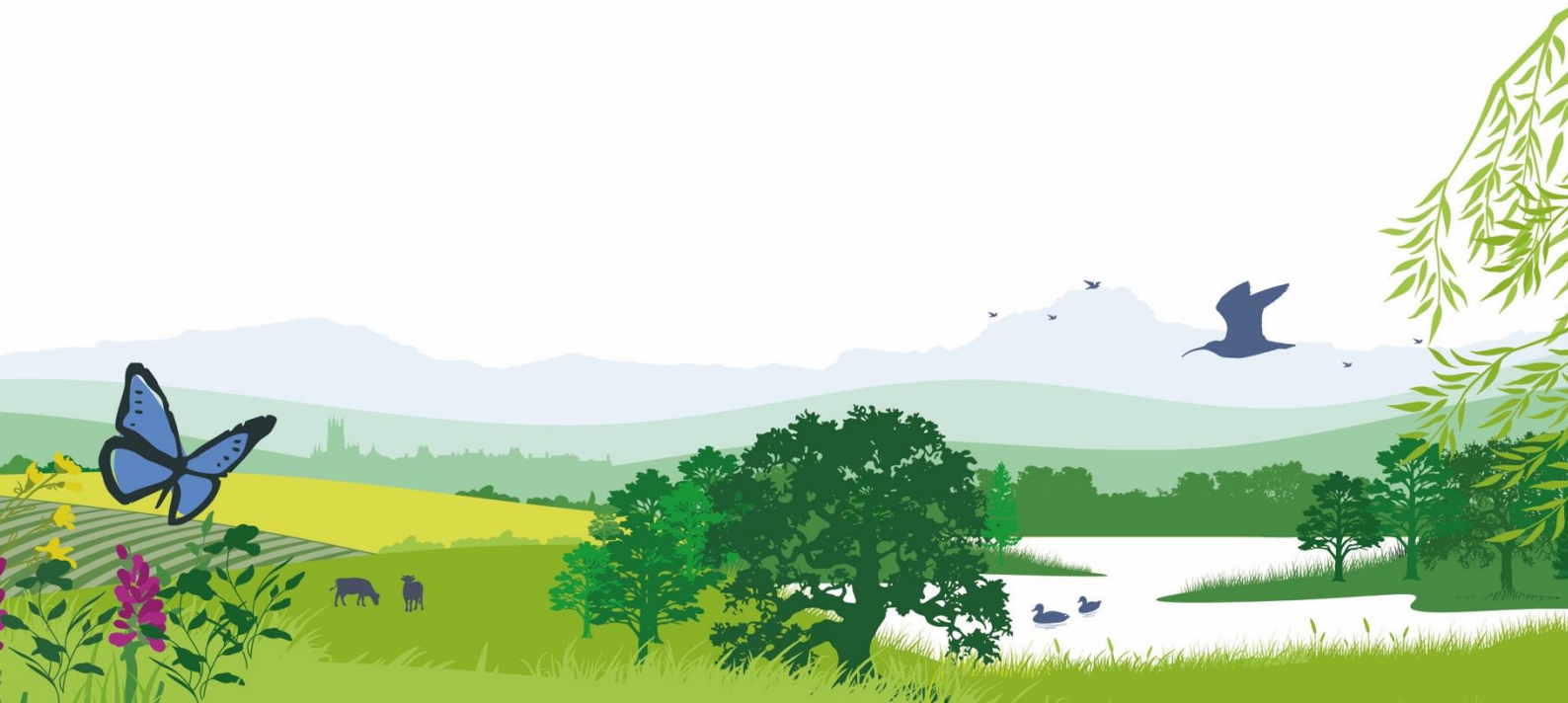
Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Fund

Gloucestershire County Council Offering and Selection Criteria

V1 November 2026



Introduction

Background

The Environment Act 2021 set out a plan for a more strategic approach to nature recovery across the county, where more power would be given to local authorities to shape how they prioritise where and how to deliver nature recovery. This would be done through the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), and County Councils or Combined Authorities were given responsibility to develop and publish these. In Gloucestershire, the County Council (GCC) is the Responsible Authority (RA).

In May 2026, Responsible Authorities for the 48 Local Nature Recovery Strategies were provided with final guidance on the delivery of LNRSs by Defra, which includes expectations and objectives for RAs. These objectives are built around 4 Key Functions which are as follows:

1. Lead and convene a delivery partnership to plan and prioritise delivery
2. Embed LNRS into local decision making
3. Identify priority strategic projects and facilitate project development
4. Monitor and report on delivery of nature recovery activities in the LNRS area

In addition to the guidance, a confirmation of grant funding from central government was confirmed for the authority, to the sum of £185,500 per annum for three years. This money is not ringfenced and can be used to fund LNRS delivery through means an RA feels best fit their position and resource level. This can include the appointment of staff, paying for resources or using the money as a funding pot to support and seed fund nature recovery projects. This document sets out how the RA will look to deliver specifically on Key Function 3, above.

Taken from the Defra guidance, the essential actions expected to be carried out by the RA are:

"***Identify new potential projects using the LNRS*** *(both the Local Habitat Map and unmapped measures from the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities) and* ***engage with potential project partners****, for example the landowners within an area identified in the Local Habitat Map.*

Develop these new potential projects, along with relevant existing projects, to become ready to be delivered *– for example, through feasibility option appraisals, project development support and signposting to potential additional funding sources.*

Work with partners to make sure that nature recovery projects they bring forward, including those that are primarily achieving a different purpose, use the LNRS to shape their project design.

Keep a record of projects being planned for LNRS delivery *to enable coordination across partners and a ready 'shop window' for potential funding*.

Overview of GCCs approach to supporting development of Nature Recovery Projects for the LNRS

At the time of the publication of this document, the internal resource for LNRS delivery lies mainly with one full-time Local Nature Recovery (LNR) Officer, with the expectation that part of the grant funding from Defra will be used to fund another part- or full-time role to assist with delivery. This fund has been set up to streamline support and resource to a select number of projects that align with the RA's delivery aims, that would most benefit from support. Alongside this we will continue to work with existing strategic projects, and look to develop other areas of LNRS delivery.

We will look to support projects that are strategic in nature, have a clear theme that aligns with LNRS Key Messages. To do this, criteria have been developed, which are set out in this document. These criteria will allow a fair allocation of resource and funding, with a transparent methodology for doing so. It will also allow the RA to steer focus and resource to LNRS delivery.

The offering

For projects that are selected, the RA will offer support in the form of time, resource, advice, and/or financial support. The exact offering will be tailored to the project, but examples of the kind of support that could be provided are as follows:

- technical expertise and advice within the remit of the Nature Recovery team and other support teams within GCC, such as Natural Flood Management, Biodiversity and Tree Planting (see appendix I for detailed list)
- grant application support or help to secure additional investment
- facilitating connections with organisations that can support with additional advice or resources
- project development
- showcasing projects to widen reach and level of support
- complete or fund desk or data searches for projects
- provide funding for setting up events or engagement workshops
- provide funding for standalone communications/marketing activities (e.g. flyers, video content)

In return projects will agree to:

- contribute project activity data to the countywide LNRS monitoring effort
- contribute high level baseline data (basic habitat classification and baseline site images) and provide similar high level outcome data (timing tbc but likely to be in year 2 or 3)
- provide images and information that can be used for case studies and LNRS communications

It should be noted that the grant aid that can be applied for can only be used for revenue means and not capital. For examples of this please see appendix II.

Clarifications around established or existing Nature Recovery Projects

This document seeks to outline how the RA for the Gloucestershire LNRS, seeks to streamline support for local nature recovery projects that could play a part in LNRS delivery. GCC already supports several existing key landscape scale projects and this will not stop following the adoption of the funding criteria and workstream, however the purpose of this fund and offering is primarily to support emerging projects in their development.

In exceptional circumstances, the fund could include small sums for existing projects showcasing where this will encourage wider LNR delivery, or for example, if the project is nearing the end of its funding, and it would benefit from extension or further development.

Other projects that will not qualify for support

Species or habitat monitoring projects: Projects where the sole aim is to monitor or collect data on species or habitats will not qualify under this funding stream. LNRS delivery focusses on facilitating on the ground nature recovery; however, we do recognise that monitoring and data collection are an important part of the wider picture for informing future management and prioritisation, so we still welcome being informed about such projects, and can discuss how we may be able to support on a more basic level. This could include simply raising awareness of the project through events where relevant collaborators may be in attendance or passing on details to other emerging projects who would benefit from monitoring.

Projects that include an element of data collection, which clearly forms the starting point for further direct action for nature recovery will be welcomed, however they will need to demonstrate a clear plan for this second phase of the project.

No support from landowner: Single site projects dependant on getting wider support from stakeholders including the landowner will not be supported. The exception to this will be where part of the project design involves outreach to various stakeholders and landowners in order to facilitate and encourage nature recovery on their property/land.

Application is for group support rather than project: the application must clearly be for a project, rather than for funding or supporting general activities of a group.

The project is a campaign rather than for delivering on-the-ground improvements: It is recognised these types of projects can still be valuable for nature recovery, but for the purpose of utilising Defra funding and steering resource, we are focusing on projects that contribute more directly to LNRS delivery.

The project is not within Gloucestershire: funding and support must be for LNRS delivery within the county, and we cannot support projects that lie entirely outside of the county. Some cross border projects may be supported where the benefit for nature within Gloucestershire is demonstrated and where at least half of the project/site is within Gloucestershire. For these projects we may seek to consult with the neighbouring authority to establish whether combined support can be offered.

Projects that will not include actual nature recovery delivery: This fund and support offering must primarily be to support or facilitate nature recovery. Whilst we expect some projects to have “wider” benefits such as supporting nature connection or climate resilience, they must still deliver an element of nature recovery.

Projects where funding will be considered “double counting”: projects may not apply for GCC nature recovery funding to fund an activity that is already subsidised or funded through other means (such as environmental land management schemes, or private finance).

Application windows and grant restrictions

Support and funding will be offered through application windows to spread the administration workload, and ensure the funding is available to a range of projects (which may not all be ready to apply at one given timeframe). An initial proposal will be for two windows per year; however, this may be adjusted depending on number of projects awarded and subsequent capacity. Application windows are provisionally planned as follows:

1. November - January 2026 with projects awarded in February 2027

2. June – July 2027 with projects awarded in August 2027

Each project/applicant can apply for up to £15,000, and the expectation is to award around three to five projects per window (more if projects selected have applied for less money). If a high number of applications are received, we may offer to keep details on record so that the project may be considered in the next application window.

Once awarded, funding will need to be used within 1 year of the award date. The limitation applied is to ensure incentive for project progression and fair distribution of funds amongst projects. If external factors have resulted in delays to projects progressing however, they may apply for an extension which will be granted at GCCs discretion. Projects may also request a longer timeframe during the application process, which will be agreed prior to award.

Whilst we expect that a single organisation may apply for more than one project, to ensure fair distribution of funds among applicants, **a maximum of one application per organisation will be awarded** per application window.

Who can apply?

We recognise nature recovery can be delivered in a range of ways, and by a range of people – both those working in the industry, but also by community groups, landowners, and businesses. As long as a project meets criteria and has potential, we would like to be able to offer support to a range of groups and organisations. We will therefore accept applications from:

- community groups
- parish and town councils
- eNGOs and charitable organisations
- landowners and enterprises
- partnerships comprising a collective of organisations



Local Nature Recovery Projects

Emerging projects the RA choose to support will be selected based on meeting criteria agreed by the RA and in consultation with key partners in the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership. Each project will be reviewed by an agreed panel (detailed below). The selection criteria have been created to give transparency and a clear system for allocating resource to projects. Projects that are selected as will be those that clearly demonstrate a desire to create a real positive impact for nature and have clear themes.

Selection Criteria

Criteria are scored on a scale of 1-3. Projects that do not meet a criterion will score 0 for that criterion, and it is anticipated that most projects will not score on every criterion, as they will have different areas of focus. The table below sets out each criterion along with a description of why the criterion has been selected, and some examples of scoring. The majority of criterion will be scored through qualitative means, however fixed scoring has been set for criterion that can be scored quantitatively.

Projects must score 3 points for at least one criterion, to demonstrate a clear theme and focus. Projects that score 3 or 2 points for multiple criteria are most likely to be considered.

Criteria	**Description**
Improving ecological connectivity	Mobile species will often reach and colonise a new project area no matter its location, but there may be limitations depending on surrounding habitat and how fragmented it is. Lack of connectivity and increased fragmentation is one of the key threats for many species that are in decline, so projects that actively support reversing this, or that strategically aim to join up habitat, will be rewarded. Example scoring: 1 point: project includes linear features or stepping stones 3 points: project demonstrates specific design to connect surrounding habitats. Ethos of project is about connectivity.
Wider benefit - provides Nature Based Solutions	Many projects will naturally also have benefits considered to be "nature-based solutions" to tackle issues like climate change and resilience, flooding, and drought. Those that can clearly demonstrate this will score points in this criterion: Example scoring: 1 point: A project identifies that actions will also have some benefit for climate adaptation (e.g. tree planting in public space, that provides shade) 2 points: the theme of nature-based solutions is strong but benefits are not quantified or measured. 3 points: supporting climate adaptation and resilience is the key focus of the project, and benefits are quantified. For

	example, NFM project working with a range of landowners, demonstrating benefits to neighbouring communities or farms.
Wider benefit - increases access to nature and nature connection for the local or wider community	The LNRS identifies the importance of access to nature and supports projects that seek to improve this. Nature connection is also a key way to help garner support and involvement in nature recovery. Projects that provide social value are strongly welcomed, and we encourage projects to consider where they can incorporate this added value. This could be through offering volunteering, improving access, or running community or engagement events to support marginalised groups. Example scoring: 1 point: site has public access and will include interpretation boards etc to inform public about the project. 2 points: project engages with public or involves public with development or delivery of project (such as offering volunteering) 3 points: long-term project plans include continued community engagement on site, citizen science, events etc
Species specific focus	Many projects are purely based on creating ecologically rich habitat with the idea that this will in turn attract a range of species. Some species, as identified by the Local Habitat Mapping and Part 1 of the LNRS project require additional interventions to support their survival, or need very specific conditions. To support a range of themes in LNRS delivery, projects that achieve this are welcomed. Example scoring: 1 point: generalist project but with some minor species-specific enhancements 3 points: whole of project design is based around a species or taxa (existing example - Eelscapes)
Habitat diversity	Habitat heterogeneity (i.e. a mix of habitats that add structural, and botanical diversity) in a landscape is important for a range of species and research shows structural diversity is a driver for increased species richness. Fixed scoring: 1 point: 2 habitat types created/enhanced 2 points: 3 habitats created/enhanced 3 points: 4 or more habitats created/enhanced
Scale: multi-site projects	Some projects may be designed around smaller scale actions but on multiple sites. There are a number of tree planting

	projects with this model in the county (and beyond) and is the basis for national projects such as B-lines. Fixed scoring: 1 point: fixed multi-site (i.e. more than one site in the project but no plans to expand from this) 3 points: project design is based around scaling up actions across multiple sites.
Scale: Large single site or area	Large sites allow for landscape scale ecological restoration. Their scale often allows for a complex and diverse network of habitats, and a rewilding approach to be taken. Scoring for this is simply based on size: 1 point: 10-50 ha 2 points: 51-100 ha 3 points: 100+ ha
Heritage protection or value	Gloucestershire has a rich heritage and past, although much is hidden and natural heritage lost. Projects will be particularly welcomed that have sought to either preserve existing heritage assets or reinstate historic features and landscapes that have biodiversity value or can generate biodiversity value (e.g. lost woodlands and hedgerows) Example scoring: 1 point: conserves and optimally manages heritage assets of local importance across one site 2 points: conserves and optimally manages heritage assets of local importance across multiple sites 3 points: preserves and optimally manages heritage assets of national importance across a single site or multiple sites

Judging Panel

The Panel that will agree scoring will consist of Key officers in GCC that sit within teams that will likely support successful projects as detailed above. In addition, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) will also be represented by the LNP Manager. Key members of the LNP will be consulted during the project selection process to provide additional expertise and input. LNP consultees will be carefully selected to ensure no conflict of interest.

Representation on the panel will be from the following teams in GCC along with the Local Nature Partnership Manager:

- Climate and sustainability
- Nature Recovery
- Heritage

- Natural Flood Management



Appendix I – List of support offered to projects

Below is a list of tasks and offerings that the County Council could provide to projects. Whilst efforts have been made to provide examples of the type of service that can be offered, the list is not exhaustive, and ultimately, the support that can be offered will be on a capacity basis. Projects will need to be explicit in the type of support they would benefit from, so that the Panel can fully assess what sort of support can be offered. Whilst the in-house expertise will not cover all projects and needs, the expertise from within the LNP may also be drawn from, again dependant on capacity.

- Advice regarding consents and permissions required for a project
- Biodiversity Net Gain and habitat banking processes
- Archaeology advice
- Tree and woodland management
- Grassland management
- Wetland and watercourse management
- Other funding sources and opportunities
- Support in providing contacts and networking opportunities
- Support with developing project plans and engagement strategies
- Occasional in person site visits to inform the above
- Broadcasting and communications to spread word of project

Support we cannot offer:

- Provision of detailed technical reports
- Detailed technical surveys

Appendix II – examples of revenue funding

Below is a list of examples of the type of activity that could be funded by Nature Recovery Fund. This list is not exhaustive and we welcome enquiries before and during the application process if you are unsure of what you can apply for.

- Funding towards staff time (such as a project officer)
- Funding in part or all of costs for feasibility studies
- Costs associated with marketing and comms
- Funding towards holding events and engagement
- Funding for other professional services



Conditions

- The grant is non-transferable and non-recurring.
- As per the terms specified by DEFRA, the grant must be used for revenue purposes only and not capital.
- The grant can only be used for the purposes described in your application form ("Purpose") as approved by Gloucestershire County Council ("GCC"), unless otherwise agreed in writing by GCC.
- The grantee will ensure that their organisation is properly and appropriately insured at all times for employers' liability and public liability, and that GCC is indemnified against all liability arising from any acts, defaults, negligence, financial mismanagement of the grantee or the closure of the project or grantee organisation in connection with the services carried out with the support of this grant.
- The grantee will inform GCC if any member of the management committee, staff or volunteers has any personal or financial interests which may be affected by the grant.
- The grantee will not knowingly break the law or encourage or permit anyone else to do so.
- The grant is made on the basis that the funding should be spent within **one year from the date it is awarded/provided unless agreed otherwise in advance with Gloucestershire County Council**
- The grantee will inform GCC if they are unable to carry out the project, as described in the application form, within the agreed timescales. In exceptional circumstances projects may apply for an extension which will be given at the discretion of Gloucestershire County Council.
- If it is established that the project will cost less than the grant awarded the grantee will inform GCC and refund the difference to GCC.
- Without prejudice to GCC's other rights and remedies, GCC may at its absolute discretion withhold or suspend payment of the grant and/or require repayment of all or any part of the grant if the grantee:
    - uses the grant for any purposes other than the Purpose;
    - is, in the reasonable opinion of GCC, delivering the project in a negligent manner;
    - receives duplicate funding from a third party for the project;
    - provides any materially misleading or inaccurate information to GCC;
    - offers any inducement and/or reward in relation to this or any other agreement with GCC, or commits any act or thing that could constitute an offence for the purposes of the Bribery Act 2010, or any common law or statutory offence related to fraud;
    - fails to comply with any term (s) of this agreement and, where that failure is capable of a remedy, the grantee fails to remedy the breach such breach within 28 days of notice requiring the grantee to do so;
    - the grantee ceases to operate its business for any reason, becomes insolvent, is declared bankrupt, is placed into receivership, administration or liquidation, or a petition has been presented to wind up the company.
- If at any stage the grantee wishes to change any element of their project from the agreed project application and/or the Purpose, they must ask the team at GCC via email and receive prior written consent before making any such change.
- The grant is made on the basis that the grantee agrees to acknowledge the support of Gloucestershire County Council by using the council logo when producing any form of public material, including press releases, leaflets, posters and signage. If your project has a website, our logo must appear on the home page. GCC grants the grantee a non-exclusive royalty free licence to the contractor to use the GCC logo for the purposes set out in the agreement only and such use will be strictly in accordance with [Gloucestershire County Council Brand Guidelines, V6.0 2026] as attached to these Conditions.
- No part of the grant shall be used for the publication or promotion of any material which in whole or in part appears to be designed to affect public support for any political party or group.
- The grantee shall not sell or dispose of any equipment or goods purchased with the grant without first receiving GCC's written consent. But this shall not apply to any equipment or goods which have reached the end of their economic life. GCC reserves the right to retain some or all of the proceeds of disposal.
- By the **end of the year** the grantee shall submit to Gloucestershire County Council an evaluation form which will include the outcomes of the project to date and the benefits derived from the funds. The

evaluation of each project will be tailored based on the criterion that were met in their application. If the project is completed prior to this date the evaluation form shall be submitted within a month of the project completion.

- GCC is accountable for the expenditure of public money and grants are made on the basis that confirmation of the expenditure will be provided by the grantee. You will submit original copies of your supporting documentation (quotations, comparative prices, copies of invoices / receipts etc.) for the expenditure incurred. The records should demonstrate that the value for money has been achieved in the procurement of goods and services and that the expenditure has been spent in line with the grant application / funding criteria, including any publicity gained for your project. If you cannot provide documented evidence of the use of the grant, you will return the applicable funding as unspent grant.
- Payments from the fund will only be made into a bank account held and operated by the applying entity. Applicants will be required to sign-up as a GCC vendor and to SAP Ariba to provide their banks details All applicants must be financially viable; have clear financial controls and produce annual accounts (or management approved accounts); we may ask for these to be submitted on application. (In the case of applicants in their first year of activity where no accounts are available, you may still receive a grant, but we may contact you for further information).
- The grantee shall keep all receipts and documentation relating to the project for at least six years after the receipt of the grant. At any time during this period, officers, or an authorised member of staff, will also reserve the right to undertake compliancy visits to projects to ensure that funding has been used appropriately. All records need to be maintained in a format suitable for inspection.
- During the operation of the project the grantee shall adopt and maintain equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices and have any appropriate safeguarding polices / procedures in place. Gloucestershire County Council l may ask for evidence of this as part of the application process.
- Your organisation name and the amount you have been awarded will be published on the GCC website.
- It is vital communities are kept informed about how GCC is spending public money, and GCC, as the responsible authority for the LNRS, will demonstrate delivery to DEFRA. By agreeing to these terms and conditions, the project agrees to be publicised on the county council's LNRS web page, and to provide images and materials.
- GCC accepts no liability whatsoever for any consequences, whether direct or indirect, that may occur as a result of the grantee running the project, the use of the grant or from withdrawal from the grant. The grantee shall indemnify and hold GCC, its employees, agents, officers and sub-contractors harmless from all claims, demands, actions, costs, expenses, losses, damages and all other liability arising from or incurred by reason of the actions and/or omissions of the grantee in relation to the project, the non-fulfilment of obligations of the grantee under this agreement and/or its obligations to third parties.
- Subject to the paragraph immediately above and except where it may be unlawful to do so, GCC's liability to the grantee in connection with this agreement (including in relation to negligence) is limited to the payment of the grant.
- Both parties will comply with all of their obligations pursuant to the Data Protection act 2018 and associated legislation which arise in connection with this agreement.
- The grantee warrants undertakes and represents that:
    - it has the necessary resources and expertise to deliver the project in accordance with this agreement;
    - it has not committed and will not commit any offence for the purposes of the Bribery Act 2010, or common law and/or statutory offence relating to fraud and/or corruption;
    - all financial and other information concerning the grantee which has been provided to GCC is to the best of its knowledge and belief, complete, true and accurate;
    - it will comply with all applicable laws whilst performing its obligations pursuant to this agreement.
- All notices and communications in relation to this agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed to be duly provided if delivered by hand or mailed first class postage prepaid to the address provided by each of the relevant parties;

- This agreement (together with the documents attached to or referred to within it) constitutes the entire agreement between the parties in relation to the grant and supersedes any previous agreement or understanding between them in relation to such subject matter.
- These Conditions have been drafted with the intention that they are lawful and comply with the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Notwithstanding this, if and to the extent that any funding provided pursuant to these Conditions should constitute any unlawful subsidy, then GCC shall be entitled to recover from the grantee the amount of any such unlawful subsidy together with such interest as is required by UK legislation and the grantee must pay such amount (s) within fifteen (15) Working Days of GCC requesting repayment.



