

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