

What is the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)?

The SDF is a fund to aid the achievement of AONB purposes by encouraging individuals, community groups and businesses to co-operate together to develop practical and sustainable solutions to the management of their activities. It is hoped that such groups will seize the opportunity presented by the fund to test new ways of achieving a more sustainable way of living in landscapes of outstanding natural beauty.

Objectives of the SDF

- Support the purpose of AONB designation and the delivery of CRoW Act Management Plans.
- Support Defra objectives of sustainable development, partnership, and social inclusion.
- Support Natural England's Strategic Direction and Corporate Plan 2014-2019

What is Sustainable Development?

There are many different definitions of sustainable development; we have set out below the definition that we will be using when we consider projects for the fund.

Sustainable Development will promote and enhance the environmental, economic and community well being of the Northumberland Coast AONB to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

According to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, achieving sustainable development requires working towards four main goals at the same time:

- Social progress which meets the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Ensuring a diverse and prosperous rural economy
- Prudent use of natural resources

Criteria

Projects should endeavour to fulfil as many of the following criteria as possible:

- Further the purposes of AONBs by delivering the AONB Management Plan
- Be sustainable against an appropriate test of sustainable development
- Have the demonstrable support or involvement of communities
- Be complementary to key local, regional and national strategies
- Demonstrate innovation or best practice - ***this should be encouraged wherever possible***

Priority will be given to those projects which:

- involve young people
- combat social exclusion
- promote diversity
- bring organizations and people together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas
- encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the AONB
- lever in contributions from other sources OR CONVERSELY have overriding merit in terms of sustainability criteria but been denied access to alternative public funding
- add value or new dimensions to existing sustainability projects
- add value by offering insights onto innovation and risk taking

Grants can be used to:

- Pump-prime new sustainable development projects which have been unable to find funding from other sources
- Provide match-funding for new sustainable development projects
- Add value to existing sustainable development projects
- Add a sustainable development aspect to existing projects

Who can apply?

Public, private, or voluntary sector, individuals, businesses, community groups and local authorities. Individuals or businesses can only be beneficiaries where the project shows clear benefit to the wider community.

You don't have to live or work within the AONB grant area (see Appendix 1) to apply. You must simply demonstrate that your project will have a positive impact upon the AONB grant area and satisfy the core criteria of the grant.

How we assess your application

Before you submit an application, please speak to us! The AONB team can guide and support the development of your application where appropriate.

Applications will be assessed against the fund's aims and criteria. If the Panel decides the proposal is a suitable SDF project, then the applicant will be encouraged to submit an application form detailing the project budget and intended targets. Applicants will then be notified of the Panel's decision within two weeks of the meeting. Applications are decided upon by the Sustainable Development Fund Administrator and AONB team.

All projects must satisfy the core criteria. Projects should also meet some of the desirable criteria. You do not need to satisfy all the desirable criteria - although in theory, the more criteria you can satisfy the better. What is more important is how well you can satisfy them, rather than the actual number. The list of criteria is not exhaustive; therefore, if other sustainable issues are highlighted in the application then these should also be taken into consideration.

Whilst projects may have no impact on a number of desirable criteria, any proposal that has a tangible negative impact on any of the criteria will be ineligible for funding.

Grants

Grant funding is paid **retrospectively** on submission of a claim form and receipts

- Grants will be in the range of £500 - £3,000.
- In general, the scheme will provide up to 75% funding for charities, trusts, community and voluntary organisations, although in exceptional cases 100% may be provided. When making grant applications, applications will be expected to explore complementary grant sources to give added value to the Sustainable Development Fund.
- The scheme will provide up to 50% funding for businesses and local authorities. For schemes led by or involving government organisations, the total level of SDF grant plus match-funding from government organisations should not exceed 50% of eligible costs.
- In all cases, an agreement setting out what is required for satisfactory completion of the project will be signed prior to receipt of grant.
- For match funding purposes volunteer time can be included. It will normally be costed at £50/day (£6.25/hr) for general volunteers and £150/day (£12.50/hr) for specialist, technical or professional volunteers. Existing staff time cannot be counted as match funding.
- Receipts which are dated *before* the date of the Offer letter will not be accepted.

How can the AONB team help?

If you would like more information or want to talk through a project idea, please contact the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership:

Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
Tel: 01670 622 644

Email: catherine.gray@northumberland.gov.uk or coastaonb@northumberland.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Area Covered by the Sustainable Development Fund

The grant is available in the AONB and adjacent parishes within 2 kilometers of the AONB boundary. This includes the following parishes (north to south):

- Berwick
- Ord
- Ancroft
- Kyle
- Holy Island
- Middleton
- Easington
- Belford
- Bamburgh
- North Sunderland
- Adderstone with Lucker
- Beadnell
- Ellingham
- Newton by the Sea
- Embleton
- Rennington
- Craster
- Longhoughton
- Lesbury
- Alnmouth
- Warkworth
- Amble by the Sea

Appendix 2: Guidance for the Sustainability Checklist

The following notes give guidance on what is looked for when completing the sustainability appraisal of applications. To be considered for funding projects need to meet a minimum of two Core Criteria, and one each of a minimum of two Desirable Criteria. Core Criteria A *Northumberland Coast AONB purposes* is a “gateway” criteria. Only projects that further the purposes of the AONB will be considered.

All projects need to promote sustainable development. This may be through direct benefits to the environment, or addressing social problems, or developing the local economy in a sustainable fashion.

Core Criteria

Q15. Northumberland Coast AONB purposes

The statutory purpose of the AONB is:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

A government policy statement¹ on AONBs also identifies three related purposes:

- Recreation (‘the demand for recreation should be met insofar as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty’)
- Socio-economic (‘account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries, and the economic and social needs of local communities’)
- Sustainable development (‘particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment’)

Natural Beauty: there is no legal definition of natural beauty but for the purposes of the Fund it may be considered to include everything that affects or has an impact upon the landscape and landscape character of an area, as described by the AONB Management Plan.

Applicants should identify which part of the AONB Management Plan they are helping to achieve, and should ensure that their impact on the area’s natural beauty is in accordance with the vision and policies of the Plan. The Northumberland Coast AONB Management Plan is available from the AONB Office or on the website www.northumberlandcoastaonb.org

Q16. Support and Involvement of Community: Ideally community projects must have achieved some kind of consensus from and / or involvement of people living within the local community. An integral aim of the SDF is to encourage individuals, communities, and businesses to develop and test new ways of living more sustainably in the countryside.

¹ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a Policy Statement. Countryside Commission, 1991. CCP 356

Q17. Desirable criteria

Environment Criteria:

A. Biodiversity: means the ecological richness and diversity of a place (or places) as reflected in the number of species and range of habitats. The rarity of the species and habitats protected or created and their quality would improve the biodiversity score.

B. Reduce, reuse, recycle: can be applied to any resource consumption e.g. from water to wood. An approach that reduces consumption of something is usually more sustainable than one that **reuses**, which in turn is more sustainable than one that **recycles**.

C. Energy conservation: sustainable projects seek to minimise the energy consumption, and efficiency of use of energy, over all aspects of the project, e.g. using efficient products (in use and manufacture), conserving heat and reducing electricity use, minimising transport. They may also promote development of renewable energy. This is linked to reducing emissions and helping to tackle climate change.

D. Minimise pollution to air/water/land: using products and processes that have a minimal impact on the environment be it peat-free products, low water extraction or minimising the release of gases that contribute to climate change. Projects should ideally seek to alleviate the effects of pollution rather than simply lessen the effects.

E. Sustainable transport means having as smaller an impact on fossil fuel based transport as possible and limiting the impact of traffic in the AONB. This also includes transport distances for goods used in the project. This is linked to reducing emissions and helping to tackle climate change.

F. Traditional materials: may not always be appropriate but in general the use of materials such as wood, slate or local stone is likely to enhance its aesthetic appeal and aid sustainability.

G. Aesthetic improvements: refers to projects which improve the quality of the local environment though visual/artistic improvements to the built (historic or contemporary), or natural environment. This can help to promote better quality of life, as well as conservation, enhancement and better understanding of natural beauty in the AONB.

H. Climate Change: projects that recognise and address the effects of climate change are encouraged. Applicants should demonstrate how the project has considered its effect on climate change and on the Carbon footprint of the AONB in particular. Wherever possible, unless effects can be shown to be unavoidable, actions should be proposed to deal with any negative effects on climate change. Claims that the project has no adverse effect on climate change need to be substantiated (eg through use of Carbon Calculators)

Social Criteria:

A. Participation/support and ownership: refers to the degree to which local people and/or people who use or work in a place or service have been involved in planning and implementing the project being put forward for funding. As with the local appraisal, a high degree of participation and ownership will only come if it has been consciously sought and encouraged.

B. Involves young people: is a key priority for the scheme and projects will score higher if young people are involved: this can be in project formulation and implementation as well as them being the beneficiaries.

C. Local Social Needs: projects score higher if they alleviate gaps or support community needs across the AONB such as: the provision of services or amenities, opportunities for 5-18 yr olds, health issues, elderly, and disadvantaged or minority groups.

D. Community structures: is a term used to describe the degree to which locally run organisations are in place to manage and develop the project over the long term. Something imposed from outside, paternalistically or by a well-meaning individual is less likely to be sustainable than one owned and controlled by a local organisation or partnership.

E. Community heritage and culture: refers to engaging communities in exploring, enjoying and conserving their local history, heritage and traditions. This is linked to developing a greater sense of involvement and ownership in a local area, and ensuring heritage and history are enriched rather than lost.

F. Local appraisal/feasibility: is a term that describes a consultative process designed to draw out the views of people living in a local community. There are numerous ways of undertaking an appraisal, from a public meeting to a sophisticated questionnaire. The more rigorous and involving the appraisal, the more weight can be placed on its results.

Economic Criteria:

A. Generates own income. The ability to create a resource, service or activity for which there is a demand and a willingness to pay, improves its long-term sustainability.

B. Helps local economy: A sustainable community is considered to be one in which there is a diverse range of economic activities, which actively trade with each other. This enables it to be more stable and less vulnerable to destabilizing external influences. Local sustainable developments should help diversify the local economy and use local products and services.

C. Jobs, training, volunteering: refer to the degree to which a resource or activity creates or supports paid or voluntary jobs, and training opportunities. If voluntary tasks are of good quality and linked to training they can enable people to move into paid work.

D. Business plan: this is a written document that is 'owned' by those who have responsibility for long-term management. It should clearly state the business objectives of those involved in the management of a resource, service or activity, and the way in which financial and human resources will be found and applied to achieve those objectives. A business plan is required where the total value of the project exceeds £80,000. It is considered good practice in projects where the total value is over £50,000 but it is not essential. Further advice can be given on this.

E. Levering in other funds/support in kind from other sources: Projects that have explored other complementary grant/funding sources to give added value to the SDF will score highly. However, projects that have overriding merit in terms of sustainability criteria but been denied access to alternative public funding, will still be considered.

F. Cost effective: projects will be assessed on their value for money.

Other Criteria

A. Partnership working: applications that work with other relevant organisations to develop and deliver the scheme or project will score highly as this helps demonstrate wider support for the idea and helps improve long term benefits.