



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



Small Habitats Grant Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

Some General Rules

The Programme is:

- Available for projects across the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) area – Birmingham, Solihull, South Staffordshire and North Worcestershire
- Focused on reducing dereliction and the improvement and development of natural habitats on land in public ownership or with agreed public access (S16 CROW Act)
- Suitable for innovative projects which improve land, water, air quality and general environment for people and wildlife
- Offering grants from £20,000-£200,000 for both capital and revenue funding
- Available as a 40%-60% match (ERDF/Applicant).

Expected Output from Project

A demonstration of the surface area of habitats supported to obtain improved conservation status in ha (ERDF Output C23)

Who Can Apply?

- Charities
- Statutory organisations
- Not-for-profit organisations
- Community or voluntary organisations
- Parish or Town Councils
- Businesses – if land open to public all year round
- Schools – if land open to public all year round

Some Examples of Types of Project

- Grassland improvement
- Wildflower seeding
- Woodland improvement
- Wetland improvement
- Tree and hedgerow planting
- River and canal bank improvements

Application Process

- Potential applicants should email esif@solihull.gov.uk if they think they have a potential Small Habitats Grants Project. If you include a brief description of the project, approximate costs and the hectares (ha) to be improved a member of the team can send through an application form for you to complete if the project is eligible activity that meets the criteria.
- Advice and support is available from the Project Officer – requests should be submitted via esif@solihull.gov.uk
- The application and approvals process is charted below.
- Applications will be assessed by an independent panel of experts who will also provide geographical coverage. The assessment will include a review by a Project Ecologist.
- The length of the approvals process will depend on the individual application but is not expected to be lengthy – maximum 4 months.
- Outcomes will be informed by email after an ecology check to the site(s) and a Project Inception Visit carried out by an officer at SMBC. After successful completion of both stages of approval the grant funding agreement can be agreed upon and put in place.

Some Frequently Asked Questions...

What is the date that all works are expected to be complete?

All expenditure will need to be defrayed by December 2022 which means projects should have ended by Sept/Oct 2022 to allow defrayal through our accounts.

Can in kind be offered as match?

In kind contributions are not eligible under the Small Grants Scheme.

Will the application process be complex – as if so voluntary groups may be prevented from applying?

A brief email describing the project is required and a request for the application form. The full application detailing the project and demonstrating how the match will be provided, the required outputs met and Value for Money (VFM) achieved will be required.

Support will be available to applicants from the Programme team at SMBC.
The applicant must be able to demonstrate sufficient financial status to sustain the project throughout its life.

What is required for proof of land ownership?

Requirements are: site name, land registry number and the applicant's legal interest on the site and there will be the requirement to maintain the land 7 years after the projects completion date

How will Payment be made?

Claims can be made on a monthly basis with all the supporting documents. Approved claims can be paid on a quarterly based on provision of sufficient ERDF evidence requirements.

Are sites not in public ownership eligible?

Public access to the site will be required to demonstrate the economic benefit to an area through the ability to market an area for visitors or investment, except where access will have a detrimental impact to a habitat or species.

Such sites can be considered but a full access arrangement with the landowner must be in place.

The applicant must also be able to provide evidence of any other relevant permissions such as planning permissions.

Will baseline ecological surveys be required as evidence for the application?

Independent ecological baseline surveys should be made available and will be used for monitoring purposes.

Can S106 monies be used as match?

S106 monies can be used as match but schemes such as Countryside Stewardship which has European funding or any other EU or ERDF scheme are NOT eligible.

The eligibility of any land receiving RPA payments should be discussed with the Rural Payments Agency.

Will HS2 monies (from the CEF, BLEF) be eligible as match?

Funds from HS2 CEF and BLEF are eligible match.

Are marketing costs eligible?

Yes, however costs will have to be reasonable to the overall project cost. All publicity will be subject to ERDF Publicity Rules and Regulations.

Will the application require confirmation (and relevant details) that a maintenance arrangement is in place?

The project application must describe the proposed maintenance and revenue support plan ongoing for a period of 7 years.

How long will the programme be open?

We will be carrying out a rolling call until all funding is allocated.

Are education facilities eligible and can education visits be included in the project as part of the application?

Applications for schools and education facilities are NOT eligible unless the facility has on-going public access (open all year). Educational visits are a great way of keeping the community involved and aware of works that are going on in the area.

Will the scheme cover the landfill tax levy (11%) if landfill tax is used as match?

Landfill tax levy can be used as eligible match.

What items can be included in an application?

Some examples of eligible items are shown below:

- Tree surveys
- Soil surveys
- Specialist consultancy costs
- Trees, shrubs and native plants
- Site works, civils, landscaping
- Publicity or interpretation boards
- Bird Hides
- Cycle Routes – only through areas where habitat improvement will occur

Please note: Construction of viewing areas, seating, outdoor workshops are not eligible.

Revenue costs can be included as part of the project, ERDF will support staffing/consultancy costs however these will have to be proportional to the project size. The hourly rates used would be agreed by MHCLG and proof of rates will have to be supplied as part of the full application processes and checks.

Fencing as part of a project has been confirmed by MHCLG however is not a blanket confirmation. The direct link between fencing and maintaining the land and encouraging biodiversity will have to be shown as part of the application. In the spirit of P6, when determining what type of fencing will be used, the use of natural borders should also be considered. Again the amount of fencing will have to be proportional to the size and cost of the overall project.

Would an application for capital equipment to maintain existing urban facilities be eligible?

The purchase of capital equipment will not be eligible for the Small Habitats Grant fund.

Will joint projects – say for an extension of the Forest of Mercia be considered?

Jointly led projects and extensions to existing sites will be considered if it can be demonstrated that the required outputs can be met along and VFM delivered, along with all other eligibility criteria

Will schemes promoting the planting of native trees and especially native to the Midlands be considered favourably?

The planting of native species is an important objective but any project proposing this must meet all other criteria

Can the scheme be matched by monies from EA and Natural England or HLF?

Funds from the Environment Agency and Natural England and from HLF are eligible as match

How best can volunteering as part of project delivery be represented in the applications?

Volunteer hours cannot be used as in-kind match but the recruitment and role of volunteers in project will be taken into account in any assessment

What will be eligible within an urban environment – green roofs and walls, cemeteries and allotments (for the enhancement of existing habitat)

All capital schemes that align to the output of habitat improvement and the increase of biodiversity will be considered providing there is public access all year round to the site which can be demonstrated and the Value for Money and Output criteria are met.

Output definition: Improvements to a defined area of existing habitat(s) that have in place a management plan which can demonstrate how the proposed activity being undertaken will improve the biodiversity of the site. Outputs are measured in hectares.

What is required as part of project monitoring?

Ongoing monitoring will be required to be undertaken by the applicant – monitoring should be carried out for submitted financials, milestones, outputs (hectares/ biodiversity improvements) etc. in relation to the project.

How long will it take to get to contracting stage?

Upon submitting an application, the Small Habitats Grant board will appraise each application, from this there may be further appraisal queries that will need to be confirmed by the applicant. In addition there will be an ecology and process check for the project & the applicant. This process will be dependent on the applicant and the availability of information.



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