'Preparing your application' section was updated to reflect the different requirements between the two funding ranges.
    - Two sentences were added at the top of the ‘After you apply’ section to reflect our assessment process.

- **9 November 2022:**
  - The information under match funding in the ‘Preparing your application’ section was updated to show that you may include other sources of match funding beyond National Lottery.
  - Information about how full application forms will be released to applicants for grants in the £250,000 to £1million range was added to the ‘How to apply section’.
- **28 February 2023:** The page was moved to closed programmes.

Tag Link
Closed programmes

Application help notes: Nature Networks Fund (round two)

See all updates

This application guide is for organisations and individuals applying to the Nature Networks Fund (round two), for grants between £30,000 and £250,000.

Page created: 18 August 2022.

You **must** use this guide to assist you in completing an online application form for a grant under £250,000.

Important: The National Lottery Heritage Fund uses the same forms across a variety of programmes that we deliver. When completing your application form, you must follow the guidance below as some questions need to be answered differently for this programme. You **should not** use the help icons embedded in the online form as they do not relate to this funding.

First Steps

1. We launched a new application portal in March 2021. If you are not already registered on the portal, you will need to register prior to submission.
2. If you are unable to set up your account or have any technical difficulties, please contact: investment-service-support@heritagefund.org.uk.
3. Once your organisation is registered, click 'Start a New Application' and select the 'Grants of £10,000 to £250,000' button. Then click 'Start a New Application'.
4. If you decide to copy and paste text from a Word document directly into your application form, please review your application before submission and make changes where necessary to make sure you do not exceed the stated word count limits. You will be able to save this form as you work on it.

Questions

Your project

Tell us what advice you have received in planning your project and who from

Answer as normal.

Is this your organisation's first application to us?

Answer as normal, 'yes' or 'no'.

Project title

Please include the prefix **#NNF2** in your project title. For example **#NNF2 Dragonfly nature reserve improvements.**

When will your project happen?

Enter the date you expect to start your project. This should be on or after **1 April 2023**.

Your project must end by **31 March 2025**.

Why does your project need to happen now?

Answer as normal.

Is the project taking place at the same location as your organisation's address?

Answer as normal, 'yes' or 'no'.

If no, please include details of your project's address.

Describe your idea

In no more than 500 words, explain what your project aims to do and what you will spend the money on. You should use the following two sub-headings, depending on whether your project is capital, resilience or both.

Capital Projects:

- Which site/s will you be working on?
- What works will you undertake for habitats and species?
- Who will be involved and how (staff, volunteers, general public, target audiences)?

Resilience Projects:

- What work will you undertake during the project (for example, what planning activity)?
- Who will be involved and how (staff, volunteers, general public, target audiences)?
- How will the activity enhance/protect the protected sites network now or in the future?

Will capital work be part of your project?

Answer questions relating to capital works as normal, 'yes' or 'no'.

You should submit condition surveys and/or ownership documents/leases if you have them.

Do you need permission from anyone else to do your project?

Answer as normal ‘yes’, ’no’ or ‘not sure’. You must demonstrate that you are aware of, and working towards obtaining, the relevant permissions and licenses to carry out the project.

What difference will your project make?

Answer as normal.

Is the heritage considered to be at risk?

Answer as normal, ‘yes’ or 'no’.

If yes, explain how the heritage is at risk.

Does the heritage have any formal designations?

Please select any options that apply to your heritage from the list.

Does your project involve heritage that attracts visitors?

Answer as normal, ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Why is your project important to your community?

Answer as normal.

What measures will you take to increase positive environmental impacts and decrease negative environmental impacts?

This answer should focus on activity outside of the improvement works themselves. For example: travel, procurement or waste. Please read our environmental sustainability guidance for more information.

What will happen after the project ends?

Tell us who will be responsible for management and maintenance of the outputs after the project ends, what work and what permissions will be needed. For capital works, this should be linked to a management and maintenance plan. If you don’t have a plan at the moment, this can be included in your project activity.

Why is your organisation best placed to deliver this project?

Answer as normal.

Will your project be delivered by a partnership?

Answer as normal, ‘yes’ or ‘no.

If you answer yes, you must attach your partnership agreement and note that formal partners may be asked to sign up to our terms of grant.

Outcomes

We describe the difference we want to make with our funding through a set of nine outcomes, which are listed in the application form. Outcomes are changes, impacts or benefits that happen as a direct result of this funding.

The **mandatory** outcomes for the Nature Networks Fund (round two) are:

- a wider range of people will be involved in heritage
- heritage will be in better condition

You **must** address **both outcomes** in your application.

We expect responses to be proportionate to the amount of grant being requested.

If relevant, you may also respond to this outcome: the funded organisation will be more resilient

How will your project involve a wider range of people?

Your answer should explain how your audience or volunteer profile will have changed between the start and end of the project. This may include:

- improvements to the accessibility of a site
- working with other organisations to reach under-served audiences
- supporting new individuals into the sector through jobs, training and/or apprenticeships

Include evidence to support your plans.

How will your project improve the condition of heritage?

Explain how your project will improve the condition of the protected sites network, even if this will be in the future. For example, describe what specific actions you will undertake to improve the management of the habitats and species.

If your project is not taking place directly on a protected site, please explain how your project will bring values to the network in the long run.

How will the funded organisation be more resilient? (optional)

If you are applying for funding to support capacity building within your organisation, please explain how this will be achieved. This can include, for example:

- how community engagement and inclusion work will make your organisation more resilient
- what the trainees and apprenticeships will bring to your organisation
- how the grant will improve the organisation’s governance or financial resilience

Will your project achieve any of our other outcomes?

Leave the other six outcomes blank, we will not be assessing any other outcomes for the Nature Networks Fund (round two).

Managing your project

How will your project be managed?

Answer as normal.

How will you evaluate your project?

We recommend you build in evaluation from the beginning of your project. The more carefully projects budget for their evaluation, the higher the quality of the final report. We have recommended minimum spends on evaluation and you can find further information on this within our evaluation guidance.

At the end of your project we will expect some evaluation feedback, in two parts:

- your own evaluation report, sent in before we pay the last 10% of your grant
- An evaluation questionnaire, within one year of completion. You can see the information we will want you to report in our evaluation guidance.

How do you plan to acknowledge your grant?

As part of your grant from the Welsh Government, you must acknowledge your funding on social media, through press releases, and by displaying our partnership logo. Please read our Welsh Government acknowledgement guidance.

Tell us about any jobs or apprenticeships that you will create to deliver your project

Answer as normal. If you are creating jobs or apprenticeships, you must attach the relevant job descriptions.

Project costs

Please refer to the application guidance section called ‘Preparing your application’ to ensure that your project costs are eligible. If you are applying for £250,000 or more please submit an Expression of Interest in the first instance.

For monitoring purposes, it is important that you distinguish between capital and revenue costs in your cost table. To do this, please put them on separate lines and add ‘Cap’ or ‘Rev’ to the start of each cost description. For example, if you are applying for £10,000 of professional fees for capital work, and £5,000 of professional fees for engagement activities, your table should look like this:

Example of a cost table

Cost heading	Description of cost	Amount
Professional fees CAP	contractors for building bird hide	£10,000
Professional fees REV	freelancers to deliver activity programme	£5,000

It is important that the costs you ask us to cover do not constitute unlawful subsidy to you. Please check the ‘Additional Information’ section of the application guidance for further details.

Support for your project

Are you getting any cash contributions to your project?

Answer as normal, ‘yes or ‘no’.

Please note: There is no mandatory requirement for cash contributions to Nature Networks (round two) projects. However, any cash contributions you provide can add to the impact and value for money of your project, which will be considered in assessment.

Add a non-cash contribution

There is no mandatory requirement for non-cash contributions to Nature Networks (round two) projects. However, any non-cash contributions you provide can add to the impact and value for money of your project, which will be considered in assessment.

Volunteers

There is no mandatory requirement for volunteer contributions to Nature Networks (round two) projects. However, any volunteer contributions you provide can add to the impact and value for money of your project, which will be considered in assessment.

Evidence of support

Answer as normal. Upload letters, emails or videos of support as appropriate for your project.

Supporting documents

The following supporting documents must be uploaded at the end of your application form. File sizes should be smaller than 20MB. **Please note** that some of the supporting documents required for this programme are different to those stated in the online application form.

For this programme, we require the following documents:

- governing document (mandatory if your organisation has one)
- audited or verified accounts (mandatory if you are an organisation) – if you are an individual, a newly-formed organisation, or do not have recent accounts, please upload bank statements for the last three full months
- project plan (mandatory for all projects) – you can download a template from our project plan page
- partnership agreement (mandatory, if you are working in a partnership)
- job descriptions (mandatory, if you are creating new jobs or apprenticeships as part of your project)
- briefs for commissioned work (if applicable)
- images, including at least one map showing the locations of capital works
- calculation of full cost recovery (if applicable)
- evidence of support, such as letters, emails or videos of support (optional)

Expression of Interest help notes: Nature Networks Fund (round two)

See all updates

This application guide is for organisations and individuals submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Nature Networks Fund (round two), for grants between £250,000 and £1million.

Page created: 18 August 2022.

You **must** use this guide to assist you in completing the online EOI form for grants from £250,000 to £1m. **If you do not submit an EOI you will not be invited to submit a full application.**

Important: The National Lottery Heritage Fund uses the same forms across a variety of programmes that we deliver. When completing your application form, you must follow the guidance below as some questions need to be answered differently for this programme. You **should not** use the help icons embedded in the online form as they do not relate to this funding.

First steps

1. We launched a new application portal in March 2021. If you are not already registered on the portal you will need to register prior to submission.
2. If you are unable to set up your account or face any technical difficulties, please contact investment-service-support@heritagefund.org.uk.
3. once your organisation is registered, select ‘Start an Expression of Interest’ and follow the instructions for completing this form for grants of £250,000 to £1m
4. give your project a name with the prefix **#NNF2**
5. If you decide to copy and paste text from a word document directly into your application form, please review your application before submission and make changes where necessary to make sure you do not exceed the stated word count limits. You will be able to save this form as you work on it.

Questions

Have you spoken to anyone at the Heritage Fund about your idea?

If so, tell us their name.

Describe what you will do during the project

Please provide additional information on the following:

- Will your project improve the condition and resilience of Wales' protected sites network, specifically the habitats and species of the sites?
- Will your project improve accessibility to the protected sites network?
- Will your project improve your resilience and, therefore, future ability to manage the protected sites network?

- Where and how will the work take place?
- What communities will you work with?

200 word limit.

Do you have a title for the project?

Please include the prefix **#NNF2** in your project title. For example **#NNF2 Mayfly nature reserve improvements**

What outcomes do you want to achieve?

An outcome is a result of what your project does. The mandatory outcomes for Nature Networks (round two) are:

- a wider range of people will be involved in heritage
- heritage will be in better condition

Please address both of these outcomes.

A wider range of people will be involved in heritage

Explain how your audience or volunteer profile will have changed during the project. This may include:

- improvements to the accessibility of a site
- working with other organisations to reach under-served audiences
- supporting new individuals into the sector through training and apprenticeships

Include evidence to support your plans.

Heritage will be in better condition

Explain how your project will improve the condition of the protected sites network, even if this will be in the future. For example, describe what specific actions you will undertake to improve the management of the habitats and species.

If your project is not taking place directly on a protected site, please demonstrate the value your project will bring to the protected sites network in the long-term.

200 word limit.

Tell us about the heritage of the project

For this programme, heritage refers to the protected sites network. You should explain how your project links with the network (for example, specific site names and grid references and/or people/organisations who manage them) and why it is important (for both biodiversity/wildlife and people).

100 word limit.

What is the need for this project?

What work have you done that shows the potential benefits of the project?

200 word limit.

How long do you think the project will take?

Your project should begin after **1 April 2023**. It must be complete by **31 March 2026**.

50 word limit.

How much is the project likely to cost?

If you know, tell us about the most important costs. These costs can be estimated.

200 word limit.

How much funding are you planning to apply for from us?

£ [**enter amount**]

You must apply for between £250,000 and £1m. If you require less funding, please use our application form and help notes for grants of under £250,000.

When are you likely to submit a funding application, if asked to do so?

Please note that this fund is different to our standard grants, so we do not require separate development and delivery phase applications. Your full application must be submitted by **7 December 2022**.

50 word limit.

Receiving a grant guidance: Nature Networks Fund (round two)

See all updates

This guidance sets out how you will receive your Nature Networks Fund (round two) grant. It also explains what we expect of you.

Attachment	Size
FILE View Grantee Outstanding Permissions Template as FILE(3.97 KB)	3.97 KB

Page last updated: 9 January 2023.

Introduction

Congratulations on being awarded a Nature Networks Fund grant, we look forward to helping you deliver a successful project.

The funding you will receive is public money from the Welsh Government and the Heritage Fund, and as such we have to ensure that it is managed in an accountable way. This means that there are a number of processes that you need to follow throughout the life of your project. We try to make these proportionate to the amount of grant you are receiving.

We appreciate that this may be the first time you have received funding from us and you may be unsure how to request your grant and keep us informed about your progress. This page explains what to do and will answer any queries you may have. It also sets out our standard practices, but please note we may choose to vary our processes depending on the specific circumstances of your project.

Working with us

We like to work in a collaborative way, so keep in touch with us if you need our support. Your first point of contact with the Heritage Fund is the person named in your notification email. Please invite us to key project events and openings and we will aim to send a representative where possible, to show our support for your project.

We expect you to respond in a timely manner to any requests for information and to discuss any substantial changes to your project with us. You must address any issues we identify throughout your project. We will carry out checks periodically to confirm that you are delivering the outcomes identified in your application and the approved purposes set out in your grant notification letter.

If you do not comply with the grant contract, we reserve the right to request repayment of some or all of your grant.

Top tips

- don’t start your project before we give you permission
- evaluate your project from the beginning
- keep track of your project spend
- keep track of your project timetable
- keep all invoices and receipts organised
- know your approved purposes
- review and learn from what you are doing
- make sure you speak to us about any issues
- keep project evidence, for example from launches, workshops and promotion
- above all else, enjoy your project!

Important documents

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the following documents before embarking on your project:

- grant contract
- Nature Networks Fund application guidance on our website
- Evaluation: Good-Practice Guidance

Additional guidance is available in the Good practice guidance sections of the website.

We also recommend that everyone who is closely involved in the delivery of your project becomes familiar with the application you submitted to us. In particular, they should understand the outcomes and the approved purposes you committed to deliver.

Getting started

Grants of £30,000 to £250,000

You will need to log into the grants portal in order to agree to the grant contract. You must:

- check the details we have about your project are correct and tell us if there are any changes to your project since you first applied
- send us any new evidence for your project, including:
    - a copy of a recent bank statement, paying in slip or cheque
    - a monitoring plan for each project site
    - proof of partnership funding
    - documentary proof of property ownership including, for example, up-to-date copies of the Land Registry title register (with plan), leases and evidence of any existing mortgages
    - Proof of any necessary statutory permissions or licences, or landowner permissions. If these are still outstanding, then please download and complete our **Outstanding Permissions Template** from this page. Record on the template when you expect to obtain each license/permission/consent.
    - project cashflow forecast
- read the terms and conditions of the grant and the Standard Terms of Grant
- tell us details of two legal signatories for your organisation, so we can send them a link to download, read, sign and upload the terms and conditions

Once we have received all the information we require, including your signed terms and conditions, we will email you to inform you that you may begin the project.

You must submit your signed grant contract and evidence within three months of being notified of your grant award. If you will not receive the relevant permissions, licenses or consents within three months, contact your Investment Manager for advice.

Grants of £250,000 to £1million

You will need to log into the grants portal in order to work through the Permission to Start process. You must:

- complete the Permission to Start form, including telling us if there are any changes to your project since you first applied
- check the details we have about your project are correct
- send us any new evidence for your project, including:
    - a copy of a recent bank statement, paying in slip or cheque
    - a monitoring plan for each project site
    - proof of partnership funding

    - documentary proof of property ownership including, for example, up-to-date copies of the Land Registry title register (with plan), leases and evidence of any existing mortgages
    - Proof of any necessary statutory permissions or licences, or landowner permissions. If these are still outstanding, then please download and complete our **Outstanding Permissions Template** from this page. Record on the template when you expect to obtain each license/permission/consent.
    - project cashflow forecast
- read the terms and conditions of the grant and the Standard Terms of Grant
- Download your completed Permission to Start form and upload a signed copy. It should be signed by the person completing the form, two legal signatories for the organisation (one of whom can be the same person that completed the form), and project partners if applicable. You must submit your Permission to Start form and evidence within three months of being notified of your grant award. If you will not receive the relevant permissions, licenses or consents within three months, contact your Investment Manager for advice.

Payment of your Grant

Payment will be made to the bank account identified in your Permission to Start and Payment Request form.

Grants under £100,000

Your grant is paid in three instalments based on the following percentages:

- **50%**: Once we have granted you Permission to Start.
- **40%**: Once you can evidence that 50% of the total project costs have been spent.
- **10%**: Once your project is complete.

Grants over £100,000

We will pay your grant in arrears once you are able to provide invoices or receipts that demonstrate your project expenditure. We will agree a payment schedule with you at the start of your project, and payments will be made as the project progresses, subject to you providing evidence of expenditure.

You will need to use the Payment Request form to request payment of your grant. We typically expect a Progress Report to be submitted with the Payment Request Form in order to receive a payment of your grant, as we will only release payments after being satisfied with the progress of your project.

All grants

We withhold the final 10% of your grant until the project is completed. We will only pay the full 10% if:

- the total agreed costs have been spent *and*
- you have completed and submitted your Completion Report and Final Payment Request form, including evidencing your total project costs

Payment percentage

We will pay a proportion of the costs you have incurred based on the payment percentage identified in your grant notification letter. Therefore, if you provide invoices totalling £50,000 and your payment percentage is 85%, your grant payment will be £42,500.

If you spend less than your agreed costs and your project completes under budget, you will need to return any grant that has not been spent to us. This will be calculated based on your overall project costs and the payment percentage identified in your grant notification letter. See the ‘Completion report and final payment request’ section of this document for further details on how the final payment of under-budget projects is calculated.

Delivering your project

Grant Expiry Date

You must complete your project and submit your Completion Report and Final Payment Request form by the Grant Expiry Date:

- projects with grants of £30,000 to £250,000 have a Grant Expiry Date of 31 March 2025
- projects with grants of £250,000 to £1million have a Grant Expiry Date of 31 March 2026

We are unable to grant extensions to this timetable. If your project is at serious risk of not completing, we may close your project early and ask for the repayment of all or part of your grant, so please discuss with us at the earliest time possible.

Acknowledgement of your Nature Networks Fund Grant

Acknowledging your grant is a condition of the grant contract. You must acknowledge Welsh Government and the Heritage Fund in all printed and digital materials that you produce, for example, on public consultation or fundraising information or materials. You must also include the logos on all designs or plans you produce, on all specialist reports or surveys, and on all tender documents or job adverts that are funded by your grant.

We encourage you to develop innovative and creative offers or promotions designed to raise awareness of our funding. We may ask you to participate in press campaigns or events acknowledging the Welsh Government’s contribution to your organisation and project.

Find out how to acknowledge your grant. If you do not comply with our acknowledgment guidelines we reserve the right to stop making payments and to request repayment of some or all of your grant.

Procurement: consultants, contractors and suppliers

In all projects, whenever you use your grant to purchase goods, works or services, we will ask you to give us details of the procurement (which is the buying, tendering and selection process). If you have already purchased goods, works or services for your project, you will need to tell us how you did it. We cannot pay your grant if you have not followed the procedure outlined below.

You should always consider equality of treatment, transparency, mutual recognition and proportionality when procuring any goods, works or services.??

If you are a public body grantee or your project is subject to public procurement legislation, then you must follow the relevant legislation.???

Procedures to recruit consultants and contractors must be fair and open and comply with relevant equality and employment legislation. Fees for any consultants or other professionals that you recruit during the project should be in line with professional guidelines and be based on a clear written specification. If any of the contractors, suppliers or consultants you wish to appoint are linked – for example, if they are close friends or relatives, or if they have any financial link, such as ownership – you will need to obtain our written permission first.?

If you are unsure about your obligations, we advise you to take professional or legal advice.?

Under £10,000?

If you are buying goods, works or services for under £10,000 you do not need to openly tender for these or obtain multiple quotes. We will still expect you to show overall value for money.??

Between £10,000 and £50,000? ?

You must get at least three competitive quotes for all goods, works and services worth £10,000 or more (excluding VAT) that we have agreed to fund.??

You do not necessarily need to appoint the contractor, supplier or consultant who provides the lowest quote. When deciding who to appoint for your project, you should look at the overall value for money the quote presents and the skills, experience and financial viability of the contractor, supplier or consultant.??

Above £50,000?

For all goods, works and services worth more than £50,000 (excluding VAT), you must provide proof of competitive tendering procedures. Your proof should be a report on the tenders you have received, together with your decision on which to accept.??

You do not necessarily need to appoint the contractor, supplier or consultant who provides the lowest quote. When deciding who to appoint for your project, you should look at the overall value for money the quote presents and the skills, experience and financial viability of the contractor, supplier or consultant.??

When a competitive tender is not needed

In some circumstances, you do not need to undertake a competitive tendering procedure and you can invite only one organisation to tender. This is where:?

- the total price of the contract is less than £10,000
- a framework agreement is in place for the supply of goods, works or services which has been previously competitively tendered, and the goods or services are directly relevant to the scope of the project works to be undertaken?
- There is a project contract in place, which has previously been competitively tendered, and it is logical to extend to cover additional project work. In this case you must confirm that:??

    - in the case of capital works the prices of most elements of work, including preliminaries, overheads and profits can be directly applied from the existing contract to the new work
    - the new work is smaller in scale, and is of a similar type to the main contract work
    - the contractor will not claim disruption or prolongation cost to the main contract if the new work is introduced
    - the existing contract restricts work being undertaken by others
- the goods, works or services required are unique as set out in a non-branded requirement specification and it is not possible to obtain them from other sources by competitive tender
- You can demonstrate that you have tried to tender the goods, works or services openly and competitively but had not received sufficient interest. The only tender received was submitted by a service provider who believed they were doing so in competition with others.
- emergency work, where it can be shown that time taken to obtain tenders would put the project at risk and add considerably to eventual costs
- the company providing the single tender is not connected, either through ownership or through family connections, with senior representatives of the grantee

Social values

We will also require you to consider social values in your procurement, including:?

- diverse supply chains?
- improved employability and skills?
- inclusion, mental health and well-being?
- environmental sustainability?
- safe supply chains?

Be aware of our digital licence requirement

You should ensure any contractor/supplier/consultant who may contribute to the creation of digital outputs is aware of our requirement for projects to share these under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence or equivalent, and ensure you have agreement for the resulting work to be shared in this way. Where this is not possible, you must seek written agreement to make alternative arrangements with us, for example to use an alternative Open Licence, prior to issuing any contract of work.

Recruitment of staff

All staff posts must be advertised with the following exceptions:

- if you have a suitably qualified member of staff on your payroll that you are moving into the post created by your project
- If you have a suitably qualified member of staff on your payroll whose hours you are extending so that they can work on the project. In this case we will fund the cost of their additional hours spent on the project and you will need to tell us about the role they will undertake.

We may ask to see evidence of the recruitment procedure you followed so keep these records safe.

If you are moving an existing member of staff into a post created by the project, then we can either pay for the cost of this member of staff, or for the cost of backfilling their post, whichever cost is less. Backfilling is where an employee is assigned to a new job and their position is temporarily filled by another employee.

If you wish to appoint any new members of staff on your project who are linked with any members of staff at your organisation, for example, any close friends, relatives, or ex-members of staff, you will need to obtain written permission from us first.

All salaries should be based on sector guidelines or similar posts elsewhere.

We are committed to ensuring that the heritage sector is inclusive and sustainable. You must use the Living Wage rate (and London Living Wage where applicable) for all project staff.

VAT

We cannot cover the costs of VAT that you can reclaim, it is therefore your responsibility to seek appropriate advice.

If your VAT status changes during your project, we will reduce our contribution to the costs where you have managed to claim back the VAT.

If you spend less on VAT than you have outlined in the project costs section of your application, you can, with our permission, transfer the underspend to another cost heading if a clear need is demonstrated. You will need to demonstrate how these changes will help you to deliver your project to achieve your approved purposes.

Supporting documents

It is important that documents you submit throughout the project are legible and are given names that usefully describe their contents. In submitting invoices, these should be combined into a single file and set out in the order in which they appear in the claim. Scans should ideally be in monochrome (B&W or grey-scale) as these will be smaller files and allow you to attach more.

All documents should be in PDF format, with the exception of spreadsheets which should be in their original format.

Photographic record

We expect you to capture photographs throughout your project showing your progress which you should submit with your Progress Report (where relevant). You will need to provide a photographic record of your project with your Completion Report and Final Payment Request form. This should include at least five high-resolution digital images in electronic format showing different aspects of your project.

The images should show your project in action and its outcome. You will need to provide a sample of images that show your project before, during and after it is finished. When completing your Progress Report and Completion Report and Final Payment Request form, you can let us know if material from your project is available on the internet and where it can be found.

We may make use of your images in publicity material. You give us the right to use those you provide us with at any time, including altering them. You must get all the permissions required for you and us to make use of them before you use them or send them to us.

These images, along with other digital outputs from your project, should also be shared with an open licence (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International). If you are not the rights holder, you must ensure you have agreement to share these images under this specified open licence.

You must ensure that you collect appropriate written consent from anyone who appears in these images that they can be reused in relation to publicity and promotional materials, and that they can be shared online under the specified open licence. This is particularly important where images include young people or vulnerable adults and where specific permission must be sought in advance. If you require any guidance on this please speak to us.

If your images are not suitable for sharing under an open licence, other arrangements will need to be put in place. Please speak to us as soon as possible.

Community Grants scheme

As part of your project, you may have asked us to contribute towards a ring-fenced pot of money that you can use to fund other groups/organisations (who we call Community Grantees) to deliver small discrete projects (Community Grants).

These Community Grants will contribute to the overall aims of your project. Any grants like this must demonstrate good value for money, and public benefit should outweigh any private gain.

You will manage the funding pot, develop an application process with a decision panel and monitor progress. The Community Grant scheme must also be publicised by you, so it is widely known and open to all.

You may wish to make Community Grants payments to third party owners (including private owners) for activities and capital works that contribute to achieving project outcomes. If you are the lead applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that the specific project outcomes are delivered by third party landowners (the Community Grantees) and that the grant contract is complied with, including repayment of the grant if necessary.

This should be formalised through third-party agreements that define the outcomes to be delivered on third party land. They should also secure the management and maintenance of capital works from the expected date of the works' completion until 10 years after the project completion date. This should be a legal agreement between you and the Community Grantee.

For more information about delivering a Community Grant Scheme, please speak to your Grant in Aid Manager.

Updating us on your project

Once we have confirmed you have permission to start, you do not need to submit any further forms until you are ready to claim the second instalment of your grant.

However, you must get in touch with us as soon as possible about any problems or significant issues that arise during the course of your project so that we can respond and support you as appropriate. This includes issues that could lead to changes in costs, serious delays, or failure to deliver the approved purposes and outcomes. Let us know in advance about any events and update us on any successes and good news stories.

Project changes

You cannot change the approved purposes of your project without our prior written agreement. If you want us to consider any changes to your approved purposes you must send us written details of the reasons for the request and explain how it will affect:

- the quality and outcomes of your project
- the cost of your project
- the time you need to complete your project
- the future viability of your project

We may then re-assess the project or take any other action we consider necessary. We may give permission for the change only if you agree to keep to extra terms and conditions.

Any changes that are agreed with us must be in writing and should also be reported in your Progress Report and/or Completion Report and Final Payment Request form.

Budget changes

Your grant notification letter includes the project costs agreed as part of your grant. All money spent on the project should be reported against these cost headings.

If you need to make minor changes and move funds between these cost headings in order to achieve your approved purposes you can report this in your Progress Report. You must demonstrate how these changes helped you to deliver your project.

You must get in touch with us in advance if you want to propose any substantial changes to these cost headings and for any major spending of your contingency. Please note all changes must be within the capital/revenue limits set by Welsh Government in the application guidance. Approximately 90% of the total project costs should be capital. Up to 10% revenue funding is available to assist the delivery of the project.

If you spend less than your agreed costs and your project completes under budget, we will adjust your final payment accordingly and you may need to return some of your grant to us. See the ‘Completion Report and Final Payment Request’ section of this page for details about how this is calculated.

If the total project cost increases during the course of the project, we will only consider increasing your grant in exceptional circumstances. In this case you will have to provide further information.

Completing your project

Once your project is complete you must submit the Completion Report and Final Payment Request form. This form will allow you to claim the final payment of your grant (up to 10%). We recommend that you do this as soon as you can gather all the information together and while the project is still fresh in your mind.

This form **must** be submitted by your Grant Expiry Date. If we do not receive the report within this timescale, we may withhold your final payment or ask for the repayment of some or all of your grant.

By complete we mean:

- your project is finished, and you have achieved your approved purposes

- you have followed our Nature Networks Fund acknowledgement guidance throughout the project
- you have a practical completion certificate or equivalent (for projects that have undertaken capital works)
- you have evaluated your project and created a report
- you can supply high resolution digital project photographs and proof of acknowledgment of our funding
- you have listed the project's digital outputs and provided the web address (URL) of the website or websites where they can be accessed

Once you have made your final grant request, we will not accept any further requests for payments from you. You should therefore agree your final accounts with your contractors and suppliers before you apply for the final grant payment.

We will continue to keep in contact with you at intervals after the project is completed including through our customer surveys.

Projects completing under budget

If you spend less than your agreed costs and your project completes under budget, you will need to return any grant that has not been spent to us. If the underspend is less than 10% of your grant we will adjust the final payment of your grant accordingly. If the underspend exceeds 10% of your grant you will need to return the unspent grant to us via cheque or BACS transfer (bank details are available upon request). Your final payment will be calculated based on your overall project costs and the grant percentage identified in your grant notification letter.

In the event of your project completing under budget, you must retain the budget limits set by Welsh Government in the application guidance. Approximately 90% of the total project costs should be capital. Up to 10% revenue funding is available to assist the delivery of the project.

FAQs: Nature Networks Fund (round two)

See all updates

Answers to questions raised by attendees of our pre-application advice webinar and workshop.

Page last updated: 9 November 2022. See all updates.

Eligibility criteria

Can our organisation apply for two projects at once, and will doing so affect our chances of success for each project?

You can submit more than one application. We will consider your capacity to deliver as part of the assessment. Please be aware that this is a competitive process, so we recommend that you focus on the main priority for your organisation as you could end up competing with yourself.

Priorities

The scheme is stated as being for activities on the protected site network or surrounding areas. What is your definition of ‘surrounding areas’? Is Nature Networks (round two) only related to protected sites?

Nature Networks' aim is to improve the condition and connectivity of the protected site network, but we recognise that ecosystems/species can be spread across wider areas. Therefore, these grants are designed to take a flexible approach to ecosystems/species.

A resilient ecological network is one where habitats and species are managed at a landscape-scale so that they have enough space to thrive and form multiple connections. ‘Surrounding areas’ could include landscape corridors, buffer zones or stepping zones which connect to, and form connections between, protected sites. The improved condition or management of these surrounding areas will benefit the resilience of the wider network.

You need to make the case for how the protected site network will ultimately benefit in your application. You may also find it useful to refer to National Resource Wales' Practitioners’ guide to Resilient Ecological Networks and maps of habitat networks which can help identify appropriate locations for actions.

Is there a fixed allocation of funding per area, or is it based on the quality of application?

There is no fixed allocation per area. If we receive more good quality applications than we can fund we will consider the balance of applications across geography.

Is a smaller application more likely to be awarded?

Details of how we will assess projects can be found within the Nature Networks Fund (round two) application guidance page. We are seeking a range of grant sizes, so a smaller application will be judged on its own merits.

Can you apply to restore peatland that one day could be entered into the peatland code, and carbon credits sold to pay for future maintenance?

Nature Networks could fund costs relating to Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) style scheme validation. Validation for carbon credit schemes such as the peatland code are required in advance of restoration. Applicants should therefore check that proposals align with the peatland code as only certain types of peatland restoration are eligible. Please contact NPAP@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk in advance of your application for further advice and to make sure that best practice is followed.

Would connections with other designated sites be acceptable, for example Wildlife Sites/Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)?

The priority of this fund is enhancing the protected sites network. You would need to make the case for other connections but they could be included as part of a wider project.

Does the Nature Networks fund cover geologically designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)?

Geologically designated SSSIs would be fine as they will likely have associated natural features or habitats. Your project should focus on the natural heritage.

In the marine environment, how do you define ‘communities’ to engage with?

There are some practical challenges to marine-based projects, but we are keen to see action that improves the marine area but also engages communities. It depends on the nature of your project. There are many under-served communities along the coast who almost never have access to their marine environment. Engagement doesn’t have to happen in-situ or on-site.

Can the project be used to develop relationships with new sites, or do relationships with sites have to be in place already?

It depends what you would like to do with those partnerships and whether there are costs associated with this. If it is part of a resilience aspect to your project, then you should have sufficient time to develop these relationships. If you expect to perform capital works on these sites, we need an agreement in place in advance so you may not have time to deliver these elements. We will consider this risk when assessing your project.

The guidance states that we cannot apply for a grant to cover work which falls within our statutory obligations. How do we make sure that our project is eligible and doesn’t constitute our existing statutory responsibilities under Section 6?

Section 6 does not prevent Local Authorities and other public bodies from applying for funding to support those duties. We have included this clause in our guidance to make sure applicants do not apply for double-funding for work they are already required to undertake. As long as your application is for additional project activity, then it should be eligible in relation to this clause.

Eligible costs

Can you clarify how much of a grant can be for revenue costs?

Unlike round one, there is no specified split for capital and revenue costs for Nature Networks Fund (round two). Please apply for the costs that your project needs.

Capital delivery for marine protected sites is extremely difficult and what is needed is revenue to influence pressures on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Can funds be used for this?

Grants are available for direct activity and engagement on sites. You cannot use funds for lobbying activity.

Can projects be entirely revenue, for example running activities, training and citizen science? Or do they also need to involve physical improvements to sites?

Projects can be entirely revenue/activity based. The work should result in direct improvements to the protected site network, and your application must make the case for how this will be achieved through the activities.

Can funds be applied to existing staff roles as well as for backfilling roles?

Yes, existing staff roles can be supported via Full Cost Recovery.

Are farmers able to be paid directly for works on their farm?

Farmers are eligible to apply for this funding. If you are the lead applicant you would be paid directly. If you are working in partnership with another organisation which is the lead applicant, you would need to invoice the lead applicant. Further details on how grants are paid can be found in the Receiving a grant guidance on the Nature Networks Fund (round two).

Can the funding be used to purchase vehicles under the 'Equipment' heading, where this would facilitate joined-up work between sites?

Yes, this is an eligible cost. We urge you to consider sustainability, value for money and what will be most cost efficient for your organisation.

How much leeway is there between the costs laid out in an Expression of Interest versus the costs when actually delivering? A lot of costs have to be estimated at this stage.

A ball-park figure is fine. We understand that your costs are estimated at this stage so we look at the sum of the figures submitted. We would only be concerned if the figures changed significantly.

During delivery, we allow a bit of leniency from your application costs, but we tend not to let activity costs be moved to capital costs, or vice versa. This is a conversation to be had with your Investment Manager during your project delivery.

In these uncertain times, how should we account for inflation in future years of our project budget?

The wide variety of projects that we will be funding through the Nature Networks Fund means that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to factoring in inflation. Your budget should include a best estimate of costs including inflation. There is guidance on how to calculate inflation, including forecast models, available on the internet.

Preparing your application

Is there any requirement for equal spend amongst the years of the projects?

This is not a requirement. We do request a cash flow document before your project starts to understand your grant payment requests across the project.

Are accounts mandatory for everyone?

No, accounts are not required for all applicants – for example, local authorities. If you do not normally produce audited accounts we can accept accounts verified (signed and dated) by a financial signatory at your organisation. If you do not have these, please provide bank statements covering the last three months.

If a project is likely to receive match-funding but hasn't yet, how early should they apply for this other funding?

In general, we would expect a project to have their match-funding in place by the time they start to deliver their project. If your match-funding is not in place, your organisation will be expected to underwrite it.

What kinds of agreements do you need in place to work on land we don't own?

Landowner agreements can take several different forms. As a minimum, you need an agreement with each landowner that signs them up to the terms of the grant and the grant duration, with clear roles and responsibilities, what area will be covered, and other stipulations according to our terms of grant.

If you are working in a partnership, both parties would need to bring something to the table and work collaboratively. Your partnership agreement should reflect this. Alternatively, if you are merely working on another organisation's land, the landowner just needs to agree for you to conduct work on their land.

These agreements don't need to be in place at the point of submitting an application, but we will factor this risk into the assessment of your application. Please consider the delays getting these agreements in place may cause.

Who do I contact from the Heritage Fund if I have any questions?

Please email: natur@heritagefund.org.uk. A colleague will answer your question as soon as possible.

Nature Networks Programme

If we had Nature Networks (round one) funding, are we less likely to get funding for round two?

Receiving a grant in round one does not mean you are ineligible to apply for round two. If we receive more good quality applications than we can fund, we will be looking to fund projects that represent a geographical spread across Wales, and this will include consideration of round one sites.

Can you clarify the overall budget?

The budget for Nature Networks (round two) is £9.6million.

Are other funding programmes still available for environmental projects in Wales or is the Nature Networks Fund the only path? Can bids for this fund be linked to other National Lottery Heritage Fund projects?

National Lottery funding is still available for environmental projects in Wales. Nature Networks Fund projects cannot be used as match-funding for other applications/projects.

Page updates

- **9 November 2022:** a new FAQ about how you should account for inflation was added under ‘Eligible costs’.