



**Shropshire
Hills**
National
Landscape

Shropshire Hills Conservation Fund 2026-27 guidance for applicants *(updated October 2025)*

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Priorities and eligibility

The Fund is for projects which deliver either or both of the priorities:

1. Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, landscape, wildlife or heritage of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape
2. Educational and awareness-raising activities relating to the Shropshire Hills and its conservation, especially involving young people

(See appendix 1 for conservation priorities)

The Fund is focused on projects delivering practical conservation work in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Activities such as feasibility studies or research may also be considered if the case is strong enough. The Fund does not normally support activities which are eligible under government land management schemes such as agri-environment schemes.

The work carried out needs to be either within the National Landscape or directly benefiting it. For example, restoration of a heritage or landscape feature outside the National Landscape would not be eligible, while education work relating directly to the Shropshire Hills but taking place outside it would be eligible.

Public, private, voluntary sector and community groups can apply, along with individuals and businesses, but in all cases the project must show a clear public benefit. You don't have to live or work within the Shropshire Hills to apply, as long as your project delivers benefits to it. Priority may be given to applicants who have not previously had funding from the Trust. There is a consecutive 3-year limit on applying to the Fund.

The Fund cannot grant aid anything retrospectively. Preparation work may be done, but costs incurred before the date of the grant offer letter cannot be claimed or used as match funding. However, if you have made significant expenditure on an earlier phase of the project, do mention this in your application because it may provide justification for a higher rate of grant.

Projects are more likely to be funded if they also demonstrate community support and fit with local and national strategies.

Size of grants, rates of grant and match funding

Grants will normally be in the range of £500 - £2,000. Grants can be of up to 75% and match funding can be made up of in-kind and volunteer time contributions as well as cash. These should be costed into your budget. Applications will be strengthened by showing other sources of funding.

Before making a full application

Please complete the Project Ideas Form, a short form to briefly describe your project idea. A link to the online Project Idea Form is on the [Conservation Fund webpage](#), or email stephanie.hayes@shropshire.gov.uk to request the form. When we have received and read your form we will be in touch to discuss your project in more detail. We will be able to recommend whether your project should progress to a full application and provide advice on developing the project and how it can best fit the aims of the Fund. **Deadline for expression of interest is Friday 13th February 2026.**

Writing the full application

We will provide you with the full application form, which you can fill in electronically. Your email with the completed application form will be taken as an authorized signatory. Remember that your application will be read by people who may know nothing about your proposed project. Please make it clear what will actually be done in the project, and pictures or plans should be included for any proposed works on the ground. **Deadline to receive completed full application is Friday 13th March 2026.**

Budget spreadsheet

- The budget must balance on the expenditure and income sides.
- Check the guidance on match funding above.
- Please ensure you state whether any match funding has been secured or not.
- If your organisation is VAT registered and you are able to reclaim VAT yourselves, the grant offer will be made to you ex-VAT. If you pay VAT then you may include this in the budget and claim grant against it. If you only pay a proportion of your VAT, please include in the budget only that proportion which you pay, i.e. that part you are not able to reclaim from the Inland Revenue.
- If the project runs for more than one year, please ensure income/expenditure are clearly indicated for the current year in which you are applying for a grant. Details for other years may be provided separately but will not form part of the application.
- Travel expenses should be costed at 45p/mile. Other in-kind contributions should be included at their actual cost.
- In kind and volunteer time should generally be costed at:

£50/day (or £7/hour) for unskilled input (manual labour type jobs e.g. scrub bashing, and anything that people wouldn't have received specific training for),

£150/day (or £21/hour) for skilled input (anything that volunteers would have received training to do e.g. wildlife or heritage monitoring/surveying, and anything where they could be said to be using other skills such as taking part in an advisory group or Board.), and

£280/day (or £40/hour) for professional input – for people who are offering their time for free doing something that they might otherwise be paid a ‘professional’ rate to do – e.g. an accountant who was doing finance stuff as a volunteer, professional photographer doing photos/filming for nothing, a teacher/lecturer providing free training etc.

Checklist

- Have you answered all the questions?
- Does your budget balance and have you filled in VAT details correctly?
- Have you emailed your completed application form?
- Have you enclosed any plans, pictures or further information about the project if appropriate?
- Have you enclosed any background information about your organisation if appropriate?
- Have you enclosed evidence of permission where required?

Assessment of your application

Trustees from the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust will meet to discuss the projects and award grants on Friday 20th March 2026. They represent a range of interests and knowledge but may seek external specialist advice if necessary. If your application is not approved, we will explain why and advise you whether it may be worth adapting the project to re-apply.

If your grant is approved

You will receive a formal offer letter by email, outlining the rate of grant and a maximum cash sum, the budget and the required outputs of the project. This grant offer is a contract between you or your organisation and the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust.

Special conditions relating to your project may be set, and the general conditions of grant also apply (see Appendix 2). These set out the procedures for claiming your grant, and for monitoring and reporting. The offer letter is a legal contract, and you will only receive the grant if your project meets the agreed outputs and conditions.

If a project does not work out as intended, it may be possible to amend the grant offer. If you have to abandon or curtail your project, or don’t expect to claim the full grant, you must let us know as soon as possible, as the money may then be allocated elsewhere.

If your project is part of a larger one for which you received funding from another source, you will need to complete the entire project before you can claim your grant. You will need to provide evidence that all outputs have been achieved.

A short written report, with photographs where appropriate, is required from each project at the end of the year showing how the work met the aim(s) and delivered public benefits.

Please acknowledge the financial support you have received from the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust in any publicity associated with your project.

Appendix 1

Information on the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and conservation priorities

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape covers almost a quarter of Shropshire, stretching from the Wrekin to the Clun Forest and from the Clee Hills to the Stiperstones and Stapeley Common on the Welsh border.

Lying between the Welsh uplands and the English Midland Plain, the Shropshire Hills is a landscape of diversity, with no single feature or hill dominating. A very varied geology is reflected in the different landforms, habitats and wildlife. The hills themselves, rolling pastoral farmland and woods, rivers and river valleys are the main elements of the landscape. Heritage and antiquity is ingrained in the landscape – in settlement and field pattern, hillforts, traditional buildings, and industrial heritage from charcoal burning to lead mining and stone quarrying.

The purpose of the National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The designation also recognises intangibles such as tranquillity and remoteness, along with human values such as local community and culture, and opportunities for quiet enjoyment.

Your project will play an important role in helping us to look after this special landscape and in helping more people to connect with and care for it.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Restoring nature and natural processes

Many of the county's high-quality habitats are found in the Shropshire Hills, but they're fragmented. These priority habitats include upland heath and rough grasses, native woodland and trees outside woods (orchards, hedgerow trees etc), species rich grassland and meadows, and rivers, streams, ponds and headwaters (the tributaries feeding the river system). Enlarging areas of existing good habitat and/ or connecting areas of high-quality habitat by creating wildlife corridors is especially valuable and preferable to the creation of new habitat.

Nature recovery priorities from the Shropshire Hills Management Plan, 2025-30:

- Best possible management of existing high-quality habitats
- Improving margins and buffer areas to heathland and rough grassland hills
- Renaturalising catchment headwater areas
- Regenerating and expanding upland semi-natural woodlands
- Woodland creation to improve habitat networks,
- Habitat improvement of river and stream corridors
- Managing and re-creating wildflower meadows and species-rich grasslands, including roadside verges
- More sustainable regenerative management of farmland
- Management of invasive non-native species such as Signal Crayfish and Himalayan Balsam
- Connecting people to nature so that they care about it and see the benefits to their wellbeing, quality of life and prosperity.

Some of our key species under threat include:

- Lesser horseshoe bat & dormouse
- Curlew & lapwing
- Grayling butterfly & bilberry bumblebee
- Green winged orchid & marsh gentian

Good conservation practice is to restore species through better habitat management across large areas, but some species may still require bespoke management. The need for this should be clearly outlined for any project wishing to focus on particular species.

[Read the NATURE section of the Management Plan here.](#)

The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

This identifies key opportunities for supporting nature across the region. An interactive map shows where nature is thriving and where targeted action could deliver the greatest benefits for wildlife, water, soil and climate resilience. [View LNRS interactive map.](#)

Involving people in your project & connecting young people to nature

Active volunteering brings benefits to the landscape and to people. People's attachment to a place is often stronger as a result of working on the land, and volunteering provides a means for many people to do this. Education and learning also helps people to connect with their local landscape. Broadening access to and understanding of the natural environment and local heritage features/sites can be a valuable springboard to a wider understanding of the landscape. Helping young people to understand and care for the Shropshire Hills landscape is a key part of increasing support for its conservation. No one knows they want to conserve something until they've enjoyed it and touched it.

Policy extracts from 'PEOPLE', Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2025-30.

Volunteering

i) Active participation in care for the landscape through volunteering and community groups should be encouraged.

Education and skills

i) Opportunities should be maximised for outdoor and environmental education, and for skills development linked to caring for the landscape.

[Read the PEOPLE section of the Management Plan here.](#)

Conserving and celebrating historic sites and features

The historic environment covers a wide range of built and natural heritage assets including buildings and features with statutory protection and those which are locally valued. Many landscape features have historic importance, such as hedgerows, veteran trees, parkland and ancient woodland. These are often at risk from neglect as much as from direct damage. There is a need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their setting as part of the wider landscape to effectively conserve and manage them. Retaining traditional building and craft skills is also important.

Policy extracts from 'PLACE', Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2025-30.

Heritage

- i) Designated heritage sites and assets should be protected, and development should seek to protect and enhance the significance of all heritage assets (including undesignated assets), including their setting.
- ii) Measures should be supported to ensure cultural heritage is better understood and celebrated

Communities, cultural heritage, connection to place

- i) Local councils, including town and parish councils, should support and enable the development of sustainable communities within the National Landscape.
- ii) Better use of built and green public spaces in villages and towns should be encouraged for better social connection and mixing, and to enhance vitality in communities.
- iii) The Shropshire Hills identity and the combined elements of the National Landscape model (Plan, Partnership, Team, etc) should be strengthened to help support people's motivation to actively care for the area's special qualities.

[Read the PLACE section of the Management Plan here.](#)

Appendix 2 General Conditions of Grant

The following conditions apply to all offers of Conservation Fund grant made by the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust, unless expressly deleted or varied in the formal offer letter to the applicant.

While some of the following conditions will not be relevant to all grant-aided projects, the decision whether to apply an individual condition remains solely at the discretion of the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust.

QUALITY OF WORK

All work grant aided through the Shropshire Hills Conservation Fund must conform to specifications submitted with the grant application unless agreed in writing.

The grantee will ensure at all times that works and activities covered by the offer of grant aid will conform to any relevant statutory obligations, bylaws, planning consents or building regulations.

The grantee will be responsible for ensuring all works are carried out to a high standard. Any physical works carried out through the project must be maintained in a satisfactory condition for a period of five years from the date of the final claim.

Where public access forms part of the project, the grantee will ensure that such access is allowed and no person is unreasonably denied access.

Where the land or feature to which this agreement pertains is sold or otherwise disposed of then the contents of this agreement shall be passed to the new owner of the land or feature. Where

this is not possible then the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust may require any grant paid to be repaid in part or in full.

PUBLICITY

The support of the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust must be acknowledged in any publicity material about the project produced by the grantee.

The Shropshire Hills National Landscape logo may be used on publicity material but must be unchanged in any way (no alteration of the horizontal and vertical proportions). Colour and black and white versions of the logo are available from Steph Hayes, Shropshire Hills National Landscape team – email: stephanie.hayes@shropshire.gov.uk.

The Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust and Team may use information about the project (including photographs) to publicise the Conservation Fund, or refer publicly to grants offered and work undertaken either generally or specifically.

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS, CLAIMS & MONITORING

The offer of grant is made on the understanding that in the course of making the application, the grantee will have disclosed any other financial contribution which may be received for the same purpose from any other body. So far as any contributions have not been disclosed prior to any offer of grant from the Shropshire Hills Conservation Fund, the Trust may subsequently vary or require the repayment of any grant to take account of them.

The offer of grant must be accepted in writing within 21 days of the date of the offer letter. The acceptance should be signed by the named contact in the application.

The offer of grant is made on the understanding that no grant will be paid for work carried out prior to the acceptance of the formal offer of grant, or after the end of the Financial Year in which the grant offer was made.

Claims for the grant must be accompanied by a progress budget related to the proposed budget in the grant offer, and backed up by evidence of expenditure (i.e. copies of receipts or invoices for all cash items, time sheets using the template provided for costs of in-kind and voluntary contributions).

Variation in approved items for expenditure or dates of claims will only be in exceptional circumstances and a written request must be made for any such changes. Significant changes of the division of expenditure between the headings above should also be requested in writing.

Abandonment of the project or significant delays affecting claim dates must be communicated to the Trust at the earliest opportunity.

Final claims must be accompanied by a written report outlining the achievements of the project, relating these to the Trust's priorities, and summarising any lessons learned from the project. (A report may be 1-2 pages for a grant of £1,000 or less, and should be around 4 pages for larger grants). A small number of photographs illustrating the project should be included, which the Trust or Partnership may use for publicity purposes. If possible these should be supplied in digital form. Copies of any written publicity must be provided, and photographs of other forms of publicity (e.g. events) if appropriate.

Information will be requested at intervals about progress with the project.

Members of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team, Trustees or the Grant Advisory Panel may need to visit the project or see its work either before or after completion, and must be allowed access to do this with reasonable notice, in order to:

- inspect any work carried out with Shropshire Hills Conservation Fund grant aid,
- monitor the conduct and progress of any works listed in the formal offer of grant,
- monitor usage of the site or features as defined in the formal offer of grant.

The grantee will give due consideration to any recommendations made following such a visit.

BREACH OF CONDITIONS AND DISPUTES

In the event of a breach of any conditions herewith the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust may declare any grant offer to be void or may vary the amount to be paid. Where the grant, or a portion of it, has been paid then the Trust may require the amount to be repaid in part or in full.

Any dispute between an applicant and the Trust about the interpretation of these conditions, shall be referred to the arbitration of a person to be agreed between the parties, or, failing agreement within 28 days after each party has given to the other written request to concur in the appointment of an arbitrator, a person to be nominated at the request of either party by the President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. In the event of arbitration, costs will be shared equally between the parties.

The offer of grant shall be governed by the Laws of England and Wales and shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts of England and Wales.