



Guidelines for Applicants to the Malvern Hills AONB Community Projects Fund

First steps

These guidelines are to help you make an application for a grant from the Malvern Hills AONB Community Projects Fund. Before filling in the application form please discuss your ideas with us 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 Community Projects Fund?

The Community Projects Fund (CPF) provides small grants towards sustainable community projects. We manage the fund for the Malvern Hills AONB on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

What are the aims of the fund?

The Community Projects Fund 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 means meeting our own needs in a way which doesn't affect 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 is £10,000. There is no set limit on the maximum or minimum that applicants can apply for but we usually provide funding of between £500 and £2000.

Who can apply for funding?

The scheme is available to schools, 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 community benefit, and we can't usually pay 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, community drama, the publication of history books and leaflets, 'green' fairs, 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 (2023-24) 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 encourage a wider range of people to explore and enjoy the AONB

Priority will be given to projects which:

- involve local communities.
- provide opportunities for people who don't usually access the AONB to do so, either by visiting or learning more about the area and its special qualities
- lever in contributions from other sources in cash or in kind.
- promote a wider understanding of sustainability.
- raise awareness of AONBs.
- generate jobs or income for local communities.
- demonstrate and share innovation or best practice.
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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%.

• 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. free goods or services, such as volunteer hours or materials, that can be given a value and be included in the project budget as your contribution. 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

• Payments will normally be paid on completion of the project, so you will need to make sure that you can pay for goods and services **before** receiving your grant. We try to make payments as quickly as we can but payments made late in the financial year can take several weeks to reach your bank account.

How are applications assessed?

Applications will be assessed monthly and grants are 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 the grant fund 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/email 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 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.

Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions and we'll try our best to answer them or to help you fill in the forms.

Further information and applications forms are available from:

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

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