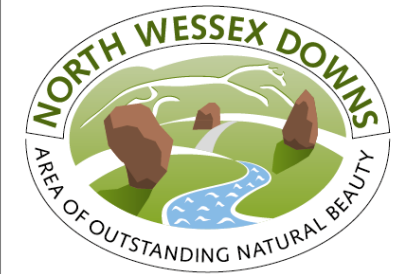


Farming in Protected Landscapes North Wessex Downs AONB

Guidance for Applicants

May 2023



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Farming in Protected Landscapes

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Before you apply:

1. Contact the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, FiPL@northwessexdowns.org.uk for advice on the programme including to discuss your ideas, the payment rates and intervention rates for your project.
2. **OR** submit an [Enquiry Form](#) to FiPL@northwessexdowns.org.uk
3. Discuss your project ideas and subsequently build an effective application using the information found in this guidance.

How you apply

1. The AONB staff will send you an application form for you to complete and return to the FiPL Officer.

Once you have applied

- You should expect to hear back from your Protected Landscape team within 10 working days of your application being submitted. This will likely be an update as the turn-around for projects could potentially take 8 weeks with the Panel meeting at that frequency.



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Introduction and Eligibility

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme seeks to provide investment in protected landscapes to help deliver outcomes for the environment, people and place by working in partnership with farmers.

The programme will run from **July 2021 to March 2025** and will be delivered by farmers and land managers in partnership with the North Wessex Downs AONB. Funding will support groups and individuals proposing projects and approved by the AONB FiPL Officer or Local Assessment Panel.

Applications can be accepted at any point in the year, but all work needs to be undertaken by **the end of the financial year in which the grant is awarded**.

The projects have to be on **farmed or managed land**

Applicants must have **management control**. If tenants, the applicant will need landlord approval. If on a commons, a commons agreement will be needed. If the application is for a cluster/group/partnership there will need to be a lead applicant and a group agreement.

Projects that consist of **legal or statutory duties** of the applicant are not eligible. FIPL can fund work that goes **beyond the statutory minimum**, though only works above the threshold.

Where an applicant is receiving payments from elsewhere for that action in that location (i.e. **double funding**), whether from another DEFRA scheme or otherwise for the action in that location, the application is not eligible.

Applications that include activities that are likely to overlap with the general conditions of **Inheritance Tax Exemptions** are not eligible.

Machinery assets (for example a brush harvester for grassland restoration) should be **maintained for 5 years from the date of purchase**.

The requirement to maintain natural, cultural and access **activities delivered as part of programme will end no later than 1 April 2025**.

Applications can be for funding between £2,000 & £250,000.



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Priorities

The [Projects Funded by FiPL](#) pages describe some of the projects we are most excited about and is worth taking some time to read.

The Panel met in April 2023 to discuss how the remaining funds should be invested. They had a full discussion reflecting on the successes and challenges of the Programme thus far and developing some priorities. These are to help guide applicants in developing projects for FiPL funding and to help the team and the Panel make decisions at assessment.

The Panel have committed to assess applications on a case-by-case basis but want to be able to see multiple benefits deriving from the project, aligned with the Programme Outcomes and the AONB Management Plan. The case for justifying the investment needs to be clearly articulated including why other relevant sources of funding are not suitable or accessible. It is important to frame the project, its impacts and benefits, in the wider context of the landscape.

The Panel don't want to fund projects that are maintenance, corrective or at a level with statutory obligations or compliance. Rather they want to receive applications that conserve restore and, enhance the special qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They want to fund ambitious, innovative & regenerative projects that contribute toward system change and that are leading by example.

The Panel are particularly interested in receiving applications that improve our connection with the food system and the countryside. These may be helping people understand where their food comes from, managed access on farmland or helping local communities engage with their local farmers and enterprises. They have also expressed a desire to fund projects that support young or new entrants into farming or associated enterprises. They like projects that help bring farmers together and have wider, landscape scale impacts and allow them to learn from one another. They will favour projects that create or restore habitats in the right place in the most impactful way. Above all, they want to support viable, sustainable farm businesses that are adapting to the emerging needs of the planet and population.



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Programme Themes and Outcomes

This programme has been designed with local flexibility at the forefront. As the decision makers, Protected Landscapes will be able to make funding decisions that take into account the wider strategic priorities of their landscapes.

FiPL seeks to achieve several outcomes across the four programme themes: climate, nature, people and place. Applicants will be asked in their applications to demonstrate how their project meets these outcomes.

Theme	Climate	Nature	People	Place
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More carbon is stored and/or sequestered • Flood risk has been reduced • Better understanding among farmers, land managers and the public as to what different habitats and land uses can deliver for carbon storage and reduced carbon emissions • The landscape is more resilient to climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a greater area of wildlife rich habitat • There is greater connectivity between habitats • Existing habitat is better managed for biodiversity • There is an increase in biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape • There are increased opportunities for more diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape • There is greater public engagement in land management, for example through volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and character of the landscape is reinforced or enhanced • Historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively • There is an increase in the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, which in turn contributes to a more thriving local economy



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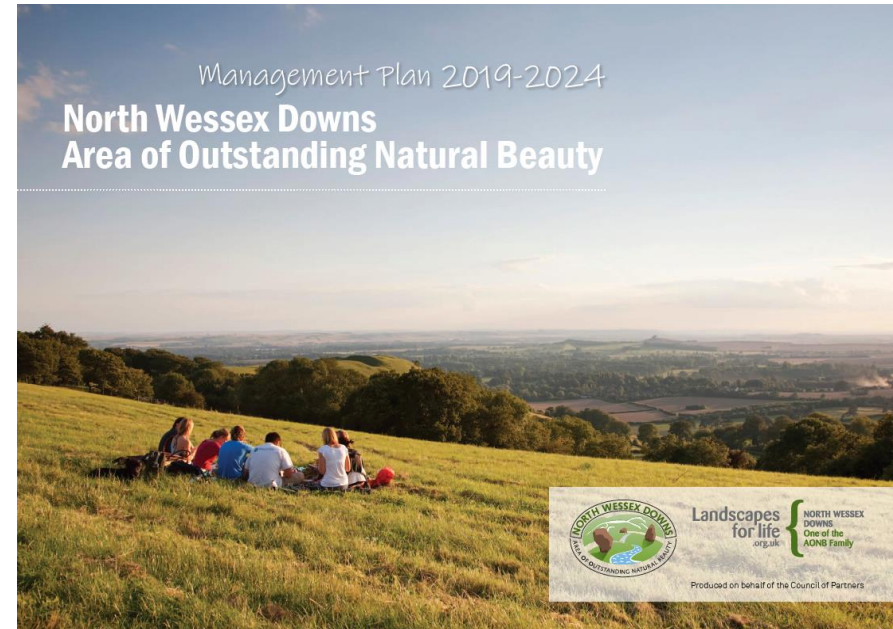
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AONB Management Plan

FiPL projects must also align with priorities in the AONB Management plan. The full plan is linked below. The plan details eight themes; for each **Key Issues**, **Strategic Objectives** and **Policies** are presented. Applicants must demonstrate their project is contributing to the achievement of one or more of these.

The AONB team have identified the most relevant and significant priorities from the management plan to help applicants with decision making. There are a selection from each theme. These are not exhaustive and should only act as guidance. Where some duplication or overlap occurs across themes, only one is referenced to help avoid repetition and overcrowding and maintain a broad aspect. These are on the following pages.

- Theme 1: Landscape pg.16
- Theme 2: Rural Land Management pg.26
- Theme 3: Biodiversity pg.40
- Theme 4: Historic Environment pg.50
- Theme 5: Natural Resources pg.58
- Theme 6: Development pg.70
- Theme 7: Communities pg.82
- Theme 8: Tourism, Leisure and Access pg.90



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NWD AONB Priorities

Landscape

- S.01** Maintain and enhance the tranquillity and distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and its setting with a focus on the contribution from agriculture and forestry, development and infrastructure.
- LA 04** Support and promote good practice across all sectors that conserves and enhances the character and qualities of the North Wessex Downs landscape.
- LA 05** Support and encourage efforts to conserve and explain the rich heritage of the North Wessex Downs, including archaeological sites.

Rural Land Management

- S.03** Focus, facilitate and support landscape-scale conservation and land management initiatives that support the purposes of AONB designation.
- S.05** Support the restoration of ancient woodland and wood pasture, and improved management of unmanaged and under-managed woodland across the North Wessex Downs AONB, promoting multiple benefits, including landscape character, wildlife, local economy and skills, recreation, and climate change mitigation.
- S.06** Support traditional and emerging land-based enterprises and their markets that respect and promote the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- RLM 03** Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves AONB objectives and accords with planning policy.
- RLM 04** Support efforts to identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the AONB.
- RLM 05** Support local markets for local produce and the development of local supply networks.
- RLM 13** Support efforts to identify and develop the skills required to care for the landscape and its special qualities, with opportunities for all to acquire such skills.
- RLM 14** Encourage and support the local provision of practical training in traditional land management and the skills necessary to deliver enhanced rural land management and business diversification with clear landscape benefits.
- RLM 15** Encourage good agricultural land management practices and adherence to good practice to contribute to resource protection, such as safeguarding watercourses from nutrient run-off and silt pollution.
- RLM 17** Support the provision of advice on integrated management of grassland to enhance biodiversity as part of equine land management practices.

Biodiversity

- S.07** Identify and promote action to safeguard and to enhance habitats and species which are characteristic of the North Wessex Downs and are not at a favourable conservation status, in particular chalk downland, chalk rivers and streams, broadleaved woodlands, and populations of farmland birds and plants.
- B 04** Support and encourage work to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the North Wessex Downs through support for landscape-scale projects for habitat management, restoration and creation, particularly where they deliver identified priorities within areas identified as offering the best opportunities for investment in biodiversity, including through management of existing wildlife sites and valuable habitat to the highest standards.
- B 05** Support land managers in restoring, creating and maintaining habitats for key species, including threatened arable plants, invertebrates and farmland birds.
- B 07** Support partnerships with key stakeholders to promote and deliver projects that contribute to the achievement of good ecological status for water bodies in the AONB.
- B 15** Support and encourage measures to enable grazing on all the main grassland areas of the AONB.

NWD AONB Priorities cont.

Historic Environment

- S.10** | Protect archaeological and historic features, sites and their landscape setting against inappropriate development and management practices.
- HE 01** | Support efforts to ensure that sites, features and landscapes of historical importance are appropriately identified, recorded and managed.
- HE 09** | Support more and better explanation, interpretation and promotion of the historic environment for residents and visitors.

Natural Resources

- S.12** | Promote and support measures to ensure chalk rivers and streams in the AONB achieve and are maintained at good ecological status including, for example, appropriate riparian planting to mitigate elevated water temperatures predicted as a consequence of climate change.
- S.14** | Ensure that all landscape interventions recognise and address the implications of climate change for the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
- NR 02** | Promote and encourage initiatives for the sustainable management of soil by land managers to minimise soil degradation through erosion, compaction, pollution and impoverishment, particularly in the case of the thin chalk downland soils.
- NR 10** | Promote Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and natural flood management initiatives to maximise benefits, for example through restoration of traditional water meadow systems or shallow winter flooding in the floodplain to benefit people and wildlife.
- NR 11** | Promote restoration and continued maintenance of rivers and river corridors to further biodiversity and amenity objectives – re-creating natural river channels and re-linking rivers with their floodplains where this would not damage artificial channels of historic and cultural importance.
- NR 17** | Promote carbon sequestration as an objective and benefit of habitat creation and management of woodland and permanent grassland.

Communities

- S.20** | Support and facilitate community-led initiatives that help deliver AONB purposes and Management Plan objectives.
- CO 01** | Support efforts to raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs AONB among communities within and surrounding the area.
- CO 03** | Encourage, support and celebrate local communities' engagement in the planning, conservation and enhancement of their local environment, protecting its natural beauty and enhancing the sense of local pride and ownership.

Tourism, Leisure & Access

- S.23** | Facilitate opportunities for more people of all abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs that respect and promote the special qualities of the area and its setting.
- TLA 13** | Encourage the creation and maintenance of new permissive and definitive routes that link existing routes and enable recreational walkers, cyclists, riders and carriage-drivers to avoid busy roads.
- TLA 16** | Recognise and protect those areas which are too sensitive to intrusion or disturbance, for example archaeologically or ecologically, for the promotion of public access.

Application Assessments

Any project between £2,000 & £10,000 will get assessed by the FiPL Officer and the Director of the AONB. Any applications up to the limit of £250,000 will get assessed by the Local Assessment Panel. The application gets scored against four criteria. Project Outcomes will focus on the alignment with the Programme Themes and the AONB Priorities.



The scoring process looks at four criteria:

- Project outcomes - (40%)
- Value for Money (20%)
- Sustainability / legacy of projects (20%)
- Ability to deliver (20%)



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Payments & Intervention Rates

Where a comparable rate exists within Countryside Stewardship, the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, Facilitation Fund or other DEFRA Scheme, we are obliged to use those rates. Where you are applying to fund an activity for which there is no standard rate, you will need to be able show that the associated costs represent value for money - this is based on getting **three** quotes or comparators for the work. The AONB may have some comparators on file so please do ask about the work you are planning. For self-delivery, the applicant may use day rates and costings published in Nix Farm Handbook, the Agricultural Costings Book or the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers.

Where particular items and activities are under £5,000 you will only need to provide one quote.

Capital items (and single intervention items, e.g. provision of advice/survey) will be paid for in arrears. Management/revenue payments will be 50% in advance and 50% in arrears.

The maximum claim for a single project is £250,000. Any single applicant should not receive over £350,000 over the course of the programme.

Where applicants have secured match funding, this should increase their value for money score. We would encourage applicants to implement a 'blended finance' approach and are happy to provide support and advice to achieve this.

Rate	Description	Example
Up to 40%	Up to 40% can be paid to applicants for an activity where it is clear that grant support enables commercial gain for the applicant.	An example might include funding to support the establishment of pop-up campsites to diversify the business.
Up to 80%	Up to 80% can be paid to applicants for an activity where there may be some commercial gain for the applicant, but where the driving force is for the delivery of public goods.	Examples might include funding a farmer to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) install hand washing facilities to allow them to host education visits, which in hosting the visits they receive a payment from the educational provider for. 2) provide new infrastructure to enable disability suitable routes across their land to allow for educational visits. In making these changes though the farmer's site, which includes a farm shop and a campsite, has greater accessibility.
80% - 100%	An intervention rate between 80-100% should be paid to applicants where it is clear that in funding an activity there is no commercial gain to the applicant. Rates can be offered at 100% where it is clearly evidenced that funding the activity will deliver value for money.	An example might include funding to improve public engagement infrastructure such as a picnic site at a beauty spot or projects to improve public access such as new permissive access routes.



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Local Assessment Panel and Application Deadlines

- The Local Assessment Panel is comprised of individuals from across the AONB with farming and land management interest and knowledge. This includes farmers, estate managers, agents, agricultural academics, NFU, natural environment experts, conservation land managers, Natural England, farm group facilitators, historic environment experts, education experts, AONB representative. They represent the views of the farming and land management sector in the AONB, help prioritise the programme and assess individual projects. It functions according to democratic principles. They can vote to approve, reject or defer applications.
- The panel meets every two months to assess applications. The deadline for submitting an application to be assessed at that panel meeting will be a fortnight prior to the meeting. The following dates are the deadlines for 2022-2024 after which any applications above £10,000 will not get assessed till the subsequent meeting.

Financial year	For April/May Meeting	For July Meeting	For September meeting	For November Meeting	For Jan/Feb Meeting
2022/23	22 nd April 2022	23 rd June 2022	1 st Sept 2022	1 st Nov 2022	26 th Jan 2023
2023/24	13 th April 2023	22 nd June 2023	31 st August 2023	2 nd Nov 2023	11 th Jan 2024
2024/25	11 th April 2024	20 th June 2024	5 th Sept 2024	7 th Nov 2024	19 th Jan 2025

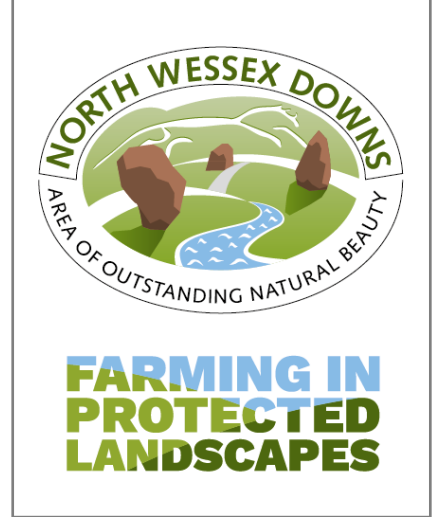


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For More Information



Refer to the [North Wessex Downs AONB website](https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk) for latest information

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>

Read [GOV.UK page](#) and subscribe to [the Future Farming blog](#) and [Defra e-alerts](#) for policy updates.

