

Sustainable Development Fund 2022/23

Guidance Notes

An introduction to the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is managed by the Blackdown Hills AONB team on behalf of Defra. The fund is aimed at supporting projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the area and demonstrate innovation and good practice. Public, private, voluntary and community groups can apply; individuals and businesses can also apply if they can demonstrate their project has a clear benefit for the wider community.

What projects are suitable?

The fund can support a range of projects including practical work, feasibility studies, research projects, partnership development, and training. Grants can be used to fund new projects or to add value to an existing project. Projects need to demonstrate that they will:

- Help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB
- Increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB
- Bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the AONB
- Have the demonstrable support or involvement of local communities

The *SDF criteria checklist*, part of application form, will help you to check whether your project meets the aims of this fund. The types of project that are eligible include: restoration of historic features (village ponds, community orchards, traditional boundaries); training programmes to safeguard traditional skills (hedge-laying, woodland management, surveying and conservation); projects that provide new opportunities for young people. You will find more examples of successful projects on the AONB website <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/get-involved/community-projects/>

How does the fund work?

- Before starting to complete the applications form read these guidance notes carefully
- SDF applications are appraised and evaluated for suitability against the grant criteria
- The scheme can provide up to 75% funding for projects. Some volunteer time can be included as an 'in-kind' contribution for match-funding purposes but it is preferable to have some cash match funding
- The maximum grant available for 2022/23 is £2,000 and **funding is paid on completion of the project and not upfront.**
- Projects must be completed by 1st March 2023
- SDF cannot fund work carried out before the date of the offer letter
- Successful projects will need to comply with the grant's Terms and Conditions, which include a minimum level of publicity and completion of a short project summary form within 30 days of project completion.

Applications

Applications can be made at any time up to 31st January 2023. The aim is to have a decision within 21 working days from the date of receipt of an application that has supplied all relevant information to enable it to be assessed.

Useful sources of information

The AONB website is the best place to start:

- SDF Criteria: <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/get-involved/find-funding/sustainable-development-fund/>
- AONB Management Plan: <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/our-work/management-plan/> or call 01392 383600 to request a hard copy

Guidance notes for completion of application form

On the application form, for every question you are given there is a box in which to write your answers and as you type in those boxes they should expand to fit your text. Applications will be considered against the set criteria not by the length of the proposal so please keep your application as concise as possible.

Handwritten applications should be completed in BLOCK CAPITALS and you may wish to submit additional sheets with your application as you will not have the flexibility of expanding the boxes.

If you have any problems with the application form please get in touch with the AONB team on 01392 383600 or email blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk

*If you would like to discuss your project idea with a member of the AONB team before completing a full application please complete the **expression of interest form** and send it to blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk*

1.0 Applicants details

Please complete the details of the main person who will be dealing with the application on behalf of the organisation.

1.1 Organisation status

Please complete the boxes that are applicable to your organisation.

If your organisation is VAT registered funding will be paid net of VAT, non VAT registered organisations will be paid the gross amount including VAT.

2.0 Project details

Project title: The title will tell others what your project is about, but it should also be as short and catchy as possible for use in publicity.

Project description: We need a detailed description of your project, including details about what the grant will fund. What your project aims to achieve and who are the key people and partner organisations involved. Do attach a separate sheet if you need more room to write and include any relevant site plans, drawings or a project plan.

Timetable for your project: We need to know how long your project will take to complete and your anticipated completion date. Please note that any grant approved must be spent before the end of the current financial year (31st March 2023).

Project location: We need to know where the project will take place and who or what it will benefit?

Ownership/permissions: If applicable, outline who owns the land and the lease details. You will need to ensure that all permissions are in place before starting the project.

Management Plan priorities: You must be **very clear** about how your project ties in with the objectives of the Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan. Please complete the relevant boxes for your project explaining how the criteria are met.

Direct and countable results (outputs) of your project: We need to know what the direct countable results of your project will be: number of people benefitting from your project, number of volunteers involved, and other outputs such as nest-boxes put up, leaflets produced, press releases written, events held, trails created.

Sustainability of your project: Please detail how your project will be maintained, funded and supported in the future. The project needs to be sustainable.

Sustainable Development Fund criteria: You must be **very clear** about how your project meets the fund's criteria. These are listed in the application form and put a cross by any that your project will deliver.

3.0 Declaration

Please sign, print and date the declaration.

Please follow the instructions about where to send the application. Electronic applications to blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk are preferred however, posted hard-copies are also fine.

4.0 Project costs and funding

You need to provide a detailed breakdown of costs and funding under the headings and rows listed in the two tables. You can add extra rows for additional information as necessary.

Expenditure Table

Description of cost/activity

Detail the cost of your project and whether this is a cash payment or offered in-kind. Examples of a cost/activity may include the following:

- ***Project manager:*** You may be paying someone with experience to manage your project; the cost will be a **cash** cost to your project. If a person chooses to manage the project without payment this will be an **in-kind** cost
- ***Specialist contractor:*** if your project requires you to hire specialist skills the cost will be a **cash** cost to your project
- ***Purchase or hire of goods/equipment:*** The cost of all goods and equipment that will be purchased or hired for the project should be listed. Any unexpected costs that arise once the project has started and have not been listed on the application form will need to be approved before they are purchased. This will be a **cash** cost to your project
- ***Design & print:*** If you are paying for the design and print of leaflets or publicity material this is a **cash** cost. If however someone volunteers their time to design your material (without charge) this will be an **in-kind** cost
- ***Volunteer time:*** If people volunteer to help with the project (without payment) this can be recorded and used as an **in-kind** cost. In all cases recording volunteer time is essential and a timesheet detailing volunteer time and activity must be submitted with your claim forms. A timesheet template is available from the AONB office should you need it. When calculating the value of your volunteer's time the following notional rates can be applied and must reflect the actual work being done for the project and not their normal occupation.

General volunteer time is valued at £60 per day or £7.50 per hour. Specialist, technical or professional volunteers are valued at £120 per day or £15 per hour (evidence of specialist expertise should be provided).

Total Costs: If you are completing the form online the sub total and total project costs will be added up for you. If you are completing the form manually please add up the columns of each section.

VAT: If your organisation is VAT registered funding will be paid net of VAT, non VAT registered organisations will be paid the gross amount including VAT.

Income Table

Description of sources of funding: Please give details of all cash contributions towards your project from your own organisation and other partners/funders and state whether this is confirmed or applied for.

Sub-total of cash funding: If you are completing the form online the cash sub-total will be added up for you. If you are completing the form manually please add up the column.

In-kind contribution: If you are completing the form online the in-kind total will be entered for you. If you are completing the form manually please add the total.

Amount requested from SDF: If you are completing the form online the amount requested from SDF will be entered for you. If you are completing the form manually please add up the total of cash and in-kind funding and take this total away from the total project costs. The total will be the funding amount you are requesting from SDF.

Total income: If you are completing the form online the total income box will be added up for you. If you are completing the form manually please add up the sub total of cash funding box with the in-kind contribution and the amount of SDF funding. This total should agree with your total project cost above.

SDF Funding as a % of the total project cost: If you are completing the form online the figure will be calculated for you. To calculate the % of total project cost divide the SDF funding requested from the AONB by the total project funding and multiple by 100.

APPENDIX 1

STATE AID RULES

It is a requirement of EU regulations that we ensure that we comply with the State Aid rules.

You are being offered assistance under the European Commission's *De Minimis* regulation (Regulation 69/2001). This allows receipt of up to 200,000 euros of *De Minimis* state aid over any given three-year period.

To confirm that you are able to receive this assistance you must therefore declare the full amount of *De Minimis* aid you have already received over the last 36 months.

The following is not a comprehensive list of the possible forms of aid. However it should give an indication of the most common forms of aid, which you may have been given over the past three years. Potentially any assistance from a public body might be an aid. Should you have any doubts on this matter, please contact the body from which the assistance was received.

- Grants from public bodies
- Loans from public bodies at favourable rates
- Loan guarantees from public bodies
- Differential tax benefits
- Grants from an investment trust (including charities) which may themselves have received the funds from a public body
- Grants from a part publicly funded venture capital fund
- Publicly administered funds, even if the funds were originally not public such as the national lottery
- Waiving or deferral of fees or interest normally due to a public body such as the waiving or deferral of rent or waiver of interest normally due on late payment of taxation or other costs to a public body
- Monopoly licences or guarantees of market share
- Advertising via a public channel such as a tourist board or state owned television
- Consultancy advice provided either free or at a reduced rate
- Training provided either free or at a reduced rate
- Aid for investment in environmental projects
- Provision of a free or reduced rate feasibility study for research and development or other assistance with research and development
- Purchase of public land or property at a less than market rate
- Benefiting from the provision of infrastructure where your organisation was pre-identified as a beneficiary

These types of aid may have been provided under *De Minimis* (as *De Minimis* aid) or under another State Aid regulation. If you are in any doubt whether aid received was *De Minimis* aid or about its value, check with the organisation, which provided it. If they are unable to say or there is any uncertainty, assume that it was *De Minimis* aid unless its value exceeded the sterling equivalent of 200,000 euros in which case it cannot have been *De Minimis*.

Any *De Minimis* state aid awarded to you under this project will have to be declared if you apply, or have applied, for any other *De Minimis* aid.

Any support (i.e. funding of proposals covering commercial activity), which is caught by the State aid rules, may operate under the de minimis rules (Commission Regulation (EC) No 69/2001 of 12 January 2001 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to de minimis aid). The de minimis regulation allows for aid of up to 200,000 euros to be provided to any enterprise regardless of size, so long as the enterprise has not received de minimis aid from any other source in the last three years which would result in the total de minimis aid to that company exceeding the 200,000 euros over three years threshold. Any de minimis aid granted over the 200,000 euros threshold may be subject to repayment with interest. De minimis aid cannot be given to enterprises in the transport or agriculture sectors or for directly export-related activities or where aid is contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods. You must keep records of aid given for ten years.

Organisations that have received de minimis aid in the last three years from any source must provide details of aid received and if given de minimis aid under this scheme must supply information to any other public authority or agency asking for information on de minimis aid for the next three years.

Further information

If you need further clarification, there is a telephone help line on 020 7215 5000 or a Government website at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid>

