Nature Networks Fund

See all updates

This fund aims to strengthen the resilience of Wales' network of protected land and marine sites, supporting a green recovery for nature and communities.

Page last updated: 24 August 2021

Important

The Nature Networks Fund is no longer accepting applications.

Applicants who have passed the Expressions of Interest stage should continue building their applications.

- Explore our available funding
- Find out how to acknowledge your grant

Overview

The aim of the Nature Networks Fund is to improve the condition and resilience of Wales' marine and terrestrial protected sites network.

It recognises the importance of these sites in helping achieve wider resilient ecosystems and the benefits they provide that can support a green recovery.

Improving the condition of protected sites will enable them to function better at the heart of nature networks ? vital areas of ecological resilience in which habitats and species can thrive and expand.

Restoring connectivity in these networks will prevent further declines in species and habitat condition, and enhance capacity to adapt to climate change.

The Nature Networks 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.

What is the protected sites network?

The protected sites network covers Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas (formerly known as the Natura 2000 network) and other Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

To check whether land is included within this definition please visit the Natural Resources Wales website.

What do we mean by ‘green recovery’?

- reversing the decline in nature
- addressing the changing climate and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change
- tackling unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, through the circular economy
- economic recovery, through investment that supports job creation and new markets
- social recovery, by targeting action to those groups, communities and places that are most vulnerable, and/or have been hit hardest to address underlying inequalities and deprivation

Aims of the fund

Through the Nature Networks Fund we want to fund:

- Action 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) and demonstrates the sustainable management of natural resources across Wales.
- Improvements on protected 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-represented groups) to increase the network of people engaged with nature, and building the resilience of their local ecosystems.

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Who can apply?

The scheme will be open to all individuals and organisations in Wales, provided that they have the right permissions, licences and consents in place to undertake activity on the protected site network or surrounding areas.

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What we expect from projects

Activities must deliver direct benefits to the protected site network. This can include both directly on a site, and on surrounding areas that will improve the condition and connectivity of sites.

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

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that their planned project delivers against the management objectives for the relevant site.

Approximately 90% of the total project costs should be capital. Up to 10% revenue funding is available to assist the delivery of the project.

Applications for funding to support active community involvement would need to embed this in a project where the core focus is on restoration of protected sites. Applications focused only on the involvement aspect will not be eligible for funding.

As this funding is being distributed by the National Heritage Memorial Fund on behalf of the Welsh Government, our usual mandatory requirements around engaging a wider range of people do not apply. Further guidance on what to consider regarding outcomes is included below in the ‘How to apply’ sections.

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Key dates

Grants between £50,000 and £100,000

12 April – 24 May: Applications between £50,000 and £100,000 accepted.

- You will be informed of our decision by 30 July

Grants between £100,000 and £500,000

12–30 April: Mandatory Expressions of Interest stage.

- This is a mandatory phase for this level of funding.
- We will review your proposals and decide whether or not to invite you to submit a full grant application.
- You will be informed of our decision by 14 May.

19 May – 30 June: Applications between £100,000 and £500,000 accepted.

- You can only submit an application if you have passed the Expression of Interest stage.
- You will be informed of our decision by 10 September.

All funded projects must complete by 31 March 2023.

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Preparing your application

It is important that you identify which of your project costs are capital and 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 also eligible even if they have been completed and paid for prior to approval, provided they are essential for the delivery of the capital project.
- Up to a maximum of 10% of capital spend may be used to enable project delivery. By this we mean direct project delivery costs that enable you to undertake the capital project work such as project planning, procurement of materials or project management.
- Up to £3,000 can be included as capital contingency. This must be used on capital spend.

Revenue costs

These can be up to 10% in addition to the capital administration budget, and can include:

- staff time
- full cost recovery or core organisational costs
- activity costs (events, refreshments etc)
- room hire
- evaluation

You may not include future costs for ongoing maintenance or running costs.

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 get in touch with our Welsh language support team: cymorthcymraeg@heritagefund.org.uk

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How to apply for £50,000?£100,000

How to submit an application

Read the application questions and prepare your answers in advance. The online application form is now available to access. The application form must be completed in one go - you cannot save your application or return to it.

Please read this guidance as well as the standard application help notes to understand what information is required for each section of the application form.

Some questions need to be answered differently for the Nature Networks Fund. When the online form or standard application help notes contradict the bespoke Nature Networks guidance, the bespoke guidance document takes precedence.

Have your mandatory supporting documents ready to submit. Please note: your application is not complete until you submit the mandatory supporting documents on the templates provided.

The **deadline for applications is midday on 24 May 2021**. Any applications that have not submitted the correct supporting document by midday on 26 May 2021 will automatically be withdrawn.

Word limits

When drafting your answers, make sure you keep within the 6,000-word limit for the application form. You will not be able to submit your application if you exceed this limit.

Please note that our forms auto-calculate the word count and this may cause slight discrepancies in documents cut and pasted from Word. Any punctuation used between two words without a space (for example "non-essential" or “don’t”) will be counted as two words.

Section one: Your project

1a Project title
Please include the prefix #NNF in your project title. For example #NNF Butterfly nature reserve improvements.

1d Where will your project take place?
For site- or landscape-based projects, please provide a six-digit Ordnance Survey grid reference number for the mid-point of your project area (for example: SK510072).

If you are working on multiple sites, separate each grid reference with a semicolon (for example: SK510072; SX163777; TQ317842). Do not include any additional text with your grid references.

1e When are you planning to start and finish your project?
Nature Networks projects should start before the end of 2021, and must be completed by 31 March 2023. Please ensure that the dates you provide fall within this timetable.

1k As well as acknowledging your grant as set out in our requirements, we also ask you to provide special access and/or offers for National Lottery players. Please tell us how you would do this.
As this funding comes from the Welsh Government, the standard requirements around acknowledging the National Lottery Heritage Fund do not apply. Please leave this box blank.

Section two: The heritage

When questions refer to heritage for the Nature Networks Fund, you should mainly focus on the habitats and species that are found on the protected site.

2e Will you be undertaking any capital work as part of your project? Yes/No
Please select Yes. This is predominantly a capital grant scheme.

Section three: Managing your project

3f How will you evaluate your project?
We expect all Nature Networks grantees to collaborate with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales in collecting site data for the evaluation of these projects. This will include taking part in interviews, and identifying existing baseline data where applicable.

You may wish to conduct your own evaluation of the success of this scheme. If you do, please outline your approach here.

Section four: Project outcomes

Please note the outcome ‘a wider range of people will be involved in heritage’ is **not mandatory** in this programme.

Your project should at least achieve the ‘heritage will be in better condition’ outcome, but please tick all that apply and provide relevant details. For example, describe what specific actions you will undertake to improve the management of the habitats and species for which the sites are designated.

Section five: Project costs

5a Project Costs

Please refer to the guidance above in ‘Preparing your application’ to ensure that your project costs are eligible.

Please set out your costs clearly, including separating out VAT if you will be applying for this cost. The following cost headings may help you:

- New staff
- Professional fees
- Recruitment
- Purchase price of heritage items
- Repair and conservation work
- New build work
- Digital outputs

- Equipment and materials including learning materials
- Training for staff
- Training for volunteers
- Travel for staff
- Travel for volunteers
- Expenses for staff
- Expenses for volunteers
- Event costs
- Community grants
- Publicity and promotion
- Evaluation
- Full Cost Recovery
- Contingency
- Inflation

There is no minimum requirement for match funding in this programme.

It is important that the costs you ask us to cover do not constitute unlawful subsidy to you. You will be asked to make a declaration that you have considered and checked the rules on subsidy control when you submit your application, and to flag any possible issues.

Section six: Your organisation

Please complete this section as per our standard guidance.

Section seven: Supporting documents

Everything we need to assess your application is in the application form and supporting documents.

You will receive an email after you submit your application with instructions to upload your mandatory supporting documents.

If you have not received it after 24 hours please contact natur@heritagefund.org.uk. Please do not change the subject line of the email as it may delay your application. It contains a unique identification reference which consists of numbers and letters. We use this to match your supporting documents to the right application.

You must send us your supporting documents promptly after receiving this email. Please do not submit any extra documents as we will not use them in our assessment.

Allowable formats for supporting documents are jpg, xls, xlsx, jpeg, pdf, doc, docx, pptx, and ppt.

When sending us your mandatory supporting documents, please use the document names below so we can easily identify each document. Failure to use the correct document names may delay your application.

The application deadline is **midday on 24 May 2021**. Your supporting documents must be with us by **midday on 26 May 2021**. If we do not receive your supporting documents by this date your application will not be assessed and will be withdrawn.

We require the following documents:

- governing document (if you have one)
- project plan (mandatory)
- partnership agreements (if applicable)
- condition survey (where possible)
- job descriptions (if applicable)
- briefs for commissioned work (if applicable)
- images (if relevant)
- letters of support (no more than six)
- calculation of full cost recovery (if applicable)
- ownership documents (eg lease; if applicable)
- audited accounts (mandatory)

Section eight: Additional information and declaration

Please complete this section as per our standard guidance.

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How to apply for £100,000?£500,000

Expression of Interest

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

We recognise the work that goes into preparing an application. To keep competition at manageable levels, and give you the best chance possible, we ask all applicants for a grant above £100,000 to complete a short Expression of Interest (EOI) form.

You must submit your Expression of Interest by the deadline of **midday on 30 April 2021**.

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

We aim to respond to your Expression of Interest within 10 working days.

If you are successful, you must submit your full application by the deadline of **midday on 30 June 2021**.

Read the Expression of Interest questions and prepare your answers in advance.

We are using a bespoke Expression of Interest form for this funding, which is now available to access. You must complete your application in one go. You cannot save your application or return to it.

Please use the standard help notes to complete the Expression of Interest form.

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

2a Please tell us about your project
Please provide additional information on the following:

- Will your project improve the condition and resilience of Wales' protected sites network, and specifically the habitats and species for which the sites are designated?
- Where and how will the work take place?
- What communities will you work with?

2c. When are you likely to submit a development phase application if invited 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 30 June 2021.

How to submit an application

The full application form for grants of £100,000-£500,000 is now open. Projects that have successfully passed the Expression of Interest stage will be notified by email, and will receive a link to this form. If you have not heard from us about your Expression of Interest by Friday 21 May please contact natur@heritagefund.org.uk.

Guidance on completing the application form, and templates for the Detailed Cost Breakdown and Project Plan, can be found in the ‘Further help, resources and recorded support webinar’ section below.

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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 for applicants, public funding for organisations is no longer governed by the European Commission’s state aid rules 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 3 (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.

It is an applicant's responsibility to check whether state aid or subsidy control clearance is required. Applicants should seek independent legal advice if they 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 (ALB), 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.

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Further help, resources and recorded support webinar

For technical support or assistance with accessibility, please contact our customer service team by email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk.

For more information about the accessibility of our expression of interest application form, please see our Accessibility Statement.

For specific queries about the programme, please contact natur@heritagefund.org.uk.

Receiving a grant guidance: tells you what you need to do if you are successful and has more detail about our requirements.

Standard terms of grant £10,000 to £100,000: outlines the terms of our grants.

Good practice guidance: advice on a range of topics to help you achieve a high quality project.

Nature and landscapes guidance: help to design and deliver projects.

Large application guidance: use this guidance to help you in completing the application form for projects of £100,000-£500,000.

Project Plan Template: all applications must submit a project plan. The template for £100,000-£250,000 is recommended for all Nature Networks projects over £100,000, but you may create your own if preferred.

Mandatory Cost Template: this document is mandatory for all applications over £100,000

These area statements from Natural Resources Wales outline the key challenges and initiatives taking place within each Welsh area.

If required, Natural Resources Wales can provide advice on the management objectives: email sitesactions@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.

Join our April advice sessions

Come and talk to us about applying for a Nature Networks Fund grant. We will be running two online advice sessions to answer any of your application and Expression of Interest queries.

The sessions will be held on:

- 27 April at 12pm-1pm
- 28 April at 4:30-5:30pm

They will be drop-in, so turn up any time with your questions. We'll be answering them on a first-come-first-served basis.

Email natur@heritagefund.org.uk for sign-up details.

Support webinar recording

View a recording of our webinar held on 6 April. It provides an overview of the Nature Networks Fund, including:

- What it can fund
- Who can apply
- How to apply
- Useful resources

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The speakers are:

- Julie Hughes, Head of Investment Wales, National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Jason Jones, Investment Manager, National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Alice Teague, Head of Programme (Biodiversity), Welsh Government
- Christine Edwards, Lead Specialist Advisor: Protected Sites Programme, Natural Resources Wales

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Data

For more information about how your data will be processed under this grant programme please see our privacy policy.

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Complaints

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

We can only review our decision if you can make a formal complaint about how we have dealt with your application.

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.

The Heritage Fund Wales is distributing the Nature Networks Fund on behalf of the Welsh Government

Cronfa Treftadaeth
Heritage Fund

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