



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



**North Wessex
Downs**
National
Landscape

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Farming in Protected Landscapes North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Local Guidance for Applicants

April 2026

Farming in Protected Landscapes

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Before you apply:

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

How you apply:

1. Application forms and Guidance are available to download, please also download and complete the financial information form (Annex A). If you would like assistance in completing the application please contact the FiPL team

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.

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 2029** and will be delivered by farmers and land managers in partnership with the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Funding will support groups and individuals proposing projects and approved by the National Landscape 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 or activity 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 can be supported.

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 2029**.

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

Application Assessments

Any project between £2,000 & £10,000 will get assessed by a FiPL Officer and one member of the Local Assessment Panel. After 5 'small' applications any subsequent applications will get assessed by the Local Assessment Panel.

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 National Landscape Priorities.

Longer term applications – as the FiPL programme is now confirmed for further 3 years, applicants may apply for longer term funding, eg 2 or 3 years. The application can include requests for funding over the full length of the project, however the Panel reserve the right to ask for interim reports before subsequent years funding is approved. Please discuss with the FiPL Officer.



The scoring process looks at four criteria:

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

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 National Landscape 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. The rate will be at the discretion of the Panel.	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.

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

Local Assessment Panel 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 2026 to discuss how priorities for the next three years. 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 are particularly interested in receiving applications that:***

- *improve our connection with the food system and the countryside, including educational projects.*
- *support young or new entrants into farming or associated enterprises;*
- *help bring farmers together and allow them to learn from one another;*
- *have wider, landscape scale impacts;*
- *create or restore habitats in the right place in the most impactful way;*
- *focus on soil health;*
- *support viable, sustainable farm businesses that are adapting to the emerging needs of the planet and population;*
- *Address issues around species populations affecting biodiversity in the landscape eg deer, squirrels;*

Please note:

- *projects in and for the community should be led by or closely engage with the community;*
- *any habitat projects should be encouraged to get baseline surveys before they start.*

- However:

- *FiPL support is not appropriate where other funding sources are available (eg SFI/CS).*
- *Any tree/hedge planting must be sensitive to landscape character*
- *Equipment should contribute towards goals of the project and deliver regenerative/restorative actions e.g. improving soil health. However, as above, we cannot provide support where other funding sources (eg FETF) are available.*
- *We cannot provide support for vehicles under the FiPL programme.*

National Landscape Management Plan

FiPL projects must also align with priorities in the National Landscape Management plan. The full plan is linked below. The plan details seven 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 National Landscape 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.

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/NWDNL-Management-Plan-2025-30-FINAL-low-res-251110.pdf>



NWD National Landscape Priorities

Landscape

Priority 1	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.

Farming & Land Management

Priority 1	Focus, facilitate and support landscape-scale conservation and land management initiatives that support the purposes of National Landscape designation.
Priority 3	Support the restoration of ancient woodland and wood pasture, and improved management of unmanaged and under-managed woodland across the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, promoting multiple benefits, including landscape character, wildlife, local economy and skills, recreation, and climate change mitigation.
Priority 5	Promote and support sustainable best practice initiatives for farming, woodland management and all country sports. .
FLM 02	Encourage and support farmer-led groups and other joint working, and expansion / replication of existing landscape scale nature recovery and land management projects, both within and beyond the National Landscape, to assist in the delivery of National Landscape and Big Chalk objectives
FLM 03	Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves National Landscape objectives and accords with planning policy.
FLM 04	Support efforts to identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the National Landscape.
FLM 05	Support local markets for local produce and the development of local supply networks.
FLM 07	Support and promote efforts across the North Wessex Downs to reduce invasive, non-native species or unsustainable populations of species where these threaten the biodiversity and sustainable management of woodland, watercourses and other habitats
FLM 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.
FLM 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.
FLM 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.
FLM 16	Support the provision of advice on integrated management of grassland to enhance biodiversity as part of equine land management practices.
FLM 17	Support collaboration among stakeholders and initiatives such as better routes to market, working with game processors, to achieve sustainable deer populations across the National Landscape.
FLM 19	Encourage and support farmers and land managers to adopt practices that sequester carbon, minimise soil carbon loss and support climate mitigation and adaptation through nature-based solutions aligned with National Landscape purposes

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

Priority 3	Develop an expanded and connected nature recovery network in the North Wessex Downs which is resilient to the impacts of climate change and allows the free movement of habitats and species throughout the landscape and beyond.
Priority 7	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.
BNR 04	Support farmers and land managers in restoring, creating and maintaining a resilient network habitats with thriving populations of key species, guided by the Nature Recovery Plan and LNRS priorities.
BNR 06	Encourage and support landscape-scale action for habitat management, restoration and creation.
BNR 07	Support and encourage actions to enable grazing on all the main grassland areas of the National Landscape.
BNR 08	Support the development of initiatives to safeguard and develop habitat corridors and ecological networks throughout the National Landscape, and in particular to enhance the ecological value of road verges and similar linear features such as public rights of way and National Trails.

Historic Environment

Priority 5	Secure greater protection for archaeological and historic features, sites, and their landscape settings in the face of inappropriate development or management practices, or forms of access that can cause damage.
HE 01	Encourage and facilitate work to improve the condition of designated heritage assets that are on Historic England's Heritage At Risk register and explore the designation or greater protection of other heritage assets through work with local Historic Environment Records, Historic England and Natural England.
HE 05	Encourage owners of designated heritage assets to create Conservation / Heritage Management Plans and manage / restore assets appropriately
HE 08	Support more and better explanation, interpretation and promotion of the historic environment for residents and visitors.
HE 10	Encourage improvements in agricultural practice to remove or mitigate the threat to archaeological sites from arable cultivation, e.g. through ELMS

Natural Resources and Climate Change

Priority 1	Promote and support measures to ensure chalk rivers and streams in the National Landscape 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.
Priority 2	Collaborative landscape-scale action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, for example through nature-based solutions (NbS).
Priority 4	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 09	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 10	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 13	Support climate mitigation measures including nature-based solutions, energy efficiency improvements, better on-farm management of fertiliser and animal waste, biomass heating from local fuel stocks and small-scale renewable energy generation consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape
NR 16	Promote carbon sequestration as an objective and benefit of habitat creation and management of woodland and permanent grassland.
NR 18	Encourage and support knowledge exchange among landowners and farmers to adapt to the impacts of climate change, e.g. including sustainable farming practices, soil health, circular water economy principles (reduced usage, grey water re-use, increased resilience to water shortages), and micro-generation of renewable energy compatible with National Landscape purposes

Communities

Priority 2	Support and facilitate community-led initiatives that help deliver National Landscape purposes and Management Plan objectives.
CO 01	Support efforts to raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape 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.

Access, Recreation & Tourism

Priority 1	Facilitate opportunities for more people of all backgrounds and abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect and promote the valued qualities of the National Landscape and its setting.
ART 01	Enable greater accessibility to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for users of all backgrounds and abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well-being, consistent with National Landscape purposes.
ART 05	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.
ART 06	Recognise and protect those areas which are too sensitive to intrusion or disturbance, for example archaeologically or ecologically, for the promotion of public access.

Local Assessment Panel and Application Deadlines

- The Local Assessment Panel is comprised of individuals from across the National Landscape 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, National Landscape representative. They represent the views of the farming and land management sector in the National Landscape, 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 roughly every two months to assess applications. The deadline for submitting an applications will be a fortnight prior to the meeting. The following dates are the **deadlines for 2026/27**, after which any applications above £10,000 will not get assessed till the subsequent meeting.

Financial year	Deadline For June Meeting	For July Meeting	For September meeting	For November Meeting	For Jan/Feb Meeting
2026/2027	21st May 2026	2nd July 2026	3rd September 2026	22nd October 2026	TBC

For More Information



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Refer to the [North Wessex Downs NL 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.