



Guidelines for Applicants to the Malvern Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund 2022-23

First steps

These guidelines are to help you with your application for grant aid to the Malvern Hills AONB Sustainable Development Fund. Before filling in the application form you are strongly advised to discuss your ideas with your Sustainable Development Fund contact to make sure that you and your project are eligible for funding. Details of how to get in touch with your local contact are at the end of this note.

What is the Sustainable Development Fund?

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) provides small grants towards sustainable projects in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). We manage the Sustainable Development Fund for the Malvern Hills AONB on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

What are the aims of SDF?

The Sustainable Development Fund is aimed at supporting projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the area and which demonstrate innovation and good practice. It encourages local communities to get involved in caring for the AONB and finding ways to understand and celebrate what makes it special.

What is sustainability?

Sustainability is about balancing our environmental, social, and economic needs in a way which means that we don't compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainability improves the quality of our lives and protects our planet – and we can all play a part in making sure we have a better future.

How much money is available?

The total fund for the year is about £12,000. While there is no set limit on the maximum or minimum that applicants can apply for, we usually provide funding of between £500 and £2000.

Who can apply for funding?

The scheme is available to community or voluntary groups and parish councils, as well as the private sector and individuals. The private sector and individuals must demonstrate that their projects have a wider public benefit, and we can't usually pay their wages or travel costs. The proposed project must meet the aims and objectives of the scheme and either take place in or have direct benefit to the AONB. It must also comply with any relevant regulatory requirements e.g. planning permission, building regulations etc.

What type of projects will be supported?

You will need to demonstrate that your project will have environmental, social, or economic benefit. Your project should address at least one of these themes.

We have supported a wide range of projects in the past, including forest schools, meadow creation, the publication of history books and leaflets, orchard work, electric bike charging, woodland pest control and walking maps. We're happy to consider any project ideas which meet our aims so contact us to discuss your project before applying.

This year (2022-23) our grant scheme is open to projects meeting our Management Plan priorities:

To make the AONB a place of rich, diverse, and abundant wildlife

To help people enjoy, value and care for the AONB

To maintain the distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB

We particularly want to encourage:

Projects which support pollinators – we are part of the National B lines project

Projects which encourage a wider range of people to explore and enjoy the AONB

Priority will be given to projects which:

- demonstrate innovation or best practice.
- involve local communities.
- lever in contributions from other sources in cash or in kind.
- overcome barriers to sustainability and promote a wider understanding of sustainability.
- raise awareness of AONBs.
- generate jobs or income for local communities.

Grants and grant rates:

• The scheme will normally provide up to 50% of total project costs but may consider funding applications up to 75%. However, any partnerships involving local authorities will normally be funded at 50%.

• Payments will normally be paid retrospectively on completion of the project, so you will need to make sure that you can pay for goods and services before receiving your grant.

• Applicants will be expected to provide at least 25% of the total project costs, either from their own funds or those of others. **We are also happy to accept 'in-kind' funding** – i.e. non-cash funding of free goods or services, such as volunteer hours or materials, that can be given a value and be included in the project budget. You will need to keep a record of the volunteer time/services given to the project. The source of any match funding needs to be clearly identified to avoid the possibility of double funding.

Current 'in-kind' hourly rates for volunteers are:

- Basic £5.30 – based on minimum wage 2016 for 18-20 yrs.
- Standard £9.99 – the default figure for all general volunteering activity
- Lead volunteer £20.00 - a volunteer with responsibility
- Professional £47.00 – a volunteer using their professional skills

How are projects assessed?

Projects will be assessed monthly and grants will be allocated in principle until the fund is fully committed. There is usually sufficient money in the budget to allow projects to be considered throughout the year, but approved projects must be able to complete their work in time to make a grant claim in February, so we advise you to apply early.

All projects will be assessed based on whether they meet the aims, objectives and priorities of SDF and of the AONB, which are set out in these guidelines and the application form.

Small projects requesting less than £2,000 will be assessed by the MH AONB Unit officers. Larger projects (£2000 +) will be assessed by a panel of not less than three people drawn from the community and with skills and knowledge relevant to the project.

We aim to let applicants know of the decision within six weeks of making the application.

If you are proposing a new project please don't start work on it until you have received a decision as to whether your submission has been successful. If you are not successful we will contact you to let you know why and to see if we can help you re-submit if appropriate.

Making the application

Fill in as much of the application form as you can and attach any supporting information which may help us when we consider your application, such as photographs. We may come back to you if we need more information about your project. Once you are satisfied that you have provided all the relevant information please send your application to the address at the end of the application form.

Remember, there are no set dates which you need to get your application in by, but the SDF fund will reduce as projects are approved, so contact the project officer as soon as you have developed a project idea in order not to miss out.

Further information and applications forms are available from:

Karen Humphries, telephone 01905 845056 khumphries@worcestershire.gov.uk

Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern

Worcestershire WR143EY