Trees Call to Action Fund

See all updates

In support of the England Trees Action Plan, this fund will build capacity in organisations and partnerships to deliver projects regionally and nationally over the next three years.

Page last updated: 11 March 2022.

Important

The Trees Call to Action Fund is no longer accepting Expressions of Interest.

Applicants that pass the Expression of Interest stage should continue building their applications.

Explore our available funding.

Overview

The Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF) will support the development of new and existing projects and partnerships, helping to deliver the England Trees Action Plan. This is part of the Nature for Climate Fund, which the government has created to treble tree planting rates in England by 2025.

TCAF aims to build the capacity of organisations working with the trees and forestry sector in England. These projects should aim to deliver the objectives of the England Trees Action Plan:

- expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands
- trees and woodlands as part of the green economy
- protecting and improving our trees and woodlands
- connecting people with trees and woodlands

We are offering grants of £250,000 to £500,000, for projects to deliver by March 2025.

The total available funding is £6million to be awarded in 2021–2022. We anticipate awarding in the region of 15–20 grants.

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What we are looking for

We are looking for innovative proposals that will contribute to the vision of the England Trees Action Plan (ETAP). Funding will be allocated competitively. To make your application stand out, you will need to set out how your project will deliver against multiple objectives from the ETAP.

Priority for funds will be given to proposals that support multiple objectives:

1. expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands
2. trees and woodlands as part of the green economy
3. protecting and improving our trees and woodlands
4. connecting people with trees and woodlands

Below is indicative guidance on the priorities of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). There are also example projects against each objective. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive, so we are interested to see other innovative proposals to deliver against ETAP objectives.

1. Expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands

We will particularly prioritise funding the development or expansion of partnerships which aim to increase woodland creation at regional or national scale. These should work to engage multiple stakeholders, landowners, businesses and communities to plan and enable woodland creation in the near future. This could include:

- landowner engagement
- community engagement to motivate public support and volunteering
- baseline surveys and ecology
- landscape assessment of suitable sites for planting
- creation of planting plans
- developing plans for future fundraising from public and private sources (including through applications to other available Defra funds for tree planting and woodland management)
- marketing and advocacy

Applications of this kind should set out:

- the background and nature of any existing partnership or how one will be built
- tree cover in your area, with targets for how this can be expanded by 2030 and 2050
- how you will build consensus around your aims and activities, for example, through alignment with Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- How you will build a pipeline of future tree planting projects at landscape scale, through engaging communities and land managers. To deliver this you may seek Defra grants for tree planting.
- how you will leverage funding from businesses, green finance and communities to invest in trees and ensure the sustainability of the partnership
- how you will facilitate effective local consultation and regulation of tree planting projects

These must be in regions not already receiving Defra funding for woodland creation partnerships (for example those funded by the Community Forests Programme).

The costs of tree planting are not likely to be awarded unless you can clearly demonstrate that these cannot be met through other available Defra and Forestry Commission funds.

Example project

You are a local authority that has stated a clear commitment to Net Zero and future tree planting targets. But, you have yet to identify where and how this will happen. You and your partners will recruit staff to work with environmental charities, community groups and landowners. You will:

- identify and survey appropriate sites
- co-create future planting programmes
- build local capacity to fundraise, create and manage future woodlands

2. Trees and woodlands as part of the green economy

We welcome proposals for developing the skills and knowledge the country needs to plant and manage trees in the long term. This could include:

- entry level skills training for new workers in the sector (particularly people aged 16–24)
- developing training for people changing careers
- on-the-job or in-house training
- external specialist courses
- volunteer training

Example project

You are a partnership who wishes to develop a scheme to recruit and develop job placements. These will be to train a new generation of arboriculturists, foresters and community woodland managers. You might choose to work with other employers and education providers to develop a placement scheme and training programme.

3. Protecting and improving our trees and woodlands

We welcome proposals to protect and improve our valuable trees and woodlands. For example, by improving their management and reducing pressures on their ecological condition.

Example project

You are a partnership looking to improve national woodland condition by reducing mammal browsing pressure on woodlands. You will work with landowners and land managers to manage deer and squirrels at a landscape scale.

Defra and Forestry Commission have other grants for woodland management. You should not apply to this fund for costs which can be met through these grants.

4. Connecting people with trees and woodland

We welcome proposals that include one or more of the following:

- Improving access to and engagement with trees and woodlands for under-served groups. For example, ethnically diverse communities, people from economically disadvantaged areas, disabled people, children and young people and older people.
- bolstering physical and mental health and wellbeing through engagement with woodland
- connecting people from urban areas with trees and woodland
- creation and improvement of nature-rich and active travel corridors, trails, signage and accessible paths in woodland locations
- employment of wardens, rangers, educators and other similar positions
- increasing volunteering in trees and woodland (including increasing volunteer recruitment from under-served groups)
- community engagement and citizen science for environmental conservation and future woodland improvement or maintenance.

We will not fund significant capital investments in facilities such as the construction of visitor centres, play areas, cafés or car parks.

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Who can apply?

Under this programme, we welcome applications from not-for-profit organisations based in England working in partnerships. Lead applicants may be:

- local authorities
- environmental charities
- environmental not-for-profit organisations
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Park Authorities

Partnerships may include commercial ‘for-profit organisations’ and private landowners, but neither can be the lead applicant.

Partnerships can include the following, but in an **advisory role only**:

- non-ministerial departments
- executive agencies
- executive or advisory non-departmental public bodies, such as:
    - Natural England
    - Forestry England
    - Forestry Commission

These bodies **cannot** receive any grant funding, but can contribute match funding, advice and land.

Who we are not looking for

Applicants are discouraged from applying if they are one of the following:

- single site projects, or projects working at a local scale
- solo applicants, with no partnerships in place
- Proposed new woodland creation partnerships in areas already in receipt of Defra Woodland Creation Partnerships funding. This includes England's Community Forests, the National Forest Company, the Northumberland Forestry Partnership, Forests for Cornwall and Woodlands for Water.

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What you can spend the money on

Examples of eligible costs include the following:

Capital costs:

- contractors or consultants (for example, ecologists, surveyors, land management advisers and facilitators)
- legal fees (for example, for creating third party landowner agreements)
- building materials (for example, for access paths)
- equipment purchase or hire (where essential to deliver the project)
- interpretation materials
- monitoring and evaluation activities

Revenue costs:

- skills and training
- salaries and on-costs of staff working directly on the project
- wages for apprentices or job placements
- recruitment
- volunteer travel and subsistence
- communications
- community engagement activities
- legacy planning activities
- Full Cost Recovery (for charities only)

Funding for AONBs, National Park Authorities, local authorities and universities can only be used to cover the following with regards to revenue costs:

- salaries and direct on-costs of staff delivering the project
- costs of backfilling an existing post where a member of staff is transferred to deliver new work associated with the grant
- costs of direct project delivery

Please note that this list is **not exhaustive and gives you an idea of the types of costs we will cover**. All goods, works and services must be procured in line with The Heritage Fund procurement guidelines.

Your project costs must be compliant with UK Subsidy Regime rules.

What you cannot spend the money on

Other public funding

TCAF is designed to work alongside and not in competition with Defra's other funds. Therefore:

- You are encouraged to consider how you can enable uptake of other grants. For example, by encouraging and enabling communities and landowners to apply.
- your EOI and application should outline any other grant funding you have or intend to apply for
- you cannot spend money from the TCAF on costs already funded by other grants, or use TCAF money as match-funding in government grant applications

TCAF will therefore not fund:

- **Purchase of trees and planting costs** which you should cover through private sources or application to other funds. Tree planting costs will only be considered if you can make a clear case that these cannot be met through application to:
    - Urban Trees Challenge Fund – planting street and urban trees
    - Local Authority Treescapes Fund – planting and natural colonisation outside of woods
    - England Woodland Creation Offer – planning and creating woodlands on specific sites
    - Forestry England Leasehold Scheme – planting sites over 50 hectares where you wish to lease land for planting and management to Forestry England

- **Woodland management costs** will only be considered if you can make a clear case that these cannot be met through private funds or application to:
    - Forestry Commission's Woodlands in Management scheme – innovative projects which can improve woodland condition through improved management activities
    - Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier – managing and improving existing woodland sites
    - HS2 Woodland Fund – restoring Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWs) by replaced felled non-native trees with native trees

- costs already covered through **existing Defra-funded Woodland Creation Partnerships**

Other ineligible costs

- land purchase or leases
- recoverable VAT
- costs related to promoting the cause or beliefs of political or faith organisations
- costs related to lobbying and/or activity to influence legislative or regulatory action
- costs incurred prior to any grant award
- Full Cost Recovery (for local authorities, universities, AONBs and National Park Authorities only)
- significant capital investments in facilities such as the construction of visitor centres, play areas, cafés or car parks

Your contribution

Applicants must contribute at least 5% partnership funding in the form of a cash contribution from public or private sources. Partnership funding can be unsecured at the point of application, but will need to be confirmed by the time the project is given permission to start. Partnership funding cannot come from The Heritage Fund, Defra or the Forestry Commission.

Please note that in-kind or non-cash contributions are not accepted for this programme. For example, volunteer time or staff time.

We will assess whether your project offers good value for money, including by taking match funding into account when making decisions.

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When to apply

We are accepting short EOIs from **3 November** until **12 noon on 16 November**. We will aim to assess Expressions of Interest within 10 working days of the deadline. We will consequently invite the top scoring projects to apply. We expect the programme to be competitive and hence not all fundable projects invited to apply will be supported. If we invite you to apply, you will then have seven weeks to submit the full application.

We are unable to give feedback on unsuccessful EOIs for this programme.

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How we assess your application

At Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, we will firstly consider whether you meet the essential criteria for the programme (see under ‘Who can apply’ and ‘What you can spend the money on’, above). If you do not meet the essential criteria, we will not assess your EOI further.

If you meet the essential criteria, we will then assess your EOI against the following quality criteria below. The criteria are given equal weight, and we will prioritise Expressions of Interest that perform most strongly overall across all criteria. We will also check that your costs appear reasonable for what you will be delivering and offer good value for money.

Quality criteria

- ability to contribute to **ETAP objectives** set out under ‘what we are looking for’
- **deliverability** of the project within timescale
- **fit** with local plans and nature recovery strategies
- **appropriateness** of project partners to deliver fund outcomes
- overall **value for money** against the grant amount requested

Projects will be scored higher if they meet **more than one** of the four ETAP objectives:

- expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands
- trees and woodlands as part of the green economy
- protecting and improving our trees and woodlands
- connecting people with trees and woodlands

If you are invited to submit a full application, we will consider a range of factors including:

- the needs and opportunities your project will address
- how strongly your project will meet our priorities
- evidence of stakeholder support
- overall value for money
- potential risks for the project's success
- how project outcomes will be sustained

All applications once assessed will be considered together by a recommendations panel involving all the fund partners. In the event that we will receive more high-quality applications than we can fund, we will use balancing principles to differentiate between high-scoring applications.

Balancing principles

In making final award decisions, we will prioritise:

- projects in areas with high potential for woodland creation, to enable tree planting at scale in future
- projects in areas of low tree cover which seek to address inequalities in access to trees and nature

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How to apply

- Visit our application portal and register an account. Anyone who has previously registered on our portal may need to re-register as we introduced a new portal in June 2021.
- from the pull-down menu choose £250,000 to £500,000
- Complete and submit an EOI Form Project Enquiry Form. We are accepting EOIs until **12 noon on 16 November 2021**.
- please read our guidance on how to fill in your EOI form
- give your project a name that starts with #Defra
- Once you have received feedback on your EOI, complete and submit a full application. If we invite you to apply, you will then have seven weeks to submit the full application.
- There is no dedicated application form for this fund. We will supply supplementary guidance on how to answer all questions in our £250,000 to £5million grant application form if you are invited to make a full application. Please see 'Applying for grants' below for what additional supporting information will be required.

Applying for grants

If you are invited to submit a full application online, we will provide you with further supplementary guidance on how to fill in the online form. You will also be required to submit the following supporting documents with your application. We must receive them by the published application deadline, otherwise your application will not be assessed.

Please do not submit any extra documents, as we will not use them in assessment.

Supporting documents

Mandatory for all applicants

1. **Governing document of lead applicant** (for example, constitution). Unless you are a public organisation (for example, a local authority) no governing document is required.

2. **last years' accounts and current year's management accounts**

- Audited accounts are independently examined and should be signed off annually. We would also like to see your management accounts.
- if you are a newly formed organisation and do not have a set of audited accounts, please submit your last three bank statements or a letter from your bank confirming that you have opened an account
- we do not need your accounts if you are a public organisation (for example, a local authority)

3. **Spreadsheet detailing the cost breakdown.** A spreadsheet which provides further detail to the cost breakdown provided in section six of the online application form: project costs.

4. **cashflow for the project**

5. **project management structure**

6. **draft partnership agreement**

- This document should outline partners' roles and responsibilities. We do not recommend a particular type or format of partnership agreement. It is up to the parties involved in partnerships to work out what is best for them.
- the agreement can be unsigned at point of application, but it will need to be signed as part of the legal agreement if an award is made

7. **project timetable**

8. **Project plan.** You must produce a project plan so that we can see how you plan to manage your project and link all the tasks and activities together in a logical way. We recommend you use the project plan we have provided on our supporting documents page.

9. **map of proposed project area**

If applicable for your application

10. **calculation of Full Cost Recovery**

11. **Job descriptions.** If you plan to recruit new staff to help deliver your project, please submit job descriptions for these posts.

12. **briefs for internally or externally commissioned work**

- Briefs describe any work you plan to commission. The brief should describe the works, how long they will take, how much they will cost and the skills required.
- For fees over £10,000, you should obtain three competitive quotes or tenders. For fees over £50,000, we will expect you to provide proof of the competitive tendering process if your project is given a grant award.

13. **letters of support (no more than six)**

- Letters of support are a good way of showing us that you have spoken to other people and that they are interested and committed to your project. Even if they are not formal partners at this point.
- letters of support should be on headed paper and signed where possible

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Legal requirements

Regulatory Control

It is your responsibility to outline in your application any regulatory implications from proposed activities within the project. For example, for woodland creation or management.

You should engage with regulatory bodies at the earliest stage to assess these implications. For example, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency or other relevant consultees to the project. Also, ensure that project timelines are planned appropriately to include regulatory assessment and approval of activities.

Subsidy Control

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

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 the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

There is expected to be further guidance, 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 subsidy control clearance is required. Applicants should seek independent legal advice if they are unsure whether a project will require clearance.

Land ownership

We expect projects to provide evidence that land in receipt of grant funding is legally secured and maintained in line with the terms of grant. This may be through evidencing freeholds, leaseholds and third party landowner agreements as relevant. We have land ownership requirements to ensure that government funds are protected. Also, that any capital works which are to be carried out will be secure for the 10 year term of the contract.

Where the lead applicant is undertaking capital works on land or buildings, we expect you to own the freehold. Or, to have a lease with at least 10 years left to run after the project completion date. We will ask you to provide copies of Land Registry ownership documents or leases before your project can start.

- 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, sublet and mortgage your lease. But if we award you a grant, you must first have our permission to do any of these.

Where projects are undertaking capital works on land owned by project partners, we may seek to tie partners into the terms of grant. We will do this by either making them a joint grantee, or by issuing a side letter.

If your project includes working on land owned by a third party or multiple third parties (including private land owners), legal agreements should be put in place between each land owner and the grantee. These agreements must be signed and a copy provided to us before any expenditure can be incurred on the land in question.

There is no prescribed form of agreement but at a minimum, land owner agreements should include:

1. details of the parties
2. confirmation as to how the land is held (freehold or leasehold)
3. a description of the property (including plans)
4. Covenants on the part of the land owner to maintain the land in accordance with the terms of the grant (as applicable). Or, to allow access for the grantee to undertake maintenance.
5. a provision that any onward disposal should be subject to the third party agreement
6. a provision that the agreement will last from the start of the work on the third party land, until 10 years following project completion

Working on private land

Projects can deliver works or activities on private land so long as any public benefit clearly outweighs any potential private gain. Also provided that Subsidy Control rules are not breached and you enter into a legal third party landowner agreement (as above). For example, we could fund the restoration of hedgerows, 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. 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. For example, if a charity planned to plant trees on Environment Agency (EA) land, that would be acceptable. But, provided that responsibility for ongoing maintenance was transferred back to the Environment Agency. Also, it is work that EA would not normally undertake as part of their statutory duties. Due consideration would also need to be made to ensure compliance with Subsidy Control rules.

Third party grants

We will consider applications that include third party grants where these are deemed essential to the successful delivery of your project. This is where a pot of money is ring-fenced for you to fund third party community groups and land owners (including private land owners). For activities or capital works that contribute to achieving the outcomes of your project.

If you feel that this is a necessary element of your project, we would not generally expect the funding pot to exceed 20% of the total grant request. Unless you have made a clear justification in your application. You must also detail how you plan to administer and monitor the payments, and evaluate what they achieve.

You will be responsible for ensuring specific outcomes are delivered by third parties and that the terms of the grant are complied with. Including repayment of the grant if necessary. You will need to demonstrate how you will formalise this through a legal agreement. This is to ensure delivery and secure the maintenance of any capital works for at least 10 years after the project's completion. You may include the costs of setting up a third-party agreement, including the costs of taking legal advice, as part of the costs in your application.

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Further help, resources and webinar recording

Help and resources

- please read our guidance on how to fill in your EOI form
- 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 EOI application form, please see our accessibility statement. We also have information on other types of assistance we can provide throughout your application process.
- for specific queries about the programme, please contact TreesAction@heritagefund.org.uk
- for more information about how your data will be processed under this grant programme, please see our privacy policy

- read our good practice guidance for projects including skills and training, and wellbeing elements

Webinar recording

Watch a recording of our Trees Call to Action Fund public webinar that took place on Friday 5 November 2021, below.

It includes a 20minute presentation and a 25minute Q&A with applicants. The presentation covers:

- overview and purpose of the fund
- eligibility
- application process

The speakers are:

- Zelda Baveystock - Head of Green Recovery Challenge Fund at the Heritage Fund
- David West – England Tree Planting Programme, Public Land Project Lead at Forestry Commission
- Ralph Weir - Team Leader, Economic and Social Forestry at Defra

Questions and answers from the webinar can be found on our support documents page.

Remote video URL

We've embedded content from YouTube here. As YouTube may collect personal data and track your viewing behaviour, we'll only load the video after you consent to their use of cookies and similar technologies as described in their privacy policy. We will also set a cookie to remember your preference.

Accept Watch on YouTube

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Making a complaint

We understand that you may be disappointed with the outcome of your Trees Call to Action Fund application. We can only review our decision again if you make a 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
- you can show that we have misunderstood a significant part of your application
- you can show that we did not take notice of relevant information

A 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 or country director from The Heritage Fund. They will be 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.

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Receiving a grant guidance and other support documents

Visit our separate page for guidance on receiving a grant. The following documents are available to download:

- Receiving a Grant guidance
- Terms of Grant
- guidance on how to submit an Expression of Interest
- project plan template (for full applications only)
- webinar questions and answers

You can also find out how to acknowledge your Trees Call to Action grant and download the logo.

The Heritage Fund is distributing TCAF in partnership with the Forestry Commission, on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Heritage Fund

Forestry Commission

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.