Nature Towns and Cities

27/05/2025

See all updates

A partnership between us, Natural England and the National Trust brings together organisations from across the UK to improve the quality of and access to urban green spaces in towns and cities.

Everyone should have access to public parks and urban green spaces which are full of natural and cultural heritage close to where they live. Evidence shows that we all feel the benefit when nature is part of our daily lives.

Through a package of support including £15million of funding to build capacity and partnerships, peer networks to share learning and practical solutions, and schemes to attract investment, we will inspire, resource and incentivise organisations to realise nature's benefits in creating greener, healthier and thriving communities.

In July 2025, we supported 40 towns and cities – through 19 partnership projects – to become greener and happier places for people to live and work. See the?full list of?projects?we've funded.

Nature Towns and Cities is a partnership initiative between Natural England, the National Trust and the Heritage Fund. In addition, we are working closely with NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Keep up to date with the latest news by signing up to the regular Nature Towns and Cities newsletter.

Our ambition

Nature Towns and Cities aims to support local authorities, their partners and communities with capacity and resources to put public green and blue spaces at the heart of their thinking. Visit the Nature Towns and Cities website to find out more about our plans and wider ambitions.

By 2028 we want to have supported places across the UK with grant investment, together with expertise and resources from our partners, to:

- place access to nature and nature recovery at the heart of local placemaking so that its benefits can be realised for health, prosperity, nature, heritage and local pride
- co-create with communities and partners ambitious green space strategies and improvement plans
- create strong and diverse partnerships between the local communities, businesses and local authorities that focus on the role of urban green and blue space in delivering better outcomes for health, wellbeing, heritage, transport, planning and nature
- Develop implementation plans that will transform the way public green spaces are utilised, managed and funded for the benefit of people and nature. This should include developing costed project plans and exploring how to unlock new investment from a wide range of investors and funders beyond just the National Lottery.

Considerations for a Nature Towns and Cities application

Important

This initiative is now closed to applications. Find out more on the Nature Towns and Cities website.

The deadline for applications has now passed. Funding decisions were made in July 2025. We are no longer accepting applications, but you may want to view this guidance for reference.

There will be one round of funding with grants available from £250,000 up to £1m. Your project can last for up to three years and will require a full application to be submitted.

In addition to the standard requirements of our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme, including responding to all four investment principles, your project application should:

- Focus on all the public urban green and blue spaces across an entire place. It is for you to determine the boundary of the place – it might be a local or combined authority administrative area, a town, a city, a city region or several towns or boroughs working together.
- Set out how you will lead for ambitious change that will deliver against our desired outcomes and ensure green space provides more for people and places.
- Show how a cross-disciplinary team and partnership working will ensure breadth in your thinking and active working across heritage, planning, transport, health, community and nature sectors.
- Identify what resources or support you will need. This might include for example investing in additional expertise and capacity to: engage local communities, develop new strategic partnerships, establish new bodies such as a foundation or trust, design new financial models, incentivise and unlock new investment, develop a project pipeline and replicate learning from the Future Parks Accelerator initiative.
- Allocate resources and capacity to join regular online network events and cohort learning sessions, to contribute to cohort working and to attend in-person visits to learn from other projects. We recommend allocating a day a month for network activities including cohort learning, events, training and site visits.

Please refer to the Nature Towns and Cities application help notes for more information on how to ensure you include the above considerations in your application.

All funded projects will receive free expert support from partners on topics such as green infrastructure planning, community engagement and green finance.

This initiative will not fund capital works. If you wish to apply for funds to regenerate a historic park or improve an existing site for nature, please apply through our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme.

Branding and acknowledgement

Projects should use our branding and acknowledgement guidance for Nature Towns and Cities.

Who can apply

Applications are open to not-for-profit organisations, and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations, from across the UK.

We encourage you to work with other people to develop and carry out your project.

If you plan to work with any other organisations to carry out a significant proportion of your project, you must formalise your relationship with a partnership agreement.

If you are making a joint application, you will need to decide which organisation will be the lead applicant. The lead applicant will complete the application, and if successful, receive the grant and provide project updates.

We usually expect the owner of the heritage (the public green space) to be the lead applicant. If the lead applicant is not the owner of the heritage, we usually ask them to sign up to the terms of grant.

If private owners or for-profit organisations are involved in the project, we expect public benefit to be demonstrably greater than private gain. We are unlikely to fund more than one project from a single place.

How to apply

The deadline for applications has now passed. Funding decisions were made in July 2025.

Any advice provided by National Trust, Natural England, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales and Northern Ireland Environment Agency should not be construed as an implied approval, acceptance or endorsement of any grant application, or consent or assent to the carrying out of any proposed activities to protected sites. All necessary consents and approvals must be obtained independently from National Trust, Natural England, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales and Northern Ireland Environment Agency or any other relevant authorities and should be done so in accordance with applicable law.

Receiving a grant guidance

If you are awarded a grant, this guidance sets out what we expect of you before, during and after receiving it.

How we make decisions

In addition to our processes under our standard National Lottery Heritage Grants approach, we will assess how your project addresses the ambitions of this initiative.

We may also consider issues such as achieving a geographical spread of our funding and/or a variety of different organisation type.

For this initiative, funding decisions will be made by a Joint Partnership Board including a Trustee from the Heritage Fund and representatives from the partner organisations.

Contact Us

If you have a question about our funding, please?get in touch with your local investment team.



Bradford's project will connect communities across the city and nearby towns with nature. Credit: SWECO.



illion investment

Credit: Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.



Parks for Health project Camden and Islington. Credit: Islington Council.

Future Parks Accelerator