

Sustainable Communities Fund

Information Sheet

Overview

This fund can provide up to 50% match funding for your project, to a maximum of £10,000. It's for non-profit projects that will deliver the objectives in the Partnership Management Plan for the national park. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/> Projects showcase sustainable materials from local businesses and should have local support.

The Sustainable Communities Fund is made possible through annual funding from the South Downs National Park Authority and generous donations made to the South Downs National Park Trust.

It's important to work with the relevant national park Ranger. They will provide information on priorities and best practice in environmental conservation and link with other national park staff with expertise in a range of areas.

After reading this sheet please complete a project enquiry form and return to grants@southdowns.gov.uk so that we can review the eligibility of your project and contact the relevant Area Ranger for you.

Other funding is available through the South Downs National Park Trust for nature recovery work: <https://southdownstrust.org.uk/grants/> And larger infrastructure funding is available each year through the Community Infrastructure Levy funding bidding process. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy/revision-of-spending-cil/applying-for-cil-funds-for-an-infrastructure-project/>

Funding Criteria

You must be a constituted community, voluntary or charitable organisation, Community Interest Company, Social Enterprise, Parish Council or Local Authority (see specific match funding requirements for LAs). You will have an appropriate governing document in place and a bank account.

All projects must contribute to at least one policy or outcome in the Partnership Management Plan. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/>

The project will take place within the South Downs National Park area or within 5km of the boundary where the project is themed around and increases participation with the South Downs National Park. <http://southdowns.gov.uk/discover/communities/do-i-live-in-the-national-park/>

The following items are eligible for grant:

- **Capital items** - such as the purchase of equipment and materials. E.g. irrigation equipment for maintaining a community orchard, signage about cultural heritage, planters for a community garden, tools for conservation work.



- **Professional contractors** - such as builders and tradespeople to install a pond or the interior of a new community workshop.
- **Cultural activities** - community arts and heritage activities that are based on or inspired by the South Downs. For example, the cost of an external artist or facilitator to lead a programme of workshops, art materials, exhibition materials.
- **Events & festivals** – equipment and materials to support events. Grants given for one-off events and towards festivals are capped at £2,000. The events must contribute to and be based on the special qualities of the South Downs rather than simply being a community event which takes place in National Park.

Start-up – occasionally the SCF will allow organisations less than a year old to include some revenue funding at the start of a project, where this is clearly linked to delivery. The application should show how these costs will be sustained by your organisation after the grant.

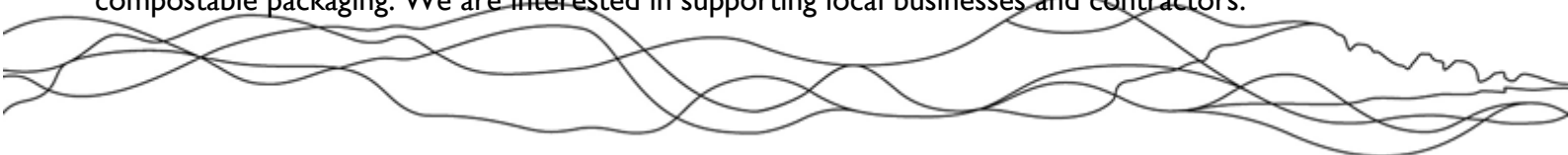
The following items are *not* eligible for grant:

- The cost of making planning applications.
- The acquisition of land and buildings.
- Long term revenue costs for your organisation including salaries and building rent.
- Profit making projects and projects for personal gain.
- Commissioning public realm artwork such as statues. The Arts Council may offer grants. Creation of South Downs inspired art as an outcome of a community- participatory activity is fundable.
- The introduction of non-native species, unless recommended by the South Downs National Park.
- School curriculum provision. A school may be one of the partners in a community project but should not be the only beneficiary.
- Academic research. Surveys and monitoring may be eligible.
- Routine repair and maintenance work.
- Vehicle purchase or hire.
- Refurbishment to churches, village halls and sport facilities. National lottery grants and Community Infrastructure Levy funding may help with these.
- The promotion of religious or political beliefs.
- Publicity or promotion for your organisation including new websites (promotion limited to the project is eligible).
- Projects which are the statutory responsibility of another organisation e.g. Highways.
- Apprenticeships.
- Projects where the main benefit is outside the boundary of the National Park. For example, fixed structures outside of the park.
- Work that has already taken place and items bought before a grant offer is made.

We will not fund the same organisation twice in a financial year and you would be expected to have fully claimed your grant and submitted a completion report before a decision is made on a new application. New applicants may be prioritised.

Sustainability

Capital items should be sourced locally where possible and use sustainable materials e.g. UK-grown timber, compostable packaging. We are interested in supporting local businesses and contractors.



For events and festivals you will be expected to promote sustainable travel options to and from.

Your project should have a legacy, with outcomes that are sustainable beyond the grant funding. We are unable to support ongoing costs.

How much can I apply for?

You can apply for up to 50% of the total cost of your project. The remaining amount will be made up of your 'match-funding' from other sources. Small grants are available between £500 and £2,000. Large grants are available between £2,000 and £10,000.

Your other sources of funding could be:

- Local Authorities and Parish Councils- it's very important to have sought a contribution from your Parish, Town Council or Local Authority
- A grant from a public funding body, trust or foundation
- A company or business sponsorship
- Your organisation's own income and reserves
- Community Infrastructure Levy Funding
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy/revision-of-spending-cil/applying-for-cil-funds-for-an-infrastructure-project> You can check whether there is any CIL remaining in the area by using this database:<https://pfm.exacom.co.uk/sdnpa/>
And instructions: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/PFM-User-Guide.pdf>
Speak to the Parish/Town Council to see whether this can be utilised as match funding
- In-kind support through voluntary time. Unskilled volunteer time is valued up to £70 per day, skilled time up to £150 per day and professional services up to £250 per day. (see note below)

We are unlikely to count bank loans as match funding.

District or County Councils must provide at least 50% cash. In-kind contributions are a positive addition to an application but will not be counted as match funding.

Match funding does not have to be secured at the time of application but your plan for match funding will be reviewed as part of the decision process. You will not be able to start until it is secure.

Volunteer time and pro-bono support– You are able to include these in your project costs up to 25% of the total project value. In the application budget you will be asked to record these as an income and an expense meaning that although we are not paying directly for these non-cash costs, more of the funding is apportioned to the rest. E.g. £10,000 total project cost could be made up of £5,000 Sustainable Communities Fund, £2,500 Parish Council grant and £2,500 volunteer time.

Planning

It is important that you find out whether you need planning permission for projects *before* applying, particularly for work involving any development including the installation of boards, signage, structures and carrying out grounds works. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/do-i-need-planning-permission/i-need-planning-permission? - South Downs National Park Authority> Permission does not need to have been granted at the time of application but if funded you will not be able to start until it has.



Application dates and decision process

Deadline dates for applications typically fall 4-6 weeks before decision and are advertised on the South Downs National Park Trust website.

A dedicated SCF grants panel, made up of South Downs National Park staff and Authority Members, South Downs Trustees and independent community representatives are consulted on applications. The Grants Officer will contact you if there is information that they require before a decision. The panel decide based on:

- Community involvement and beneficiaries
- Contributions to the Partnership Management Plan
- Alignment with the purposes and duty of the National Park and contribution to its special Qualities <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/our-history/why-are-we-a-national-park/>
- Sustainability – both environmental and the legacy of the project beyond the funding. Projects should support native species and use local, sustainable materials.
- Value for money.

If awarded a grant you will be asked to confirm acceptance of grant conditions. Small grants are paid up-front once you have your match funding in place and any other necessary permissions. For large grants a payment plan will be based on the information in your application with a minimum of 10% retained until completion.

Standard conditions include the need for match funding and planning permission (where applicable) to be in place before starting and the requirement to send a completion report and proof of expenditure at the end. You will be responsible for managing the project and health and safety of volunteers under your direction. The fund should be acknowledged in any project promotion and we should be notified in advance of press.

What do I need to apply?

- A constitution or governing document for your organisation. This is a simple set of rules by which you run your organisation, agreed by its members. Local Voluntary Action groups can often offer advice on writing these, and the My Community page has a template: [Download a template constitution for your group - MyCommunity](#). There should be a dissolution clause.
- Your organisations latest accounts, audited where applicable. If your organisation has been running for less than 15 months, you may not be able to supply this so please send a 12-month financial projection for the year when you will spend the grant. You will need to justify the need for grant if you have more than 1 year's expenditure in unallocated reserves.
- Location details for the project including a grid reference number and basic map
- A budget detailing all of the anticipated income, expenditure.
- Three comparable quotes for any items that will cost £1,000 or over or justification in the form where this is not possible/appropriate.
- A clear idea of how this meets the Partnership Management Plan for the national park

Without the above information your application will not be considered.

These items greatly enhance an application:

- Local support, which could come in the form of letters from your Parish Council, local stakeholders or intended beneficiaries.
 - Understanding of the people and species that would benefit from the project e.g. surveys
 - Photographs illustrating the project
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